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A TEXTUALLY-ARRANGED, GENRE-SENSITIVE,
RHETORICALLY-INFORMED
HOMILETICAL APPROACH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Michael Douglas Williams

December 2015

APPROVAL SHEET

A TEXTUALLY-ARRANGED, GENRE-SENSITIVE,
RHETORICALLY-INFORMED
HOMILETICAL APPROACH

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Dedicated to my wife, Cathy. Indeed, you are the love of my life. Proverbs 31:10 describes you best, “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” Without your love and support this dissertation would have been impossible to complete.

I love you forever and always.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BETS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BrLT</i>	<i>Brethren Life and Thought</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>The Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>Interp</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>NIGCT</i>	<i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>PC</i>	<i>Philosophia Christical</i>
<i>PRR</i>	<i>Presbyterian and Reformed Review</i>
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series</i>

Sem *Semitics*
S W J Th *Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TE *Theological Educator*
TrinJ *Trinity Journal*
WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*

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PREFACE

By God's grace many have assisted me in this journey, and without their help this work would have been impossible to complete.

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your grace and mercy in my life is undeserved. By your grace you have redeemed me and keep me. By your grace you have called me to proclaim the wonderful riches of your gospel to the nations. You are worthy of my affection and total devotion.

To my wife, Cathy, whom I love with all of my life. Your support and encouragement along this road have been the fuel which has kept me going down this path. You encouraged me to keep going each day, particularly on those days when I no longer wanted to keep going. You are truly a treasure from the Lord. I am all the more blessed because of you in my life.

To our children, Haley (15), Hayden (12), Hudson (7), and Holly (awaiting your adoption), I love you more than you can ever imagine. You are blessings and gifts from God. You often encouraged Dad to keep writing, particularly on those days when I would rather have been hanging out with you all. I look forward to many uninterrupted times to play and enjoy your company.

To my parents, Tom and Faye Williams. Thank you for raising me in a home that feared the Lord. Your guidance to follow after Jesus and your encouragement to pursue God's call of ministry on my life is more important to me than you will ever realize. Without your support in so many ways I would not be able to complete this

dissertation. Thank you for being there in more ways than I can count.

To my in-laws, Ken and Sharon Thomas. Not only did you entrust your wonderful daughter into my care, but you have treated me as a son. Thank you for your encouragement and support to follow the Lord wherever He leads.

To Bullitt Lick Baptist Church. You have given me the privilege to be your pastor for over a decade. You have helped me to grow as a follower of Jesus and have been patient with me as a young pastor. I am grateful for the high and holy calling of being your pastor. Your kindness and support of our family has been a gift from God.

To my professors. Dr. Vogel, you have always taken the time to show your care for me, my family, and ministry above my academic goals. For your genuine care I am grateful. I am also blessed by the keen insight you share in the field of expositional preaching. Your comments and suggestions have improved this work far beyond my own capabilities. Dr. Allison, I am grateful for the privilege to have sat under your teaching. The seriousness with which you approach theology and its necessary application to our lives is refreshing. You have stretched me to grow academically, but most importantly in Christ-likeness. Dr. York, you have given me opportunities in the classroom that have shaped my ministry. You have also taught me much about preaching boldly, which ultimately comes from unwavering convictions. I am grateful to have learned much from you in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

Michael Douglas Williams

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December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the words of J. I. Packer, “Scripture should be thought of as *God Preaching*.”¹ If Packer is correct, that Scripture is God preaching, then this truth carries great implication for preachers of God’s Word today.² Preachers preach because God has spoken, and what they preach is what He has spoken. The preacher’s task, then, is to be a “mouthpiece” and “sounding board” for the biblical text.³ Elsewhere, Packer explicates,

¹J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 97 (italics original).

²R. Albert Mohler Jr. concurs with Packer that God has spoken by saying, “True preaching begins with this confession: We preach because God has spoken. That fundamental conviction is the fulcrum of the Christian faith and of Christian preaching” (*He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008], 40). Because God has spoken, David L. Allen asserts, “It is the nature of Scripture itself that demands a text-driven approach to preaching!” (“Introduction,” in *Text Driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 3).

³J. I. Packer, *Truth & Power: The Place of Scripture in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1996), 164. Viewing preaching as being God’s mouthpiece and sounding board of the biblical text is of great concern for modern preaching. Packer clarifies the task of preaching, “Since the Triune God—the Father and the Son, through the Spirit—already preaches to us in every part of the Bible, the human preacher’s task resolves into becoming a mouthpiece and sounding board for the divine message that meets him in the text. It is not for the preacher to stand, as it were, in front of and above the Bible, setting himself between it and the people and speaking for it, as if it could not speak for itself. Rather, his role is to stand behind and below it, letting it deliver its own message through him and putting himself explicitly and transparently under the authority of that message, so that his very style of relaying it models a response to it” (ibid.). This dissertation will not treat the apparent crisis or lack of being God’s mouthpiece and sounding board in preaching today, but recognizes that such a crisis exists. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. argues that reversing the famine of God’s Word is the need of the hour. Kaiser traces what he considers to be the crisis in expository preaching, which is ultimately the loss in affirming biblical authority (“The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today,” *Preaching* 11 [1995]: 4-12). Similarly, Mohler also affirms that a crisis exists, which he attributes to a lack of expository preaching. While Mohler does affirm Kaiser’s analysis of a loss of biblical authority, Mohler is more concerned in his book to attribute the loss to a lack of true preaching. He bemoans much of what happens in pulpits across America today and concludes that true preaching does not occur in many cases. He clarifies, “Preaching is not the task of saying something interesting about God, nor is it delivering a religious discourse or narrating a story” (*He*

“Only as God himself is perceived to be preaching in our sermons can they have genuine spiritual significance, and God will be perceived to speak through us preachers only as we are enabled to make plain the fact that it is really the Bible that is doing the talking.”⁴ “God preaching” through the sermons of preachers and the “Bible doing the talking” occurs solely through the exposition of Scripture. Expository preaching may be understood generally as that preaching which takes the point of the passage as the point of the sermon and applies it to the lives of the hearers; therefore, what God has spoken or preached through the written Word is spoken through the declared message of the expositor with relevance to the contemporary audience.⁵

While commonality exists in many contemporary definitions of expository preaching, Mohler’s definition, as offered in the body of this introduction, and to a degree Kaiser’s definition, deals with an important but neglected element—namely, the relationship of authorial intent and the sermon to not only the *substance* of the biblical text and message, but the *structure* of the biblical text and message as well. Mohler

Is Not Silent, 50). Mohler then calls for expository preaching as the need of the hour. Whether this famine comes through a denial of the authority of God’s Word, as is the concern of Kaiser, or through an improper handling of God’s Word, as demonstrated by Mohler, the remedy is the same—the proper and faithful exposition of Scripture to the lives of God’s people for their everlasting good.

⁴Packer, *Truth & Power*, 163.

⁵No shortage of definitions exists as to what is expository preaching. For a cursory examination of related definitions, see Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20; Kaiser, “The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today,” 4; Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 52; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 129; Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 33; Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 2; Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 29; and John MacArthur, Jr., *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 9-14. Common in all of these definitions is the centrality of the biblical author’s intent and the application to contemporary life.

argues that exposition is not *one* kind of preaching—or even the *best* kind. He forthrightly advocates, “Let’s be clear. According to the Bible, exposition is preaching. And preaching is exposition.”⁶ Mohler’s formal definition of expository preaching is divided into four sections. As a whole, his definition states,

Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. *As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon.* Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and message of the biblical text and makes clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God.⁷

⁶Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 50. He further states, “What we mean is, very simply, reading the text and explaining it—reproving, rebuking, exhorting, and patiently teaching directly from the text of Scripture. *If you are not doing that, then you are not preaching*” (ibid., 51, italics added). As Walter L. Liefeld rightly comments, “The essence of exposition is *explanation*” (*New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 5). He goes on to conjecture, “The essential *nature* of expository preaching, then, is preaching that explains a passage in such a way as to lead the congregation to a true and practical application of that passage” (ibid., 6). While Liefeld does not insist upon any one method by which expository preaching is accomplished, he does claim that certain characteristics are discernible in true expository messages. In short, Liefeld asserts that (1) an expository message deals with one basic passage of Scripture, (2) an expository message has hermeneutical integrity, (3) an expository message has cohesion, (4) an expository message has movement and direction, and (5) an expository message has application (ibid., 6-7).

⁷Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 65 (italics added). In his definition, Mohler seems to use the terms “meaning” and “message” synonymously, as he does not give an explanation or differentiate between them. In a similar light, but not as forthright in their claims, Allen, speaking for the contributors of *Text Driven Preaching* maintains, “The authors of this book believe the paragraph unit is best used as the basic unit of meaning in expounding the text of Scripture. Expository preaching should at minimum deal with a paragraph (as in epistles), whereas, in the narrative portions of Scripture, several paragraphs that combine to form the story should be treated in a single sermon since the meaning of the story itself cannot be discerned when it is broken up and presented piecemeal. Bottom line: structure of the text itself should guide the structure of the sermon, since meaning is expressed by an author through the text itself” (“Introduction,” 6). Allen later affirms, as he writes on “Preparing a Text-Driven Sermon,” that “text-driven preaching stays true to the substance of the text, the structure of the text, and the spirit of the text” (“Preparing a Text-Driven Sermon,” in *Text Driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 10). Similarly, in defining an expository sermon, Shaddix and Vines tip their hat to the biblical text giving structure to the sermon structure in their definition as they concede that the sermon is organized around a central theme and main divisions “which issue forth from the given text” (*Power in the Pulpit*, 29). Furthermore, they offer a checklist and state that “the main divisions of the sermon must be drawn from the structure of the passage itself” (ibid., 31).

What sets Mohler's definition apart from many contemporary definitions of expository preaching is his insistence upon the text's right to "establish both the substance and structure of the sermon." He clarifies his stance upon textual prerogative in both sermon substance and structure: written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, each different genre of biblical literature—e.g., historical narrative, direct discourse, and apocalyptic symbolism—"demands that the preacher give careful attention to the structure of the text and allow it to shape the sermon."⁸ As a divinely inspired text, not only are the words given by inspiration, but so is the structure of the passage. Part of the biblical passage's structure involves its genre. To ignore the genre of the biblical passage would be detrimental to both understanding the passage and communicating the passage.

How much the preacher allows the structure of the text to shape the sermon is a question which needs a clear answer. Classical rhetoric can be of help in answering this question.⁹ Rhetorician Roderick P. Hart maintains that structure argues. The aim of any

⁸Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 67. In accenting Mohler's definition above contemporary definitions in this introduction, I am not stating that the remaining definitions of expository preaching outright deny textual prerogative to determine the substance and structure of the sermon nor that the very shape of the biblical text is divinely determined. However, what Mohler does include in his definition and explanation of expository preaching that many do not is at least the theory that the substance and the structure of the sermon follow the substance and structure of the text. What this dissertation seeks to do is further develop what it means for the text to determine both the substance and structure of the sermon. In a similar vein with Mohler, Kaiser defines expository preaching as "that method of proclaiming the Scriptures that takes as a minimum one paragraph of Biblical text (in prose narrative or its equivalent in other literary genre) and derives from that text both the shape (i.e., the main points and subpoints of the sermon) and the content (i.e., the substance, ideas, and principles) of the message itself" ("The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today," 4).

⁹I recognize that there are clear differences within the discipline of rhetoric and that of homiletics. For instance, classical rhetoric starts with a goal in mind and with a blank slate on how to reach that goal. For Aristotle, rhetoric is "a faculty of considering all the possible means of persuasion on every subject" (*Treatise on Rhetoric*, ed. Theodore Buckley [London: George Bell & Sons, 1894], 11). Artistic and inartistic proofs are at the disposal of the rhetorician and both types of proofs are to be used in every discourse (ibid., 11-12). Artistic proofs are created by the speaker in the audience, and they include logos, pathos, and ethos. Inartistic proofs are things which are, such as facts, oaths, and documents. Homiletics,

discourse is to persuade through argument.¹⁰ According to classical rhetoric the purpose of this persuasion is for maximum impact.¹¹ If the aim of any discourse is maximum impact and if structure indeed argues, then the structure of a discourse is vitally important for the speaker and the audience.¹² Hart further insists, “Structure and content cannot be separated easily.”¹³ If this difficulty in separation is true for the rhetor, then it must also be true for the preacher of God’s Word.

The expositor must not only deal appropriately with the substance of his message, but he must also deal appropriately with the structure by which the message is given in the biblical text, a substance and structure given under the inspiration of God.

on the other hand, starts with the text and intends to allow that text to determine the substance and, as I argue, the structure of the sermon. The parameters for the rhetorician and the expositor are very different—the former having none, while the latter is shaped by the text of the Bible. With differences being noted, classical rhetoric is still a valuable resource for dealing with the issue of textual substance and structure with that of sermon substance and structure, particularly when examining the five parts of the canon of arrangement.

¹⁰For the purpose of this dissertation words like “structure,” “shape,” and “arrangement” will be used interchangeably. Interestingly, in a correspondence with David L. Allen about his chapter on “Preparing a Text-Driven Sermon,” in *Text-Driven Preaching*, I asked him about his understanding of the biblical text establishing both the substance and structure of the sermon. He affirms a difference between “structure” of the text and “order” in the sermon. In short, he maintains that “structure” is the main point and sub-points of the text, and the “order” of the sermon may or may not reflect the “structure” of the passage. However, the “structure” of the passage must be clear to the audience regardless of whether the “order” it is presented in reflects the “order” that it is given in the text. In the end, text-driven preaching stays true to the structure of the passage—the emphasis of the text, *which generally involves the order of the text reflected in the sermon, but not necessarily* (David L. Allen, email message to author, September 23, 2010). In short, Allen typically will follow the structure of the text in developing the order of his sermon, but not as a hard and fast rule. He allows for homiletical freedom in the arrangement or order of the sermon as it relates to the structure of the text. I deal with this issue of arrangement and order in chap. 4.

¹¹Roderick P. Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 107. While Hart is concerned about the structure of a given discourse for the purpose of maximum impact, the goal of this dissertation is to determine how the preacher in the homiletical task is to structure the sermon in relation to the biblical text.

¹²John A. Broadus writes about the value of arrangement in preaching for both the speaker and the audience (*A Treatise On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* [Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012, originally published 1870], 174).

¹³Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 110.

The arrangement of a biblical text is not an arbitrary attempt of communication by the biblical writer; rather, it is a divinely guided process.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that sermonic structure which considers the arrangement of the text, is sensitive to the genre of the text, and aware of the rhetorical impact of the text assists the preacher in faithfully and effectively communicating the Word of God.¹⁴ A brief explanation of substance and structure, as well as faithful and effective communication, is in order. Substance refers to the content of a biblical text. The text's substance, then, is the author's meaning and its necessary application for contemporary audiences. Explaining and applying the author's intent is the aim of the sermon. The text means what it meant, even as it is newly applied to each generation.¹⁵ The preacher's task is not to determine or invent the substance of his message, but to proclaim what has already been said by the biblical author and to emphasize its relevance

¹⁴By text, this dissertation refers to a specific biblical text that is discerned by the preacher through exegetical work and forms what is considered a preachable unit. Hershael W. York and Bert Decker offer helpful insight into discerning a preachable unit by suggesting that the expositor read the passage repeatedly and determine the textual breakdown. By selecting the specific text on natural, not forced, divisions, the preacher searches for the biblical writer's idea. York and Decker explain, "While reading the book once again, make a list of each preachable unit—a passage that recognizes the natural divisions of the author, yet acknowledges time constraints that a preacher must respect. Natural divisions must never be ignored, but they sometimes must be further divided or, on the other hand, combined" (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 36). A balance between discerning the writer's idea or the preachable unit and the time restraints of the cultural context is necessary for the preacher's selection of a text for preaching. These preachable units may be harder to discern in the OT, particularly where the author is making one point, but takes pages and pages to do so (*ibid.*). On the other hand, in the NT the preacher faces a different challenge—one in which he is tempted to get bogged down in a single book or section at the expense of the church failing to see the big picture (*ibid.*, 37). While addressing the importance of understanding biblical discourse, Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson speak helpfully of discourse boundaries, which are discourse features that provide clues for defining the parameters of a preachable unit (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011], 577). More is said about biblical discourse in chap. 3.

¹⁵Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 66.

for each generation.¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson explain that the interpreter's aim is to recover the author's intended meaning:

The text is not 'just there,' left to be interpreted any way a given reader chooses. . . . It follows that the text of Scripture, likewise, is not neutral, that is, malleable to a great variety of interpretations that lay equal claim to represent valid readings of a given passage (as is common in various post-modern, reader-response approaches to biblical interpretation). Nor is the text autonomous, that is, a law unto itself, as if it existed apart from the author who willed and wrote it into being (as is held by various narrative or literary approaches). It is an authorially shaped and designed product that requires careful and respectful interpretation.¹⁷

The aim, then, of the homiletician is to discover the meaning of the biblical text and faithfully explain and apply that meaning as the substance of the sermon.

Because the text is an "authorially shaped and designed product," the structure of the sermon should also reflect this authorially shaped and designed product in so far as the sermon structure conveys the text's meaning. Structure refers to the shape or design of the sermon in relation to the shape or design of the text. If the text is divinely shaped and designed through human agency, then the structure of the sermon should at bare minimum consider the intent of this divine shape and design. Three factors influence the structure of the sermon as it relates to the structure of the text: attention to the arrangement of the text, sensitivity to the genre of the text, and an awareness of the rhetorical impact intended by the text.

In dealing with the structure of a specific text in relation to the structure of a

¹⁶ For a treatment of authorial intent, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 106-14; E. D. Hirsh, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1967), 24-67. For a brief history of the debate over author, text and reader, see Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 366-96. I treat this topic in chap. 3.

¹⁷ Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 58.

sermon, focus is given more on the macrostructure of paragraphs than on the microstructure of individual words or phrases or sentences, inasmuch as meaning is found on the paragraph level rather than the isolation of words or phrases.¹⁸ In discourse analysis, for example, the idea of meaning is explored through surface and notional structures—not simply the syntax (the way the author wrote it), but also what he was doing by writing the way he did. The concern, then, in this dissertation is not primarily with the isolation of words and phrases within sentences, though that is important, but with the overall authorial arrangement of a given discourse. Individual words and phrases are important, but meaning is discerned on the paragraph level.

Therefore, following the structure of a particular passage involves an understanding of biblical discourse. Discourse, as defined by Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, is “any coherent sequence of strings, any coherent stretch of language.”¹⁹ Discourse and structure are inseparable. Cotterell and Turner argue that all discourse is carefully structured to ensure some measure of development through the discourse.²⁰ The

¹⁸This statement is not a denial of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. In fact, as I treat this area in chap. 3, verbal inspiration is affirmed (e.g. chap. 2). My concern for the structure of the text in this dissertation largely deals with the macro-level. I am aware of the importance of grammar (which “denotes specific features of syntax, such as a certain kind of genitive or participle [form]”) and syntax (which “refers more broadly to relationships between words in the larger scheme of discourses and sentence structures”), but believe that understanding the meaning of the passage and even communicating that meaning is more importantly focused upon the context of a specific discourse—marked out as a preachable unit or discourse boundary—and not simply the individual words or phrases or sentences. On the micro-level, words, clauses, phrases, and sentences are of importance, but do not give an adequate understanding of a given text if only microstructures are studied. Definitions of grammar and syntax given by Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 576. See Richard J. Erickson for a definition of related terms, such as syntax, discourse, phrase, clause, and sentence (*A Beginner’s Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear out of Critical Method* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005], 70-74).

¹⁹Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1989), 230.

²⁰*Ibid.*

relationship between these sentences, which form the discourse, cannot be rearranged as the reader, interpreter, or expositor desires and still be what the biblical author intended.

Furthermore, considering the structure of a biblical passage also involves maintaining the relationship between the discourse under purview and the proposition intended by the biblical author.²¹ In any given discourse the biblical author communicates his intent through specific genres or types of literature. Robert Vogel insists, “One of the glorious features of the Scriptures is their literary diversity.”²² The biblical authors use these various genres to communicate their truth-intention, which can be further narrowed to the text’s proposition (that which is both truth in content and personal in nature). In order to communicate the proposition of the text, the expositor should give careful consideration the author’s structural arrangement.²³

One final explanation of the thesis involves what is meant by the faithful and effective communication of the Word of God. Faithfully communicating the Word of God requires a clear and accurate understanding of the biblical author’s meaning.

Chapter 3 offers a hermeneutical process for attaining a faithful understanding of the

²¹I recognize that proposition can be used in two ways: (1) statement of truth, and (2) a speech act, such as a command, warning, promise, etc., (Gregg R. Allison, personal conversation, November 6, 2014). The work of Kevin J. Vanhoozer, as I deal with in chap. 3, seeks to bring together the understanding of proposition as a statement of truth and as a personal word. By the use of proposition here, I am seeking to wed the two understandings within the homiletical task. In other words, the sermon proposition seeks to speak the content of truth from the biblical passage as well as to demonstrate what the author is doing by what he said and the necessary response to it.

²²Robert Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” in *Text Driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 163. Among the many genres of Scripture, Robert H. Stein clarifies that two main kinds of language exist: referential language and commissive language. He states that referential language seeks to pass on information, to describe, while commissive language seeks to evoke decision, convey emotion, elicit feelings, arouse sentiment, and effect change (*A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 68).

²³I examine this aspect further in chaps. 3 and 5.

Word. While the faithful communication of the Word begins with proper hermeneutics, chapters 4 and 5 deal with rhetorical elements of faithful communication. The aim of any sermon, like that of any discourse, is to provide maximum persuasion. Effective communication, therefore, considers the structure of the passage, but preaches the point of the author, not necessarily the syntax of the author. Considering matters of speech act theory, along with surface and notional structure, will assist the expositor in effectively preaching the biblical text.

Having defined the substance and structure of a biblical text, as well as faithful and effective communication, I now explain how this thesis is demonstrated. Chapter 2 begins with the doctrine of inspiration. Since the biblical text is the outcome of a divinely guided process, the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is innately tied to the arrangement of the biblical passage. Consequently, both *what* the preacher says as well as the arrangement of *how* he says what he says are inherently tied to the biblical writer's intention. In other words, both the substance and the structure of the sermon flow from the careful consideration of the God-breathed text. The preacher is not simply seeking to arrange the sermon in the way in which he believes it will bring maximum impact (though he desires that); he is seeking to say what God intends to say through the biblical writer. Therefore, preachers should not only expound the content of the biblical passage in their sermons, but also carefully consider its textual arrangement. If the substance and structure of what the biblical writer says are inseparable, and if both are determined by divine inspiration, then the faithful expositor ought to expect his sermon to be influenced by both.

Chapter 3 explores the field of hermeneutics and its connection to the

arrangement of a given biblical passage. Because the biblical writers wrote through various genres, understanding basic hermeneutical principles of these literary types is essential for proper exegesis. Yet, also important for substantiating this thesis is demonstrating the connection between the biblical writer's use of a particular genre and what he was doing by using that genre (speech act theory). As mentioned above, while attention is given to the microstructure of a given discourse, the bulk of my focus is on the macrostructure. Understanding the biblical author's meaning necessarily involves sensitivity to his use of genre. Each of these aspects of hermeneutics impacts the homiletician's proclamation of the biblical writer's intention.

Chapter 4 utilizes the study of classical rhetoric. The ultimate aim of rhetoric is the persuasion of the audience.²⁴ Classical rhetoricians believed that audiences are most persuaded through the use of the five canons of rhetoric—invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and delivery. For the purposes of this dissertation, disposition, also known as arrangement, is of interest, since it concerns the structuring of a given discourse for maximum impact. This dissertation presents an explanation of the canon of disposition, and notes the similarities as well as differences between classical rhetoric and homiletics, for both rhetoric and homiletics have as their aim maximum impact upon the listeners.²⁵ At the same time, the two disciplines diverge at critical points, such as the

²⁴Robert L. Dabney asserts that rhetoric is most notably known as the art of persuasion (*Sacred Rhetoric or A Course of Lectures on Preaching* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979, first published 1870], 49). Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors explain, "Classic rhetoric was associated primarily with persuasive discourse. Its end was to convince or persuade an audience to think in a certain way or to act in a certain way" (*Classic Rhetoric or the Modern Student*, 4th ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 16).

²⁵In homiletics, for example, Dabney, speaking of rhetoric as a branch of eloquence, asserts, "Its design is to evoke an act. . . . And, I repeat, that wherever there is no direct purpose in the speaker to educe action of will in his hearers there is no proper oration" (*Sacred Rhetoric or A Course of Lectures on*

means by which persuasion is accomplished and the scope of appropriate subject matter. In short, classical rhetoric aids the homiletician by making him aware of the rhetorical impact of the text.

Chapter 5 weaves together several disciplines—theology, hermeneutics, and rhetoric with homiletics. Over three decades ago Kaiser noted the current crisis in exegetical theology, saying, “A gap of crisis proportions exists between the steps generally outlined in most seminary or Biblical training classes in exegesis and the hard realities most pastors face every week as they prepare their sermons.”²⁶ The goal of the expositor is allowing the text to speak for itself in contemporary language with maximum impact. Theological and hermeneutical considerations, along with rhetorical awareness, are not meant to be studies in isolation; rather, they unite ultimately in proclamation. Kaiser notes the intention of bridging the chasm of understanding the content of Scripture in the past and proclaiming it with relevance in the present, saying, “It [the sermon] must be derived from an honest exegesis of the text and it must constantly be kept close to the

Preaching, 30). Again, Dabney states, “The end, I repeat, of every oration is to make men do. . . . If your discourse urges the hearer merely with excellent reasons and inducements, natural, ethical, social, legal, political, self-interested, philanthropic, if it does not end by bringing their wills under the direct grasp of a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ it is not a sermon; it has denigrated into a speech” (ibid., 34). Geoffrey D. Dunn affirms this emphasis upon persuasion by Cicero and Augustine. He clarifies, “Augustine saw the task of the preacher very much as Cicero had seen the task of the orator” (“Aristotle and the Art of Preaching,” *Worship* 72 [1998]: 225-26). As an orator, then, the expositor, for example, seeks to win over opponents and arouse the negligent. Dunn continues by saying that Augustine, in following Cicero, “ranked persuasion as the highest achievement of the orator. One preached in order to persuade people into future action” (ibid.).

²⁶Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 18. A decade before Kaiser wrote of the current crisis in exegetical theology, James Dick Smart bemoaned the problem between the text and the preacher, saying, “The predicament of the preacher has been created to a large extent by the hiatus between the Biblical and the practical departments in our theological seminaries. . . . And much more easily it happens that those who are engaged in the complex tasks of Biblical interpretation become isolated from those whose function it is to train future ministers in preaching and teaching. Hermeneutics is developed in one compartment while homiletics and Christian education go their way separately” (*The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 29).

text.”²⁷ Engaging in theological, hermeneutical, and rhetorical accuracy is certainly for the express purpose of proclaiming God’s Word with relevance. This dissertation examines not only the importance of bringing these disciplines together, but also determines just how the expositor structures his sermon for the congregation in light of his theological, hermeneutical, and rhetorical findings.

Conclusion

Beyond proving my thesis, my desire in this dissertation is to offer an answer to how the sermon considers the substance and the structure of the biblical text. More specifically, my aim is to offer a homiletical approach where sermonic structure involves the consideration of the arrangement of the biblical text, is sensitive to the genre of the text, and is aware of its rhetorical impact in order to faithfully and effectively communicate God’s Word. Therefore, as a contribution to expository preaching, this topic is explored so that the expositor will be armed with an approach for preaching that allows the substance and the structure of the text to influence the substance and the structure of the sermon.

²⁷Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 19. Smart highlights the hermeneutical and homiletical objective. First, hermeneutics, is “a comprehensive term that embraces all the elements that enter into the interpretation of Scripture—linguistics, textual criticism, literary analysis, form and tradition criticism, historical exegesis, and theological exposition—and its full task is to move from a determination of the original meaning of a text to a translation of that meaning into contemporary language and thought forms. In some quarters the function of Biblical scholarship is limited to the determination of the original meaning and the student is left to discover the seriousness of the full hermeneutical problem when first he takes his place as an interpreter between the Scriptures and the community that is represented by his congregation. Homiletics has far too often been considered merely practical training in the construction and delivery of sermons rather than a seriously theological discipline that focuses its critical attention upon how the whole theological enterprise and the whole life of the church comes to expression in preaching. Insofar as preaching is regarded as bound to the Scriptures, homiletics has as its task the training of men to translate the evangelical content of the Scriptures into sermons that will let the voices of prophets and apostles continue to be heard in a contemporary form” (*The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church*, 30).

CHAPTER 2

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

The importance of the doctrine of inspiration to the subject of this dissertation is clearly expressed by R. Albert Mohler Jr. as he states, “God has spoken through the inspired human authors of Scripture, and each different genre of biblical literature . . . demands that the preacher give careful attention to the structure of the text and allow it to shape the sermon.”¹ God speaking through inspired human authors involves not only the substance of their message, but the structure of their message as well. If the structure of the biblical author’s message is divinely inspired, then the preacher of God’s Word cannot ignore the divine shape of the text. Indeed, “genuine exposition demands that the text establish the shape as well as the substance of the sermon.”²

The purpose of the preacher is to say what God says on a given matter in a given text, and to do so by first discerning the biblical author’s intention. The writer’s intention is given through the words, grammar, and sentences that make up the biblical passage—a message revealed to the writer through divine inspiration.³ The significance

¹R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Mood, 2008), 67.

²*Ibid.*

³In other words, as with chap. 1, meaning is not discerned solely through individual words or phrases or even sentences, but more through the larger discourse or paragraph level. I refer to this distinction briefly in chap. 1 as micro-level and macro-level, and deal with it more thoroughly in chap. 3. See, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson as they write of the distinction between individual words, phrases, and sentences versus the larger discourse (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011],

of this doctrine in relation to preaching that considers both the substance and the structure of the biblical text is explored along three avenues: inspiration's message, process, and manner.

The Inspired Message

The history of the church discloses her belief that the Bible is a divinely inspired book.⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield declares, "The church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God, of which God was in such a sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority."⁵ Reinforcing the church's overall belief in the divine origin of Scripture, Herman Bavinck examines the time of the Reformation and declares that "the Reformers accepted Scripture and its God-breathed and God-breathing character as it had been handed down to them by the church."⁶

575-76).

⁴Gregg R. Allison notes, "The church has historically acknowledged that 'all Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Tim. 3:16) and that in the writing of Scripture the biblical authors 'spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:21). Technical terms such as *verbal* and *plenary*, though coined in the midst of modern debates about this doctrine, accurately represent the historical position of the church that Scripture is fully inspired (plenary inspiration), even to its very words (verbal inspiration)" (*Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 59). See Allison as he traces the church's belief of inspiration historically during the Early Church, Middle Ages, Reformation and Post-Reformation, and Modern Period (ibid., 59-78).

⁵Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 112. Warfield earlier maintained that the "church-doctrine of inspiration was the Bible doctrine before it was the church-doctrine, and is the church-doctrine only because it is the Bible doctrine" (ibid., 60). See Joel Stephen Williams, "Inerrancy, Inspiration, and Dictation," *ResQ* 37 (1995): 158, who agrees with Warfield's assertion. For a survey of Baptist confessions on the doctrine of Scripture, see James Leo Garrett, Jr., "Biblical Authority According to Baptist Confessions of Faith," *RevExp* 76 (Winter 1979): 43-54. Garrett posits that Baptist confessions from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century reveal the overall Baptist consensus in the belief in the higher authority of the Bible. This authority includes an understanding that Scripture is given by God through human authors.

⁶Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 414. Bavinck traces the affirmation of Scripture's

Theologian Wayne Grudem argues for the divine origin of Scripture by maintaining that all the words in Scripture are God’s words.⁷ Being the words of God does not mean that God audibly spoke every word of the Bible.⁸ In fact, the Bible is “both a divine book and a human book. God is the author, and there are also human authors.”⁹ The relationship between God’s words and the human writers of the Bible is often referred to as inspiration.¹⁰ Defining inspiration, or the relationship between God’s words and the human writers of Scripture, is necessary in understanding the origin of the Bible’s message.

The Doctrine Defined

While the Bible nowhere lays out a clearly defined doctrine of inspiration, Bavinck insists that it does confront the reader with the witness of its God-breathed

origination with God through the Reformed traditions (ibid., 414-22). Wilmer R. Kensinger puts forth, “By the time of the Reformation and following, a kind of dictation theory was held which made the canonical writers to be little more than amanuenses. Some went so far as to insist upon the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel points. Others, faced with the growing list of variations in extant manuscripts, took refuge in the inaccessible autograph originals, which were asserted to have been free from error” (“The Decline of the Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration,” *BrLT* 1 [Winter 1956]: 61).

⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 73.

⁸Ibid.

⁹John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 4:140. Frame’s concern in his chapter on inspiration is to consider the relationship between God’s personal words and the human writers of Scripture.

¹⁰Ibid. D. A. Carson affirms that the term inspiration has been used at least over the last several hundred years to describe the relationship between God’s Words and the human writers (*Collected Writings on Scripture* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 31). Grudem is hesitant to use the term “inspiration” because it has such a weak sense in ordinary usage today (*Systematic Theology*, 75n6). For example, poets and songwriters claim to be “inspired” to write or athletes give “inspired” performances. Grudem attributes the confusion to an older translation of 2 Tim 3:16, which reads, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .” (AV). Therefore, he has chosen not to use the word “inspiration” in his doctrine of Scripture. Second Timothy 3:16 will be treated later in the definition of this doctrine. In short, I do not believe it is necessary to avoid the term “inspiration”; rather, the term needs to be clearly defined and explained from a biblical standpoint and not from a contemporary cultural usage.

character and supplies all the component parts to affirm such dogma.¹¹ He goes on to explain that Scripture presents such dogmas as the Trinity, the incarnation, and vicarious atonement in the same kind of way that it presents inspiration.¹²

Taking the totality of the Scriptural witness, Warfield offers an historic definition of the doctrine of inspiration. He states,

The Biblical books are called inspired as the Divinely determined products of inspired men; the Biblical writers are called inspired as breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers and becomes Divinely authoritative. Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their

¹¹Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 422. Though this dissertation is not a full defense of the doctrine of inspiration, I am aware that recent scholarship does not always view this doctrine in a positive light. For example, N. T. Wright offers a vague explanation of the doctrine of inspiration (*Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* [New York: Harper One, 2011]). He states, “‘Inspiration’ is a shorthand way of talking about the belief that by his Spirit God guided the very different writers and editors, so that the books they produced were the books God intended his people to have” (ibid., 35). What Wright fails to address in his book, as John M. Frame notes, is whether and how inspiration affects the text of Scripture (*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 522). In other words, did God simply providentially guide the compilation of books, or are these books in any sense authored by God? A. T. B. McGowan’s understanding of inspiration is also problematic (*The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging Evangelical Perspectives* [Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007]). McGowan desires to replace the word *inspiration* with the word *spiration*. He concurs with Warfield that *theopneustos* gives the idea of “breathed out by God,” hence his choice of *spiration*. What is problematic, however, is his definition and explanation. He defines *spiration* as “the affirmation that at certain times and in certain places, God the Holy Spirit caused men to write books and his supervisory action was such that although these books are truly the work of human beings, they are also the Word of God” (ibid., 43). He continues by explaining that the Bible has authority, and then states, “In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, it is better to reside the authority in God rather than in the Scriptures themselves” (ibid.). Certainly the Scriptures have no authority “apart from God,” as Frame contends, but as that which is “breathed out by God” the Scriptures are authoritative (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 529). In other words, the written word, the *graphe* is God breathed (ibid.). Peter Enns, while apparently writing a book on inspiration, never clearly defines or explains the doctrine (*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005]). Instead, he roots what he says of the Bible in relation to the “myth” accounts of the ancient world. Enns’ ambiguity is heightened by the fact that he likens Scripture to the “myth” accounts that pre-date the Bible’s origin. A myth, as Enns defines it, “is an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?” (ibid., 40). The problem with Enns’ work is that he never deals with whether these stories actually happened. Instead of bolstering confidence in God’s word, Enns’ book leaves much to question.

¹²Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 423. Carson posits, “Like *Trinity*, the word *inspiration* is not a biblical word but summarizes some important facets of biblical truth” (*Collected Writings on Scripture*, 31).

writings are given Divine trustworthiness.¹³

Warfield insists that inspiration results in both divine and human authorship. On the surface this authorship appears to be dual, but in reality it is singular.¹⁴ In other words, to say that God wrote is to say that the human author wrote. The result of this written record is complete trustworthiness, a total reliability.

Similarly, Carson offers what he calls a typical Protestant definition:

“Inspiration is normally defined (at least in Protestant circles) as that supernatural work of God’s Holy Spirit upon the human authors of Scripture such that what they wrote was precisely what God intended them to write in order to communicate his truth.”¹⁵ What unites Warfield’s and Carson’s two definitions is the dual emphasis upon the inspired writers and the inspired text. Carson’s comments concerning the definition he offers apply to Warfield’s definition as well. Carson explains, “The definition speaks both of God’s action, by his Spirit, in the human author and of the nature of the resulting text. This double emphasis is an attempt to capture two elements demonstrably present in the Bible’s summary of what is taking place.”¹⁶ Interestingly, Carson’s definition makes

¹³Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 131. As a staunch defender of biblical inspiration, C. F. H. Henry defines it as “a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen men in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative” (“Bible, Inspiration of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 145). Augustus Hopkins Strong defines inspiration as “that influence of the Spirit of God upon the minds of the Scripture writers which made their writings the record of a progressive divine revelation, sufficient, when taken together and interpreted by the same Spirit who inspired them, to lead the honest inquirer to Christ and to salvation” (*Systematic Theology* [Philadelphia: Judson, 1907], 196).

¹⁴J. I. Packer asserts that the Bible “is more than a library of books by human authors; it is a single book with a single author—God the Spirit—and a single theme—God the Son, and the Father’s saving purposes, which all revolve round Him” (*Fundamentalism and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980], 84).

¹⁵Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 31.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

note of inspiration as that of God's action. As addressed later in this dissertation, God's Word is an act, a speech act to be exact. God is not simply communicating truth through inspiration; He is acting. God's Word, therefore, is meant to be a communicative act, as seen in the very definition of inspiration. Two particular passages address these dual elements of God's action and Scripture's nature occurring in the Bible's inspiration, namely, 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16.

Moved authors, inspired text. Along with Warfield and Carson, Basil Manly, Jr. states that inspiration implies both divine and human authorship. The apostle Peter demonstrates this truth by stating, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:20-21).¹⁷ Manly asserts,

The divine origin and authority of the Word is not to be affirmed, so as to exclude or impair the reality of the human authorship, and the peculiarities resulting therefrom. . . . The Word is not *of* man, as to its source; nor depending *on* man, as to its authority. It is *by* and *through* man as its medium. Yet, it is not simply the channel along which it runs, like water through a lifeless pipe. It is *through* and *by* man as the agent voluntarily active and intelligent in its communication.¹⁸

The biblical authors were guided and used by the Holy Spirit to write through their own styles and experiences exactly what God intended.

The result of men moved by the Holy Spirit is an inspired text. The

¹⁷All Scripture references taken from NASB unless otherwise noted.

¹⁸Basil Manly, Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 30-31 (italics original). See David S. Dockery, "Special Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 111, as he argues that the Bible must be affirmed as entirely and completely the Word of God and the words of human authors. In fact, as he states, Scripture "is the Word of God written in the words of men."

apostle Paul declares, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Carson offers a summary of both passages that explain the dual emphasis of Scripture concerning inspiration. He explicates,

On the other hand, not only are the human authors of Scripture “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” but the resulting Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). . . . The striking point is that it is Scripture, the text, that is so described, not the human author. If we choose to use the word “inspired” instead of “God-breathed,” then we must say (according to this passage) that it is the text that is inspired, not the human authors. Alternatively, if we attach the term “inspire” to the fact that the human authors were “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” then the authors of Scripture were inspired. In any case, the wording of the definition is designed to embrace both the work of the Spirit in the human author and the resulting status of the text of Scripture.¹⁹

A closer study of 2 Timothy 3:16, particularly θεόπνευστος, will give clarity in defining this historic doctrine.

Paul’s use of θεόπνευστος is the sole usage of the word in the New Testament.²⁰

Warfield concurs that the phrase “given by inspiration of God” or “inspired of God” occurs only once in the New Testament—2 Timothy 3:16. The word under consideration is translated at times as “God-breathed.” Not only is this word used only once in the biblical record, but it does not occur in earlier Greek literature.²¹

Warfield’s treatment of θεόπνευστος insists that the Greek term has nothing to do with *inspiring* or *inspiration*; rather, it speaks only of “spiring” or “spiration.” In other

¹⁹Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 31-32.

²⁰Translated as “inspiration” or “inspired” in versions like the AV, NKJ, and NAU; translated as “breathed out by God” or “God-breathed” in the ESV and NIV, respectively.

²¹Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 245.

words, Scripture is not breathed into by God, but is breathed out by God, “the product of the creative breath of God.”²² The concern about the meaning of this word among Greek scholars is also coupled with the words *πάσα γραφή*.

Two possible translations are offered by Greek scholars for the phrase *πάσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος*. The major issue for this verse is whether *θεόπνευστος* functions actively as an attributive adjective (all God-breathed Scripture) or passively as a predicate adjective (all Scripture is God-breathed). George W. Knight III insists that the best understanding of the phrase is that “all Scripture is God-breathed.”²³ He concludes, “In the final analysis there is no essential difference in meaning. ‘All Scripture’ perceives scripture as a whole, and ‘every scripture’ perceives it in terms of all its component parts.”²⁴

After offering his apology affirming that 2 Timothy 3:16 is saying that all Scripture is God-breathed, Warfield attests,

From all points of approach alike we appear to be conducted to the conclusion that it is primarily expressive of the origination of Scripture, not of its nature and much less of its effects. What is *θεόπνευστος* is “God-breathed,” produced by the creative breath of the Almighty. And Scripture is called *θεόπνευστος* in order to designate it as “God-breathed,” the product of Divine spiration, the creation of that Spirit who is in all spheres of the Divine activity the executive of the Godhead. . . . It does not

²²B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), 79.

²³ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 445. See also Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics- An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 313-14. More specifically, Wallace explains, “In the NT, LXX, in classical and Koine Greek, the overwhelming semantic force of an adj.—noun—adj. construction in an equative clause is that the first adj. will be attributive and the second will be predicate. There are almost 50 instances in the NT and LXX in which the second adj. in such a construction is predicate and the first is attributive (39 of which involve *πᾶσ* before the noun; most in the LXX) and none on the other side. The evidence is so overwhelming that we may suggest a ‘rule’: *In πᾶσ + noun + adjective constructions in equative clauses the πᾶσ, being by nature as definite as the article, implies the article, thus making the adjective(s) following the noun outside the implied article-noun group and, therefore, predicate*” (ibid., 314, italics original).

²⁴Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 445.

express a breathing *into* the Scriptures by God. . . . What it affirms is that the Scriptures owe their origin to an activity of God the Holy Ghost and are in the highest and truest sense His creation.²⁵

For Warfield, then, Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16 speak primarily about Scripture finding the origin of its message in God.²⁶ Scripture as a whole (all of it) and in its parts (every part of it) is given by Divine design, namely from God himself.²⁷

In summary, God breathed out Scripture using human authors. These authors wrote the very words of God using the words of men. The origin, therefore, of the sacred message is divine, but the means or channel of the Scriptures is human. Just how this God-breathed text came into being is now further addressed by examining the inclusiveness of inspiration.

The Inclusiveness of Inspiration

The Bible is God’s personal word to us, but written through the agency of human reasoning and personality.²⁸ That inspiration is inclusive means that the activity

²⁵Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 296.

²⁶Henry also explains that *theopneustos* indicates God as the origin of Scripture (“Bible, Inspiration of,” 145). See also Bavinck who states, “In 2 Timothy 3:16 Scripture is called ‘God-breathed,’ not primarily with a view to its content but in virtue of its origin. It is not ‘in-spirited because and insofar as it inspires’ but, conversely, ‘it breathes God and inspires because it has been inspired by God’” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 430, quoting from Christian Pesch). H. Wayne House offers fine exegetical work on *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος* concluding that Paul’s point is upon God as the origin of Scripture (“Biblical Inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16,” *BibSac* [January-March 1980], 61).

²⁷Witmer is correct in his conclusion, “The main thrust of this verse, however, is that ‘every scripture’ has the character of being ‘God-breathed.’ This does not imply that God injects some quality of inspiration into ‘every scripture,’ but that ‘every scripture’ possesses the character of having been spirited or ‘breathed’ by God. It matters not what inscrutable means nor what secondary-agents God used to produce ‘every scripture.’ This text states the fact of the final result that ‘every scripture’ is identified with God as His ‘breath.’ God, therefore, is the source and author of ‘every scripture,’ and, in turn, ‘every scripture’ is the utterance of God — God’s Word written” (“The Biblical Evidence,” 245).

²⁸Frame writes of the relationship between God’s personal words and the human authors of the Bible, “Scripture is both a divine book and a human book. God is the author, and there are also human authors.” As God’s word to us, the presupposition is that God can and does communicate (*The Doctrine of*

of God is present throughout the entire process so that the completed, final product is ultimately from Him.²⁹ God was both actively involved in revealing specific messages to prophets (Jer 1:1-0) and in guiding biblical authors in their research (Luke 1:1-4).³⁰ I.

Howard Marshall summarizes the inclusiveness of inspiration by saying that it involves

the collection of information from witnesses, the use of written sources, the writing of and editing of such information, the composition of spontaneous letters, the committing to writing of prophetic messages, the collecting of the various documents together, and so on. At the same time, however, on the divine level we can assert that the Spirit, who moved on the face of the waters at creation (Gen 1:2), was active in the whole process, so that the Bible can be regarded as both the words of men and the Word of God.³¹

Being both the words of man and the words of God, however, does not mean that the writing of Scripture was an equal endeavor split 50/50.³²

Confluence. Confluence is the understanding that the whole of Scripture is from God, but given through the means of human authors. Warfield affirmed divine-human cooperation in the writing of Scripture. He says,

By it, the Spirit of God, flowing confluent in with the providentially and graciously determined work of men, spontaneously producing under the Divine directions the writings appointed to them, gives the product a Divine quality unattainable by human powers alone. Thus these books become not merely the

the Word of God, 140). As for being God's Word to mankind, James I. Packer insists that "from the earliest days of Christianity, the whole Church regarded the Bible as a web of revealed truths, the recorded utterances of God bearing witness to himself" ("Contemporary Views of Revelation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958], 89). Bernard Ramm defines revelation as "the autobiography of God, i.e., it is the story which God narrates about himself. It is that knowledge *about* God which is *from* God. In the broadest sense revelation is the sum total of the ways in which God makes himself known" (*Special Revelation of the Word of God* [Grand Rapids: Willam B. Eerdmans, 1961], 17, italics original).

²⁹Dockery, "Special Revelation," 120.

³⁰Ibid., 121.

³¹I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 42.

³²Allison, *Historical Theology*, 76.

word of godly men, but the immediate word of God Himself, speaking directly as such to the minds and hearts of every reader.³³

The Bible is, thus, the Word of God flowing through the biblical authors, so that the result of their writings is a divine message which in turn is trustworthy and authoritative.³⁴ In other words, inspiration involves both human and divine causes to bring about the biblical text, which is sometimes referred to, particularly in Reformed circles, as organic inspiration.³⁵

Bavinck's words are helpful in explaining what can be referred to as either confluent or organic inspiration. Bavinck affirms that Scripture is "conceived without defect or stain," that it is "totally human in all its parts but also divine in all its parts."³⁶ Describing the organic view of inspiration, Bavinck postulates,

It implies the idea that the Holy Spirit, in the inscripturation of the word of God, did not spurn anything human to serve as an organ of the divine. The revelation of God is not abstractly supernatural but has entered into the human fabric, into persons and states of beings, into forms and usages, into history and life. It does not fly high above us but descends into our situation; it has become flesh and blood, like us in all things except sin. . . . The human has become an instrument of the divine; the natural has become a revelation of the supernatural; the visible has become a sign and seal of the invisible.³⁷

³³Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 104.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 502.

³⁶Bavinck offers an interesting analysis that up until the late seventeenth century the church considered inspiration to expand even to the vowels and the punctuation (*inspiratio punctualis*), and then began to gradually and progressively shrink to affirming less and less (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 435).

³⁷Ibid., 442-43. That God used the human authors in various ways is made clear by Bavinck: "Though Scripture is true in everything, this truth is certainly not homogeneous in all its components. Divine inspiration, as we remarked earlier, made all literary genres subservient to its aim. It included prose and poetry, history and prophecy, parable and fable. It is self-evident that the truth in all these scriptural components has a different character in each case. The truth of a parable and fable is different from that of a historical narrative, and the latter again differs from that in wisdom literature, prophecy, and psalmody" (ibid., 447-48).

This understanding of inspiration recognizes, then, that the biblical text is primarily from God, but is written through the abilities and personalities of the biblical authors. To say that Paul said, for example, is to say that God said, and vice versa.

Therefore, one may accurately speak of the Scriptures as a “production equally of God and of man” and thus “never to be regarded as merely human or merely divine.”³⁸ The doctrine of inspiration may not be separated from the divine or human element, but must keep intact the union of the two.³⁹ The Bible’s message is both divine and human.

Perhaps Carson’s analogy of Scripture’s divine and human origin is helpful as long as one does not push it too far. He maintains that the Bible is both divine and human in a similar way that Jesus is both divine and human. The Bible “is God’s revelation, and it is a human record. The message, extending to the very words, is divine, originating with the eternal God, yet it is deeply human, written in history, one book with two natures.”⁴⁰ Certainly, then, the Bible is divine in its words (all of them) and human in its writing.

However, while Scripture is the confluence of the divine and human, the Bible is not a joint effort on the part of both God and man.⁴¹ The biblical authors were moved

³⁸ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 212.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 24.

⁴¹ The Bible’s testimony to itself makes this claim clear. G. F. Hawthorne recalls the OT formulas of the ancient prophets as they would say, “thus says the Lord” (Jer 9:23), “the Lord has spoken” (Isa 1:2), “the word of the Lord came to me” (Ezek 33:1), or the like (“Holy Spirit III: Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles, Revelation,” in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Daniel G. Reid [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 508). The point is clear, as Hawthorne suggests, “The word of the prophet was the word of the Lord and was to be received as such.” In the NT these OT formulas were largely

by the Holy Spirit only as they penned sacred Scripture. Edward J. Young asserts that the Bible never makes such a claim of joint effort between God and man in the writing of Scripture. He writes,

There were indeed human writers of the Scripture, but they are not to be considered as co-authors with God. It is not that God contributed certain parts of the Scriptures, and men supplemented these, and it most certainly is not the case that men contributed the greater portion of Scripture to have it supplemented by God. Nor did God and man take counsel together as to what should be included in the Scripture. God did not consult man as to what should be written. The Bible is truly the Word of God. He is the final and the ultimate Author; the Bible comes from God. . . . While the human authors were true authors, nevertheless they were not the originators of the words and the thoughts that are found in the Bible.⁴²

Thus, the Scriptures are inspired by God and written by man. God did not consult with man for his opinion, but He did use man in its composition. God guided the writers in such a way that the words of the Bible are divine and yet genuinely the words of man.⁴³

How this guidance of the writers occurred is greatly debated. While I address theories of inspiration under the process of inspiration, a general word about the variety in which God used the biblical writers to compose Scripture is in order. The union of both the divine and human in the writing of sacred Scripture is accented through God's use of variety in the human authors. William G. T. Shedd asserts,

But God employed various modes in his authorship: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners (*polymerōs kai polytropōs*) spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). Here,

replaced with the single formula "the Holy Spirit said" or its like. Hawthorne concludes, "The universal testimony of the earliest church concerning the OT is that it is the word of God, because those designated persons who spoke or wrote its message spoke or wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus spoke or wrote for God" (ibid.).

⁴²Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1957), 79-80.

⁴³This understanding of inspiration allows for the literary processes that take place on the human level (Dockery, "Special Revelation," 121). Manly counsels that a distinction between the divine and human authorship of Scripture not be denied in thought, nor ignored in our reasoning (*The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, 30). Both, he argues, must be distinctly held.

the prophets of the Old Testament and Christ, the subject of the revelation, are mentioned as the media through whom the divine mind was communicated. To these must be added the apostles of the New Testament.⁴⁴

While God spoke in various ways throughout history, God used the individual intellect, emotion, and will of each author to write his divine message. Strong describes this multifaceted movement of God upon the biblical writers by saying, “Inspiration, therefore, did not remove, but rather pressed into its own service, all the personal peculiarities of the writers, together with their defects of culture and literary style.”⁴⁵ The Spirit of God used the biblical authors’ own personalities and experiences in the writing of Scripture.⁴⁶

Packer writes that inspiration took on many psychological forms, which shows God to be a God of variety. The most basic form, according to Packer, was dualistic. Here, “the recipient of revelation remained conscious throughout of the distinction between himself, the hearer and reporter, and God, the Speaker to and through him.”⁴⁷ The OT prophetic oracles are examples of dualistic inspiration. The second form of inspiration is lyric. He states that “the inspiring action of God was fused with the concentrating, intensifying, and shaping mental processes of what, in the secular sense,

⁴⁴William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 113.

⁴⁵Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 213. By this statement, Strong simply means that Scripture is God’s revelation not for a select class of people but for the common mind. God used ordinary people in a fallen culture to write a divine message.

⁴⁶In referring to God’s inspiration of prophets, for example, Shedd comments that “when the Holy Spirit inspires a prophet, the mind of the prophet is so moved that he not merely thinks, but utters his thinking in language that is suitable and simultaneously inbreathed and prompted along with the thought” (*Dogmatic Theology*, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 76n110).

⁴⁷J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 100-01.

we would call the inspiration of the poet.”⁴⁸ Examples of this form include the Psalms, Job and the Song of Solomon. The last form of inspiration is called organic, “whereby the inspiring action of God coalesced with the mental processes—inquiring, analytical, reflective, interpretative, applicatory—of the teacher, seeking to distil and pass on knowledge of facts and right thoughts about them.”⁴⁹ Books inspired in this manner, according to Packer, include the historical books, apostolic letters, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. While the manner of inspiration varies, that God is the origin of the scriptural message and man is the agent through whom it came is clear. Certainly, the inspiration of the Bible is confluent or organic.⁵⁰

In short, the confluence theory affirms both the human and divine authorship of Scripture. Men were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21) to write perfectly what God intended for them to write in their own language and with their own personalities and experiences. One does not have to choose between affirming the human authorship of Scripture and the divine control of the sacred writings. Indeed, the origin of holy writ’s message is both divine and human without the diminishing of either.

The Process of Inspiration

Just how God’s divine guidance of the writing of the Scriptures came about involves the process of inspiration. Certainly Bob E. Patterson is correct in that “no one

⁴⁸Ibid., 101.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰Allison notes two corollaries related to the confluence of Scripture: its trustworthiness and authority (*Historical Theology*, 76).

knows exactly how inspiration took place.”⁵¹ He suggests that the work of scholars like B. B. Warfield and Dewey Maurice Beegle place an unbalanced emphasis either upon the divine agency or human authorship in their respective studies. Patterson proposes that the former scholar’s approach leads to the greater emphasis being upon divine agency and thus garners an unavoidable label as a “dictationist,” while the latter scholar places his greater emphasis upon human authorship and thus raises the question of infallibility.⁵²

However, just because the process of inspiration is not overtly articulated in Scripture, one does not have to concede the inevitability of either of Patterson’s two extremes. The Bible actually offers clearer insight than may first be thought. Understanding the process by which inspiration occurred involves a proper view of the primary author and the secondary author, according to Bavinck. He asks, “In what, then, does inspiration consist?”⁵³ His answer is helpful for a general understanding of inspiration’s process:

Scripture sheds light on that question when it repeatedly states that the Lord speaks through the prophets or through the mouth of the prophets; we read in Scripture “that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying. . .” [cf. Gr. Matt. 1:22]. Of God the preposition ὑπὸ is used; he is the one speaking, the actual subject. The prophets, however—speaking or writing—are God’s instruments; in reference to them the preposition διὰ with genitive is used, never ὑπο (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:3, 4:14, etc.; Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 4:25; 28:25). God, or the Holy Spirit, is the actual speaker, the informant, the primary author, and the writers are the instruments by whom God speaks, the secondary authors, the scribes.⁵⁴

⁵¹Bob E. Patterson, “James Leo Garrett Jr and the Doctrine of Revelation,” *PRS* 33 (2006): 32.

⁵²*Ibid.* Patterson’s assessment of Warfield, for example, is unfair as Warfield does not deny the use of each biblical author’s own personality and experiences in the writing of Scripture. In fact, Warfield’s definition, as mentioned previously, affirms that inspiration is the product of inspired men and that the writers are called inspired, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers. In other words, Warfield insisted that inspiration is a supernatural influence upon the writers not to trump their personalities and experiences, but to use them for divine purposes.

⁵³Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 428.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

While inspiration involves both the divine and the human, the working relationship between the primary author and the secondary author must be properly understood in order to avoid extremes on either end of the spectrum.

Just how God used the human authors through inspiration is further clarified by Bavinck as he reflects on 2 Peter 1:19-21. He remarks,

Being driven (φέρεσθαι, cf. Acts 27:15, 17, where the ship is driven by the wind) is essentially distinct from being led (ἄγεσθαι, used of the children of God, Rom. 8:14). The prophets were borne, impelled by the Holy Spirit, and thus spoke. Similarly the preaching of the apostles is called speaking “in the Holy Spirit” (cf. Matt. 10:20; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Cor. 2:10-13, 16; 7:40; 2 Cor. 2:17; 5:20; 13:3). Prophets, and apostles, accordingly, are people “borne of God”: it is God who speaks in and through them.⁵⁵

God is not merely offering His approval of the written record, simply preserving the writing from error, nor motivating or inspiring the writers to write.⁵⁶ Rather, God so superintended the biblical authors that what they wrote is actually the Word of God through the penmanship of man.

Theories of Inspiration

No one method of inspiration can be pinpointed as the sole means of the Bible’s origin, yet many theories have been proposed.⁵⁷ The explication of any doctrine

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Robert Gnuse affirms, “Since the divine-human relationship is not explained by the text [in passages such as 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; and John 10:35], great debate has arisen over the extent of the divine or human origin of the text. The Church has always believed in inspiration, but the idea has never been defined in authoritative fashion for the consensus of the Church” (*The Authority of the Bible: Theories of Inspiration, Revelation and the Canon of Scripture* [New York: Paulist, 1985], 14). My intention in this section is not to present a full treatment of various theories of inspiration, but to acknowledge and to summarize briefly key theories. For a summary of the various views explained by James Leo Garrett Jr., see Patterson, “James Leo Garrett Jr. and the Doctrine of Revelation,” 33-34. Garrett, as Patterson maintains, offered six theories of inspiration: (1) dictation—the actual words; (2) dynamic or limited verbal inspiration—inspiration of all the words of the Bible, but inerrancy is limited to matters of doctrine and

will regularly deal with a denial of certain extremes. The doctrine of inspiration is no exception, particularly as it relates to the process of inspiration. Bavinck contrasts two extreme views of inspiration. The first understanding sees inspiration as “arousing religious affections in the heart of prophets and apostles, affections that were then expressed in their writings.”⁵⁸ Yet, God is not said simply to arouse affections, but to reveal his truth, to speak to those whom He will use as agents of communication.⁵⁹ This

ethics; (3) different levels or degrees of inspiration—four levels include: (a) superintendence: God prevents the writer from embracing error; (b) elevation: God gives loftiness to the thought of the human writer; (c) direction: God instructs the writer in what to include and what to omit; (d) suggestion: God determines for the human writer both the thoughts and words to be utilized; (4) partial inspiration—holds that some aspect of the Bible’s authors are inspired, but not their writings [language, illustrations, allusions, etc.]; (5) universal Christian inspiration—holds that the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of all Christians, and the Bible writers had “no” special inspiration; (6) natural inspiration or intuition—holds that all people are inspired, and the biblical writers were inspired exactly in the same way that William Shakespeare was inspired, only differing in degree. Strong summarizes four main theories: (1) intuition theory—“holds that inspiration is but a higher development of that natural insight into truth which all men possess to some degree”; (2) illumination theory—“regards inspiration as merely an intensifying and elevating of the religious perceptions of the Christian, the same in kind, though greater in degree, with the illumination of every believer by the Holy Spirit”; (3) dictation theory—“holds that inspiration consisted in such a possession of the minds and bodies of Scripture writers by the Holy Spirit, that they became passive instruments or amanuenses—pens, not penmen, of God”; (4) dynamical theory—“holds, in opposition to the first of these theories, that inspiration is not simply a natural but also a supernatural fact, and that it is the immediate work of a personal God in the soul of man” (*Systematic Theology*, 202-12).

Manly writes of six similar views: (1) mechanical [or dictation] inspiration—believes that the “inspired man was as truly and merely a mechanical instrument as the pen with which the writing was done”; (2) partial inspiration—“limit the inspiration to certain parts or sorts of the sacred writings”; (3) different degrees of inspiration [superintendence, elevation, direction, and suggestion]—“insist that all Scripture was inspired, but not all alike, some parts absolutely and fully, others less completely”; (4) natural inspiration—is an “inspiration everywhere in the Scriptures,” but only “little more than a strong excitement or fervor, which all men have in some measure”; (5) universal Christian inspiration—while Scripture is the personal influence of the Holy Spirit, it “represents that as the same in kind with the ordinary illumination of every Christian”; (6) plenary inspiration—affirms “that the Bible as a whole is the Word of God, so that in every part of Scripture there is both infallible truth and divine authority” (*The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, 41-53). Gnuse writes of at least two other views. He says that there are both Protestants and Catholics who hold to a non-textual inspiration—an association of inspiration “with something other than the words of the biblical text,” an inspiration of ideas. He also articulates a social inspiration, held primarily by Catholic proponents—which understands the sensitivity to the biblical text and its complex process of development [from oral form to written form by redactors and scribes]. Social inspiration is “seen as a charism of the community as a whole and covers the entire process of producing Scripture” (*The Authority of the Bible*, 42-62).

⁵⁸Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 429.

⁵⁹Warfield states that the words of God are always “oracular utterances, divinely authoritative communications” (ibid., quote from B. B. Warfield, “The Oracles of God,” *PRR* 11 [April 1900]: 217-60).

view essentially denies God as the primary author and fails to see His ability to communicate to mankind.⁶⁰ The word of the biblical authors is the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13). Bavinck rightly debunks this theory, stating, “This position not only confuses inspiration with regeneration and puts Scripture on a par with devotional literature, but also denies in principle that God revealed himself to human beings by speaking, by thoughts, and by words.”⁶¹

The other extreme view of inspiration explained by Bavinck is the mechanical theory. In short, this view, while depending upon the particular proponent, fails to do justice to the activity of the secondary authors, namely the human writer.⁶² Traditional Evangelicals are often accused of holding to mechanical or dictation inspiration.⁶³ However, as Frame argues, almost all who hold the traditional view of Scripture do not view the writers of the Bible as mere recipients of “dictation.”⁶⁴ While mechanical or

⁶⁰Ronald H. Nash asserts, “Human language is adequate as a vehicle for divine revelation and for human communication about God because it is a divinely given instrument. God can therefore reveal truth about Himself through words” (*The Word of God and the Mind of Man: Crisis of Revealed Truth in Contemporary Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 120).

⁶¹Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 429. That God has spoken to humans using thoughts and words makes understanding the structure of a given passage essential to comprehending the intended meaning of the God-breathed text.

⁶²Ibid., 430. Bavinck dissects this view, saying, “A mechanical notion of revelation one-sidedly emphasizes the new, the supernatural element that is present in inspiration, and disregards its connection with the old, the natural. This detaches the Bible writers from their personality, as it were, and lifts them out of the history of their time. In the end it allows them to function only as mindless, inanimate instruments in the hand of the Holy Spirit” (ibid., 431).

⁶³See Ronald Nash as he distinguishes between verbal inspiration and the mechanical view of dictation that is frequently and erroneously attributed to evangelicals, saying, “The doctrine of verbal inspiration has to do with the extent to which God’s revelation is conveyed in *words* notably the written words of the Bible. It has to do with the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the human authors of Scripture in their selection of words to convey the inspired ideas” (“Southern Baptists and the Notion of Revealed Truth,” *CTR* 2 [1988]: 381, italics original).

⁶⁴Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 141.

dictation may not be the best way to express inspiration, the truth that God at times dictated to the biblical author is unquestionable.

In the Pentateuch, God dictates to Moses the words of the law (Exod 34:27). Or, as stated in Jeremiah 36:4, “Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him.” In the New Testament, Jesus dictates for John the words He wants him to write to the seven churches of Asia (Rev 2-3). Indeed, Frame is right, “Speaking for myself, I would consider it a transcendent privilege to receive dictation from God. What a wonderful experience it must have been, for Moses, Baruch, and John.”⁶⁵ Dictation, as found with Moses, Baruch and John, however, is the exception, not the norm. The normal pattern is what some call an organic and plenary-verbal approach to inspiration.

Inspiration as Organic and Plenary-Verbal

Though the majority of Scripture is not given by God through dictation, the text otherwise written is nothing less than the Word of God.⁶⁶ Bavinck, as mentioned earlier, refers to inspiration as organic. Frame concurs, saying,

Organic inspiration means that God used all the distinct personal qualities of each writer. God used the differences of heredity, environment, upbringing, education, gifts, talents, styles, interests, and idiosyncrasies to reveal his word. These differences were not a barrier that God had to overcome. Rather, they were God’s

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid. 142. Carson asserts that “it is important to distinguish the *mode* of revelation (dream, vision, dictation, etc.) from the *manner* of inspiration (the employment of various literary techniques and genres) from the *result* of inspiration (what Scripture says, God says) and the *purpose* of inspiration (to make us wise unto salvation)” (*Collected Writings*, 33, italics original).

chosen means to communicate with us.⁶⁷

Therefore, whether the passage of Scripture came through dictation to Moses or through Paul's personal letter to a particular church or individual, the result is God's personal Word to mankind.

God used the various personalities and backgrounds of each biblical author to convey His Word to mankind. The different styles of the authors are apparent. Moses' writings are different than David's and Matthew's writing is distinct from Peter's. Frame captures this truth well by saying, "God's Word is complex and nuanced, multiperspectival. God used the organic complexity of human persons and the diversities among persons to communicate the complexity of his own personal word."⁶⁸ God's Spirit so carried each of these writers that, though using their own abilities and experiences, they wrote exactly what God intended to be written.

While God using the distinct lives of each biblical writer to communicate His Word is understood as organic inspiration, this doctrine can be further clarified as plenary and verbal in nature. Inspiration is plenary in nature, which means that everything in or all of Scripture is God's Word.⁶⁹ Shedd insists that the "theory of plenary inspiration has been the generally received doctrine of the church."⁷⁰

⁶⁷Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 142. In referring to God's normal means of inspiration without dictation, Frame comments, "It is *like* dictation, because what Luke writes is exactly what God wants us to hear. It is *like* mechanical inspiration, because God is in full control of the process" (ibid.).

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 143. Young says of plenary inspiration, "It is not only in specific teachings or in great doctrines that the Scriptures cannot [*sic*] be broken. Rather, in all its parts, in its very entirety, the Bible . . . is utterly infallible" (*Thy Word Is Truth*, 48).

⁷⁰Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 91. He states, "The theory of plenary inspiration prevailed in the patristic, medieval, and Reformation periods" (ibid., 92).

Therefore, in line with Warfield's thought, inspiration is plenary in that the Bible is "inspired not *in part* but *fully*, in all its elements alike,—things discoverable by reason as well as mysteries, matters of history and science as well as of faith and practice, words as well as thoughts."⁷¹ Practically speaking, plenary inspiration means that certain books or portions of Scripture cannot be pitted against other books or portions as if some parts are divine and others are human. The entire Bible is from God written by human agency without error.

Scriptural inspiration is also verbal in its nature, which speaks to the intensiveness of inspiration. Verbal inspiration "means that the *words* of Scripture, not only the ideas of the biblical writers, are God's Words."⁷² As Young correctly concludes, if the Scriptures are plenary in their inspiration, then it is evident that it also extends to the very words.⁷³ Stated negatively, the Bible's verbal inspiration means that no one can

⁷¹Warfield, *Inspiration and Revelation*, 59 (italics original). I. S. Rennie offers a definition of plenary inspiration. He begins with three key components. (1) God is the author of the Bible, in varied ways. (2) The focus of inspiration is the writers of the Bible. (3) The writers have been inspired in all that they have written, though in varied ways. Still yet, as Rennie notes, many plenarists refine the definition further. (4) The data of the Bible are claimed as the source of the theory, both its teaching about itself and its phenomena. (5) The Bible is all of God and all of man, but in varied ways. (6) Human frailty allows for any lapse, infelicity, or inexactitude. (7) Although the word "inerrancy" is not generally used, the Bible is described as without error, without mistake, and infallible. (8) The authority of the Bible extends particularly to the revealed truth of Christianity, but since all was inspired, no part, however apparently incidental, will ever lead astray if properly interpreted ("Plenary Inspiration," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 860).

⁷²Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 143. See also I. S. Rennie as he offers nine components that make up this definition ("Verbal Inspiration," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 1139).

⁷³Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, 49. John Stott affirms inspiration to be verbal in that "it extended to the very words used by the human authors. This is what they claimed. The apostle Paul, for example, could declare that in communicating to others what God had revealed to him, he used 'not words taught us by human wisdom but . . . taught by the Spirit' (1 Cor. 2:13). Nor is this in the least surprising, since it is not possible to convey a precise message in any other way than in precise words" (*Understanding the Bible*, rev. ed [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 124).

divorce the thoughts of the Bible from the words of the Bible.⁷⁴ Young explicates the inseparable connection between the thoughts of the Bible and its words, saying, “The thoughts are indeed ‘God-breathed’ thoughts, and to them we are to give our entire soul’s obedience. . . . In what manner, however, has God seen fit to reveal these thoughts to us? To ask the question is to answer it. He has revealed them through the media of words.”⁷⁵ Thus, God did not only inspire the ideas conveyed in Scripture, but the text of Scripture—the very words. The text is the authoritative Word of God, because the text is written under the inspiration of God conveying the mind of God by using the words that God intended to be written through human authors.⁷⁶

Millard J. Erickson offers two arguments for the verbal inspiration of Scripture.⁷⁷ First, when examining the NT writers’ use of the OT, they often “regarded every word, syllable, and punctuation mark as significant.”⁷⁸ For example, in Matthew 22:32, Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the

⁷⁴Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, 49.

⁷⁵Ibid. Frame adds, “At no point in this redemptive history is God content to give thoughts or ideas to his spokesmen, without giving them words in which to express those thoughts. Rather, he assigns them the role of speaking and writing his words” (*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 143).

⁷⁶Accordingly, Frame asserts, “In Scripture, the Spirit inspires not only prophets, apostles, and biblical writers, but also *texts*. As we have seen, Jesus and the apostles regard the texts of the OT as fully authoritative, just as authoritative as God’s direct voice. The text has no less authority than the divine voice itself, or than the prophets and apostles” (ibid., italics original). The written record called Scripture is fully authoritative because every word is from God. Frame concludes, “Because inspiration is verbal, it is also, often, textual. You can’t put an idea or a thought exhaustively on paper; but you can put a *word* on paper. Inspiration is of words, whether spoken orally or put on a material medium (stone tablets, parchment, paper, digital media, etc.). So there is no reason to deny that God’s personal words take written form in the canonical books he has given to us” (ibid., 144). By saying that verbal inspiration is often textual, Frame is distinguishing between that which is written and oral. Obviously, the Bible is the revelation of God’s written verbal inspiration. While prophets, for example, were inspired at times to speak orally God’s word, the record of their message is recorded in written form.

⁷⁷Summarized from Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 180-81.

⁷⁸Ibid., 180.

God of Jacob.” The tense of the verb is the point that leads Jesus to conclude that “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” Another example is from Galatians 3:16 where Paul’s argument focuses upon the singular in Genesis 12:7—“The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” Erickson summarizes, “Since the New Testament writers considered these Old Testament minutiae authoritative (i.e., as what God himself said), they obviously regarded the choice of words and even the form of the words as having been directed by the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹

Second, the NT writers attribute to God statements in the OT that are not originally attributed to Him. For example, in Matthew 19:4-5 Jesus speaks about God making male and female in the beginning, and then He quotes from Genesis 2:24. Genesis 2:24 is originally a narrator’s comment on the event of creation, but Jesus claims that this verse is what God said. Whatever the OT asserted, in Jesus’ mind, was what God said.⁸⁰ Further, Jesus often introduced His quotations of the OT with the expression, “It is written.” Whatever the Bible said, Jesus identified as having the force of God’s own speech. At the very least, this identification links the OT writings with the Word of God. Erickson states, “On the basis of this type of didactic material, we may conclude that the inspiration of the Scripture was so intense that it extended to the choice of particular words.”⁸¹

⁷⁹Ibid., 181.

⁸⁰Other examples of attributing to God words not originally ascribed to Him are Acts 4:25-26, quoting from Ps 2:1-2; Acts 13:35, quoting Ps 16:10; and Heb 1:6-7, quoting Deut 32:43 and Ps 104:4 (ibid.).

⁸¹Ibid.

In summary, while there were cases in which God dictated to prophets His divine message, the normal reception of the Word did not occur in this way. Instead, God used the personalities, experiences and education of each biblical author to convey His divine message through human words, so that inspiration is organic. Yet, biblical inspiration is also both plenary and verbal. Every part of Scripture is from God, not only the thoughts but the words.

God did not simply convey thoughts to the biblical writers, but secured their words as the biblical record that He intended to communicate. If God used the “distinct personal qualities” of each writer so that every part and every word which they wrote is from God, then the manner in which that content was conveyed is of great importance, especially for the expositor seeking to communicate this divinely inspired Word.

The Manner of Inspiration

The manner of inspiration, as Carson insists, involves the employment of various literary techniques and genres.⁸² The doctrine of inspiration must be viewed not only in terms of every part and every word being from God, but also to the very form or shape of the biblical text. To affirm the organic, plenary and verbal inspiration of Scripture to the neglect of its literary form is a great injustice to the doctrine of the Word and the subsequent handling of it. The content of Scripture is mediated through a particular structure used by the biblical author. Just as thoughts cannot be divorced from words in the doctrine of inspiration, the content of Scripture cannot be divorced from its literary medium.

⁸²Carson, *Collected Writings*, 33.

Content and Literary Form

Leland Ryken maintains that three primary modes of writing converge in the Bible—theological, historical, and literary. Ryken goes on to insist that “theology and history are embodied in literary forms. A crucial hermeneutical principle thus needs to be established right at the outset: meaning is communicated *through form*, starting with the very words of a text but reaching beyond that to considerations of literary genre and style.⁸³ The content of Scripture comes through the medium of literary form. The one does not exist without the other.⁸⁴ God did not inspire the human authors of holy writ to write words randomly without any form; rather, the means by which God’s chosen words are communicated through human agency is through the use of literary form.

Inspiration, according to Orr, is

not an influence acting on the soul as a passive instrument, as a player might draw music from a harp, but a life imparted to the soul which quickens it to its finest issues. It follows that there is no form of literature capable of being employed by the genius of man which inspiration cannot employ as its medium. Every one recognises this to some extent in the variety of styles and forms of composition in the Bible. . . . Each writer in these departments has his own style and idiosyncrasies of thought and treatment. His genius is enkindled, not suppressed, by the power of the Holy Spirit inspiring him.⁸⁵

By the Spirit’s power, men used their own abilities and styles to write with great diversity using the conventional literary forms of the day. Instead of ignoring the literary

⁸³Leland Ryken, “The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 39, italics original.

⁸⁴Though I deal with the relationship of hermeneutics to the literary form in chap. 3, Ryken’s comment is necessary, “As a result, the first responsibility of a reader or interpreter is to assimilate the form of a discourse” (ibid.).

⁸⁵James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 169.

techniques of the day, the Holy Spirit employed them for His use in the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Ryken defines literary form in a very broad way. Literary form is “anything having to do with *how* a biblical author has expressed his message.”⁸⁶ Literary form, thus, recognizes that *how* an author said what he said is not inconsequential to *what* he said. In fact, *what* an author says is conveyed by *how* he says it. While literary form certainly is important to the issue of hermeneutics, establishing its necessary correlation to the inspiration of Scripture is essential.⁸⁷

The inseparable link between the literary form and content of the biblical text and inspiration is asserted by Ryken. He writes,

In short, forms like story, poetry, proverb, and vision (to name just a few) are the forms *through which* biblical content is mediated. If the writing of the Bible is the product of divine inspiration—if it represents what the Holy Spirit prompted the authors to write as they were carried along (2 Pet. 1:21)—then the only possible conclusion is that the literary forms of the Bible have been inspired by God and need to be granted an importance congruent with that inspiration.⁸⁸

Because literary form and content are inseparable one must conclude that both are inspired by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the doctrine of inspiration extends not only to

⁸⁶Ryken, “The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching,” 39-40. Grant Osborne speaks of genre or literary type interchangeably. He also interjects that knowing the literary form is essential before interpretation can begin (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991], 354). Furthermore, as Kevin J. Vanhoozer contends, to focus on the literary form, or genre, is to treat texts as literary wholes—unified communicative acts. Vanhoozer states, “Literary acts have subject matter, illocutionary energy, a perlocutionary trajectory, and a particular literary form. It is essential to attend to this last aspect—the ‘generic’—for . . . the literal sense of a text is its literary sense, and this can only be determined by identifying the genre. Understanding . . . is a matter of grasping what an author is doing in a text” (*Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 336-37). I deal with texts as communicative acts more in chap. 3.

⁸⁷In chap. 3, I deal with the necessary relationship hermeneutically between the content of a biblical text and the form of that text.

⁸⁸Ryken, “The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching,” 52 (italics original).

what the authors said, but *how* they said it.⁸⁹ The *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (1978) affirms that inspiration extends to the literary features of the Bible, the commonly held evangelical view that inspiration extends not only to the content of the text, but to the structure as well. Article eight states, “We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.”⁹⁰

Sidney Greidanus argues that the connection between literary form and inspiration can be seen in the unity of the literary form of a biblical passage and its content. In writing about the usefulness of rhetorical criticism, he recognizes the importance and inseparable connection of literary form and content, saying, “Rhetorical criticism looks on the biblical text as a work of art and therefore emphasizes the unity of form and content. Thus the interpreter cannot lay hold of the specific content of a text without paying close attention to the form into which the artist-author (redactor) has cast his message in that particular instance.”⁹¹

Understanding Scripture in this light views the text as a work of art and thus emphasizes the unity of form and content. Accordingly, form and content cannot be

⁸⁹For instance, Moisés Silva states, “It may be helpful to remember that our source of authority is not the bare facts of history but rather the *inspired presentation* of those facts in the Bible” (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 108, italics original).

⁹⁰*Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, art 8, in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1205.

⁹¹Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 58, quoting David Clines, “I, He, We, and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53,” *JSOTSup* 1 (1976), 37. Greidanus also quotes Isaac Kikawada, saying, “In rhetorical criticism the Hebrew Bible is studied from a synchronistic perspective, in an effort to appreciate the received text and to describe not only what the text says but also how it conveys the message” (*The Modern Preacher*, 58n42, quoting Kikawada, “Some Proposals for the Definition of

separated.⁹² Perceiving the meaning of the God-breathed text involves an understanding not only of *what* it says, but *how* it says what it says. As a matter of fact, discerning *how* the biblical author said what he said precedes understanding *what* he said.

Greidanus' insistence upon approaching Scripture as a unity of form and content is helpful. He clarifies,

This holistic perspective points up that inquiring about form is already to inquire about meaning—and vice versa. In literary studies, “form is intrinsically related to content. . . . Ultimately form has to have content; it has to *contain* something. And conversely content has to take some shape; it has to *conform* to some recognizable or intelligible pattern. Therefore, to deal with one to the exclusion of the other is to surrender a significant part of the whole. Or, stating the process positively, in those instances when we press to discern the fullness of meaning, to deal with the one aspect is to invoke the other.”⁹³

Analyzing the form of the biblical passage is necessary in determining the meaning of the author, for the author conveys his message through both content and form.⁹⁴ The content of the biblical passage is not void of form; rather, the “content is communicated through form,” a form given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ Working together then, the content and form of the passage communicate for a specific purpose.

Rhetorical Criticism,” *Sem 5* [1977]: 67).

⁹²R. Lansing Hicks explains, “Examination of forms has proved to be especially appropriate in literary studies because form is indigenous to language. Whenever we wish to communicate by speaking or writing, we are confronted with two related problems: what to say, and how to say it. There is the idea, the intellectual substance, to be communicated through language. There is also the word, the structure or shape, in which the thought is to be presented. At basis, we have to do with content and form” (“Form and Content: A Hermeneutical Application,” in *Translating & Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert Gordon*, ed. Harry Thomas Frank and William L. Reed [Nashville: Abingdon, 1970]: 306).

⁹³Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 59, quoting R. Lansing Hicks, “Form and Content: A Hermeneutical Application,” 307, italics original.

⁹⁴Hicks affirms this conclusion, saying, “In principle, then, there is a whole consisting of form and content, which is ultimately inseparable, and of which the one aspect not only interacts with the other but also shares with it the totality of meaning” (“Form and Content,” 307).

⁹⁵Ryken, “The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching,” 52.

Debate Over Propositional Truth

Certainly Packer is correct as he states, “The Word of God consists of *revealed* truths.”⁹⁶ While there is a propositional nature of Scripture which certainly reveals truth, the Word is not simply for conveying truth alone, but for expressing what the author is doing by what he is saying. God communicates through literary diversity. While the inspiration of Scripture extends beyond the revelation of mere concepts and actual words to the literary forms, Carson raises important questions regarding the relationship between the inspired text and propositional truth. Carson asks, “How are words related to propositions? How are propositions related to any particular literary genre? How are truth questions related to words, propositions, and literary genres?”⁹⁷ He continues, then, by stating, “At a popular level, any reasonable conscientious and intelligent reader makes various literary distinctions as the various parts of the Bible are encountered.”⁹⁸ Recognizing the literary diversity of Scripture is not difficult, but recognition alone of this diversity is not sufficient. What is important is understanding how literary diversity relates to the propositional character of biblical truth.

Why literary diversity? Properly dealing with the literary diversity of Scripture is essential to its understanding.⁹⁹ The purpose for such literary diversity may seem obvious at first glance. Ramm suggests, “Because special revelation comes to a

⁹⁶Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, 91, italics original.

⁹⁷Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 93.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Bernard Ramm states, “Biblical interpreters and theologians have not always manifested a proper sensitivity to this phenomenon [that special revelation comes in the form of both speaking and writing], for they cannot grasp the Scriptures properly unless they do” (*Special Revelation and the Word of*

particular man, living in some *particular* culture, and speaking some *particular* language, it will come in particular oratorical or literary forms.”¹⁰⁰ Yet, the aim of literary diversity is seen as Scripture reaches into the heart and soul, not just the head. For example, as Vanhoozer comments, “Poetic language expresses emotion not for emotion’s sake but in order to inform us about the *object* that evoked the emotion.”¹⁰¹ The Scriptures are written with literary diversity not simply to give quantitative information, but qualitative information.¹⁰²

The literary diversity of the Psalms, for example, calls the reader not simply to know more about God, but to be moved by what is revealed about God.¹⁰³ Lewis, therefore, states, “The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance. . . . Against that [simply the mere duty as Christians] it stands out as something astonishingly robust, virile, and spontaneous; something we may regard with an innocent envy and may hope to be infected by as we read.”¹⁰⁴ The biblical authors wrote with literary diversity in order that the reader might be ‘infected’ by what is read.

God [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1961], 63).

¹⁰⁰Ibid., italics original.

¹⁰¹Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture’s Diverse Literary Forms,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 77, italics original.

¹⁰²Ibid. Vanhoozer is describing C. S. Lewis’ view of the impact of poetic literature in Scripture. He goes on to explain Lewis’ disparaging of the reader who is on the lookout for information alone: “As the unmusical listener wants only the Tune, so the unliterary reader wants only the Event” (ibid., quoting C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* [London: Cambridge University Press, 1961], 30).

¹⁰³The aim, then, of an author-inspired genre is to tell what the structure is doing and not simply to mimic the structure in proclamation. More is said about what the structure does within its literary form in chap. 3 with speech act theory.

¹⁰⁴C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958), 45-46.

While some readers of the Bible, particularly in Western modernity, may prefer the lucid and systematic presentation of divine truth, God chose, for our good, the best way to infect the whole person with sacred Scripture. Lewis states, “We might have expected, we may think we should have preferred, an unrefracted light giving us ultimate truth in systematic form—something we could have tabulated and memorised and relied on like the multiplication table.”¹⁰⁵ However, in giving Scripture through literary diversity, God ensured the best means for mankind to be “infected” by his Word.¹⁰⁶

Lewis argues that Jesus’ teaching is an example

in which there is no imperfection, is not given us in that cut-and-dried, fool-proof, systematic fashion we might have expected or desired. . . . He preaches but He does not lecture. He uses paradox, proverb, exaggeration, parable, irony; even (I mean no irreverence) the ‘wisecrack’. . . . His teaching therefore cannot be grasped by intellect alone, cannot be ‘got up’ as if it were a ‘subject.’”¹⁰⁷

Broadening the intellect is simply not the aim of Jesus or any other portion of Scripture.

While Jesus (and all of Scripture) is interested in transforming the mind, He does so through more than intellectual appeal. To place Jesus or any other genre of Scripture in a nice-neat-package is like “trying to bottle a sunbeam.”¹⁰⁸

Vanhoozer rightly explains Lewis’ conclusion as to why Jesus’ teaching, for example, eludes our systematizing intellect. He summarizes that Jesus’ teaching “demands a response from the *whole* person: ‘No net less wide than a man’s whole heart

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 112.

¹⁰⁶Lewis maintains, “God must have done what is best, this is best, therefore God has done this. For we are mortals and do not know what is best for us, and it is dangerous to prescribe what God must have done—especially when we cannot, for the life of us, see that He has after all done it” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 113.

... will hold the sacred fish.”¹⁰⁹ Lewis is in line with theologian Abraham Kuyper, who also understands inspiration to involve the literary forms for the purpose of impacting the whole person. Kuyper explains, “Man received in his creation more than one string to the harp of his soul, and according to the nature of the objects that hold his attention his mood changes, he strikes a different key, and his mental action assumes new phases.”¹¹⁰ The Spirit freely used the varying forms of literature in order to strike all the chords of the soul, not just one.¹¹¹ The whole person is affected or “infected” by the inspired Word as it connects not only intellectually, but volitionally, emotionally, viscerally, and imaginatively through the Spirit’s use of multiplicity of literary forms.¹¹²

Vanhoozer captures the essence of Scripture’s use of multiple genres in order to bring about a proper response by the individual. He states,

In sum, good reading calls for the response of the “rationalist” (who approaches the Bible as truth to be believed), as well as the “romantic” (who approaches the Bible as a reality to be received). Lewis the Christian reader has an appreciation for both the propositional, or rational, truth-bearing function and the nonpropositional, or

¹⁰⁹Vanhoozer, “The Semantics of Biblical Literature,” 78, quoting Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 119, italics original.

¹¹⁰Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1954), 520.

¹¹¹Ramm captures the essence of Kuyper’s view of the Spirit’s inspiring of literary diversity (*Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 63).

¹¹²Lewis further explicates Scripture’s expectation for a response of both head and heart in his work *An Experiment in Criticism*. He writes, “Now the true reader reads every work seriously in the sense that he reads it whole-heartedly, makes himself as receptive as he can” (C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* [London: Cambridge University Press, 1961], 11). Similarly, Vanhoozer connects Augustine’s understanding of reading that impacts the whole person by saying, “Good readers receive the literary text; bad readers use it” (Vanhoozer, “The Semantics of Biblical Literature,” 78). Peter J. Schakel summarizes Lewis’ view of good readers and bad readers, saying, “Reading involves an imaginative, emotional, and intellectual interaction between the words an author writes and a reader’s understanding of and response to them” (*Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984], 165). Scripture is to be read in order that the whole person is impacted by the Spirit-inspired text. The words of the author are meant to impact the life of the reader, and by God’s design the most effective means for this impact is through literary diversity.

imaginative, reality-bearing function of good literature.¹¹³

The relationship between the rational and the imaginative in Scripture is not meant to be in opposition; rather, they are meant to be in conjunction. One need not nor must not divorce the truth-bearing nature of Scripture from its reality-bearing nature. God inspired the biblical authors to write with literary variety, so that both the head and heart are informed and thus moved to respond appropriately.

What about propositional truth? Carl F. H. Henry, while fleshing out the implications of verbal inerrancy, explains the propositional nature of Scripture. He writes, “Verbal inerrancy implies that God’s truth inheres in the very words of Scripture, that is, in the propositions or sentences of the Bible, and not merely in the concepts and thoughts of the writers.”¹¹⁴ Propositional truth extends to the words, thoughts and statements of the biblical author. Yet, propositional truth is not simply the distilling of words or even thoughts communicated under divine inspiration, but also the action behind the divine speech.

Affirming propositional truth does not negate the importance of being sensitive to particular literary features. Through the divinely guided literary features, the biblical authors both speak and act. Vanhoozer remarks that saying is a form of doing.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1979), 4:205. Henry was writing during the mid-twentieth century when the tendency was to deny the verbal and cognitive dimensions of revelation, so he argued that God’s Word “should be equated with revealed propositions of the Bible, objective truths stated in conceptual and verbal form” (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005], 45. The opposite view in Henry’s day claimed that the Word was ultimately God’s self-revelation—“God does not give us information by communication; He gives us Himself in communion” (John Ballie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1956], 47).

¹¹⁵Vanhoozer, “The Drama of Doctrine,” 44.

A proper balance between the truth content of Scripture and the personalization of Scripture is in order. A proper balance realizes that God's words in the Bible do many and various things: He creates (Gen 1:3), He warns (Gen 2:16-17), He asks questions (Gen 4:9), He makes promises (Gen 12:2), and He issues commands (Gen 22:2). In fact, as Vanhoozer explains, "As to Scripture, it is not merely the disclosure of information about God (revelation) but a collection of diverse kinds of divine communicative acts (divine discourse)."¹¹⁶

The biblical authors convey the desired message of the Holy Spirit through both what they are saying and what they are doing by what they are saying. "Speech-acts," Vanhoozer insists, "are both propositional (because all communication has content) and personal (because speakers *do* things with propositional content). *Language is not simply a tool for information processing but a rich medium of communicative action and personal interaction.*"¹¹⁷ Thus, God both communicates and interacts through His Word.

Vogel maintains that the propositional nature of a passage and its literary diversity need not be held in opposition. There is content being communicated through the biblical author regardless of the genre he uses. Yet, the biblical author is also

¹¹⁶Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁷Ibid (italics original). Robert Vogel affirms, "Literary study of a text exposes its subject matter with concrete and experiential force. The literary features of a passage embellish its explicit or embedded propositions tangibly" ("Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 173). David Jackman cautions, "All too often, evangelical preaching has put every text through the same mincing machine of a particular systematized theology so that its content is dissected and laid out in terms of doctrinal propositions with ethical applications, in an identical way, irrespective of whether the original was poetry or prose, proverb or parable ("The Hermeneutical Distinctives of Expository Preaching," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007], 18). See also Leland Ryken as he agrees with this caution of Jackman (*How to Read the Bible as Literature* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 18-21).

personalizing the content through particular literary features. He both communicates and acts through the biblical passage. Vogel is surely correct, saying,

The transformational intent of Scripture is expressed as their profitability for ‘doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness’ (2 Tim 3:16), all characteristics that require that truth be propositionally stated and applied. Accordingly, expository sermons must express the teaching propositions of a passage under consideration, whether they are stated directly (as in epistolary literature) or more indirectly (as in poetry).

The preacher may be thankful that he is not required to choose between directly proclaiming textual truth and respecting literary form. Indeed, the two readily work together.¹¹⁸

The Spirit inspired the Scriptures in order for the content to be expressed in a variety of ways, so that the biblical passage might have a transformational quality. Thus, as Vogel argues, proclaiming the text is not a choice between expositing the content or being sensitive to the literary form. Rather, God used the Spirit-inspired authors to write in impactful ways by using a diversity of literary forms, so that there is both speaking and acting through the passage.

Literary forms are used to convey God’s desired message, both its content and action. While figurative or poetic language, for example, reaches into the heart, the content of a poetic passage is still intact. As a matter of fact, God uses certain genres to strike at the soul of the reader/hearer in order to be “infected” by the propositional truth conveyed through that particular literary form.

Not everyone agrees that the Scriptures are propositional in nature.¹¹⁹ As with Karl Barth, the tendency is to state revelation in terms that are entirely personal.¹²⁰ A

¹¹⁸Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” 174.

¹¹⁹See David G. Buttrick, “Interpretation and Preaching,” *Interp* 35 (1981): 55, as he argues for the movement of Scripture rather than the propositions of Scripture.

¹²⁰See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T

personal encounter with the Word rather than propositional revelation is the goal in this understanding. While seeking to examine how propositions relate to Scripture's diverse literary forms, Vanhoozer demonstrates that the actual phrase "propositional revelation" is a relatively new expression.¹²¹ Though this phrase may be relatively new in relation to church history, the idea of revealed truth through genre diversity is not new. Packer claims, "From the earliest days of Christianity, the whole Church regarded the Bible as a web of revealed truths, the recorded utterances of God bearing witness to himself."¹²² To provide context for the current debate over the propositional understanding of Scripture, Packer summarizes the church's view during its early days, Middle Ages, and Reformation.¹²³

Packer explains that the Reformation recovered the importance of both the content of Scripture and its literary diversity. He explains this importance, stating, "As self-interpreting, they held, Scripture must be allowed to fix its own sense from within; arbitrary modes of interpretation, such as were practiced by medieval allegorists, may not be imposed upon it. Scripture has only one sense: the literal (i.e., natural)."¹²⁴ From their

Clark, 1975), 138. So, for example, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, as Vanhoozer characterizes, "stressed the notion of revelation as personal encounter with God: God discloses Himself by divine acts in history, not by dispensing information about Himself" (Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature," 57).

¹²¹See, for example, Ronald Nash where he says that the phrase has only been in use for the last forty years or so. Nash maintains that the phrase was first used by non-Evangelicals as a term of derision for the position they wished to repudiate (*The Word of God and the Mind of Man: Crisis of Revealed Truth in Contemporary Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 53). One of the earliest references is found in Emil Brunner's book *The Divine-Human Encounter*, trans. Amandus W. Loos (London: S. C. M., 1944).

¹²²J. I. Packer, "Contemporary Views of Revelation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 90.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

understanding of the literal sense of a passage, the Reformers made possible for the “first time a just appreciation of the literary categories in Scripture, and, guided by it, the Reformers laid the foundation of scientific exegesis.”¹²⁵ The work of the Reformers, therefore, wed together, perhaps for the first time, a recognition and respect for both the literary and propositional nature of Scripture. For them, proper exegesis and exposition involves the careful consideration of the biblical genre.

In the modern day, Clark H. Pinnock explains well the careful relationship between propositions and genre diversity. He states, “Historic Christian theology has employed the term *propositional revelation* to describe the cognitive truth-content of Scripture. The expression is not intended to deny that Scripture contains a rich multiplicity of literary forms in conveying its message. It merely points to the valid conceptual side of divine revelation.”¹²⁶ In fact, the Spirit uses a “rich multiplicity of literary forms” to express the “cognitive truth-content” of Scripture, and to thus act through the writing of Scripture.¹²⁷

In summary, Scripture is both propositional and personal. God communicates content through literary diversity as well as acts through its diversity. In other words,

¹²⁵Packer, “Contemporary Views of Revelation,” 90.

¹²⁶Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 110n6, italics original.

¹²⁷Packer, for example, captures well how modern Evangelicals should approach Scripture as propositional truth. He explicates, “Not that the text of Scripture is made up entirely of formal doctrinal statements; of course, it is not. The Bible is not a repository of isolated proof-texts, as the Mediaevals, unconcerned about the literal sense of passages, were prone to think” (*Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, 93-94). He goes on to explain that the Bible contains a variety of expressions, which reveal biblical truth. The Bible is an organism, as he describes it, and its theology shows the meaning of the events and experiences that it records. These events and experiences show the outworking of the theology in actual life. The Spirit clearly acts through the writing of the Scriptures. For example, He (1) expresses truth, (2) motivates to holiness, (3) warns against sin and stagnation, (4) prompts praise and thanksgiving, and (5) commands an action, to name several ways (adapted from comments by Gregg R. Allison, March 30,

God both says something and does something through the Scriptures. He uses the unique background and personalities of each author to speak in and through human words.¹²⁸ Thus, as with Vanhoozer, “the concept of a word-act—a saying that is also a doing—enables us to get beyond the standoff between ‘propositional’ and ‘personal’ revelation that has so complicated the contemporary discussion.”¹²⁹

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the Bible is given by the inspiration of God. While some theologians have chosen to avoid using the term “inspiration,” that position is unnecessary. What is important, however, is clearly defining what one means by this historic doctrine. The origin of the Bible’s message is divine, which means that God breathed out His sacred text through human authors. Inspiration is also inclusive, meaning that the whole process is ultimately from God. Further, God revealed His Word through confluence. In other words, the message of the Bible is divine in its origin, but human in its composition.

Also, the process of inspiration begins with an understanding of the primary and secondary author of Scripture. God is the primary author and man is the secondary author. Yet, this truth does not negate the organic nature of Scripture. God inspired the writers of Scripture to write while using their own distinct personalities, educations, styles, and abilities. God did not work in opposition to these differences in each writer; rather, He chose to use these various qualities as the means of His communication.

2015).

¹²⁸ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 47.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Although God used the differences of each writer to pen holy writ, the process involves inspiration that is plenary and verbal. Being plenary, the Bible in its entirety is fully from God, written by human means without error. Furthermore, the very words of the biblical authors, not simply their ideas, are inspired by God. Communication occurs not simply through ideas, but through words. The mind of God is conveyed in the Word of God by using the words of men as they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Finally, inspiration extends beyond the very words of Scripture to the diverse literary forms used by the biblical authors. In fact, the inspired words of Scripture are shaped and understood through the varied genres employed by God’s chosen authors. Indeed, understanding the words of Scripture is impossible without understanding the genre in which the inspired text is composed. The issue of propositional truth, then, comes into view as it relates to the intent of the author through his particular literary choice. God uses literary diversity in the writings of human authors to speak and to act, to both say and do. The message that God desires to communicate is given through the literary composition of the biblical author. The result of such a composition is not only an inspired content, but an inspiration that extends to the very structure or literary form of the biblical passage. How this content is understood in the context of its literary form is addressed in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

HERMENEUTICS AND GENRE

Establishing and affirming the inspiration of the Bible leads to a natural question—“How do we understand what the Bible says?” This question has been asked by the church since God revealed his Word through his biblical authors. Gregg Allison asserts, “As the church historically has treasured the revelation of God in his inspired Word, it also has recognized the crucial need to interpret the Bible properly.”¹ Properly interpreting the Bible is most commonly referred to as hermeneutics, which comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein*.²

The church has traditionally sensed a tension between two different methods of

¹Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 162. In the modern era, the church has continued her belief in the inspired Scriptures and her responsibility to interpret them correctly. See, for example, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 397-401.

²Grant R. Osborne clarifies, “Traditionally it [hermeneutics] meant ‘that science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author’s meaning’” (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991], 5). William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. explain that the Greek verb *hermeneuein* means “to explain, interpret or to translate,” while the noun *hermeneia* means “interpretation” or “translation” (*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Dallas: Word, 1993], 4). They explain that Luke uses the verb form in Luke 24:27 where Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, “explained” to the two disciples what the Scriptures said about him. Then in 1 Cor 12:10, Paul uses the noun form to refer to the gift of “interpretation” of tongues. The term hermeneutics is historically connected with the Greek god Hermes, who delivered messages from gods to mortals. Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson describe Hermes’ role, saying, “He was a medial figure that worked in the ‘in-between’ as an interpreter of the gods, communicating a message from Olympus so humans might understand the meaning. In this way, Hermes, son of Zeus, was responsible for fostering genuine understanding. . . . Hermes had to interpret the meaning of the messages on behalf of his listeners and in doing so had to go far beyond merely repeating the intended truth. He had to re-create or re-produce the meaning that would connect to his audience’s history, culture, and concepts in order to make sense of things” (*Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011], 3).

interpretation.³ In short, the two approaches are referred to as literal and spiritual/allegorical. The former approach, known as the literal meaning, “can be grasped by considering the words, grammar, and sentence structure of biblical passages.”⁴ Allison explains the latter approach by saying that “the Bible is viewed as containing several meanings. . . . The other meanings [besides the literal]—often referred to as the spiritual or mystical senses—demand an allegorical method: by a process of abstraction, the interpreter moves from the concrete realities of the biblical passages to concepts that lie hidden behind those texts.”⁵ The Protestant Reformers, who were largely trained in the plural meanings approach, rejected it and embraced a literal, or grammatical-historical, method of interpretation.⁶

The literal meaning of Scripture does not negate, but rather requires, a careful understanding of literary genre.⁷ Köstenberger and Patterson clarify, “Since Scripture is

³Allison, *Historical Theology*, 162. Allison offers an interpretative methodology of the early church, Middle Ages, Reformation and Post-Reformation, and Modern Period (ibid., 162-84). See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson as they trace the history of interpretation beginning with the OT, Jesus and the early church to the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists to the schools of Alexandria and Antioch to Jerome and Augustine to the Medieval Period to the Reformation and Enlightenment and lastly to the Modern Period (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011], 67-79).

⁴Allison, *Historical Theology*, 162.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. There is, however, a precursor to the Reformers’ literal, or historical-grammatical method of interpretation—the exegetical school of Antioch. During the days of the Apostolic Fathers, two schools of thought on interpretation existed: the school of Alexandria and Antioch. In short, “the difference between these two schools hinged on their approach to the biblical writings as history. While the Alexandrian school resorted to allegorical readings in which history took second place to an interpreter’s perceived spiritual significance of a given Old Testament character or event, the Antiochenes proceeded in the conviction that the primary level of exegesis was the historical one” (Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 70-71, italics original).

⁷As I argue in this chapter, this literal meaning relates to the single intention of the author. See, e.g., “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 397, “We affirm that the meaning expressed in each Biblical text is single, definite and fixed. We deny that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.” Furthermore, the literary genre used by the

a text of literature, the bulk of interpretive work entails coming to grips with the various literary and linguistic aspects of biblical material.”⁸ While biblical interpretation involves a literal approach to Scripture, which largely entails a literary analysis, the purpose of hermeneutics is not simply to attain a proper grasp of the text’s meaning, but also to identify the implications for proclamation which flow from that meaning. In other words, interpretation is not the end in itself, but the means to an end: the proclamation of the biblical passage to the life of the reader/listener.⁹

Therefore, the importance of hermeneutics and genre to the thesis of this dissertation is explored through two primary avenues. First, an overview of hermeneutics is given from the position of a literal, or grammatical-historical, approach to Scripture. Understanding the author’s intent is the emphasis of this section. Second, since the Bible is a text of literature, biblical literature and the necessary sensitivity to the various literary genres for the interpretive process is discussed.

Overview of Hermeneutics

Raymond Bailey is correct in stating, “You are a hermeneut. . . . Every person is a hermeneut of sorts because each of us is called upon to make important decisions

biblical author to convey his single meaning must be taken into account. Again, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” expresses this belief well by saying, “We affirm that Scripture communicates God’s truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms” (ibid., 399, art 10).

⁸Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 66. The authors speak of biblical interpretation as a hermeneutical triad: history, literature, and theology. The text is embedded historically and thus culturally; therefore, interpretation must carefully consider the historical setting. As mentioned, the form or genre in which the text is written must also be given thorough consideration for proper interpretation to occur. Lastly, the authors speak of the third element as theology. The goal of this inspired historical and literary work is theology.

⁹Ibid., 79. Upon dealing with hermeneutical issues in this chapter and the importance of the canon of arrangement within classic rhetoric in chap.4, chap. 5 deals with the synthesis of my findings for the purpose of the proclamation of the biblical text.

about interpretation every day. . . . We make decisions about the meaning of statements heard and read.”¹⁰ The biblical interpreter’s task is to discern exactly what the biblical author meant by what he wrote. To better understand the role of hermeneutics for the interpreter, defining this discipline is necessary.

Hermeneutics Defined

“Hermeneutics has a long and complex history,” as Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson explain, “with many surprising twists and turns. As a discipline in its own right it is relatively modern, yet the idea of hermeneutics may be traced as far back as the ancient Greeks.”¹¹ In its most basic and earliest modern forms, hermeneutics was created primarily as a discipline to serve as an analysis for a biblical text.¹² Simply put, hermeneutics is the science/art of understanding texts, to understand both what the text is saying and doing.¹³

Author’s intent. Porter and Robinson further expound that in early modern forms, hermeneutics represents a body of accepted principles and practices for

¹⁰Raymond Bailey, “Hermeneutics: A Necessary Art,” in *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. Raymond Bailey (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 7.

¹¹Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 1. My intention in this section is not to give an extensive overview of hermeneutics. My primary focus is arguing for discerning the authorial intent of a given biblical passage. For a thorough treatment of the debate over authorial intent, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s chapter on “Undoing the Author: Authority and Intentionality,” in *Is There a Meaning in this Text: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 43-97.

¹²Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 3.

¹³See John Frame as he describes hermeneutics as putting the meaning of a sentence in words that are somewhat equivalent (*The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship*, vol. 4 [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010], 293). However, hermeneutics is more than just restating the text; it involves an understanding of what the text is doing.

interpreting an author's intended (and inspired) meaning. The authors assert,

This form of hermeneutics was focused on the many dynamics that exist between author, text, and reader. It was assumed that in order to achieve a clear and accurate reading of a text one had to employ definitive rules of interpretation to clarify and safeguard the proper understanding of a rather obvious and commonsense relationship; that is, someone (at a specific place, at a specific time, with a specific language) had written something with the intention of having a later reader understand what he or she had in mind.¹⁴

The biblical authors wrote with the intention of being understood by their readers, and hermeneutics has to do with the understanding of the biblical authors' intentions.

Discerning the authorial intent of the biblical author is not a new approach. For example, using the time of the Alexandrian school's fourfold sense approach to Scripture, Jerome championed a way of biblical interpretation that centered on the authorial intent of the biblical passage.¹⁵ Jerome's words shed light on his interpretive approach: "My fixed purpose was not to bend the Scriptures to my own wishes but simply to say what I took to be their meaning. A commentator has no business to impose his own views; his duty is to make plain the meaning of the author whom he professes to interpret."¹⁶

In more recent history, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who is

¹⁴Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 3.

¹⁵Allison, *Historical Theology*, 168. By the time of the Medieval Period, the fourfold sense of Scripture is the primary pursuit of interpreters. In short, it involved: (1) literal (or historical), (2) allegorical (or spiritual), (3) tropological (or moral), and (4) anagogical (or future). The literal sense is the historical-grammatical sense. The allegorical sense is the spiritual sense which lies beneath the surface of the text. The tropological sense involves moral lessons drawn from Scripture. The anagogical sense is concerned with end-time implications within a passage (Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 73).

¹⁶Jerome, *Letter* 48.17, in *NPNF*, ed. Alexander Roberts, et al., 2nd ser., 14 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 6:76-77, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 169. Jerome continues, saying, "For, if he contradicts the writer whom he is trying to expound, he will prove to be his opponent rather than his interpreter" (ibid.). In other words, to say something about the text other than what the author intended in his passage is to be his opponent rather than his interpreter, his enemy rather than his friend.

considered the “father of modern hermeneutics,” argued that interpretation consists of two categories: grammatical and psychological.¹⁷ He writes of these two categories as being somewhat interchangeable, and contended that understanding a text requires a grammatical knowledge as well as a psychological knowledge.¹⁸ Dockery summarizes well Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical approach. For Schleiermacher, the text was psychologized:

The theme of an author’s text was a product of the author’s nature. The ultimate aim, therefore, involved getting through to an author’s unique individuality, a psychological interpretation. . . . The interpreter’s goal focused on sharing a life relationship with the author. Understanding, then, involved more than rethinking what an author thought. It included reexperiencing what was in the life of the author who generated the thought.”¹⁹

¹⁷David S. Dockery, “A Historical Model,” in *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. Raymond Bailey (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 27. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. describes the prior influence of Johann August Ernesti (1707-1781) as one who believed that the scope of hermeneutics “was confined to and identical with the words used by the author. Theological interpretation and application of the Biblical text were to be attempted only on the basis of and in strict reliance on the prior determination of the verbal meaning found in the text” (*Toward An Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 24). For example, Johann August Ernesti, while writing about the requisites of a good interpreter, states, “The act of interpretation implies two things; viz, a right perception of the meaning of words, and a proper explanation of that meaning. (a) Hence a good interpreter must possess a *sound understanding*, and be *skilful in explanation*” (*Elements of Interpretation*, trans. Moses Stuart, 3rd ed. [Andover: Flagg and Gould, 1827], 2-3, italics original). The aim of the interpreter, according to Ernesti, is to understand and explain the meaning of the author. Ernesti held to several key affirmations: (1) the act of interpretation; (2) the art of interpretation; (3) the skill in explanation; (4) definition of hermeneutics; (5) the single meaning theory; (6) the error of assigning many meanings to the same word at the same time and in the same place; (7) the error of those who affirm that the words of Scripture mean all that they possible can mean; (8) the grammatical sense the only true one; (9) any method of interpretation not philological, is fallacious; (10) subject matter, doctrine, applications and preunderstandings must not control interpretation (Kaiser, *Toward An Exegetical Theology*, 25-27). My intention here is not to offer a full historical explanation of the development of hermeneutics, but simply to highlight the influence of Ernesti and to show briefly how Schleiermacher moved away from a more objective approach to interpreting Scripture, like that of Ernesti, to a more subjective approach.

¹⁸Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986, reprint of 1977), 100.

¹⁹Dockery, “A Historical Model,” 29. Kaiser narrows down the significance of Schleiermacher’s influence by saying that he “produced his whole conception of language in opposition to Ernesti’s point that there is a single meaning (German, *Sinn*, sense) for an author’s words which may then unfold in numerous significances or applications insofar as they still reflect that single meaning. Schleiermacher countered by saying instead that every word has a general sphere of meaning which is not to be found in itself, but is to be worked out from the total given value of language brought to the text and

For Schleiermacher, then, interpretation becomes much more subjective in nature, which is a clear movement away from the more objective hermeneutical approach of Ernesti.

Schleiermacher believed that in order to complete the grammatical side of interpretation, a complete knowledge of language is necessary. To complete the psychological side of interpretation, a complete knowledge of the person is necessary as well.²⁰ Yet, he readily admitted that in either case complete knowledge is impossible. Therefore, the interpreter must move “back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides, and no rules can stipulate exactly how to do this.”²¹

In the twentieth century, E. D. Hirsch, Jr. published an influential work, *Validity in Interpretation*, in 1967. Hirsch, working within Schleiermacher’s tradition of general hermeneutics, “called for a grammatical and historical interpretation that attempts to grasp the meaning an author intended to convey in what was written.”²² However, Hirsch distanced himself from Schleiermacher’s tradition in that it is not the task of the

the heritage common to the author and his reader” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 29).

²⁰Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 100.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Dockery, “A Historical Model,” 30-31. Hirsch was also dealing with the impact of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who is considered to be significantly influential in what is called “The New Hermeneutic,” particularly with his 1960 work *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)*. In contrast to Hirsch, Gadamer believed that “not only is the recognition of an author’s meaning an impossibility, but so is the association of what a text now means with what it once meant to its author. Instead, the meaning of a text lies in the subject matter, the thing meant, which is independent of both the author and reader; yet it also is somehow shared by both. Thus the meaning of a text always goes beyond what its author intended” (Kaiser, *Toward An Exegetical Theology*, 30). See E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 245-64, for a thorough interaction with Gadamer’s New Hermeneutic. For further reading on the New Hermeneutic, see James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds., *The New Hermeneutic*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); R. G. Gruenler, “The New Hermeneutic,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1984); D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 38-40, 97-105; and Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, “New Hermeneutic, New Homiletic, and New Directions: An U.S.—North American Perspective,” *Homiletics* (2010): 17-31.

interpreter to have access to the mental process by which an author wrote his work.²³ Understanding the author's meaning is possible because the author chooses language conventions that have sharable meanings.

Hirsch states, "The interpretation of texts is concerned exclusively with sharable meanings, and not everything I am thinking of when I write can be shared with others by means of my words."²⁴ The concern, therefore, of the interpreter is not reexperiencing the life situation of the biblical author, but discerning the intended meaning of his written words through his use of sharable meaning. Dockery describes Hirsch's view, saying, "Language is efficient in transmitting these meanings because it consists of conventions, of elements that the society using that language has agreed should stand for all its various aspects of common experience."²⁵

Perspectives for interpretation. Grant R. Osborne offers three perspectives for properly understanding the interpretive task.²⁶ First, hermeneutics is a science, since it provides a logical, orderly taxonomy for interpretation. As a science, hermeneutics involves rules, principles, methods, and tactics.²⁷ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard state,

²³Dockery, "A Historical Model," 31.

²⁴Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 18.

²⁵Dockery, "A Historical Model," 31.

²⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 5-7.

²⁷Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 5. As a science, hermeneutics assumes that the goal is to arrive at what the biblical author (or whomever is communicating) meant by what he said. I address this more in the next section on author, text, reader, but suffice to say that communication is possible because people intend to be understood. Robert H. Stein correctly remarks, "The greatest argument in favor of understanding the author as the determiner of a text's meaning is that it is the common sense approach to all communication. One cannot have a meaningful conversation or even a serious debate about this issue without assuming this. During the present reading of this article, you, the reader, have been seeking to understand what I, the author, meant by the words I have written. . . ."

“If the goal is correct understanding of communication, we need precepts and methods that are appropriate to the task. Hermeneutics provides the precepts and methods for acquiring an understanding of the Scriptures.”²⁸ As a science, then, hermeneutics seeks to offer basic guidelines for understanding correctly what the biblical authors wrote.

Second, as Osborne notes, “Hermeneutics is an art, for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply ‘laws’ to selected passages or books.”²⁹ While mastery of the rules and principles of interpretation is paramount for the proper understanding of the biblical author, “no mechanical system of rules will ever help one understand correctly all the implications or nuances” of certain words or phrases.³⁰ Daniel Doriani captures well the essence of hermeneutics as an art form by explaining that it is “mastered not by rigid adherence to procedures but by long practice conducted under tutors.”³¹ The art form of hermeneutics takes the rules and principles of interpretation and learns over time and with repetition how to best apply them in each given context.

Third, hermeneutics is a spiritual act as it relates to interpreting Scripture.

As a spiritual act, the interpretation of a biblical passage is dependent upon the leading of

Communication between two people can only take place if both parties seek to understand what the other person means by their words. . . . Much of the interpretative process that people perform almost unconsciously is based on the hermeneutical principle that the goal of interpretation is to arrive at what the author of a text meant” (“The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 44 (2001): 455).”

²⁸Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 5.

²⁹Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 5.

³⁰Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 5.

³¹Daniel Doriani, “Interpreting the Bible: An Introduction,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible’s Origin, Reliability, and Meaning*, ed. Wayne Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 12.

the Holy Spirit.³² In the end, the work of the Holy Spirit is essential in the illumination of God's Word.³³ Osborne regrets, "Modern scholars too often ignore the sacred dimension and approach the Bible purely as literature, considering the sacred aspect to be almost a genre."³⁴ Not only is this third perspective for interpretation a spiritual act because of the role of the Holy Spirit, but also because of the nature of the work of interpretation. Doriani says it well, "To read the Bible is not to dissect a lifeless text that only contains marks on a page. As people read Scriptures, Scripture reads them, questions them, reveals their thoughts (Heb. 4:12)—and it leads to a Person, not just truths."³⁵ Because the Bible is inspired by the living God, it is a "living" and "active" book that accomplishes the intent given by the Lord in the lives of His people.

Ground, goal, and guide. In hermeneutics there is also a ground, goal, and guide for understanding the Bible.³⁶ In short, the aim is to discern the meaning of the original author. Köstenberger and Patterson maintain, "Apart from authorial intent,

³²Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 5.

³³The Spirit's illumination is not meant to say that unbelievers cannot understand the author's intended meaning of a passage. Osborne addresses this issue in more detail, saying, "The Spirit works through the mind and study of the interpreter. However, there is no guarantee that the person will 'automatically' comprehend the intended meaning of the passage. The hermeneutical tools all provide grist for the Spirit's will in the act of interpretation" (*The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 340-41). What the Spirit does is He allows the interpreter to overcome the effects of sin on the rational process; however, He does not guarantee that we will do so. As Osborne concludes, "The Spirit enables us to free our minds to the text but does not whisper to us the correct answer" (*ibid.*, 341).

³⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵Doriani, "Interpreting the Bible," 12. As discussed briefly in chap. 2 and later in this chapter, God both does and says through the Bible.

³⁶Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 74-77.

validity in interpretation is a virtual impossibility.”³⁷ Validity in interpretation is the understanding that meaning is determined by the author and can in turn be understood by the reader.³⁸ Communication will not occur apart from the author willingly conveying his desired message, and that message being understood by the recipient as the author intended it.

As for the ground of interpretation, Vanhoozer deals extensively with Hirsch’s understanding of meaning as it relates to the author’s intention. Vanhoozer says, “Interpretation is the quest for meaning, that is, the author’s intended message.”³⁹ Meaning, therefore, is “the message that the author intends to convey via the text.”⁴⁰ Seeking to understand the meaning of a text, consequently, is not concerned with the thought processes or mental acts experienced by the author, but simply understanding what the author consciously meant to communicate by the shareable words/symbols written in his text.⁴¹ Stein remarks, “The ‘shareable’ nature of these symbols indicates

³⁷Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 76.

³⁸See Hirsch as he describes validity in interpretation (*Validity in Interpretation*, 1-5, 27).

³⁹Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 74.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Stein, “Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach,” 457 (Hirsch and Stein use different but acceptable spellings: sharable and shareable, respectively). Intentional fallacy is a common term used to describe the view that argues against the author being the determiner of meaning. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe Beardsley popularized this view. In their essay “The Intentional Fallacy” first published in 1946, the authors argue that knowing the author’s intention is impossible because “intention is design or plan in the author’s mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author’s attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write” (“The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* [Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954] <http://faculty.smu.edu/nschwart/seminar/Fallacy.htm>; [accessed April 24, 2013]). For Wimsatt and Beardsley, then, the intention of the author is unattainable because one can never know the thoughts of the author or the experiences that compelled him to write. Yet, as I discuss shortly, and in agreement with Stein, the meaning of a text is not determined in “the process that an author went through in writing a text, but rather what the author consciously willed to convey by the words he or she has given us. We possess those words, and because the author wanted to be understood and wrote using the norms of language in his day, we can understand what the author intended

that the author consciously encoded his or her meaning using the norms of language with which their readers were familiar. . . . Meaning as it is defined here is what the author consciously wanted to communicate to the readers by the words he or she chose.”⁴²

Thus, the author’s meaning is objective and stable, which grounds and fixes his meaning. Because the author’s intention is grounded, the meaning of the text remains the same over time and can be shared by subsequent readers.⁴³

Hermeneutics also has a goal in mind. As Hirsch avers, “All valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the re-cognition of what an author meant.”⁴⁴ In other words, the goal of interpretation is the recovery or reconstruction of the author’s intended meaning.⁴⁵ To reach this goal, objective measures must be in place in order to discern rightly the author’s consciously willed meaning. Interpretation is not an arbitrary matter. Interpretation must be scientific; it must have a method for gaining understanding of the author’s intent. If the right measures are in place, then shared meaning between

by these words” (Stein, *Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach*,” 456). See, e.g., Vanhoozer as he outlines four intentional fallacies related to the undoing of the author as the determiner of meaning. First, the fallacy of relevancy says that the author’s intentions are irrelevant for all interpretive purposes. The text functions on its own and extrinsic facts about the author’s life have no intrinsic connection to the meaning of his or her text. Second, the fallacy of transparency purports that meaning is a matter of the subconscious, the unconscious, or the collective consciousness. Certain cultural forces shape the thinking of the author’s subconscious, so that “behind the intended message of the author lie unintended messages about history and society in which the author lived.” Third, the fallacy of identity “collapses the distinction between the author’s intention and what is said in the text by treating them as one and the same.” The intention of the author is a short-lived event and the text launches out on a career of its own. Fourth, the fallacy of objectivity revolves around the distinction that Hirsch draws between meaning and significance—between a stable object and the series of attempts to perceive it. For the Hermeneutic non-realists, as Vanhoozer characterizes them, meaning is objectively undecidable, “so that the meaning of the text is in no way separable from its meaning for us” (*Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 82-85).

⁴²Stein, “Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach,” 457-58.

⁴³Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 74.

⁴⁴Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 126.

⁴⁵Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 76.

the author and interpreter may result. Vanhoozer comments, “An interpreter grasps the meaning of a text when he or she experiences sameness of content (or object) despite differentness of context.”⁴⁶

Subsequently, the guide for hermeneutics says “that unless you make the author’s intended meaning the norm for interpretation, you will have no reliable means for discriminating between valid and invalid interpretations—between exegesis (what one gets out of texts) and eisegesis (what one puts into texts).”⁴⁷ What guides the interpreter, therefore, is the desire to know what the biblical author said, which is also to know what God has said. In short, hermeneutics seeks to answer the question—What does the Bible say?

Author, Text, and Reader

An underlying assumption is present within the study of hermeneutics—communication is possible. To seek the intended meaning of a biblical author is to believe that the author not only wanted to be understood, but that he can be understood. For this understanding to occur, Stein believes that three distinct yet interrelated components of communication must be present. In fact, if any of these three components is missing, communication is not possible. He explains these elements as: the author, the

⁴⁶Ibid. More is said later in this chapter concerning objective measures for discerning authorial intent.

⁴⁷Ibid., 77. Distinguishing between hermeneutics and exegesis is in order at this point. While they instinctively go together, there is a difference between them. Hermeneutics, as I define it, is the discipline that seeks to “describe the general and special principles and rules” which aid the interpreter in approaching the biblical text, while exegesis seeks to “identify the single truth-intention” [and/or what the text is doing] with “the individual phrases, clauses, and sentences as they make up the thought of paragraphs, sections, and, ultimately, entire books. Accordingly, hermeneutics may be regarded as the *theory* that guides exegesis; exegesis may be understood in this work to be the *practice* of and the set of *procedures* for discovering the author’s intended meaning” (Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 47).

text, and the reader.⁴⁸

Determining where the meaning of a text is found is the central issue of biblical scholarship.⁴⁹ In other words, is the meaning found with the author, the text, or the reader?⁵⁰ To misunderstand this issue is to misunderstand the Bible. If one misses this first element of communication—the author—then so goes the ability to reach a valid interpretation.

Author. In one sense, to deny the presence of the author is illogical. Texts do not simply appear; they are written.⁵¹ Vanhoozer describes the author-text relationship in

⁴⁸Stein, “Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach,” 451. He notes that linguists often refer to these three components as: the encoder, the code, and the decoder. Further, some refer to them as: the sender, the message, and the receiver. Stein offers brief history of how the twentieth century witnessed amazingly diverse views as to which of these three components is the determiner of meaning. See Stein for this brief interaction from the twentieth century (ibid., 451-54). In short, I argue that the author is the determiner of meaning and “without the author as an anchor of meaning, there would be no adequate principle for judging the validity of an interpretation” (Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 47).

⁴⁹Stein, “Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach,” 454. David S. Dockery bemoans the fact that the more fundamental issue of hermeneutical theory is ignored; namely, the issue of the location of meaning in the author, text, or reader (“Author? Text? Reader? Toward a Hermeneutical Synthesis,” *TE* [1988]: 7).

⁵⁰Each of these three components of communication involves much historical discussion. I do not intend to offer a detailed interaction with the history of these elements within the study of hermeneutics. My intention, however, for this section is to simply show the importance of these three components for communication to properly occur. For a detailed interaction of the historical understanding of the locus of meaning, see Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1-23; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 43-97, as he interacts with the authority of the author in determining meaning and its subsequent demise; T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *The Sacred Wood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), as he popularized the view that a text should be read independently of its real or hypothetical author; Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” as the authors became prominent with the movement of New Criticism, which insists that the author’s intention is irrelevant because the text has meaning on its own; Walter Vogels, “Inspiration in a Linguistic Mode,” *BibThBul* 15 (1985): 87-93 or John Ziesler, “Historical Criticism and a Rational Faith,” *ExpT* 105 (1994): 270-74, as each of these authors propose what is referred to as reader-oriented criticism, which holds that the written text is dead and the reader revives it or gives it meaning. In the words of John Ziesler, the text is either a window or a mirror. For Ziesler, he views the text to be more fruitful as a mirror because “the texts are a language through which we generate meaning” (ibid., 273). In short, I propose that the author, as the originator of meaning, intends for his text to be more of a window in which the interpreter views and understands the author’s willed meaning.

⁵¹Stein reinforces this reality. He states logically, “They [texts] do not evolve from trees or from papyrus plants or from animal skins. An ancient text did not come into existence because some

terms of cause and effect. He maintains,

The author is the historical cause of a textual effect; his or her intention is the cause of the text being the way it is. No other explanation adequately accounts for the intelligibility of texts. The author, an intelligent cause, is the necessary and sufficient explanation of the text, an intelligible effect. The text thus serves as a kind of surrogate presence, a reliable expression and extension, of the author.⁵²

Clearly the text exists because of the author, and therefore the text is the effect of the author. Since the author is the point of origin for the text, then ‘original meaning’ is the same as the ‘author’s meaning’.⁵³

The author originates and guarantees authenticity of the text, and he also commands and controls its meaning. Thus, authorship implies ownership.⁵⁴ The author created the text through the words he chose to use in writing the text. Common sense dictates that all normal communication assumes that the goal of interpretation is to understand the communicative intent of the speaker or writer contained in the words that the author provides.

Additionally, not only does common sense seek the meaning of the author, but as Stein maintains, it also best fits an evangelical view of the Bible’s inspiration.⁵⁵

animal lost its skin or some papyrus plant shed its bark and written symbols miraculously appeared on them. Someone, sometime, somewhere wanted to write these texts. Someone, sometime, somewhere willed to write something and have others read it. If this were not true, these texts would never have appeared” (Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2011], 18-19).

⁵²Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 44.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 46. Vanhoozer states, “The original meaning alone is the *authentic* meaning, the author’s actual, authoritative meaning.”

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵Stein asserts, “If we believe that the ‘meaning’ of the Bible is inspired, where is this meaning to be found? Surely it is not found in the ink and paper used to convey that meaning. As stated earlier, these inanimate materials cannot think and therefore cannot will a meaning. If we, on the other hand, give to the reader the authority to determine or create the meaning (note we are not saying ‘to ascertain or learn’ but ‘to determine or create’ the meaning), what do we do with diverse and contradictory ‘meanings’ that readers find in the Scriptures? Are they all inspired? How do we distinguish a good translation of the Bible

Though the text is authored by the writer, God’s Spirit is the origin of this sacred text as men were “carried along” by Him (2 Pet 1:21). Not to seek after the meaning of the author is to ignore the doctrine of inspiration. Meaning is found in the God-inspired text, which is written by the Spirit-carried author.

Therefore, since the author is the originator and owner of the text through the Spirit, the meaning that the author intended is fixed. While the author, the text, and the reader are all important components of communication, the locus of control of meaning resides with the author. He determines the fixed meaning of the text.⁵⁶

Text. The text plays an important role in the communication process. If the author is the determiner of meaning and if he intends to communicate meaning to his audience, it only makes sense that he will choose language signs that his readers will understand. The signs that the author chooses to use will involve consonants, vowels, words, idioms, and grammar that he shares in common with his readers.⁵⁷ The author, therefore, with a desire to communicate, generates a text that possesses shareability.

Although writing about the goal of interpretation, Elliot E. Johnson says that “meaning is not given directly except to language speakers. Language signs are given

from a poor one? Is it that a poor one elicits fewer reader-responses than a good one? Is not the test of whether a translation is good or bad dependent on whether it translates accurately and well what the Biblical author consciously meant by the words he used?” (“Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach,” 456).

⁵⁶The issue here, as Hirsch points out, is not whether or not an author can revise his views or even explain his views differently at different times. Rather, the matter involves a fixed meaning located in what the author originally wrote (*Validity in Interpretation*, 7). I do not mean to say by using Hirsch here that the biblical authors change their views, but only to reinforce the fact that the author’s meaning does not change, even if he were to later revise his own work. What he originally wrote means what it meant, nothing more, nothing less.

⁵⁷Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 24.

directly in the text. These signs must be construed to perceive the meaning.”⁵⁸ These signs, as they are called, must possess shareability; otherwise, the reader will never understand the author’s text. If the desire of the author is to be understood, then he will purposely use shareable signs that both he and the audience understand.

Authors use shareable symbols in writing their texts in order to convey their meaning. Therefore, in agreement with Hirsch, banishing the original author as the determiner of meaning is rejecting the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.⁵⁹ He concludes, “For if the meaning of a text is not the author’s, then no interpretation can possibly correspond to *the* meaning of the text, since the text can have no determinate or determinable meaning.”⁶⁰ Thus, the text has meaning insofar as the reader correctly discerns the shareable signs that the author used in writing the sacred message.

Because of his desire to communicate his message to his audience by using shareability, the author will “abide by the rules of the language he is using and use the words and grammar in a way understandable to his audience.”⁶¹ Context assists the reader in understanding how the author has used a particular word or phrase. Some people interpret Scripture as if word meaning is found on the level of individual words. While using a dictionary or studying parallel passages can be helpful in

⁵⁸Elliot E. Johnson, “Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 410.

⁵⁹Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 5.

⁶⁰Ibid. (italics original).

⁶¹Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 24.

discerning word meaning, more properly understood, word meaning is “determined by the use of a word in context, that is, on the larger discourse level.”⁶²

Language is part of history and culture. In other words, “the linguistic forms in which Scripture has come down to us—in the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic—are a reflection of the historical-cultural world in which God chose to reveal Himself to His people in both Testaments.”⁶³ Language by its very nature is subjective and varied in style, and thus naturally fails to offer the reader simple formulas or rigid dictionary definitions. Because language is convention—“the arbitrary assigning of a certain sequence of letters or symbols to a particular object or action,” there is no reason why certain objects or actions have received certain symbols other than a group of language users determined to call this particular object or action by a particular name.⁶⁴

Understanding the historical-cultural usage, then, of that word or phrase is essential in discerning the intended meaning of the author.

Reader. If the author’s desire is to communicate through the written text, then the reader’s desire is to understand the author through that same text. The reader approaches the text with the presupposition that the author used shareable symbols in order that his message might be understood by his readers. The reader, thus, partakes in a

⁶²Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 623. I discuss the micro-level and macro-level of hermeneutics elsewhere, but for now suffice it to say that the author uses shareable signs that at times are more difficult to discern. However, the larger context of the author’s passage is essential in understanding the smaller unit under consideration. Speaking about contextual analysis as one of the most critical steps in hermeneutics, Kaiser sees the problem as “not merely the common error of forgetting or disregarding the immediate context. It is, rather, the more serious error of attempting to atomize or fragment the text and then presuming that meaning can be attributed to phrases, sentences, or even paragraphs in isolation from the rest of the context” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 70).

⁶³Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 623.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 624.

process of moving back and forth to discern the parts as well as the whole of the passage, a process called the hermeneutical spiral (circle).⁶⁵ In other words, the whole text aides the reader in understanding certain parts of the text, while the parts or individual words help the reader to discern the meaning of the whole text. The role of the reader in the communication process involves the recognition that “meaning is determined on the basis of the congruence of two factors, semantic field (the number of possible meanings at the time of writing) and context (which tells you which of the possible meanings is indicated in the passage).”⁶⁶ Between these two factors, context takes priority.

In summary, hermeneutics involves certain tools or principles for deriving the meaning of the biblical author. The study of hermeneutics begins with the presupposition that communication is possible. Every communicative act involves three important aspects: author, text, and reader. An author’s willed and fixed meaning is given through shareable signs, which makes communication possible. The reader’s task, then, is to use appropriate principles for discerning the author’s intended meaning. Particularly important to understanding the author’s intended meaning is grasping the particular genre

⁶⁵Grant Osborne describes the hermeneutical circle as the interdependence of the theological disciplines of exegesis and biblical theology, systematic theology, and homiletical theology and their necessary informing and checking of each other (*Hermeneutical Spiral*, 269). Osborne later states, “Meaning [the author’s intended meaning] results from the symmetry of the passage as a whole and not from the isolated parts. Moreover, the context of the whole controls the meaning of the parts and adjudicates between competing interpretations” (ibid., 414).

⁶⁶Ibid. To deny that the authors of Scripture did not intend to communicate a particular meaning by writing their texts is nonsensical. Carson offers many principles for interpreting Scripture that I provide briefly: (1) the priority of the original languages; (2) some words on words; (3) the importance of becoming a good reader; (4) immediate and more distant contexts; (5) the role of the “analogy of faith”; (6) the value of historical and archaeological background information; (7) the importance of asking appropriate questions; (8) fitting the Bible together; (9) aiming for biblical balance; (10) determining the functions of biblical times; (11) the distinction between interpretation and application; and (12) the importance of godliness (D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 40-52).

or literary features he used in writing his text.

Biblical Literature

Vanhoozer insists that the tendency in interpretation today is to mishandle the literary phenomena of Scripture. He argues, “The new battleground is no longer biblical words, but larger units of discourse: sentences, paragraphs, entire books. The crucial questions of meaning and truth are now located on the textual level—thus the need for a semantics of biblical *literature* rather than biblical *language*.”⁶⁷

Meaning is not found in the isolation of words, but in the context where the words are located. To state it another way, meaning is genre-dependent. The genre or type of literature used by the biblical author provides the “rules of the language game,” the hermeneutical principles by which understanding is achieved.⁶⁸

Before exploring principles of interpretation for specific genres, two matters of importance are discussed as they relate to not only hermeneutics but also homiletics.

These matters are surface and notional structure in discourse, and theory.

⁶⁷Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture’s Diverse Literary Forms, in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 53-54 (italics original).

⁶⁸Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 8. Osborne speaks of the essential nature of genre for proper interpretation, saying, “Every writer couches his message in a certain genre in order to give the reader sufficient rules by which to decode that message. These hints guide the reader (or hearer) and provide clues for interpretation” (*Validity in Interpretation*, 9). He further states, “All understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound” (ibid., 76). James M. Hamilton, Jr. explains, “The biblical authors have given us carefully constructed presentations of God’s truth. . . . The biblical authors have often marked their turning points in the structure of their books through the use of repeated words or phrases. Using these repeated words, phrases, and themes, the biblical authors have signaled their structure and meaning for careful readers. These signals give information about the meaning of the passage at hand, how it fits in the structure of the whole book, and how it relates to earlier parts of Scripture” (“Biblical Theology and Preaching,” in *Text-Driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 201). These structural signals are embedded in the specific genre chosen by the biblical authors. The authors have presented God’s Word through the literary features common in their day and, thus, have given certain signals by which the reader is able to discern the author’s intent.

Surface and Notional Structure

Cotterell and Turner note, “The term discourse is used generally for any coherent sequence of strings, any coherent stretch of language. . . . All discourse is carefully structured as to ensure some measure of development through the discourse.”⁶⁹ Discourse analysis aims to get at the heart of the meaning intended by the biblical author, but does so through the analysis of the “deep structure” of the speech act.⁷⁰ Any discourse will involve surface and notional (or deep) structure. Surface structure involves syntax; notional structure moves beyond the surface to discern the meaning of the discourse.

Hershael W. York explains that the “surface structure deals with the basic grammatical and semantic relationships of a sentence. The deep structure, however, looks at the underlying message behind the words. The deep structure discerns meaning beyond form.”⁷¹ Robert E. Longacre summarizes that notional structures communicate the overall purpose of a given discourse and that surface structures involve a discourse’s formal characteristics.⁷²

In dealing with notional structure, Longacre classifies all discourses according to two possible parameters. First, contingent temporal succession (contingent succession)

⁶⁹Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 230.

⁷⁰Hershael Wallace York, “An Analysis and Synthesis of the Exegetical Methods of Rhetorical Criticism and Discourse Analysis as Applied to the Structure of First John,” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 100.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 100-01. See also J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 73.

⁷²Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983), 3.

“refers to a framework of temporal succession in which some (often most) of the events or doings are contingent on previous events or doings.”⁷³ The second possible parameter is agent orientation, which is “orientation toward agents with at least a partial identity of agent reference running through the discourse.”⁷⁴ These two parameters intersect in order to provide a four-way classification of discourse types.⁷⁵

The following chart, adapted from Longacre, demonstrates the parameters and classification of discourse types within notional structure.

	+ Agent Orientation	- Agent Orientation	
+ Contingent Succession	Narrative (<i>I recount</i>)	Procedural (<i>I prescribe</i>)	
	Prophecy	How-to-do-it	+ Projection
	Story	How-it-was-done	- Projection
- Contingent Succession	Behavioral (<i>I propose</i>)	Expository (<i>I explain</i>)	
	Hortatory	Budget Proposal	+ Projection
	Eulogy	Scientific Paper	- Projection

Figure 1. Notional Types

⁷³Ibid., 3.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Each of the four classifications are summarized from *ibid.*, 3-6.

The first type is narrative discourse, which involves both parameters, contingent succession and agent orientation.⁷⁶ The second type is procedural discourse (how to do it, how it was done, how it takes place), which is positive in regard to contingent succession but negative in regard to agent orientation (attention on what is done or made, not on who does it). The third type is behavioral discourse (a broad category that includes exhortation, eulogy, and political speeches of candidates), which is negative in regard to contingent succession but positive in regard to agent orientation (deals with how people did or should behave). The fourth type is expository discourse, which is negative in both parameters.

In addition to contingent succession and agent orientation, Longacre describes a further component for classifying discourse types as projection. Projection involves a situation or action which is contemplated, enjoined, or anticipated but not realized. Narrative discourse, broadly speaking, can be subdivided into prophecy and story. As prophecy, projection is positive and as story it is negative. Procedural discourse also distinguishes varieties, which are positive projection (how to do it) and negative projection (how it was done). Behavioral discourse distinguishes positive projection (hortatory discourse or a campaign promises speech) and negative projection (a eulogy). Lastly, expository discourse is usually negative projection, but can also be positive projection (speech submitting a budget or economic plan).

Longacre speaks of performative verbs which underlie the whole discourse and may or may not surface explicitly.⁷⁷ The notional structure in narration employs the

⁷⁶See an adapted chart from Longacre's notional types above.

⁷⁷Summarized from Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 12-13.

performative, *I recount*; procedural discourse employs *I prescribe*. The notional structure in expository discourse employs *I explain*, while behavioral discourse employs *I propose* (i.e., *suggest, urge, command*).

An author may disguise the notional structure motive, which may make the presentation all the more effective. Longacre explains,

Thus, in that people do not like to be urged to change their conduct, presenting this hortatory material as a narrative or a drama may make it easier for them to accept it. Likewise, expository material may be livened up by being cast into a narrative or dramatic form. . . . Narrative material may achieve poignancy by being cast into procedural form and procedural material may attain a certain concreteness and authority by casting it into narrative form.⁷⁸

While the form of the discourse is important for discerning the author's intent, the notional structure moves beyond form to what is intended by the author.

For example, applying Longacre's theory to a biblical text, the prophet Nathan, concerned that king David would not welcome an explicit rebuke for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah, uses narrative story to present behavioral discourse (2 Sam 12:1-15). In telling David the story of the stolen and slaughtered little ewe lamb, Nathan is able to disarm the king and then confront him as the guilty man described in the story (v 7). Understanding these notional types assists the interpreter in discerning the meaning beyond the form.

Or again, the surface structure may be a question, but the notional structure may be intended as a (rhetorical) statement. For example, Paul's great treatment of God working all things for good to those who love God (Rom 8:28) is reinforced with a question that is intended to be a statement—"What then shall we say to these things? If

⁷⁸Ibid., 12.

God is for us, who is against us” (Rom 8:31)? Paul’s apparent overall use of expository discourse in Romans is intended to be behavioral discourse in this passage. Paul’s intent is to bring comfort to believers and spur on great trust in God’s providence.

To further assist the interpreter in discerning meaning, recognizing discourse markers is important. The analyst should expect to find discourse marked by some measure of structuring, which demonstrates initiatory sequences, concluding sequences, and continuative sequences.⁷⁹ Discourse is characterized by staging, the orderly progression in a necessarily linear sequence.⁸⁰ This orderly sequence is not just to prevent chaos, but to lead to some kind of peak.⁸¹ While this expectation is certainly true of narrative, ordinary correspondence demonstrates this peak as well.

Longacre explains, “Something like plot characterizes forms of discourse other than narrative. If we grant that any discourse is going somewhere, it follows that it does not simply start and stop but that it may have some sort of cumulative expression between.”⁸² Longacre notes that the climax of discourse is marked by the intersection of vertical and horizontal prominence. As for vertical prominence, the surface structure of a text signals that certain elements in its structure are more vital than other elements.⁸³ Horizontal prominence in discourse, as York describes, “is going somewhere in terms of

⁷⁹Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 241.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 20.

⁸³Robert E. Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sequential Form*, ed. Jessica R. Wirth (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma, 1985), 83. For example, verb tense may mark vertical prominence.

its inner drive and development and should build to some kind of climax.”⁸⁴ Longacre explains that the discernment of this textual climax is indicated by the surface structure features of the language.⁸⁵

Regardless of the genre and kind of discourse, it builds to a peak somewhere because each discourse has a point.⁸⁶ Longacre elaborates,

Texts of any sort typically have a cumulative development. The plot of a story moves toward climax and resolution. A hortatory text typically has a culminating exhortation near its end. An expository discourse can have a culminating explanation. . . .

It has been my contention for several years now that cumulative development(s) of a discourse usually manifests itself in certain grammatico-lexical characteristics. I have therefore referred to *peak-marking features*. Essentially, *peak* is a kind of zone of turbulence in which predictable discourse features are skewed so that certain typical features are removed or partially suppressed, while other features are introduced. It represents a kind of gear shift in the dynamic flow of discourse.⁸⁷

Longacre offers ten helpful ways to mark the peak of a discourse:

(1) rhetorical underlining by means of repetition and paraphrase; (2) heightened vividness by a tense shift or by a person shift; (3) resort to such quasi-dialogue devices such as rhetorical question, dialogue, or drama (dialogue without quotation formulas) when they have not been previously present in the discourse; (4) change of pace by varying the length of constituent units such as clauses, sentence, and paragraphs; (5) use of onomatopoeia; (6) packing the action line by increasing the ratio of verbs to nonverbs; (7) “slowing the camera down” by treating structures that are not usually on the event line as if they were; (8) phasing out of the usual markers of event line in favor of the more particular sort of markers that are found in peak; (9) phasing out many of the sequence signals and conjunctions that normally provide cohesion to a discourse; (10) simulating at the peak of a discourse of one type the features of another; or by outright embedding of one type within another.⁸⁸

⁸⁴York, “An Analysis and Synthesis,” 105.

⁸⁵ Longacre, “Discourse Peak,” 84.

⁸⁶York, “An Analysis and Synthesis,” 106.

⁸⁷Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 18 (italics original).

⁸⁸Longacre, “Discourse Peak,” 96-97.

The aim of the interpreter, then, is to recognize these peak markers in order to distinguish not simply how the author says what he says, but what he is actually saying. As York rightly notes, “Within the deep structure of a discourse, one may find a marker that denotes something more than what is revealed by verb forms alone.”⁸⁹ Thus, markers indicate the point of the passage, regardless of its structure.

J. P. Louw expresses the important relationship between surface and deep structures, saying,

With regard to the surface structure it is not merely the structure that is important, but the choice of a specific structure. This means that if the author wishes to say something (deep structure) he will choose a specific form (surface structure) in which to say it. There is no need to see an opposition between the surface and deep structures. They are part of one process. If the deep structure is investigated then the meaning is uncovered, and the outer form of the language, the surface structure, will help us to better understand this meaning.⁹⁰

Applied to biblical interpretation, the biblical author chose a specific (surface) structure to communicate his intended meaning (notional structure). Accordingly, the responsibility of the interpreter is to discern not only the type of literature used by the author, but why he chose to use that particular structure to communicate his message. If the biblical author indeed chose the best way to render the notional structure through his choice of surface structure, then the interpreter must discern why he did so and what implication that choice has on his own communication of that same message today.

The hermeneut may conclude that the notional structure of a specific text is the essential element of meaning, but that surface structure is not inconsequential to that meaning. In agreement with Louw, they are not in opposition but work together for the

⁸⁹York, “An Analysis and Synthesis,” 132.

⁹⁰J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 77.

benefit of the reader/expositor. Further, while the interpreter may follow the surface structure in his own communication of the author's meaning, he, too, like the biblical author, must choose the best way to communicate the meaning of the biblical passage for the contemporary audience. As the biblical author may have disguised his notional structure for intent, so the expositor must grapple with the best approach for communicating the author's intention for the contemporary audience.

Language Games

Understanding biblical texts also involves the concept of language games. Because biblical discourse is written in the form of specific genres or games, crucial in the understanding of each author's text is the recognition of the rules of the genre or game.⁹¹ Speaking of biblical genres, Abraham Kuruvilla states,

Biblical texts clearly qualify as language-games, linguistic "sports" of particular kinds. . . . A genre (with its rules) constitutes the language-game that is actualized by a specific text, analogous to the way a specific match played with ball and racquet on a court with a net belongs to that particular genre of games called 'tennis'. A text, then, is an instance of a generic language-game, played in accordance with, and while abiding by, the rules of that game. The corollary to this notion is that interpretation of the text involves the utilization of those rules as well.⁹²

Just as playing contrary to the rules of the game disqualifies one from the game, so playing contrary to the rules of a given biblical genre disqualifies one from discovering the author's intention in the text. If the text itself is bound by certain rules in its

⁹¹Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 15. The author explains that the word "genre," from its various Latin roots *genus*, *genre*, *gignere*, gives the sense of class and division (ibid., 35). N. T. Wright, recognizing the importance of literary understanding, states, "If we are to be historians and theologians, we must also be literary critics" (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 25).

⁹²Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis*, 15.

composition, then the text is bound by those same rules in its comprehension.⁹³

Author, reader and genre. Authors use biblical genres for more than simply classifying kinds of texts. Each genre is carefully chosen by each author to communicate his intention in a variety of ways.⁹⁴ These language games have their own set of rules that both the author and the reader must equally understand for effective communication to occur.⁹⁵ Because each biblical author is communicating a God-inspired message and thus intends to be understood, he methodically selects a certain genre and writes within the conventions of that literary form in order to engender a specific effect upon the reader.⁹⁶

Kuruvilla understands the relationship between the author, reader and genre well as he explains,

If texts are the literary products of communicative agents (authors), then the intended response of the communicative subjects (readers) must also be an important consideration in interpretation. The *response of the reader* begins with an expectation of the text-in-its-genre. Indeed, it was in anticipation of what the reader might expect that that genre was chosen by the author in the first place; therefore genre is the cipher key to decoding the text. It is the conventional and institutional system of these rule-bound language-games that leads the reader to peruse expectantly.⁹⁷

⁹³Because a text is something said by someone else to someone else about something fixed in writing, these literary texts are best viewed as communicative actions. Therefore, “to understand a text, one needs to do more than parse every verb. One needs to know what an author is doing. For texts have both matter (a message, a topic) and energy (the use to which an author puts his message)” (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 58).

⁹⁴Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” 59.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis*, 38.

⁹⁷Ibid., (italics original).

Therefore, to know the author's meaning and his desired response from the reader, the interpreter decodes the text through a proper handling of the genre. Interaction between the author and the reader is possible because of the selected genre. This interaction between author and reader is best understood in covenantal terms: a genre is a covenant of discourse.⁹⁸

Kuruvilla clarifies this covenantal agreement, saying,

Both author in inscription and reader in interpretation implicitly execute generic agreements of what is written and what is expected to be read and acted upon, respectively. Such covenantal or contractual obligations superintended by rules—commitments that authors and readers are called to honor—are essential for the production and reception of meaning and, indeed, for maintaining societal relationships.⁹⁹

Therefore, both meaning and understanding are necessarily genre-bound. For this reason, genres work to create an author-reader covenant that functions within the parameters of the rules which govern that specific and chosen genre.¹⁰⁰

Genre, speech act, and meaning. The text of Scripture is a communicative act left for the reader to understand rightly. Speech act theory helps an interpreter develop an awareness of what an author is doing in his text (e.g., making a promise, warning, exhorting, etc.), and is an important component of understanding the author's meaning.¹⁰¹ When the interpreter understands not only the genre in which the message is

⁹⁸Ibid., 39

⁹⁹Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 40.

¹⁰¹Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," 58. Scott A. Blue says of this emphasis, "The recent trend in evangelical hermeneutics is to move beyond Hirsch's work in defending the necessity of the author in interpretation to make use of the idea of language as a communicative act" ("The Hermeneutic of E. D. Hirsch Jr. and Its Impact on Expository Preaching: Friend or Foe?" *JETS* 44 [2001]: 263).

packaged, but what the author is doing by packaging the message in such a way, he is more likely to understand the author's meaning.

While a distinction had been made in the philosophy of language between *constatives*, or utterances which state something, and *performatives*, or utterances which do something other than stating, the formal development of speech act theory did not occur until J. L. Austin presented the 1955 William James lectures at Harvard University.¹⁰² Until Austin's formal development of speech act theory, it was believed that all one actually does in saying something is state something.¹⁰³ In other words, he challenged the prevailing view that statements simply describe. Instead of simply describing, statements do something; they perform an act.¹⁰⁴ Austin concluded that a speech act contains three aspects: locution, illocution, and perlocution.¹⁰⁵

The locutionary act is the act of saying something. The illocutionary act is the *force* or use of language, such as informing, commanding or warning. The perlocutionary act moves beyond the illocutionary act or intention of the author to the desired *effect* upon the reader, effects such as feelings, thoughts or actions.

Austin's student John R. Searle expands upon his teacher's theory of speech

¹⁰²Gregg Allison, "Speech Act Theory and Its Implications for the Doctrine of the Inerrancy/Infallibility of Scripture," *PC* 18 (1995): 1.

¹⁰³J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 3. The lectures Austin presented at Harvard were later published as this book.

¹⁰⁴Scott A. Blue summarizes Austin's understanding of speech act well, saying, "There are some utterances, on the other hand, which are either nonsensical or intended to do something else quite different than describing. Austin takes an inductive approach in evaluating whether there is a definite demarcation between statements that merely describe (constative utterances) and those meant for action (performative utterances). He concludes that all statements are performative in some sense. They are part of a total speech act" ("Meaning, Intention and Application: Speech Act Theory in the Hermeneutics of Francis Watson and Kevin J. Vanhoozer" *TrinJ* 23 [2002]: 163).

¹⁰⁵See Austin as he describes all these aspects (*How to Do Things with Words*, 94-101).

act.¹⁰⁶ While not agreeing with Austin’s rigid distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts, Searle “does distinguish between the illocutionary force and the propositional content of speech acts.”¹⁰⁷ For Searle, the illocutionary force may vary while the propositional content is the same.

Searle offers a classic example of how propositional content can take on various illocutionary forces. His example is as follows: (1) Sam smokes habitually; (2) Does Sam smoke habitually?; (3) Sam, smoke habitually!; and (4) Would that Sam smoked habitually.¹⁰⁸ Allison’s explanation of Searle’s classic example is helpful. He states,

In each of these four utterances or speech acts, the propositional content is the same, while the illocutionary force is different. Specifically, the referent or “referring expression” (R = Sam) is identical in each instance; this is true likewise of the predicate or “predicating expression” (P = smokes habitually or some inflected form). Thus, the propositional content remains the same. But the illocutionary force (F) can be differentiated in each speech act, viz., 1 is an assertion, 2 is a question, 3 is an order, and 4 is a wish or desire.¹⁰⁹

Thus, propositional content can be made through more than simple assertions.¹¹⁰

Searle offers five general classifications for what people do when they

¹⁰⁶See John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

¹⁰⁷Allison, “Speech Act Theory,” 3.

¹⁰⁸Searle, *Speech Acts*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁹Allison, “Speech Act Theory,” 3.

¹¹⁰The genre used by the author is part of the speech act. By selecting a certain genre, the author is doing something with what he is saying through that genre. In regards to propositional content, Ben Awbrey states, “To assert that Scripture is propositional truth is not a claim that the Bible is composed of nothing but propositions. To assert that Scripture is propositional truth is not a denial of the obvious fact that Scripture includes many genres. The assertion that Scripture is propositional truth means that from all the genres of the Bible, objective meaning is discernable” (*How Effective Sermons Advance* [Eugene, OR: Resource, 2011], 82-83).

use sentences in actual speech.¹¹¹ First, assertives are speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (e.g., recite a creed). Second, directives are speech acts that attempt to cause the hearer to take a particular action (e.g., requests or commands). Third, commissives are speech acts that commit the speaker to a future action (e.g., promises or oaths). Fourth, expressives are speech acts that express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition (e.g., apology or thanksgiving). Fifth, declarations are speech acts that bring about the reality of the proposition (e.g., pronouncing one as husband and wife).

Vern Poythress demonstrates the importance of recognizing these classifications within speech act theory and its importance to understanding the propositional nature of Scripture. He comments,

One of the points of speech-act theory is to awaken us to the fact that assertions of fact are only one of a number of kinds of speech act.

Such awareness has value. Evangelical defenses of propositional revelation have often concentrated on arguing for the inerrancy of the Bible's *assertions*. Such concentration is legitimate, given that the propositional content and the inerrancy of the Bible's assertions have been the focus of outside attacks. But one needs to observe as well that divine authority belongs to the Bible's commands and promises, not just to its assertions.¹¹²

Upon recognizing the type of genre used by the author, the reader is well served by next discerning what the author is doing by what he is saying.¹¹³

¹¹¹John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12-17.

¹¹²Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Canon and Speech Act: Limitations in Speech-Act Theory, With Implications for a Putative Theory of Canonical Speech Acts" *WTJ* 70 (2008): 338 (italics original).

¹¹³Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature," 92. Understanding speech acts through the use of particular genres lead, then, as Vanhoozer characterizes it, to certain implications for exegesis and theology (ibid., 93-104). First, God reveals himself in the Bible through inscribed discourse acts. "God makes himself known through what he does and what he says" (ibid., 93). Both the *meaning* and the *force* of the divine revelation are intended to be stressed. Second, exegetes should not make *a priori*

Principles for Specific Genres

Principles for interpretation of five common genres found in the Bible are offered in the charts below: narrative, prophecy, parable, poetry, and epistle. Each genre is defined, hermeneutical and structural elements pertinent for interpretation are given, and biblical references are offered. Along with the principles offered for each genre, the interpreter must discern the illocutionary act (force) and the perlocutionary act (effect) of the passage. Discernment of the biblical author's intent involves what he is doing with what he is saying and the effect his words are meant to have upon the hearer.

Narrative. As the most common literary form found in the Bible, the narrative is built around discourses, episodes, or scenes. Meaning is found in a text as a whole rather than in isolated parts.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the complete narrative must be considered in order to understand the biblical author's message. The following serve as hermeneutical principles for understanding the narrative genre.¹¹⁵

decisions about biblical genres. The nature of the biblical text should be determined only after a close reading. Vanhoozer advocates a reading that heeds both the illocutionary intent (historical context) and literary convention (grammatical context), and in so doing speech act theory continues the Reformation tradition of grammatical-historical exegesis and the priority of the literal sense. Third, Scripture does many things with words and hence its authority is multifaceted. Intellectual belief or assent is the appropriate way to respond to authoritative doctrine. However, Scripture contains several other illocutionary points besides the assertive. Directives, for example, are also authoritative, and obedience rather than intellectual assent is the appropriate response. Two types of directives vary in degree of force and intensity. "The Proverbs have the authority of 'wise sayings' and, as such, require thoughtful consideration and gradual integration into the fabric of one's life. The Ten Commandments, on the other hand, are a more intense form of directive and solicit absolute *obedience*" (ibid., 94, italics original). Fourth, infallibility means that Scripture's diverse illocutionary forces will invariably achieve their respective purposes. "Scripture is, therefore, indefatigable in its illocutionary intent. It encourages, warns, asserts, reproves, instructs, commands—all infallibly" (ibid., 95). Fifth, theology is "ordinary literature" analysis of an extraordinary book. "As such, theology pursues an intelligent reading of Scripture, noting both propositions and illocutionary intents and rendering them coherent" (ibid., 104).

¹¹⁴Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 153.

¹¹⁵Principles are adapted from Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 238-51; Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 153-60; and Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 152, 205.

Hermeneutical Principles:

(Mode) Stories- dramatic forms used by the biblical author to drive home the significance of an event or series of events (1 Kgs 17-19; Mark 14-16).

(Mode) Accounts- selected presentation of events intended to present a theological evaluation of that record (Josh 24; Acts 1).

(Mode) Reports- specific and strategic information provided by the biblical author (Num 13).

Setting- provides the basic context for which the narrative develops. Setting can be geographical, temporal, social, and historical (as in setting behind the writing of the book, such as time period) (Luke 24- geographical; John 11:55- temporal; Luke 22:24-30- social).

Characterization- Biblical characters are given real life qualities with whom the readers can identify. A biblical character is usually identified as either the protagonist—the main character of the story (e.g., Elijah), the antagonist—the one who opposes the protagonist (e.g., Ahab), or as the foil—one who provides a clear contrast to someone in the story (e.g., Jezebel) (1 Kgs 18-22).

Structure- Also referred to as plot, structural arrangement is the ordering of events and selection of details within the narrative (Neh). Osborne notes that it involves the “united sequence of events” which follows a cause-effect order and builds to a climax that involves the reader in the narrative world of the story. Often a conflict or contest (physical, psychological, or spiritual) and suspense (curiosity, dread, anticipation, or mystery) occur (Dan 2-7). Further, while the intent of the notional structure of narrative is *I recount*, the author does so for specific reason. His aim is not simply to recall the story; he is doing something with that story. Discerning markers of peak in the narrative is essential for knowing what the author is doing (see pages 75, 79).

Principlization- The interpreter asks what the biblical author’s purpose is in the narrative by asking what he expects from his audience when they first hear his words. Thus, principlization is, according to Kaiser, “to state the author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church” (Neh 4-6, for example, can be principlized as learning to lead through adversity). Yet, this principle is more than stating “timeless abiding truths;” it involves replicating what the author is doing with the narrative. While a truth certainly may be stated, the narrative may give a command or call for an action or suggest personal reflection, etc.

Speech Act- Each of these principles will aid in discerning the illocutionary act (force behind the narrative) and the perlocutionary act (intended effect upon the

reader). Regardless of the mode of narrative, the author is performing an act through that mode of narrative. Nehemiah 4, for example, offers an illocutionary act (force) of a directive (command) from Nehemiah to be resilient amidst opposition, while the perlocutionary act (effect) is that of action by the people to be resilient. Today's audience is given a directive to remain resilient as godly leaders in the midst of opposition. Searle's five general classifications of speech acts are helpful at this point (page 85-86).

Figure 2. Narrative

Prophecy. A common understanding of prophecy is that of "prediction."

However, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word lends itself to a future orientation.

"*Nabi*" has both an active and a passive use: passively, the prophet is filled with the Spirit and receives God's message; actively, he interprets or proclaims God's message to others."¹¹⁶ The following principles are intended to guide the understanding of prophecy.

Hermeneutical Principles:

Overall Principle- Both for prophecy related to individuals and groups, those who heed God's divine Word will receive blessing and those who ignore it will face the consequences of judgment (Jer 18:7-10).

General Principles- Because prophecy appears in prose and poetry certain principles guide its understanding:¹¹⁷

- 1) Determine the individual saying within its historical setting. Discerning where one oracle begins and another ends can be challenging (Isa 1-39; 40-55; 56-66).
- 2) Determine the subgenre employed. While a book's overall genre may be

¹¹⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 211. A. Berkeley Mickelsen realizes the difficulty of interpreting prophecy and thus calls for an approach which "reads nothing into prophecy that is not there, that will make clear all that the prophet said or wrote to his own people, and that will make the correctly interpreted message of the prophet relevant to our own times" (*Interpreting the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963], 280).

¹¹⁷See Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 217-20.

prophecy, prophetic texts may have various subgenres (e.g., Isa 13:9-11 concerns Babylon, not the end times).

- 3) Study the balance between the historical and the predictive. Is it predictive or didactic (Zech 1:1-6—didactic; 7-21—predictive)? Further, as in speech act, is the passage an assertive, directive, commissive, or expressive?
- 4) Discern literal meaning or symbolic meaning (Isa 11:6-9 and 35:8-10; Rev 9:17).
- 5) Carefully delineate the Christological emphases. While all of the OT points forward to Christ, interpreters must not overlook the trees for a view of the forest. It is in the particular historical context that the prophetic writer pens his message. Seeking after the author's intended meaning requires searching for the original thrust of the passage. While there is a Christological thrust of Scripture, passages should be interpreted in this way only if the text warrants it (Mic 5:2 with Matt 2:1-6).¹¹⁸
- 6) Do not impose your theological system upon the text. Allow the text to determine how the passage should be understood (Rev 20:1-6, e.g., dispensationalists tend to be more literalists and non-dispensationalists stress symbolism more).
- 7) Seek situations that are analogous to the contemporary church. Though prophecy, particularly in the OT, is given to a culture far removed from today, there is still great relevance in our day (2 Chr 7:14—"called by my name" applies to Jew or Gentile called by the Lord's name).

Structure:

Because prophecy involves various genres, such as narrative or poetry, each oracle should be treated structurally according to its individual genre.

Discerning the notional structure types is important—narrative, procedural, behavioral, and expository (see page 75). These notional structure types assist the interpreter in grasping the meaning of the text beyond its surface structure. For example, while Jonah is largely narrative in structure, much of its structural intent is behavioral. The peak of chapter 1, for example, is more than retelling the account of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish. The chapter speaks to current readers and listeners that one can run from God, but cannot hide from Him. Therefore, it is better to not try and run from God; just simply obey. Markers for discerning the author's use of prophecy are essential as well (see page 79).

Speech Act- Both the overall and general principles assist the hermeneut in discerning the illocutionary act (force) and the perlocutionary act (effect) of the

¹¹⁸Ibid., 219.

prophecy. Revelation 20:1-6, for example, offers an illocutionary act (force) of a commissive (promise) for those who will be part of the first resurrection, while the perlocutionary act (effect) is that of feelings of assurance and comfort because of this promise. For the audience today, John's message is a resurrection promise for the believer intended to provide assurance and comfort. Searle's five general classifications of speech acts are helpful at this point (pages 85-86).

Figure 3. Prophecy

Parable. In the OT the word used is *mashal*, while in the NT the term is *parabolē*. *Mashal*, which is also used for “proverb” or “riddle,” has as its basic meaning that of comparison.¹¹⁹ Defining what a parable is for the OT and the NT is often a difficult task.¹²⁰ In short, while a parable has a broad range of possible meanings, each meaning carries the idea of a comparison between two different things. The interpreter must further realize that parables are not historical narrative; therefore, asking historical questions for clarification is not possible with them.¹²¹ The following are principles for parables.

Hermeneutical Principles:¹²²

- 1) Discern the main point by recognizing that details in the parable are meant to enhance the story and not be pressed for obscure meaning (Luke 10:30-37).¹²³
- 2) Discern the point Jesus sought to make. Understanding the audience that Jesus

¹¹⁹Ibid., 235.

¹²⁰It can refer to a proverb (1 Sam 24:13; Luke 4:23); satire or taunt (Ps 44:14; Isa 14:3-4); riddle (Ps 49:4); figurative saying (Mark 7:14-17); extended simile or similitude (Matt 13:33); story parable (Matt 25:1-13); example parable (Matt 18:23-25); and allegory (Ezek 17:2-10; Mark 4:3-9). See Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 158.

¹²¹Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 159.

¹²²Adapted from Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 160-69 and Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 437-38.

¹²³Brad H. Young likens the comparison in parables to the feathers of an arrow (*The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998], 14).

addressed in the parable is necessary (Luke 15:1-3).

- 3) Discern the point the evangelist sought to make. The gospel writers do not simply record Jesus' traditions; they interpret them as well (E.g., compare Mark 11:27-33 and Luke 20:1-18 with Matt 21:28-32).

Essential questions-

- 1) Who are the main characters (Matt 20:1-16)?
- 2) What occurs at the end—"the rule of end stress" (Matt 20:14-16)?
- 3) What appears as direct discourse (Luke 15:18-19, 21, 29-32)?
- 4) Who gets the most space? (first-hour laborers—Matt 20:1-2, 10-15 verses eleventh-hour laborers—Matt 20:6-7, 9).

Structure:

Two parts: a picture part (the story proper) and a reality part (the comparison to which it is likened). While many points of comparison may be made, the parable has one point it seeks to convey.

In parables, the initial structure may seem to be narrative, but the covert intention is likely behavioral—an urging, commanding, suggesting, etc. (see page 75). Certain markers may provide the peak of the parable (see page 79). For example, Luke 15:11-32 tells the story of the prodigal son(s). In fact, through markers of peak (e.g., end emphasis- vv 25-32), the story is about behavior, the behavior of the older brother. As a result, listeners are urged to be like the younger brother and not the older brother.

Speech Act- Approaching the parable for the main point allows the interpreter to find the illocutionary act (force) and the perlocutionary act (effect) of the story. Though in the OT, 2 Samuel 12:1-15 offers a parable in verses 1-4. The illocutionary act (force) of the parable serves as a declaration (verdict) against David's unrepentant behavior, while the perlocutionary act (effect) is that of thoughtful action by first realizing his own guilt and then his necessary repentance. For audience's today, Nathan's confrontation of David is intended to cause the listener to examine his or her own heart and life for unrepentant sin and then to confess it. Searle's five general classifications of speech acts are helpful at this point (see pages 85-86).

Figure 4. Parable

Poetry. Not until the Revised Standard Version of 1952 were English readers

made aware of the place of Hebrew poetry in the Bible. Prior to that time other versions put only the Psalms in poetic format, but the RSV did so with all biblical poetry.¹²⁴

Poetry spans across multiple genres. For example, there are many songs in narrative books (Gen 49; Exod 15:1-18; Deut 32; 33) as well as poetry of entire prophetic books (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) and poetry in extended portions of prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Zechariah).¹²⁵

In contrast to prose, which is built around narrative discourse, episodes or scenes, poetry is built around individual lines. These lines often use imagery and figurative speech.¹²⁶ There are several features that distinguish poetry from prose. The most important distinguishing feature is parallelism.¹²⁷ Parallelism is “the practice of using similar language to express corresponding thoughts in succeeding lines of poetry.”¹²⁸ Repetition is the most often used feature of Hebrew poetry. Being aware of the various structural elements in poetry aids the interpreter in understanding this genre in general and the poetic passage in particular.

In general, poetry is less concerned with precise description and more with evoking emotions and creating certain impressions. Thus, it is more commissive rather than referential in nature.¹²⁹ The following principles of poetry are intended to be a guide.

¹²⁴Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 174

¹²⁵Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 212.

¹²⁶Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 265-66.

¹²⁷Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 109.

¹²⁸Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 310.

¹²⁹Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 110.

Hermeneutical Principles:

While the most dominant feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, it is also known by the absence or sparse use of several grammatical features.¹³⁰ Other important features of poetry include: terseness (Nah 3:2-3); concreteness (the senses are involved) (Judg 5:25-27); imagery (poets think more in imagery rather than in abstractions) (Song of Sol 2:1-2).¹³¹

Structure:

Various forms of parallelism are found in Hebrew poetry as well as in the New Testament.¹³²

Synonymous parallelism- the second line and following lines repeat the sense of the first line, but with some variation (Ps 19:1; Matt 7:7-8).

Antithetical parallelism- the second line contrasts the first line. Most common form of parallelism found in the Bible (Prov 10:1; 15:17; Matt 7:17-18).

Step or climatic parallelism- the second line picks up the thought of the first line; however, instead of repeating the thought or providing an example, it advances the thought an additional step (Ps 92:9; Ps 96:1-2; Matt 5:17).

Chiastic parallelism- an inverting of parallel statements in the form of a b / B A. The first statement is in two parts (a and b) and the second statement is in two parts, but reverse order (B and A). Often the hinge or pivot point is the crux of the passage and point of the author (Prov 31:10-31).¹³³

Speech Act- Following these poetic principles assists the hermeneut to grasp ultimately the illocutionary act (force) and perlocutionary act (effect) of the poem. Proverbs 31:10-31, for example, offers an illocutionary act (force) of an assertive (statement of truth) for the man being highly esteemed because he has married such a wonderful wife. The point, in this case (v 23), being discerned best through the chiasm. The perlocutionary act (effect) is that of action for men to marry such

¹³⁰Kaiser notes several absent or sparse features: (1) the use of the definite article; (2) the sign of the accusative case; (3) the conjunction normally translated “and”; (4) the so-called relative pronoun (which, who, that); (5) the consecutive or conversive forms of the verb (such as the waw-conversive with the imperfect which gives the narrative past tense: “And he said”) (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 213).

¹³¹Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 271-75.

¹³²Adapted from Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 116-22.

¹³³See Duane A. Garrett, “Preaching From the Psalms and Proverbs,” in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 107-08. Garrett offers a chiasm of Proverbs 31:10-31 to serve as an example of this pivot point emphasis.

women as this woman. For men already married or never to be married, they are called to value the godliness of this type of woman. For women, regardless of their marital status, the passage calls them to emulate this type of woman. Searle's five general classifications of speech acts are helpful at this point (see pages 85-86).

Figure 5. Poetry

Epistle. A majority of the NT is written as a letter.¹³⁴ An epistle or letter is a personal correspondence with a particular audience in order to maintain and give pastoral care and instruction.¹³⁵ Most epistles were addressed to a church community and it was expected that the congregations obey (2 Thess 3:14), exchange (Col 4:16), and consider the letter as a message from God to them (1 Cor 14:37-38; 1 Thess 2:13).¹³⁶ D. A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris suggest two primary reasons for the use of letter writing in the NT. First, the early Christian movement, with its fast growth and itinerant missionaries, necessitated a means of communication from a distance. The letter became the clear solution to this necessity.¹³⁷ Second, letters were chosen by NT writers as a sense of personal immediacy.¹³⁸ The NT writers felt a responsibility for these

¹³⁴Twenty-one out of twenty-seven books are letters, which composes 77 percent of the NT (D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 231). Some have sought to draw a distinction between letters and epistles. For example, see Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 228-41. Others take a more middle ground approach. See Stein as he describes letters as less literary and a more personal form of communication, while epistles are more artistic in form and are intended as a self-explanatory treatise to a wider public (*A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 189). However, he also affirms that the distinction between the two can be blurred. For an interchangeable understanding of letters and epistles, see Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 454-55; M. Luther Stirewalt Jr., *Paul, the Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1-30; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Content and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 43-65. In agreement with the latter approach, I use epistles and letters interchangeably.

¹³⁵See Carson, Moo, Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 231-32.

¹³⁶Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 189.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

congregations and used lettering writing as an extension of their sphere of influence upon them, which allowed them to maintain personal care over the congregations that they had served. The following principles are meant to serve as a guide for this genre.

Hermeneutical principles:

- 1) Some epistles offer a strong echo of the author's actual preaching.¹³⁹
- 2) Because of the close connection between oration and the epistle, NT letters reflect the spoken word.¹⁴⁰ Many letters fit into one of three types of rhetoric (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic).¹⁴¹
- 3) Understand the situational nature of the epistle. Often the instructions given in an epistle are in response to specific situations faced by the audience.

Structure:

Epistolary form-

- 1) Salutation- consists of a reference to the sender, recipients, along with a greeting (1 Cor 1:1-3).
- 2) Thanksgiving and/or prayer- all of Paul's letters contain this form, except Galatians (Gal 1:3).
- 3) Body- often the largest portion of letters (Rom 1:18-11:36; 1 Cor 1:10-4:21).
- 4) Exhortation- giving encouragement and instruction for certain action (Rom 12:1-15:32; 1 Cor 5:1-16:18).

¹³⁹James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 28. Thompson argues for six factors that indicate Paul's letters as a strong echo of his actual preaching (ibid., 28-35). Paul's Pastoral Epistles would not necessarily fall into this category. See chap. 5 for more discussion on this relationship.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 34. See also George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86-87.

¹⁴¹The issue of rhetoric is discussed in more detail in chap. 4. In short, judicial rhetoric refers to the law courts and aims to bring the audience to a judgment over an event of the past. Deliberative rhetoric functions in the democratic assembly and calls for a decision on future action. Epideictic rhetoric is intended to effect praise or blame and to reinforce the community's values (Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul*, 67). These categories are not meant to suggest rigid adherence. Features of all three types of rhetoric may be found in one letter.

5) Conclusion- closing remarks and often a wish for peace, grace, greeting, prayer, etc. (Rom 15:33; 16:16; Col 4:17).

Beyond the epistolary form is the need to understand the notional structure of the epistle (see page 75). For example, while Ephesians 1-3 is largely Paul's doctrinal affirmations/explanations, chapters 4-6 are practical exhortations. Thus, there is both expository discourse and behavioral discourse in his letter(s). Discourse markers are of further assistance at this point. For example, as Paul closes out chapter 3 and his doctrinal affirmations/explanations, he ends the chapter with an interior benediction, which marks a transition from doctrinal affirmations to practical exhortations (3:20-21) (see page 79).

Speech Act- These hermeneutical principles for epistles allows the reader to discern the illocutionary act (force) and perlocutionary act (effect) of the letter. Second Timothy 1:1-7, for example, offers an illocutionary act (force) of an expressive (thanksgiving) of Paul for Timothy's genuine faith. The perlocutionary act (effect) is that of action since this genuine faith in the God who is at work in Timothy leads to power, love and discipline (v. 7). For today's audience, this passage encourages believers to continue in their faithfulness to the Lord in order to live/leave a lasting legacy (v 5) because the same God who was at work in Timothy is at work in them (v 7). Searle's five general classifications of speech acts are helpful at this point (see pages 85-86).

Figure 6. Epistle

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter offers an overview of hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics is the attempt to understand the meaning of biblical passages. This aim, of course, is no small task. A proper view of hermeneutics centers on the author's intent in the passage. Seeking the author's meaning presupposes that the author wants to be understood. After all, communication is impossible if this assumption is not true. Essential to understanding the meaning of a given passage is the important relationship between author, text, and reader. Important in this relationship is recognizing that it functions similarly to following the rules of a game. Lastly, general principles related to a proper interpretation of Scripture are provided.

The second section of this chapter identifies the inseparable connection between interpreting Scripture and understanding the given genre used by the biblical author. *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982) asserts that the value of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is only “as real as one’s understanding of the meaning of Scripture.”¹⁴² This meaning is wrapped-up in the particular genre employed by the God-inspired writer. To ignore the literary diversity for which the Scriptures are written is to make a costly error. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to understanding the Bible.

Each book of the Bible is classified as a particular genre, and within each book other genres are apparent. Therefore, genre sensitivity is a must as interpreters aim for a proper understanding of the biblical author’s message. This literary understanding involves both the surface structure and notional structure of the passage. In addition to these two types of structure, speech act theory enhances the interpreter’s ability to grasp not only what the author is saying, but what he is doing by what he is saying. Thus, the interpreter may also discern the intended effect the text is meant to have upon the reader. Finally, I examine particular genres, showing their hermeneutical principles and structural features as they must govern interpretation.

¹⁴²“The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” 397.

CHAPTER 4

THE CANON OF ARRANGEMENT

The study of classical rhetoric, particularly the canon of arrangement, finds convergence with the study of homiletics.¹ The study of the canon of arrangement, while not identical in importance to homiletics, has value. The value is seen in the comparable aim of rhetoric in general with that of homiletics, as well as certain elements found within the canon of arrangement. “Rhetoric,” as George A. Kennedy explains it, “is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes. . . . The writers of the books of the New Testament had a message to convey and sought to persuade an audience to believe it or to believe it more profoundly.”² According to classical rhetoric, the purpose of any discourse is to persuade through argument and to do so for maximum impact.³ While persuasion for maximum impact is the goal of classical

¹The reference to classical rhetoric here is meant to differentiate it from the way “rhetoric” is often used in contemporary language. Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp write, “When we hear the word ‘rhetoric’ used today, the meaning frequently is pejorative. More often than not, it refers to talk without action, empty words with no substance, or flowery, ornamental speech. . . . Rhetoric should not engender, however, only negative connotations for us. In the Western tradition, rhetoric has a long and distinguished history as an art dating back to classical Greece and Rome” (*Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* [Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1985], 1). While contemporary culture often uses the term “rhetoric” with negative connotations, throughout this dissertation I interchangeably use the terms “rhetoric” and “classical rhetoric”.

²George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3.

³Roderick P. Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 107. While Hart is concerned about the structure of a given discourse for the purpose of maximum impact, the goal of this dissertation is to determine ultimately how the preacher in the homiletical task is to structure the sermon in relation to the biblical text.

rhetoric, it is also the goal of the study of and the proclamation of Scripture.⁴

Though rhetoric is an oral medium, Kennedy demonstrates the close relationship of rhetoric with God's written revelation, the Bible. Though one is an oral medium and the other a written medium, Kennedy affirms the interrelation of the two, saying,

Rhetoric originates in speech and its primary product is a speech act, not a text, but the rhetoric of historical periods can only be studied through texts. . . . We need to keep in mind that the Bible in early Christian times was more often heard when read aloud to a group than read privately. . . . To a greater extent than any modern text, the Bible retained an oral and linear quality for its audience."⁵

Thus, studying rhetoric with homiletics, particularly as it relates to the arrangement of a passage for maximum impact, is valuable.

Rhetorician Roderick P. Hart maintains that structure argues.⁶ If Hart is correct, then the structure of a discourse is vitally important for the speaker and the audience.⁷ Hart further insists that within rhetoric "structure and content cannot be

⁴Hershael W. York and Bert Decker concur about the goal of maximum impact as they write, "His [the preacher's] passion must be to preach the Word in such a way that he accurately teaches the meaning of the text and leads his audience to discover its implications for their life situations so that they respond in obedience and become more like Christ as a result" (*Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003], 11).

⁵Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 5. Kennedy rightly acknowledges, "Some of the writers of the books of the New Testament show signs of envisioning this (reading the book again and again for a group), but the rhetorical qualities inherent in the text were originally intended to have an impact on first hearing and to be heard by a group. In practicing rhetorical criticism we need to keep in mind that intent and that original impact, and thus to read the Bible as speech" (*ibid.*, 5-6).

⁶Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 110.

⁷John A. Broadus, writing about the value of arrangement for both the speaker and the audience, states, "The order of arguments is scarcely less important than their individual force. The superiority of an army to a mob is hardly greater than the advantage of a well-arranged discourse over a mere mass of scattered thoughts." (*A Treatise On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, [Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012, originally printed 1870], 174). While I use the words structure and arrangement interchangeably in this dissertation, later in this chapter I explain that there may, at times, be a difference in the structure of the passage and its orderly or sequential arrangement.

separated easily.”⁸ While not identical, the two are inseparably connected.⁹

In fact, the classical rhetorician Quintilian notes the essential connection between content and arrangement by saying that arrangement is to oratory as generalship is to war.¹⁰ Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors explain this analogy, saying, “It would be folly to hold a general to a fixed, predetermined disposition of his forces. He must be left free to distribute his troops in the order and proportion best suited to cope with the situation in which he may find himself at any particular moment.”¹¹ In a similar vein, Cicero asserts that the orator “must first hit upon what to say; then manage and marshal his discoveries, not merely in orderly fashion, but with discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were of each argument.”¹² Quintilian and Cicero capture, then, the

⁸Hart., *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 110.

⁹See chap. 3 as I deal with literary sensitivity in understanding the Scriptures. Content is mediated through genre. Thus, genre in Scripture is the umbrella for which the biblical writer structures or arranges his writing.

¹⁰See Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, trans. John Selby Watson, vol. 2 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1876), 69.

¹¹Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 256.

¹²Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), I:31. One preacher who advocates the arrangement of the sermon according to the weight of the topic being preached is D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 76-77. He believes that if the preacher has done the exposition of the passage then he will arrive at a doctrine. Once the preacher understands the doctrine under consideration, he is to determine its significance for the listener today. Once this doctrinal significance is discerned, the preacher is to arrange the sermon into propositions or headings. While the propositions make clear the central doctrine, there is a definite form to all of this arrangement. Lloyd-Jones explains, “The arrangement of these propositions or heads is a very important matter. Having divided up the theme, and having seen its respective elements, you do not now place these haphazardly in any sort of order. You have a doctrine, an argument, a case which you want to argue out, and to reason, and to develop with the people. So, obviously, you must arrange your headings and your divisions in such a way that point number one leads to point number two, and point number two leads to point number three, etc. Each one should lead to the next, and work ultimately to a definite conclusion. Everything is to be so arranged as to bring out the main thrust of this particular doctrine” (ibid.). For Lloyd-Jones, the thrust of the sermon is developed around a central point, which is then organized for both logic and impact. Here, the arrangement is not necessarily tied to the biblical text. In speaking of the importance of sermon arrangement, Broadus states, “We must strive not merely to render it possible that the people should understand us, but impossible that they should misunderstand” (*On the*

crux of the import of the canon of arrangement. The orator arranges his material as he deems appropriate according to the weight of his subject matter, and in relation to how that arrangement will solicit maximum impact upon the hearer.

The aim in this chapter, first, is to show the value of the canon of arrangement to homiletics and that structure argues and, second, to demonstrate that the responsibility of generalship or the arrangement of the material according to the weight of the matter falls first upon Scripture and then upon the expositor. Thus, the expositor's duty is not the arbitrary rearrangement of the biblical material according to what he envisions as the weight of the subject matter; rather, he is to give preference to the arrangement of the divinely inspired author who structures the text according to the weight of his own intent. Yet, he must also, like the rhetor, make decisions about the structure of the sermon that convey the author's meaning in the most effective way to the contemporary audience.

In order to achieve this goal, a brief overview of classical rhetoric is given. Next, particular emphasis is focused upon the canon of arrangement. Lastly, similarities and differences of the canon of arrangement are explored, particularly as it relates to sermonic arrangement for contemporary expositors.

Classical Rhetoric

The practice of rhetoric has been around since the beginning of time. Hershael W. York writes, "The ability to state effectively one's case and to persuade others has been an integral part of human history since the serpent beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden. Not until Greek civilization splendidly dawned on the world, however, did it

Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, 213). He goes on to list the qualities of good arrangement: unity, order, and proportion (*ibid.*, 214).

become a formal study with methods, techniques, and conventional varieties.”¹³

Definition of Classical Rhetoric

The history of classical rhetoric is rich, covering more than two thousand years from the fifth century B.C. until the first quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The study of rhetoric began in the fifth century B.C. when Corax of Syracuse produced a treatise called “The Art of Rhetoric.”¹⁵ This treatise was a systematic instruction in the art of speaking which was intended to help property owners engaged in legal disputes over land.¹⁶ Hence, rhetoric was primarily an art of persuasion, used in civic life, and oral in

¹³Hershael Wallace York, “An Analysis and Synthesis of the Exegetical Methods of Rhetorical Criticism and Discourse Analysis as Applied to the Structure of First John,” (Th.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 21.

¹⁴ Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 489. The authors add that during most of this time rhetoric was a prominent, and for long periods of time the dominant, discipline in the schools. Because of this long history and prominent role of classical rhetoric, I do not intend nor could I offer a thorough history of classical rhetoric. My purpose is simply to highlight the history and note the prominence of this long-standing discipline. In short, three traditions of theory and practice developed within classical rhetoric (John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul’s Letters* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 47). Sophistic rhetoric can be identified with Gorgias and Isocrates. Here, the emphasis is upon the speaker, rather than the speech or audience and is more often ceremonial and cultural, rather than civic. Philosophical rhetoric, beginning with Socrates and his objections to sophistic rhetoric, tended to deemphasize the speaker and to stress the validity of his message and its effect upon the audience. Technical rhetoric is the most conceptualized tradition and is linked with rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian. It concentrates on the speech and is very pragmatic; it shows how to present a subject efficiently and successfully without judging the morality of the speaker and his effect on the audience. See also Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, chaps. 2, 3, and 4, respectively, as he discusses each of these traditions within classical rhetoric.

¹⁵Grant R. Osbrone, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 122.

¹⁶Foss, Foss, and Trapp describe this land dispute as a time when tyrannical dictators on Syracuse, a Greek colony on the island of Sicily, in about 465 B.C., were overthrown and a democracy was established. The courts were deluged with conflicting property claims. The dispute revolved around who was the rightful owner of a piece of land: its original owner or the one who had been given the land during the dictator’s reign? Because the Greek legal system required their citizens to represent themselves in court, the burden of “proof” fell upon the claimants in these land disputes to present the best possible case and persuade the jury in their favor (*Contemporary Perspectives*, 1-2).

nature.¹⁷ In short, the aim of rhetoric was to persuade an audience to think or act in a certain way.¹⁸

The etymology of the word *rhetoric* is rooted in the notion of “words” or “speech.”¹⁹ In fact, the Greek words *rhēma* (“a word”) and *rhētor* (“a teacher of oratory”) stem ultimately from the Greek verb *eirō* (“I say”). The English noun *rhetoric* originates from the Greek feminine adjective *rhetorikē*, which is elliptical for *rhetorikē technē* (“the art of the rhetor or orator”).²⁰ The word “rhetoric” first appears in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias*, written in the second decade of the fourth century B.C.²¹

Rhetoric, as seen in its origin with Corax, involves the civic art of public speaking. While there is no shortage of definitions for rhetoric over the last two thousand years, Aristotle’s definition is classic: “A faculty of considering all the possible means of persuasion on every subject.”²² Quintilian says that rhetoric is the “art of speaking well, and the orator knows how to speak well.”²³ These two definitions demonstrate a difference in emphasis, Aristotle’s emphasis being upon proof and Quintilian’s being upon a variety of rhetorical features, not neglecting proof but giving greater attention to

¹⁷George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁸Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 16.

¹⁹Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 15.

²⁰Ibid. Kennedy affirms this origination of the word *rhetoric*, as being derived from the Greek word *rhetorikē*, the art or technique of a *rhētor*, or public speaker (*Classical Rhetoric*, 1).

²¹Ibid.

²²Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Treatise On Rhetoric*, 1.2.1.

²³Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, trans. John Selby Watson, vol. 2 (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1873), 2.17.37.

style.²⁴

Both definitions accent the importance of persuasion; Aristotle's is more explicit and Quintilian's is more implicit. In contemporary culture, Kennedy defines rhetoric as "that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes."²⁵ Common in these definitions is the aim of speaking persuasively for a purpose. Understanding what rhetoric is and the purpose of it are inseparable.

Purpose of Classic Rhetoric

Understood from the above explanation, rhetoric is applying the techniques of persuasion to communication. All human creatures use techniques to persuade.²⁶ Classical rhetoric seeks to systematize the techniques most effective for persuasion.²⁷ Kennedy is correct as he states, "All communication involves rhetoric. A speaker or writer has some kind of purpose, and rhetoric includes the ways of accomplishing, or attempting to accomplish, that purpose within a given culture. . . . Every communication is rhetorical because it uses some technique to affect the beliefs, actions, or emotions of an audience."²⁸ Rhetoric, thus, can be likened to an act where the speaker "creates a

²⁴Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 13.

²⁵Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 3. Robert L. Dabney argues that rhetoric is most notably known as the art of persuasion (*Sacred Rhetoric or A Course of Lectures on Preaching* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1979, first published 1870], 49). Corbett and Connors explain, "Classic rhetoric was associated primarily with persuasive discourse. Its end was to convince or persuade an audience to think in a certain way or to act in a certain way" (*Classical Rhetoric*, 16).

²⁶Kennedy, *Classic Rhetoric*, 1.

²⁷Brian Vickers states, "According to this tradition, the first writers of rhetoric-books observed situations in real life when eloquence succeeded, analysed the resources used by such speakers, and developed a teaching method which could impart those skills" (*In Defence of Rhetoric* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1988], 1).

²⁸Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 1-2. Kennedy explains that rhetoric involves *primary* rhetoric and *secondary* rhetoric. *Primary* rhetoric is understood as the art of persuasion and is primarily used in

message whose shape and form, beginning and end, are stamped on it . . . with a goal for an audience.”²⁹

What is true of rhetoric in general is also true of homiletics. Every communication act, including preaching, is rhetorical in that techniques are used to affect beliefs, actions, or emotions in an audience. Further, rhetoric (and preaching) shares a similar goal with speech act, in that both rhetoric and speech act are doing something with what is communicated, namely, preaching.

While classical rhetoric began as an attempt to settle disputes over land claims on the island of Sicily, in time, rhetoric became a systematized set of techniques which were used by orators to persuade through discourse. Seeking maximum impact upon listeners through orality and the use of these techniques became the aim of rhetoric.

Canon of Arrangement

Rhetorical persuasion consists of five canons, or laws: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.³⁰ While the five canons are integrated in a holistic

civic life; it is oral. It involves utterance on a specific occasion; it is an act not a text, though it can be subsequently treated as a text. *Secondary* rhetoric refers to the rhetorical techniques as found in discourse, literature, and art forms when those techniques are not used for an oral, persuasive purpose. Here, the speech act is not central; the text is central (ibid., 2-3).

²⁹Karyln Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), 7.

³⁰First, the canon of invention is from the Latin term *inventio*, and is most often translated as invention. The word literally means to “come upon” or “find” (Donovan J. Ochs, “Cicero’s Rhetorical Theory,” in *A Synoptic History of Classic Rhetoric*, ed. James J. Murphy [Davis, CA: Hermagoras, 1983], 93). As Ochs explains, “Any potential orator had to start with a thorough, painstaking study of the facts and physical evidence that pertained to the case in question” (ibid.). Therefore, with this first rhetorical canon, invention “is the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, LCL [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954], 1.2.3). Thus, invention is concerned primarily with developing proofs that best support the case the orator is making. Aristotle said that there are two kinds of arguments or means of persuasion for the speaker: inartistic and artistic. He describes inartistic proofs as “not furnished forth by our own means, but which are in existence already, as witnesses, torture, deeds, and all of this kind” (Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Treatise On Rhetoric*, trans. Theodore Buckley [London: George Bell & Sons, 1984], 1.2.2). Duane Fredrick Watson

consideration of a rhetorical act, for the purpose of this dissertation, the canon of arrangement is the relevant one.

Each canon of classical rhetoric holds an important role in the persuasive power of the orator's speech. Arguably the most important three canons, as seen in the amount of attention given to them by rhetoricians, are invention, arrangement, and style. This recognition is not to say that memory and delivery are unimportant. However, without solid content and persuasive arrangement, no amount of keen memory and skilled delivery will effectively influence one's audience.

similarly notes, "Inartificial proofs are those not manufactured by the rhetor, and include witnesses, evidence extracted by torture, informal agreements, contracts, laws, decisions of previous courts, rumors, documents, and oaths" (*Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBLDS, no. 104 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1991], 14). Second, the canon of arrangement is the English equivalent of the Latin term *dispositio*. The word in English also carries the idea of disposition or organization (Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style*, 20). Arrangement, according to classical rhetoric, "is the ordering and distribution of the matter, making clear the place to which each thing is to be assigned" (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.2.3). Thus, the classical canon of arrangement is concerned with the structure and organization of ideas, particularly by arranging those ideas for maximum rhetorical effect upon the listener. Third, the canon of style is the word *elocutio* in Latin. "The word *elocution*," as Corbett and Connors helpfully explain, "means something quite different to us from what it meant to the classical rhetorician. We associate the word with the act of speaking (hence, the elocution contest)" (Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 21). However, for classical rhetoricians, *elocutio* is "the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter" (Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.7.9) and "the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the matter devised" (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.2.3). See Aristotle, *Aristotle's Treatise On Rhetoric*, 3.2.1-3, as he writes about the importance of the excellence of style and of the need to be clear through proper word choices. This canon places great importance upon the use of word choices for persuasion. Fourth, the canon of memory in Latin is *memoria*, and it is concerned with the memorizing of speeches. Memory has received the least amount of attention in the classical rhetorical books. Still, classical rhetoric did view memory as important in the whole rhetorical process, as is evinced in the reference to memory as "the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric" (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.16.28). Quintilian, recognizing memory as a gift that must be improved through training, says that "it is strengthened, like all our other faculties, by exercise; and all the study of the orator, of which we have hitherto been speaking, is ineffectual, unless the other departments of it be held together by memory as an animating principle. All knowledge depends on memory" (Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 11.2.1). Fifth, the canon of delivery is known in Latin as *pronuntiatio*. Like the canon of memory, delivery is noticeably neglected in the books on classical rhetoric until the elocutionary movement began in the middle of the eighteenth century (Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 22). Delivery involves the orator's use of voice (*pronuntiatio*) and gesture (*actio*). Quintilian argues for the undeniable impact of voice and gesture as he says that they produce "a wonderful power and efficacy in oratory; for it is not of so much importance what sort of thoughts we conceive within ourselves, as it is in what manner we express them; since those whom we address are moved only as they hear" (Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 11.3.2). Here, Quintilian places an enormous amount of weight upon delivery; so much so that the import of the speech falls upon the method by which it is communicated. Interestingly, Demosthenes, the greatest of the Greek orators, when asked what the most important part of rhetoric is,

Content and effect are mediated through the arrangement of material, and therefore, the three are connected inseparably. Related to preaching, arrangement captures the structural features of the text and its message (content) and shapes a sermon that acts (produces a rhetorical effect).

Cicero states that arrangement “is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order.”³¹ Thus, the second canon mentioned in classical rhetoric is *dispositio*, for without a proper ordering of the material the speech will be unintelligible. Quintilian notes the logical and important order of this second canon, stating, “It is therefore not without reason that arrangement is considered the second of five parts of oratory; for though all the limbs of a statue be cast, it is not a statute until they are united.”³²

In fact, even though a sculptor may cast all the parts of the body of a statute accurately, unless he assembles those parts in a proper order the result is a monster.³³ Indeed, as it relates to discourse, content is mediated through arrangement, and to neglect the latter is to fail to communicate intelligibly and faithfully the former.

This section explores the importance of the canon of arrangement through two main avenues. First, the purpose of arrangement is given as it relates to the overall purpose of rhetoric. Second, the five parts of arrangement in classical rhetoric are discussed.

replied, “Delivery, delivery, delivery” (ibid., 11.3.6).

³¹Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.7.9.

³²Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 7.intro.2.

³³Ibid.

Purpose of Arrangement

The canon of arrangement is concerned with much more than simply arranging the discourse according to certain parts. Corbett and Connors explain, “It was concerned also with the strategic planning of the whole composition.”³⁴ The rhetor painstakingly arranges his whole discourse for a specific goal, namely, maximum impact upon the listener. Logically, then, if the aim of rhetoric is persuasion, then the careful structuring of a given discourse intends to achieve maximum persuasive power. Cicero contended that the ordering of one’s discourse is done according to the weight of the matter and the judgment of the speaker.³⁵ Therefore, orators evaluate the weight and impact of their arguments and arrange them according to how they perceive that the audience will be most impacted.

Quintilian understood this premise as he dealt with judgments and decisions related to the arrangement of a given discourse. He asked questions like the following:

1. When is an introduction necessary and when can it be omitted or abbreviated?
2. When should we make our statement of facts continuous and when should we break it up and insert it *passim* (here and there)?
3. Under what circumstances can we omit the statement of facts altogether?
4. When should we begin by dealing with the arguments advanced by our opponents and when should we begin by proposing our own arguments?
5. When is it advisable to present our strongest arguments first and when is it best to begin with our weakest arguments and work up to our strongest?
6. Which of our arguments will our audience readily accept and which of them must they be induced to accept?
7. Should we attempt to refute our opponents’ arguments as a whole or deal with them in detail?
8. How much ethical appeal must we exert in order to conciliate the audience?
9. Should we reserve our emotional appeals for the conclusion or distribute them throughout the discourse?
10. What evidence or documents should we make use of and where in the discourse

³⁴Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 256.

³⁵Cicero, *De Oratore*, I:31.

will this kind of argument be most effective?³⁶

As is clear from these questions, for Quintilian the disposition of one's material is not a matter of indifference.³⁷ In fact, it has tremendous implication for the impact of the discourse upon the audience.

Hart expounds upon the importance and aim of strategic planning in the arrangement of one's discourse. He maintains that questions like those posed by Quintilian are for discerning "decisions about which ideas should be given what amount of attention and how ideas should be arranged for maximum impact."³⁸ So important is the discernment of how to arrange one's discourse that the "best of arguments could be weakened or nullified if inserted in the wrong place or if presented with inappropriate emphasis or proportion."³⁹ Like rhetoric as a whole, then, the canon of arrangement matters ultimately for the maximum persuasion of the listener. To misplace a portion of one's discourse, according to classical rhetoricians, could amount to minimal impact or no impact at all upon the listener.

Five Parts in Arrangement

Disposition, as has been said, is concerned with the "effective and orderly arrangement of the parts of a written or spoken discourse."⁴⁰ Developing ideas or

³⁶Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 258-59 (taken from Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, book VII, chap X).

³⁷*Ibid.*, 259.

³⁸Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 107.

³⁹Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 259.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

discovering arguments is not enough; there remains the difficulty of selecting and organizing them “with a view to effecting the end of the discourse.”⁴¹ In basic terms, any discourse needs a beginning, a middle, and an end.⁴² However, a simple tri-part division of a given discourse was deemed insufficient. Classical rhetoricians were more precise in their assessment of the parts of a given discourse.⁴³

Exordium. Introduction means “a leading into.”⁴⁴ The Greek and Latin rhetorical terms carry this same idea. In Greek, the term *proemium* means “before the song”; the Latin term *exordium* means “beginning a web.” The basic function of the introduction is to lead the audience into the discourse.⁴⁵ The exordium is meant to establish rapport between the speaker and the audience, as well as create interest and goodwill toward the subject matter.⁴⁶

The rapport between the speaker and the audience may at times involve establishing credibility with the audience, which Latin rhetoricians called *insinuatō*.⁴⁷ This function suggests, as with the term *insinuation*, that orators must convince the audience that they are qualified to speak on some subject or counter prejudices or

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Most rhetoricians acknowledge five parts for the usual arrangement of a given discourse. See Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 3.9.1-9. He states that the majority of authors hold to five parts of a discourse; however, he also acknowledges that a debate exists as to the exact number.

⁴⁴Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 260.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 123. Corbett and Connors mention two similar aspects for the introduction: (1) it informs the audience of the end or object of our discourse, and (2) it disposes the audience to be receptive to what we say (*Classical Rhetoric*, 260).

⁴⁷Ibid., 264.

misconceptions about themselves or about the subject of their discourse.⁴⁸ Corbett and Connors summarize the exordium as seeking to render the audience *attentive*, *benevolent*—that is, well-disposed toward the writer and his or her cause, and *docile*—that is, ready to be instructed or persuaded.⁴⁹

To accomplish this aim, five considerations are necessary: (1) what we have to say, (2) before whom, (3) under what circumstances, (4) what the prepossessions of the audience are likely to be, and (5) how much time or space has been allotted to us.⁵⁰ At least four of the five considerations deal with understanding the audience. What may be a persuasive exordium for one audience may not be for another.

Narratio. The Latin term *narratio* is often referred to in English as narration. However, narration takes on meanings that it did not have for the Romans. In short, this second part of a discourse states the proposition being discussed and provides the audience or reader with background information and a reason for the point being made.⁵¹ The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* said that *narratio* “sets forth the events that have

⁴⁸Ibid., 266-67.

⁴⁹Ibid., 267.

⁵⁰Ibid. Though beyond the period of classical rhetoric, Richard Whately says that creating interest in the subject matter is the second purpose of the exordium. The writer or speaker must demonstrate the importance or relevance of the subject matter to the audience. Whately coined several terms to designate various kinds of introductions which intend to arouse interest. The “introduction inquisitive” is meant to show the subject as worthy of attention or curious. The “paradoxical introduction” dwells on the seeming improbability of that which must, after all, be admitted. The “introduction corrective” shows that the subject has been neglected, misunderstood, or misrepresented by others. “Introduction preparatory” explains a peculiar mode of reasoning, guards against the misconception of the discourse’s purpose, or apologizes for some deficiencies. The “introduction narrative” arouses interest through an anecdotal lead-in. All five kinds of introductions are taken from Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution*, ed. Douglas Ehninger (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963, originally published in 1828), 170-72.

⁵¹Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 123.

occurred or might have occurred.”⁵² Corbett and Connors prefer the phrase “statement of fact” to describe this second division of a discourse.⁵³ As a general rule, the statement of fact is expository in nature. In other words, the orator is informing his audience of the circumstances that need to be known about the subject.⁵⁴

Often considered part of the *narratio is partitio*. In fact, some teachers of rhetoric consider there to be six parts to a discourse, *partitio* being a sixth element added. *Partitio* is the listing of the particular points to be made, often times in the form of the opponent’s arguments as well as his own.⁵⁵ The orator is not just making neutral statements of facts, but is seeking to “turn every detail to our advantage so as to win the victory’, both by ‘winning belief’ and ‘incriminating our adversary.’”⁵⁶

Confirmatio or Probatio. This third division of a discourse is the presentation of the logical arguments for the case.⁵⁷ Osborne explains, “The speaker would marshal the evidence on behalf of the proposition, quoting authorities and citing parallels which enhanced the case being made. Proofs would take two forms, an analogy or comparison with something the audience found favorable and an example which demonstrated the

⁵²*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.3.4.

⁵³Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 270.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 271. The authors clarify, “If the readers are sufficiently informed about the subject under consideration, we can dispense with this part altogether. But most of the time, even well-informed readers will appreciate, even if they do not require, some recital of the circumstances, the details, the state of the question” (*ibid.*).

⁵⁵Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 123. See Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.22.31.

⁵⁶Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, 69 (quoting from *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.8.12).

⁵⁷Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 123.

value of the speaker's position."⁵⁸ If *exordium* and *narratio* involve the preliminaries of a discourse, then *confirmatio*, or confirmation, may be regarded as the core, the central part of the discourse.⁵⁹ The *confirmatio*, for the orator, is where he does what he sets out to do, whether that be to explain or persuade.⁶⁰

This part of the discourse is where the material gathered in the process of invention is utilized. For the orator, the material is selected and disposed for maximum effectiveness. In fact, as Corbett and Connors propose,

The processes of invention and disposition are not really as independent of one another as we may have suggested by giving them separate treatments. . . . We have discussed invention and disposition separately partly because there is a sense in which we must *discover* before we can *arrange* and partly because there is a pedagogical convenience to a separate discussion of these two processes.⁶¹

The discovery and the arrangement of the material often occur simultaneously, which lends itself to the greatest challenge facing this part of discourse—the problem of sequence.

The challenge for the rhetorician is what point does he take up first? Once he has determined his first point, what point does he take up next? Some discourse, such as expository discourse, can be organized according to a chronological scheme—as one might explain the process of changing a tire. However, with a more complicated subject, the orator may move from general to particular or from the familiar to the unknown. As Corbett and Connors espouse, usually the nature of the subject being explained will guide

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 276.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 267-77 (*italics original*).

the appropriate approach.⁶²

Yet, following this principle is not always the answer. In rhetoric, the general rule is not to present one's arguments from strongest to weakest. Ending on a more anticlimactic note often weakens the effectiveness of the orator's persuasion. Instead, rhetoricians should leave their strongest argument "ringing in the memory" of the audience; therefore, placing the strongest argument last is ideal.⁶³

Refutatio. This fourth part of a discourse is sometimes combined with *probatio*, as it seeks to disprove opposing views. Cicero describes this element as "that part of an oration in which arguments are used to impair, disprove, or weaken the confirmation or proof in our opponent's speech."⁶⁴ Yet, dividing *refutatio* into a separate part of discourse made sense for most rhetoricians.⁶⁵ *Probatio* deals essentially with the sequencing of arguments to confirm one's own case, while *refutatio* involves the refutation of one's opponent's views. Osborne explains, "In judicial speech this would involve the refutation of an opponent. In declarative speech this would involve a rhetorical presentation of the opposite perspective so as to enhance the argument. At times this could include a digression (often seen in Paul) which provided added

⁶²Ibid., 277.

⁶³Ibid. Of course, this part of discourse carries tremendous implications for the arrangement of expository sermons. I deal with this more in the next section under similarities and differences of arrangement in homiletics.

⁶⁴Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.42.78.

⁶⁵Interestingly, Quintilian disagrees with Aristotle, who combines refutation with proof. Quintilian insists that proof establishes, while refutation overthrows (Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 3.9.5).

information.”⁶⁶ No matter how well the orator has crafted his discourse, doubts will remain in the minds of listeners if the objections to one’s case are not anticipated and answers are not offered.⁶⁷

Corbett and Connors describe two ways that an opponent’s proposition is refuted by reason. First, the orator can prove the contradictory of his opponent’s proposition or, second, he can demolish the arguments by which the proposition stands.⁶⁸ The first approach is accomplished if the orator is able to demonstrate the falsity of his opponent’s claims. This approach is an appeal to reason, since people rationally recognize the principle that a thing cannot at the same time *be* and *not be*.⁶⁹ However, contradictorily opposed arguments are not always present; therefore, more often an orator is faced with refuting *contrary* propositions.⁷⁰ Refuting contrary propositions entails discrediting the claims that support the argument of the opponent. Two primary ways for demolishing an opponent’s arguments are: (1) denying the truth of one of the premises on which the argument rests and proving, perhaps through evidence or testimony, that the premise is false, or (2) objecting to the inferences drawn from the premises.

Refutation, according Corbett and Connors, occurs also through emotional appeal. Knowing one’s audience is vital because any miscalculation about the temperament of the audience could destroy or reverse the intended persuasion of the

⁶⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 123.

⁶⁷Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 278.

⁶⁸Ibid., 279.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid. Often the issue here is that one side maintains that a certain course of action is wise, while the other side maintains it is foolish.

audience.⁷¹ Ethical appeal is another way in which refutation of an opponent's arguments are accomplished. Aristotle understood the importance of ethical appeal by saying, "Let it [your ethical appeal] convey an impression of your character; and the show of goodness more befits a virtuous man, than accuracy of speech."⁷² In other words, at times, even if one's own argument is weak, the ethical appeal may be enough to persuade the audience. Refutation occurs lastly by wit. "Jests, sarcasm, and irony can be effective tools for refutation, but they must be used with the utmost discretion. The Greek rhetorician advised that we should 'kill our opponent's seriousness with our ridicule and his ridicule with our seriousness.'"⁷³

Peroratio or conclusio. The last part of a discourse is the conclusion which summarizes the major points of the *probatio* and appeals to both reason and emotion. Aristotle lists four aims of the conclusion: "of getting the hearer favourable to one's self, and ill-disposed towards the adversary; and of amplification and extenuation; and of placing the hearer under the influence of the passions; and of awakening his recollection."⁷⁴ He goes on to explain that the orator aims in the conclusion at showing the audience that he is good relatively or even absolutely to them and that his opponent is bad relatively or even absolutely.⁷⁵ Upon making this distinction clear, the orator need excite the hearer to passion, such as pity, terror, anger, hatred, envy, emulation, and

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Aristotle, *Aristotle's Treatise On Rhetoric*, 3.17.12.

⁷³Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 281.

⁷⁴Aristotle, *Aristotle's Treatise On Rhetoric*, 3.19.1.

⁷⁵Ibid.

contentiousness.⁷⁶

In summary, this brief study of the five parts of discourse demonstrates that arrangement is an essential matter, in persuasive discourse. *How* something is said and even *when* it is said is vitally connected to *what* is said. This theory of arrangement asserts a logical sequence of speech acts (i.e., to introduce, to provide background, to argue, to refute, and to appeal) for an oral discourse, and accounts for consideration of the audience. The purpose of the canon of arrangement for maximum persuasion has been established in this section, along with the importance of each part of a discourse in accomplishing this aim. The speaker makes decisions of arrangement to accomplish maximum audience impact.

Similarities and Differences between Rhetorical and Homiletical Arrangement

The last section of this chapter explores the similarities and differences between the arrangement of discourse in general and that of an expositional sermon. In particular, the five parts of arrangement are compared and contrasted with expositional sermonic structure.

Oratory is the tool by which persuasion is achieved. Both classical rhetoricians and contemporary homileticians desire to achieve maximum impact upon their listeners through the spoken word.⁷⁷ Aristotle viewed rhetoric as “considering all the possible means of persuasion on every subject.” Accordingly, the orator may use all that is

⁷⁶Ibid., 3.19.3.

⁷⁷See Dabney as he argues for the purpose of persuasion in rhetoric and homiletics, but insists that preachers ultimately endeavor to evoke an act of the will. Where this evoking does not occur, proper

available to him in order to impact the response of his hearers. In classical rhetoric, all five parts of the canon of arrangement may be used for maximum impact. In a similar way, all the parts of an expositional sermon are meant for maximum impact, though all aspects of the canon of arrangement may not be applicable in preaching.

Unlike classical rhetoricians, the expositor's potential field of persuasion is tied to the very Word of God. His intention is to preach the heart of a passage, not a message of his own invention. In this way, he is bound to the text of Scripture, because the Word he is called to preach is not an invented discourse through the ingenuity of man, but is a divinely inspired revelation from God.⁷⁸

Persuading by being bound to the Word is understood by Dabney as he asserts, "The nature of the preacher's work is determined by the word employed to describe it by the Holy Ghost. The preacher is a herald; his work is heralding the King's message. . . . Now the herald does not invent his message; he merely transmits and explains it."⁷⁹ This transmission and explanation of a biblical text must have structure, and the most faithful sermon arrangement reflects the notional structure of the biblical text.⁸⁰

oration has not occurred (*Sacred Rhetoric*, 30).

⁷⁸Mohler urges humility in preaching which comes only as the preacher stands in submission to the text of Scripture. He declares, "We are called not only to *preach* but to *preach the Word*" (*He Is Not Silent*, 42, italics original). Mohler further explains that John Calvin "understood that preaching is to be the process by which God uses human instruments to speak what He Himself has spoken. . . . All Christian preaching springs from the truth that God has spoken in word and deed, and that He has chosen human vessels to bear witness to Himself and His gospel. We speak because we cannot be silent. We speak because God has spoken" (ibid.). Being bound to the text of Scripture in preaching does not mean that the expositor has no freedom in arrangement (of content or structure), but that all of his arrangement is to be centered upon that specific text.

⁷⁹Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 36. The debate between whether preaching is that of being an orator or herald is unnecessary. I deal with preaching and orality more in chap. 5, but suffice to say that preaching involves both oration and proclamation.

⁸⁰W. E. Sangster affirms, "We have admitted that a sermon can be without form and—such is the grace of God—not utterly void. But it borders on the miraculous. No sermon is really strong which is not strong in structure too" (W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of the Sermon* [London: Epworth, 1954], 90). See

When the preacher gets at the heart of what the author is doing with the passage, he will preach faithfully and effectively because he understands and communicates the intention of the text.

The content of a given discourse is shaped by the arrangement of that discourse for both classical rhetoric and contemporary homiletics. In fact, without a clear grasp of the structure of the discourse or sermon the content is indiscernible. In line with classical rhetoric, structure and content cannot be separated (easily). Thus, *what* the expositor says is delivered by means of *how* and *when* he says it. Structure argues because structure and content are inseparable.

However, the difference between the two disciplines as it relates to content and structure revolves around the designer of that structure, as well as the use of freedoms and cautions. For classical rhetoric, discourse is designed by the orator who determines the content by which he will develop and argue his case. He thus has the freedom to arrange that invention (content) according to his own perception of its most effective impact upon the listener. Expository homiletics, on the other hand, considers both the surface and notional structure, concerned with preaching the emphasis of the text for persuasive impact. Kaiser states, “An expository sermon . . . receives both the shape (its major points) and content of its meaning from the Biblical text itself.”⁸¹ Therefore, the canon of arrangement when applied to the homiletical task is concerned with the “shape” of the sermon as it relates to the text under consideration, a shape, when taken from the

also, John R. W. Stott as he adds, “Just as bones without flesh make a skeleton, so flesh without bones makes a jellyfish. And neither bony skeleton nor jellyfish make good sermons” (*Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982], 229).

⁸¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., review of *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, by Sidney Greidanus, *JETS* (September 1991), 409.

notional structure, that allows the preacher to communicate faithfully and effectively.

Similarities between Classical Arrangement and Sermonic Arrangement

It is important to note that while I argue for considering the arrangement of a biblical text for the sermon, I am not suggesting that elements not present in the biblical passage may not be used by the expositor. For example, I do affirm, as discussed below, the appropriateness of introductions and conclusions in the sermonic structure. These two parts, derived from classical theory of arrangement, are not necessarily a part of a biblical text to be preached. Further, biblical authors choose a certain surface structure by which to convey the deep structure of the text. In so doing, they make decisions as to the best way to communicate their intended meaning. The homiletician, in a similar vein, must make rhetorical decisions as they relate to the arrangement of the sermon in order to communicate most effectively the intended meaning of the biblical author for contemporary understanding and action.

Broadus understands the value of arrangement in general.⁸² First, arrangement is of great importance to the speaker himself.⁸³ He insists, “The speaker who neglects arrangement will rapidly lose, instead of improving, his power of constructing, organizing, a discourse; and he will have to rely for the effect of his sermons entirely on the impression made by striking particular thoughts or on the possibility that high emotional excitement may produce something of order.”⁸⁴

⁸²Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 209.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 210.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 211.

Second, according to Broadus, the value of sermon arrangement benefits the audience as well. This benefit begins with an intelligible discourse. The goal is not only that people understand what the expositor is saying, but also that it be impossible to misunderstand what is being said.⁸⁵ Clear order in the sermon provides for a clear understanding by the audience. Related to the intelligibility of the sermon is its pleasantness for the audience. Broadus explains this element of benefiting the audience, saying,

“Order is heaven’s first law.” Even those phenomena in nature which seem most irregular and those scenes which appear to be marked by the wildest variety are pervaded by a subtle order, without which they would not please. Chaos might be terrible but could never be beautiful. . . . Let it be added that a well-arranged discourse will much more surely keep the attention of the audience. And this not merely because it is more intelligible and more pleasing but also because, being conformed to the natural laws of human thinking, it will more readily carry the hearer’s thoughts along with it.⁸⁶

A sermon may be pleasing in so much as the listener is able to follow the expositor’s thoughts clearly.

Another way in which sermon arrangement is valuable is for persuasion. Broadus explains, “Good arrangement makes the discourse more persuasive. Both in presenting motives and in appealing to feeling, order is of great importance.”⁸⁷ As with rhetoric, sermons are intended to present motives or arguments and appeal to the

⁸⁵Ibid., 212-13.

⁸⁶Ibid., 213.

⁸⁷Ibid. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones refers to preaching as “logic on fire.” Logic or order and passion go together in preaching. In fact, without it one should not preach as Lloyd-Jones insists. He said, “What is preaching? Logic on fire! Eloquent reason! Are these contradictions? Of course not. Reason concerning this Truth ought to be mightily eloquent, as you see it in the case of the apostle Paul and others. It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology; or at least the man’s understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to this. I say again that a man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be

emotions. The hearer's feelings are more powerfully and permanently impacted when appeals are made in some natural order.⁸⁸ Woodrow Kroll avows,

Many times the only difference between a good sermon, one with great persuasiveness, and a sermon lacking in such power is a difference in arrangement. Lack of arrangement is probably the single most common fault of preaching today. Some sermons remind the congregation of the beginnings of creation; they are like the early earth, "without form and void."⁸⁹

When an audience struggles to follow what the expositor is saying, then it can be certain that persuasion will not occur.

A last value of sermon structure, Broadus asserts, is its ability to be remembered easily.⁹⁰ Hearers are edified as the sermon sticks. Orderly arrangement allows the listener to revisit in his mind what was said by the speaker. A lack of clear arrangement means that the congregation will soon forget the sermon and it will thus be of little value.⁹¹

While few may disagree with Broadus' argument for the value of sermon arrangement, the question remains as to just how the expositor is to arrange his sermon. Does he have the full freedom of the orator to dispose of his discourse as he deems appropriate, or is his freedom limited?

Exordium/Introduction. Any discourse, including preaching, must have a beginning. The *exordium* or introduction does not simply aim to begin, however, but to

allowed to enter one" (*Preaching & Preachers* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 97). For Lloyd-Jones, an orderly and a passionately delivered sermon are inseparable.

⁸⁸Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 214.

⁸⁹Woodrow Kroll, *Prescription for Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 153.

⁹⁰Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 214

⁹¹Kroll, *Prescription for Preaching*, 154-55.

begin well. Quintilian compares a faulty *exordium* to a pilot who runs his ship ashore while leaving port.⁹² Broadus asserts the importance of a sermon introduction as he states,

It can scarcely be necessary to argue at length to the effect that sermons ought generally to have an introduction. Men have a natural aversion to abruptness, and delight in a somewhat gradual approach. A building is rarely pleasing in appearance, without a porch, or something corresponding to a porch. . . . And so any composition or address which has no introduction, is apt to look incomplete.⁹³

Beginning well by leading the audience into the discourse gradually rather than abruptly is the goal behind the introduction.

Quintilian speaks of the introduction as a way to “prepare the hearer to be more favourably inclined towards us for the rest of the proceedings,” which is done by making the audience disposed, attentive, and ready to learn.⁹⁴ In a similar way, as Haddon W. Robinson asserts, the sermon introduction should command attention.⁹⁵ Preachers should not assume that audiences are eager to hear from them. “In reality,” comments Robinson, “they are probably a bit bored and harbor a suspicion that he will make matters worse.”⁹⁶ Expositors, like classical rhetoricians, must capture the attention by going after the minds of their listeners. They need not be dramatic or plain, but they need to capture the

⁹²Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 4.1.61

⁹³Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 217.

⁹⁴Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.1.

⁹⁵Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 160.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

attention of the audience rather quickly.⁹⁷

Establishing rapport with the audience is another crucial factor in audience attentiveness. Rapport is established through the expositor's demeanor, countenance, tone of voice, and the construction and content of his first remarks.⁹⁸ Rapport is important because the speaker's authority "carries most weight if there is no suspicion of sordid motive, personal enmity, or ambition in his undertaking the case."⁹⁹

Like the classical rhetorician, there is freedom in the expositor's approach to the introduction because what he says at this point is not inventing the core of his message, but introducing the importance of the content that he will discuss. The audience is essentially asking, "Why should I listen to you?" York and Decker describe creating interest for the audience through involuntary listening. They state, "Involuntary listening is what takes place when a member of the audience who is not necessarily disposed to pay attention cannot help himself and finds himself engrossed in what the speaker is saying."¹⁰⁰

Broadus offers several qualities of a good introduction.¹⁰¹ The introduction should present some thought closely related to the theme of the sermon, so as to lead to

⁹⁷Robinson argues that thirty seconds is the key to grasping the attention of the audience before they decide to check out (ibid.). Similarly, York and Decker maintain that within the first few minutes the preacher must draw the audience in or he faces the real possibility of losing their attention (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 174).

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 4.1.

¹⁰⁰York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 179. The authors describe nine techniques to draw people into their sermons: novelty, movement, proximity, concreteness, familiarity, suspense, intensity, humor, and life relatedness (ibid., 180).

¹⁰¹Summarized from Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 222-25.

the theme with naturalness and ease. The introduction should not address anything separate from the sermon topic. In other words, the introduction is no place for chasing novel ideas not related to the message of the biblical author. The introduction should also generally consist of a single thought, related to the theme of the sermon. Introductions are better served by avoiding generalities. While general openings are at times appropriate, preachers may become habitual in such an approach and lose their opening impact. Conversely, introductions should not promise too much in thoughts, style or delivery, and then fail to deliver in the content of the message.

Narratio/Proposition. Classical rhetoricians viewed this second part of arrangement as the “statement of fact.”¹⁰² In short, the proposition of the discourse is stated and the reason or background for the proposition is given. In general, Quintilian advises that the statement be lucid, brief, and plausible.¹⁰³ Furthermore, *partitio*, as a component of *narratio*, is the listing of points to be made, which, as mentioned earlier, is usually in the form of an opponent’s arguments as well as one’s own.¹⁰⁴

For the expository preacher, *narratio* is similar to the statement of the sermon proposition or thesis.¹⁰⁵ The proposition is heart of the message, the central idea that expositors desire their listeners to take away and put into practice from the sermon.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 270.

¹⁰³Ibid., 274.

¹⁰⁴Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.22.31.

¹⁰⁵York and Decker refer to the proposition as “the main point stated in an applicational way” (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 139).

¹⁰⁶See *ibid.*, 182. Drawing from chap. 3, the proposition or thesis of the sermon relates to that of speech act. The sermon proposition/thesis is the contemporary and applicable product of what the author is doing with the text and, thus, what he intends for the hearer to do with it as a result.

Donald G. McDougall states that the central idea of the passage is not created by the expositor. Rather, his responsibility is to (1) find the author's central theme; (2) build the message around that theme; and (3) make that theme the central part of all the preacher says.¹⁰⁷ While the expositor is free to position the *narratio* or proposition wherever he likes, his freedom is one of arrangement of the proposition statement, not freedom to create the actual statement itself.

However, generally it seems best to state the proposition up front. The introduction and the statement of the proposition work best together. The end of the introduction may be the best place to state the proposition and transition into the body of the sermon. As York and Decker explain, "The introduction sets it [the proposition] up while the body of the sermon proves it."¹⁰⁸ Further, the expositor may use elements of *partitio* as he lists his points to be explained. While the expositor is not likely to list the points that his opponent will make, he may give his audience a roadmap showing where he is going along the path of the sermon.¹⁰⁹ In this way, the audience is better able to follow the expositor as he reveals the intended course that he is taking in the sermon.¹¹⁰

Peroratio/conclusion. The third similarity between the five parts of the canon

¹⁰⁷Donald G. McDougall, "Central Ideas, Outlines, and Title," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue (Dallas: Word, 1992), 229.

¹⁰⁸York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 182.

¹⁰⁹Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 221. As for *partitio*, the expositor may wish to briefly introduce an opponent's argument against the particular passage being expounded, but will not want to expound on that opposition until possibly the *refutatio*. I mention *refutatio* as an expositor's option within arrangement later. In short, in *partitio* the expositor may simply list an opponent's arguments in order to make the audience aware that he is conversant with opposing worldviews and will address it later in the sermon.

¹¹⁰Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 190.

of arrangement and expository preaching is *peroratio*. Like the introduction and proposition, the expositor has freedom in the arrangement of this part of sermonic construction. However, this part of arrangement, by nature, is last.

Peroratio means “finishing off.” Quintilian spoke of the closing of the discourse as accomplishing two objectives: (1) *enumeratio* (an enumeration or summing-up) and (2) *affectus* (producing the appropriate emotion in the audience).¹¹¹ The great orators of Greece and Rome gave much effort to their *peroratio*, as they felt that it was the final struggle which must decide the conflict.¹¹²

The importance of a proper conclusion is noted by Broadus: “Preachers seldom neglect to prepare some introduction to a sermon, but very often neglect the conclusion; and yet the other is even more important than the former.”¹¹³ The conclusion should move like a river, growing in volume and power, but often it loses itself in some great marsh.¹¹⁴ Thus, conclusions are to be fully prepared in order to end with a great force rather than a tiny fizzle.¹¹⁵

Strong conclusions require thoughtful consideration. Robinson captures the aim of a thoughtful conclusion, saying, “Like a lawyer, a minister asks for a verdict. The

¹¹¹Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 283.

¹¹²Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 243.

¹¹³Ibid. Stephen and David Olford remark, “More sermons are ruined by a poor conclusion than for any other reason” (*Anointed Expository Preaching* [Nashville: B&H, 1998], 78). Similarly, York and Decker state, “We will go so far as to say that the *greatest error* most otherwise good preachers make is in their conclusion—or lack thereof” (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 185, italics original).

¹¹⁴Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 244.

¹¹⁵Though dealing more with *confirmatio* in classical rhetoric, rhetoricians argue that a discourse should, in general, present the weakest arguments first and the strongest arguments last. If reversed, the discourse is more likely to be anticlimactic and diminish its effectiveness (Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 277). In short, the idea behind ending with a climax in the conclusion finds

congregation should see the idea entire and complete, and listeners should know and feel what God's truth demands of them."¹¹⁶ More than just summarizing the terrain of the sermon, the conclusion seeks to move audiences to action. If the sermon reflects the heart of the passage, understood through its notional structure, then what the author is doing with the text is brought home in the sermon's *peroratio*. The homiletician aims to reproduce the effect of the text, particularly as he closes out his sermon. One goal, therefore, of the conclusion is to help listeners visualize themselves acting on the truth from the sermon and changing their lives accordingly.¹¹⁷

Akin, Curtis, and Rummage offer helpful suggestions for well planned conclusions.¹¹⁸ First, end on a crescendo. Second, conclusions must have cohesion, so as to signify that nothing else needs to be said. Third, summarize the main points with key phrases. Fourth, end on the right tone and tenor. Fifth, conclusions are clear and transparent in thought and expression, as the audience knows where they have been and what they are to do now. Sixth, conclusions should be brief; land the plane quickly. Seventh, never underestimate the value of the element of surprise. Eighth, strive for good timing. Ninth, use personal application ("you" and "we"). Tenth, make application concrete. Eleventh, conclusions should flow naturally from the text at hand. Twelfth, the conclusion has the feel of being well prepared. To employ these suggestions grants the expositor considerable freedom in the development and arrangement of thought.

support in this principle from classical rhetoric.

¹¹⁶Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 167.

¹¹⁷York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 193.

¹¹⁸Summarized from Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 201-02. While not every aspect will be present every time, each suggestion is helpful for a thoughtful conclusion.

Differences between Classical Arrangement and Sermonic Arrangement

Whereas the orator may use whatever sources he envisions to bring about the most effective impact upon his audience, the expository preacher is most faithful and effective as he proclaims the notional structure and, consequentially, what the text is calling the listener to do. Unfortunately, many sermons *use* a text of Scripture, but the sermon itself is not *derived* from a text of Scripture.¹¹⁹ Deriving both what the preacher says and when he says what he says from the notional structure is an important aspect of expository preaching. Therefore, this section argues that *confirmatio* and *refutatio* differ in expository sermonic arrangement from classical rhetorical arrangement. Further, this section insists that the structure of the text is not an indifferent matter and that the text is king in sermonic structure.

Confirmatio and refutatio. While the first canon of rhetoric is *inventio* and involves the discovery of the arguments for a discourse, *confirmatio* is the third part of the second canon, *dispositio* (arrangement).¹²⁰ *Confirmatio* deals with the arrangement of that material within the discourse. *Confirmatio* is the core, main body of the discourse. Classical rhetoric gathers material in the process of invention, while arrangement, particularly in *confirmatio*, selects and disposes the material for maximum

¹¹⁹David L. Allen, "Introduction," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Neb L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 6. As with introductions and conclusions, for example, I affirm that the expositor has freedom to use illustrations, applications, and other supporting material to expound the author's intent for the audience. A sermon derived from the text of Scripture does not exclude these other elements; rather, it ensures that all other elements support the point of the text, which must be the point of the sermon.

¹²⁰While I argue that content and structure cannot be separated, these two canons are treated separately because in a very real sense the material must be *discovered* before it can be *arranged* (Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 277).

effectiveness.¹²¹ The challenge for rhetoricians is one of sequence. As Corbett and Connors explain, “What point do we take up first? Once we have dealt with that point, then what point do we take up?”¹²² In short, *confirmatio* is where the rhetorician generally begins with his weakest argument and works progressively toward his strongest argument.

Like the strategy of an architect in constructing a building, so, too, the expositor must develop a careful strategy for sermonic arrangement.¹²³ His goal is to arrange the sermon as a faithful reflection of the notional structure of his text and for an effective impact upon the listener. For the rhetorician, *confirmatio* may be arranged as he sees necessary. However, for the expositor, the arrangement of the sermon’s body is not a matter of his choosing, but of his following. Thus, he does not rearrange the material according to what he envisions as the weakest argument progressing to the strongest argument. Rather, he considers the arrangement of the biblical text, an arrangement that is God-inspired and therefore offers the strongest argument possible.

The body of the sermon must be constructed on a plan, or it is not a sermon at

¹²¹Ibid., 276.

¹²²Ibid., 277.

¹²³The importance and strategy of arrangement in the sermon is noted by Broadus as he compares the construction of the speaker’s discourse to that of an architect. While his words are true for sermonic arrangement in general, they apply most notably to the arrangement of the body of the sermon, which is comparable to *confirmatio* in classical rhetoric. He states, “Out of gathered materials he [the preacher] is to build a structure, and a structure suited to its specific design. The same, or nearly the same materials may be made into a dwelling, a jail, a factory, a church. But how different the plan of the building according to its design” (Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 209). I am primarily dealing with the main body of the sermon as I compare it to *confirmatio*. Within the body of the sermon, the expositor is granted freedom to illustrate and apply the passage as he chooses, but he is not granted the arbitrary freedom to rearrange the structure of the actual content of the sermon’s body as it relates to the biblical text. Thus, the core, or main body of the sermon must carefully consider the structure of the biblical text.

all.¹²⁴ The difference between the classical rhetorician and the expository preacher is in what determines the arrangement of the discourse or sermon. The expositor is not only seeking some plan for the structuring of the body of his sermon; he is seeking the best plan.¹²⁵ The best plan is not one invented by the preacher, but the one discovered by the preacher from the biblical text. The best plan is one which reflects the notional structure and, thus, what the author intends to do with what he has said. This plan is constructed by not just any author, but by those carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21).

Discovering the structural plan of the body of the sermon may reflect at times the sequential arrangement of the biblical text. David Helm acknowledges, “The organization of your sermons should ordinarily follow the organization of the biblical text. Your preaching outline emerges from your exegetical and biblical and theological work. . . . We don’t superimpose our outline over the text. Rather, we bring out of the text what the Holy Spirit already put in.”¹²⁶ In order to bring out of the text what the Holy Spirit put in the text, the expositor extrapolates the proposition from the text and then demonstrates how the text supports what the biblical author is doing.¹²⁷ While this

¹²⁴Ibid., 225.

¹²⁵Ibid., 226.

¹²⁶David Helm, *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God’s Word Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 100-01. Outline discovery for the expositor, as Leland Ryken describes, is to do so ordinarily “in a sequential manner from the beginning of the passage to the end” (“The Bible as Literature and Expository Preaching,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson, 38-53 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 51-52. See also, McDougall, “Central Ideas, Outlines, and Title,” 233-34.

¹²⁷I recognize the potential difference here between the (notional) structure of the passage and its sequential arrangement. In other words, expositors are tasked with the responsibility of extrapolating the proposition of the text, which may come in the middle or end of the passage, and then showing how the sermon outline supports that proposition. If the heart of Matthew 28:16-20 is make disciples of all nations (v 19), then logically this is done by evangelizing (going, participle) (v. 19), baptizing (participle) (v. 19), and teaching (participle) (v. 20). While there is a logical sequence in making disciples, each of these components is happening simultaneously both individually and corporately. Matthew, under divine

may not be a strict organizational sequence from the text, the structural integrity of the text is followed by locating the proposition and then explaining what the author is doing in the text. York and Decker explain what sermon structure should look like:

Make it your goal to *let the structure of the passage determine the structure of your sermon*. If you see three sections or movements in the text, then show that in the number of main points. Admittedly, this is sometimes hard if not occasionally impossible, but we have to believe that the Holy Spirit was involved in composing the structure of the text as well as choosing the vocabulary.¹²⁸

As York and Decker note, there may be challenges to letting the structure of the passage determine the structure of the sermon. Some passages lend themselves more naturally to a close following of the text's structure. For example, an epistolary text like Ephesians 2:1-10, though a single sentence in Greek, flows naturally in a progressive manner. The flow of thought in the sentence begins with mankind's deadness because of sin, God's grace saving those who were dead, and good works resulting from salvation in Christ.

Other passages are more difficult to structure in the same way. An example of the difficulty of following a strict textual structure is seen in Proverbs 31:10-31, where a chiasmic structure is employed. If he is preaching the notional structure of the passage, the expositor discovers that the author is holding the man in honor because of his virtuous

inspiration, gives the reader the way in which disciples are made, and he does so through sequential arrangement—going, baptizing, and teaching.

¹²⁸York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 143 (italics original). Helm insists that the flow of the sermon's structure follows the flow of the text's structure by saying, "By *shape* and *emphasis* I mean that every natural unit in the Bible comes ready-made with a Spirit-intended organization and emphasis. The job of the preacher is to find it. . . . Once that shape and emphasis are clearly apprehended, the preacher is ready to think about sermon construction. What sets the construction of an exposition apart from other kinds of Bible talks is this: the preacher *rightly submits* the arrangement of the material to the shape and emphasis of the text. We don't impose some other outline upon it. And further, we don't interpose material not included in it" (*Expositional Preaching*, 101, italics original).

wife.¹²⁹ If the expositor follows the chiasm sequentially, then he would have many points that are repetitious.¹³⁰ However, the expositor may take the notional structure—the man is highly regarded because he has a great wife (H in the chiasm)—and show how in pairing each point the heart of the proverb is demonstrated and the structure is still intact.¹³¹

Within *confirmatio* is *refutatio*. While the former is concerned with the sequence of arguments for one’s own case, the latter is concerned with presenting a refutation of one’s opponent’s views.¹³² Refutation may occur by appealing to reason,

¹²⁹Duane A. Garrett, comments, “It seems certain that the point here is *not* that the reason the woman is industrious, wise, and kind is because she is married to an important man. Rather, the man is highly regarded by his peers *because he has such a great wife*. In short, by placing the honored husband at the center of the poem, the text is telling the young man: ‘If you want to succeed and be well thought of, marry this kind of woman’” (“Preaching From the Psalms and Proverbs,” in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 108, italics original).

¹³⁰The chiasm reveals the notional structure, but creates challenges for preaching if the sequential structure is followed. See Garrett’s chiasm below (ibid.).

- A: High value of a good wife (v 10)
- B: Husband benefited by wife (vv 11–12)
- C: Wife works hard (vv 13–19)
- D: Wife gives to poor (v 20)
- E: No fear of snow (v 21a)
- F: Children clothed in scarlet (v 21b)
- G: Coverings for bed, wife wears linen (v 22)
- H: Public respect for husband (v 23)
- G’: Sells garments and sashes (v 24)
- F’: Wife clothed in dignity (v 25a)
- E’: No fear of future (v 25b)
- D’: Wife speaks wisdom (v 26)
- C’: Wife works hard (v 27)
- B’: Husband and children praise wife (vv 28–29)
- A’: High value of a good wife (vv 30–31)

¹³¹For example, points made throughout the sermon may revolve around the following: there is value in having a good wife (chiasm A and A’); both the husband and children benefit from such a wife/mother (chiasm B and B’); a wife of such character is hard working (chiasm C and C’), etc. My purpose here is to show that the expositor is being faithful to the (notional) structure of the text even if he does not follow it sequentially. His primary task is to convey the heart of the passage and its intended impact upon the listener, and in so doing he is being most faithful and effective in preaching the passage.

¹³²Corbett and Connors, *Classical Rhetoric*, 278.

emotion, ethic, and or wit.¹³³ In short, refuting by appealing to reason occurs in two general ways: (1) proving the contrary of that proposition, and (2) demolishing the arguments by which the proposition is supported. However, audiences are more often swayed by emotion rather than by reason, but rhetoricians must carefully calculate their use of emotion, lest it backfire on them.¹³⁴

Contemporary expositors, while not generally called to refute opponents, are at times called to give an apology (1 Pet 3:15-16). Craig A. Loscalzo notes two immediate goals of apologetic preaching: (1) to present unbelievers with a viable understanding of Christian faith so they may want to make it theirs, and (2) to instruct, confirm and affirm those who are already believers in the faith.¹³⁵ Within the sermonic body there may be times where the expositor necessarily addresses certain contemporary issues that directly relate to the passage under consideration. Like illustrations or applications in the sermon body, these are rhetorical decisions granted to expositors as they reflect the biblical author's intent.

Structure is not indifferent. While in agreement with classical rhetoricians that structure is not indifferent, expository preaching diverges from this shared sentiment when addressing the parameters of structural design. Content and structure cannot be separated (easily) for the rhetor, nor can they be separated for the preacher of God's Word. The preacher may not divorce the content of his message from the structure

¹³³Ibid., 279-83.

¹³⁴Ibid., 280.

¹³⁵Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 25.

by which the message is given in the biblical text. The arrangement of a biblical text is not an arbitrary attempt of communication by the biblical writer; rather, it is a divinely guided process.

The writers of *Text-Driven Preaching* affirm that textual structure should determine sermon structure. They espouse that “the structure of the text itself should guide the structure of the sermon, since meaning is expressed by an author through the text itself.”¹³⁶ At bare minimum, then, the structure of the whole passage guides the structure of the sermon outline. The sermon structure is concerned with presenting the content faithfully and effectively based upon what the biblical author is doing in the text and how it might best persuade the contemporary audience.¹³⁷

Akin, Curtis, and Rummage acknowledge the importance of sermon structure as it relates to the text, saying, “An effective teacher of the Word of God recognizes the wisdom of honoring the substance and structure of the text. What he says should be faithful to the text, as well as obvious from the text, both to himself and to those he instructs.”¹³⁸ The desire is that listeners will later, after hearing the sermon, be able to go

¹³⁶Allen, “Introduction,” 6. As I discuss in chap. 5, this dissertation argues that the expositor must not only consider the arrangement of the biblical text for the structure of his sermon, but also be sensitive to the genre of the text and be aware of the rhetorical impact of the text. All of these elements assist the expositor in faithfully and effectively communicating the Word of God.

¹³⁷Stott insists, “The golden rule for sermon outlines is that each text must be allowed to supply its own structure. The skillful expositor opens up his text, or rather permits it to open itself up before our eyes, like a rose unfolding to the morning sun and displaying its previously hidden beauty” (*Between Two Worlds*, 229). Stott is concerned here with the arrangement of the sermon serving the dominant thought of the passage. In other words, the dominant thought of the text (its content) is displayed through the structure of the text, which in turn supplies both the substance and the structure of the sermon.

¹³⁸Akin, Curtis, and Rummage, *Engaging Exposition*, 141. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson are surely correct as they chide, “We often wrestle with the outline of our sermon study, but this is really unnecessary. The task is to *discover* our outline (again, remember Schlatter’s hermeneutic of perception), not to *come up with one*. That is, if we have done our job in exegesis, we have our outline: it is the literary shape of the text” (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the*

back to the same passage and, though they may not recall the exact outline, hear from God in the text because they have thought through its structure.¹³⁹

The text is king. As an advocate of expositional preaching—that is, preaching which is not only based upon a text, but actually expounds and applies the meaning of the text—Allen asserts, “Text-driven preachers refuse to let the congregation walk away without understanding what God is saying to them through the text.”¹⁴⁰ Three premises guide a text-driven approach to Scripture: (1) God has spoken His final word in His Son, Jesus (Heb 1:1-2); (2) because Scripture is authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient, *Textus Rex*—“the text is king”—is the motto; and (3) preachers must submit to the authority of the text.¹⁴¹ Each of these premises rise and fall upon the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures.

Mohler’s definition of expository preaching substantiates that the text is king for the preacher. Mohler states,

Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon.¹⁴²

The preacher, as Mohler argues, begins with the determination to present and explain the

Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011], 741, italics original). The reference to Adolf Schlatter’s hermeneutic of perception is simply the understanding that we must stand “below” Scripture rather than assert our presuppositions and preferences into Scripture. Scripture is meant to conform our presuppositions and preferences, not the other way around. In chap. 5, I offer examples of sermons based upon texts of five different genres.

¹³⁹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 160.

¹⁴⁰Allen, “Introduction,” 8.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴²Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 65.

text of the Bible. Not only does he begin with the text, but he works from the text to apply its truth to the listeners.¹⁴³ Moreover, the enduring words of Southern Baptist homiletician John Broadus on the primacy of the text ring with clarity:

To interpret and apply his text in accordance with its real meaning, is one of the preacher's most sacred duties. He stands before the people for the very purpose of teaching and exhorting them out the Word of God. He announces a particular passage of God's Word as his text with the distinctly implied understanding that from this his sermon will be drawn. . . . But using a text and undertaking to develop and apply its teachings, we are solemnly bound to represent the text as meaning precisely what it does mean.¹⁴⁴

All other issues are subordinate to the central task of presenting the biblical text.¹⁴⁵ While there may be many important and noble concerns in the preacher's mind, his primary task of presenting the meaning and applying the text to the listeners is non-negotiable. Subordination to the substance and structure of the text is rooted in the proper understanding of Scripture's authority as a divinely inspired book, as opposed to a humanly invented discourse.¹⁴⁶ Thus, authority in preaching takes place only as human lips utter God's message, a message whose content is mediated through its structure.¹⁴⁷

J. I. Packer declares, "Holy Scripture is, in and of itself, preaching. From one standpoint, it is servants of God preaching; from another, profounder, standpoint, it is God Himself preaching. . . . The Bible text is the real preacher, and the role of the man in

¹⁴³Ibid., 66.

¹⁴⁴Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 33.

¹⁴⁵Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 66-67.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 67.

¹⁴⁷J. I. Packer, "Introduction: Why Preach?" in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 11.

the pulpit . . . is simply to let the passages say their piece through him.”¹⁴⁸ God preaching through Scripture requires the expositor to allow the substance and the structure of the message to come from the text itself.

In summary, the differences between the classical canon of arrangement and sermonic arrangement involve three primary elements. *Confirmatio* and *refutatio* in classical rhetoric are different from expositional arrangement in that the former are often arranged from weakest to strongest argument and the latter are arranged according to the structure of the biblical passage. The arrangement by which the expositor says what he says is not indifferent. It matters what he says and how he says it. His goal is to faithfully and effectively communicate the biblical author’s message. While he does invent some of what he says and have freedoms in certain parts of arrangement—e.g., introductions, conclusions, illustrations, and applications, the core or body of his sermon differs from that of the rhetorician.

Just as he is not given the license to invent what to say as the core of his sermon, he is not given the prerogative to structure his message any sort of way. He is bound to the text of Scripture for both what he says and the consideration of when he says it. *Textus Rex*—the text is king. His message is not an invented discourse, but a discovered discourse. He is simply charged with saying what has been said. Since the text is king, under the divine inspiration of the King, it controls the substance and the structure of the message.

Conclusion

The canon of arrangement finds common ground with important theological

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 17.

disciplines such as the doctrine of inspiration and hermeneutics as well as homiletics. God's Word was given through inspiration in order to impact lives. Hermeneutics involves applying key principles for understanding and applying rightly the Word of God, which alone transforms lives. The canon of arrangement falls within the overall goal of rhetoric—persuasion for maximum impact. This chapter begins by offering a brief history of rhetoric. Rhetoric originated as a means of assisting land owners who were engaged in disputes over land. Speaking with persuasion in order to garner support for one's argument was the aim. In time, rhetoric became a refined art with particular techniques that were repeatedly used to bring about a desired response from the speaker's listeners.

Among these techniques of persuasion are the five canons or laws of rhetoric. The second canon in classical rhetoric is arrangement. Upon the invention of what will be said, the speaker determines the proper order for presenting his content. In rhetoric, this ordering of the presentation of the content is dependent upon what the speaker believes will bring maximum impact upon the listener. Therefore, the goal of arrangement follows suite with the overall goal of rhetoric—maximum persuasion. The five parts of the canon of arrangement are discussed in order to bolster the claim that arrangement is not an indifferent matter within rhetoric. In fact, arrangement matters greatly to the overall achievement of the goal of maximum persuasion.

Lastly, similarities and differences of the canon of arrangement with the field of homiletics are explored. Rhetoric and homiletics converge as both disciplines desire to have maximum impact upon the listener. Both desire to arrange material for persuasive power. Arguments are made through arrangement. Persuasion through the classical

canon of arrangement is unrestricted. Not only may the speaker invent his subject matter, he may also arrange it according to what he envisions as bringing the most persuasive outcome. The expositor, on the other hand, while desiring persuasion, is bound not only to what the Scriptures say for his content, but also to the arrangement or structure of the passage to be preached. Two key ideas guide the expositor's field of potential arrangement: structure is not indifferent and the text is king. In short, in order to achieve maximum impact upon the listener the expositor must *discover* his outline from the text, not *create* it. This discovery is based upon the heart of the passage more than the grammar and syntax of the passage.

CHAPTER 5
TEXTUALLY-ARRANGED, GENRE-SENSITIVE,
RHETORICALLY-INFORMED HOMILETICS

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. celebrates the evangelical declaration to the commitment of preaching, but he laments that there is little consensus as to what constitutes authentic and faithful preaching. Unfortunately, as Mohler chides, evangelical preaching is often characterized as superficial and insubstantial.¹ He then explains, “One of the key symptoms of this expositional distress is the lack of adequate structure in biblical exposition.”² Thus, the scarcity of authentic and faithful preaching is due partly to inadequate sermon structure. Mohler insists, “Just as any building requires architecture and engineering, an expository message requires structure and form. . . . In other words, just as the blueprint and engineering schematics lead to a beautiful building, careful attentiveness to expositional structure is required in order to achieve a powerful and faithful sermon.”³

The structure of the sermon serves the text of Scripture.⁴ The structure is meant “to provide an adequate means of conveying biblical truth that will serve to enable

¹R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Preface,” in *How Effective Sermons Advance*, by Ben Awbrey (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2011), xi.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Steven Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons like Scripture* (Nashville: B&H, forthcoming), 19.

the preacher to proclaim the Word of God while ‘rightly dividing the Word of truth.’⁵

Sermonic structure which considers textual structure assists the preacher in proclaiming the heart of the passage, a structure that involves sensitivity to the diversity of the literary forms in the Bible.

A biblical text is structured according to divine inspiration, being written using a common and specific literary form. Through its literary form, the biblical text is meant to impact the reader as well as the listener. Accordingly, sermon structure is designed for rhetorical impact upon the hearer. This chapter seeks to synthesize textual arrangement, genre sensitivity and rhetorical aim with homiletics. Careful attention to the structure of the text and sensitivity to the genre of the passage aids the expositor in communicating clearly and effectively the message of God’s Word.

Ben Awbrey explains the connection of sermon structure with clear and faithful proclamation of the text by stating,

Sermon structure is the essential substance of what the preacher will be saying in the sermon. It must never be the case that what the preacher will say, in essence, in his sermon is still beyond his ability to grasp! The opportunity to preach is an opportunity for a preacher to expound the meaning of a biblical text which has been understood thoroughly and will be explained clearly by him. Poor sermon structure provides evidence that the preacher did not understand the text as thoroughly as he should have when he was in his study and did not express it as clearly as he should have when he was in his pulpit.⁶

Sermonic structure that considers the arrangement of the text, is sensitive to the genre of the text, and aware of the rhetorical impact of the text assists the preacher in proclaiming the heart and impact of the passage. Therefore, this chapter synthesizes textual

⁵Mohler, “Preface,” xi.

⁶Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, xvi.

arrangement, genre sensitivity and rhetorical aim by exploring the need to preach to both the head and the heart, as well as the need for textual sermonic structure. It concludes with a tool for sermon analysis.

The Need for Head and Heart

Preaching is not simply an academic exercise, but a holistic one. Both the head and the heart are most effectively engaged through the act of preaching. Preaching is not simply pouring information into the mind; it is the engagement of the heart as well. This engagement occurs most effectively through consideration of textual structure, sensitivity to genre, and awareness of the text's intended rhetorical impact. Preaching is the primary vehicle by which the head and the heart are impacted.

Rhetoric and Holistic Homiletics

In chapter 3, I establish the important role that literary diversity has in impacting the whole person—the head and the heart.⁷ The text of Scripture is written in ordinary language to ordinary people in order to have transformational impact. Abraham Kuruvilla is correct in stating, “By creating expectations in readers and instructing them how to read, genres shape the response of readers to the text; they are directions for viewing the world.”⁸ However, the task of the expositor is not complete by simply understanding the passage correctly or by being impacted himself by the text. Rather, his

⁷By holistic, I am referring to not only the intellect, but the emotional and spiritual components of individuals. In this way, rhetoric and preaching aim for impacting the whole person.

⁸Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 39. This diversity in genre finds its foundation in God as the Great Communicator. Jeffery D. Arthurs maintains, “Because God has ‘taken the trouble’ of communicating with such variety, careful exegetes should sit up and take notice. We rejoice in, respond to, and learn from our Lord’s creativity”

responsibility is to communicate the text in a way that not only conveys the intended meaning of the biblical author, but also the intended response.⁹

Preach for persuasion. Scripture is written in such a way and is to be communicated in such a way that the head and the heart are engaged.¹⁰ Preaching, therefore, needs to reflect the literary diversity of Scripture in order to impact the head and the heart.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Edwards A. Park recognized the struggle of pastors in his day between preaching to the head and the heart, saying, “It seems to be an opinion of many, that the object of *all* sermons is barely to impart instruction; the opinion of many more, that this is the sole object of *some* sermons.”¹¹ Yet, preaching is more than imparting knowledge. The purpose of preaching is persuasion, persuading to believe, to affirm, to repent, to love, to forgive, to obey, etc. As the Scriptures act/perform, so, too, the sermon should call listeners to act on the heart of the biblical message.

Just as the biblical author persuades his audience through the use of genre, the expositor persuades his audience by shaping the sermon in such a way as to solicit the intended response of the biblical author. Jeffery D. Arthurs explains, “The key to genre-

(*Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genre* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007], 22).

⁹Smith calls for the expositor to capture the spirit of the text, which he refers to as the emotional design. The spirit of the text comes most naturally through the genre (*Recapturing the Voice of God*, 19). Genre is inseparable to the structure of the text and even the rhetorical impact, since, as I argue in chap. 4, structure argues. The proper response to the text and sermon are all impacted by these elements.

¹⁰Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Lost in Interpretation: Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics” *JETS* 48 (2005): 89.

¹¹Edwards A. Park, “Schott’s Fundamental Principles of Rhetoric and Homiletics” *BibSac* 2 (1845): 40 (italics original).

sensitive preaching is to replicate the impact of the text, not its exact techniques, although that is the best place to start. A narrative text naturally lends itself to a narrative sermon; a poetic text structured with parallelism naturally lends itself to restatement.”¹² Saying what the text says and doing what the text does compels the expositor to use variety in his preaching.

The greatest of all communicators, Jesus, communicated with great variety.

Jesus used dialogue, story, visuals and lecture, all of which were often participatory and image laden.¹³ While none of these examples are arguably normative for expositors today, one cannot overlook the great diversity with which Scripture is communicated and fail to recognize the importance of such genre-sensitivity for preaching today.

God’s communicates diversely with purpose. Arthurs explains this purpose in two ways: “Because God is both an artist and a persuader. He expresses himself with

¹² Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 22.

¹³Ibid. A word of caution is duly noted by Hershael York and Bert Decker when it comes to Jesus’ model of preaching. They insist, “Frankly, we are never told to preach like Jesus and probably shouldn’t try. . . . Certainly we should emulate many elements of Jesus’ preaching: his passion, his high view of Scripture, his confrontation and application, and his tendency to force a decision of acceptance or rejection. But on the other hand, we must admit that Jesus, as the sovereign Creator of the universe, had intents, information, and abilities that we do not have” (Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* [Nashville: B&H, 2003], 16). The authors continue by offering Jesus’ use of parables as an example. Jesus had no single methodology for preaching parables. Sometimes he clearly explained the parable, and other times he did not, but simply admonished those who had ears to hear. The curious student of the Word may wonder why the Lord had such an approach. York and Decker explain, after quoting Mark 4:11-12 about seeing but never perceiving and hearing but never understanding, that in Jesus’ sovereign purpose his plan was to keep some listeners in the dark. The authors, then, maintain, “Frankly, that is not a burden that we can ever bear nor do we want to! So when some preachers defend their inductive method of preaching, letting the listener draw his or her own conclusions, I always wonder if they are also so bold to claim the same purpose of Jesus. Would we say that we preached a sermon with an inductive method so that some people listening would not repent and be forgiven? If we cannot claim his stated purpose as our model, then perhaps neither should we follow his methodology simply because he used it. So while our preaching might indeed have inductive *elements*, we really cannot shy away from the fact that the preaching of the prophets and apostles was almost exclusively deductive and directly applicational” (ibid., 17, italics original).

skill, and he moves audiences with purpose.”¹⁴ The author’s word in Ecclesiastes is true of all Scripture, which also accents the artistry of the Bible: “The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly” (Eccl 12:10).¹⁵ Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the biblical authors were concerned not only with the right words, but with the beauty of the words. The combination of the right words and the beauty of those words lead to transformational impact.

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix understand the necessary beauty of words for sermon effectiveness, insisting that effective preachers must be artists of words, which intensify the impact of the message.¹⁶ Scripture is not written only to please the eyes or ears, but to have lasting impact upon lives. Arthurs explains, “God’s purposes flow out of his character just as artistry does. He is active as well as beautiful. He is building his kingdom, so the verbal artistry of the Bible is not simply art for art’s sake; it is art that accomplishes his purposes. Rhetorical goals, not just aesthetic goals, lie behind the beauty and variety of the Bible.”¹⁷ Through the beauty in which the Word of God is wrapped, the Bible pierces both the mind and the heart of its audience. The goal, then, for the preacher is to mimic, as best as possible, the intent of those words and structure.

The Bible’s rhetorical goal of impacting both head and heart is affirmed by C. S. Lewis. While he agrees with the overall aesthetic appeal of Scripture, the Bible is “not merely a sacred book but a book so remorselessly and continuously sacred that it

¹⁴Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 23.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 24.

¹⁷Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 23.

does not invite, it excludes or repels, the merely aesthetic approach. . . . It demands incessantly to be taken on its own terms: it will not continue to give literary delight very long except to those who go to it for something quite different.”¹⁸ Similarly, Bernard Ramm espouses that the Bible “is not a theoretical book or a book of theological abstractions, but a book that intends to have a mighty influence on the lives of its readers.”¹⁹ These authors affirm that the Bible’s diversity is not simply for artistry, though it is that, but most fundamentally for persuasion through its artistry. Thus, preaching is saying what the text says and doing what the text does in a contemporary and relevant way. The logical way to accomplish this expository goal is through the structure of the sermon.

The Need for Textual Sermonic Structure

Upon discovering the specific genre of the biblical passage and analyzing the structure of the text (both surface and notional), the expositor may prepare an outline that is genre-sensitive. Moreover, such an outline may reflect the literary structure of the text, and convey the force and effect (illocutionary and perlocutionary speech act) of the text.²⁰

¹⁸C. S. Lewis, *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962), 49.

¹⁹Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 113.

²⁰See Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 743. If the expositor aims to preach for maximum impact, he must recognize and utilize the principle that logical structure impacts audiences more forcefully than that which is unstructured. Yet, more than a simple logical structure, the expositor seeks to structure his sermon so that the biblical author’s intended message is communicated. I do not intend to address the development in the last fifty years concerning the “New Homiletic”. In short, more traditional approaches to sermon structure have been replaced with an emphasis upon movement and experience rather than upon propositional ideas. For more on the “New Homiletic,” see Henry Grady Davis, as he uses the organic nature of a tree as a metaphor for preaching (*Design for Preaching* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958]); Fred B. Craddock, as he advocates a process of discovery in place of propositional preaching (*As One Without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching* [Enid,

Guidelines for Genre-Sensitive Outlines

While chapter 3 offers hermeneutical principles for five specific genres—narrative, prophecy, parable, poetry, and epistle, this section provides homiletical guidelines for those same genres. Following these five guidelines will assist the expositor in allowing the text to guide sermonic structure. While there are more than five types of genre in the Bible, these five are among the most prominent types.²¹

Important in sermonic development is not only the consideration of the structure and sensitivity to the genre, but an awareness of the intended rhetorical impact. In other words, the expositor should ask the question(s), Why did the biblical author use the structure and thus genre that he did? What was he doing by using what he did to communicate his intention? Further, how can the expositor structure his sermon in such a way that the impact intended by the biblical author is accomplished? Speech act theory is helpful in discerning the rhetorical impact intended by the biblical author and consequently, the preacher. The expositor is not only concerned with something being said (locutionary act); he also desires to discern the force (illocutionary act- e.g., inform, command, warn, etc.) and effect (perlocutionary act- e.g., feelings, thoughts, actions, etc.) of the speech act, and incorporates them in his sermon structure.

Oklahoma: Phillips University Press, 1974)]; and Eugene L. Lowry, as he compiles common elements of the “New Homiletic” (*The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1997]). Vines and Shaddix conclude rightly that the common denominators of the “New Homiletics”—(1) refusal to announce a conclusion in advance and (2) an intentional use of moving, sequenced form—stands “in opposition to time-tested rhetorical structure that calls for a clearly stated proposition and supported divisions” (*Power in the Pulpit*, 145).

²¹Smith argues that there are nine potential ways to categorize genres: Old Testament narrative, law, Psalms, prophecy, wisdom literature, gospel/Acts, parables, epistles, and Revelation. Genres, therefore, are limited in number. He then notes that all nine of these genres are expressions of only three basic structural forms: story, poem, and letter. 1) Story (narrative): Old Testament narrative, law, gospel/Acts, parables. 2) Poem: Psalms, prophecy, wisdom literature. 3) Letter: epistles, Revelation (*Recapturing the Voice of God*, 25-26).

Helpful in answering the above questions are Searle’s five general classifications for what people do when they speak. The following chart is adapted from Searle’s classifications and can be used to guide sermonic development, as it pertains to the force behind what the author is doing.

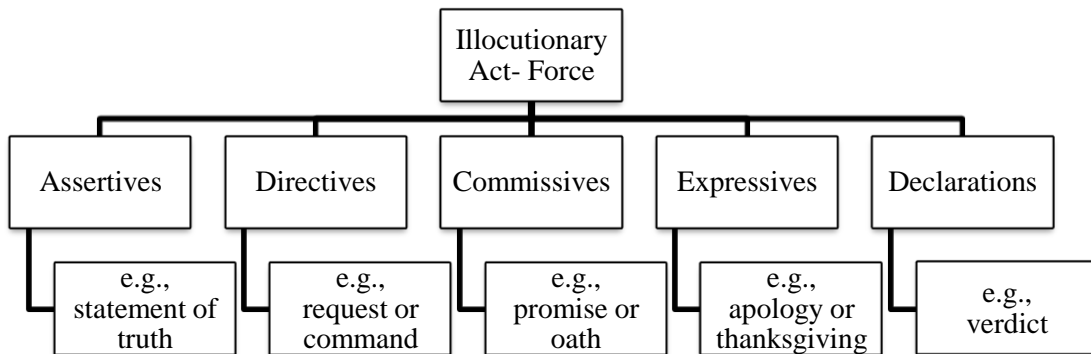


Figure 7. Illocutionary Act- Force

Narrative. As the most common literary form in the Bible, the purpose of the narrative is “not merely to tell what took place in the past. Rather, it is to relate these past events to biblical faith. Thus, the meaning and proclamation of such texts involves not simply ‘what happened’ but rather the interpretation of what happened.”²²

Proclaiming what happened and the importance and impact of what happened occurs through the structure of the sermon. In narrative passages, sentences do not normally last for several verses or have complicated structure. “The development of the passage,” as York and Decker explain, “is found in the development of the story. Our thematic outline of a narrative text, therefore, should reflect the simple storyline and themes that surface. Narrative texts typically show us something to either emulate or to avoid.”²³

²²Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 157.

²³York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 93.

Just as the biblical author is not concerned with simply telling his readers what happened, the sermonic structure stresses the significance of the story as the emphasis of the passage. Because the author uses narrative to address the reader, not through direct statements (as is found in an epistle, for example), but more indirectly, the expositor will do well to follow this same structural approach.²⁴

The expositor must remember that the point of the author will likely not come at the beginning of the story. Narratives are stories and stories are inductive. The point of the story often does not come until later in the story or when it is over. Sermon structure may follow this inductive approach as well. An inductive sermonic approach does not mean that the point of the passage remains open-ended; rather, it means that the point will most likely come later in the sermon or even at the end of the sermon as it mirrors that within the story.²⁵

Preparing the sermon outline for a narrative, the expositor must identify individual scenes.²⁶ The scenes cluster together to form the cycle. In all of these scenes which form the cycle, the biblical author is doing something. In essence, then, the expositor should ask, “What is the main idea of each scene, and what point is made when these scenes are stitched together to form a cycle,” and, thus, how can he replicate what is

²⁴See Vogel as he discusses narrative as being more indirect (“Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” 165).

²⁵Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God*, 43, 49.

²⁶Köstenberger and Patterson mention three internal elements: setting, plot, and characterization (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 247-51). Each of these elements involves not only a conscious choice by the biblical author for selecting certain components for the narrative, but also the careful and intentional arrangement of such material in order to convey clearly the meaning of the passage.

done in the narrative through the sermon structure?²⁷

The first step in narrative sermon development, then, is to identify and interpret the scenes of the narrative cycle.²⁸ Cycles consist of scenes that are related by character, place, setting, or incidents. There are two basic plot structures found in narratives: problem-resolution plots and occasion-outcome plots. The major difference between the two is whether or not there is a problem.

If the text does not describe a problem but a simple event, then the structure is simple: setting, occasion, and outcome; and there may or may not be a sequel. However, most plot structures in biblical narrative take the problem-resolution form. The backbone of a problem-resolution plot structure is comprised of setting, problem, resolving incident, complication, and resolution.

Each scene may involve a different form (a speech, a conversation, a narrated event, etc.), and each develops a new idea or expands the story. Analyzing the progressive development in the sequence of scenes, the expositor determines the main point of the narrative cycle, as each has an intended point and purpose given by the author.

The second step in narrative sermon development is analyzing the scenes to determine the span of text for the sermon, for an expositor must determine how he will delimit the text under consideration.²⁹ Köstenberger and Patterson add, “Your text will

²⁷Ibid., 743.

²⁸Ibid., (summarized from pages 743-56).

²⁹See York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 36.

need to be a self-contained unit, true to the divisions you discovered in step 1.”³⁰ When possible one should preach the whole cycle in one setting, but because some cycles cover much material, the expositor may need to break up the cycle in order to cover the passage adequately.

The third step in narrative sermon development is to design the sermon around the structure of the textual unit. From one’s exegesis the main point of the passage becomes clear. The message should be built around the main point of the cycle (or the scene, if preaching only one scene of the cycle). Building a message around the main point of the narrative does not necessitate that each scene be developed as an individual point. Neither does it mean that the sermon may not have stated points throughout the outline. Moreover, given the interactive nature of stories, preaching inductively from a narrative text seems most logical.³¹ In other words, as with the narrative, the sermon may build as it progresses.

As an example of a narrative, a thematic outline and sermonic outline of Acts 4:1-31 is offered (see figures 8 and 9). On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the early believers are filled with the Spirit and go throughout Jerusalem with boldness preaching the gospel. In chapter 3, Peter and John proceed to the temple during prayer, and they engage and heal a lame man. After healing the man, Peter proclaims his second sermon after Pentecost in the temple area. Because of the disturbance that Peter and John cause,

³⁰Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 750.

³¹Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Reader and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 224. See also Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” 172-74. Vogel notes that preaching a particular genre does not mean that the sermonic structure will be identical, but it will guide the sermon’s structure. Propositions are given no matter the genre used by the biblical author (either explicitly as in an epistle) or implicitly (as in poetry or often narrative) and must be expressed in the sermon. Propositions, as discussed earlier, may be statements

they are arrested and threatened to speak no longer in the name of Jesus. The structure of the text follows the three scenes of the passage (vv. 1-12, 13-22, and 23-31).

This text demonstrates the boldness of gospel proclamation by Spirit-filled believers who are confident in a sovereign God. In essence, Spirit-filled believers, who are confident in a sovereign God, are willing to take risks for the gospel. The concluding challenge for the congregation, by way of illocutionary force, is to pray for the filling of the Spirit in order to spread the gospel boldly.

Narrative Central Idea of the Text (CIT)- As Spirit-filled believers, Peter and John spread the gospel through their confidence in their sovereign God. ³²
Scene 1- As Spirit-filled believers confident in their sovereign God, Peter and John were willing to be arrested for the gospel- vv. 1-12.
Scene 2- As Spirit-filled believers confident in their sovereign God, Peter and John were willing to be threatened for the gospel- vv. 13-22.
Scene 3- As Spirit-filled believers confident in their sovereign God, Peter and John were emboldened by the gospel- vv. 23-31.

Figure 8. Narrative theme outline of Acts 4:1-31

Narrative Sermon Thesis- As Spirit-filled believers, we are to spread the gospel through our confidence in our sovereign God. Transition- As the gospel spreads through our confidence in a sovereign God . . .
Scene 1- As Spirit-filled believers confident in our sovereign God, we are willing to be arrested for the gospel- vv. 1-12.
Scene 2- As Spirit-filled believers confident in our sovereign God, we are willing to be threatened for the gospel- vv. 13-22.

or speech acts.

³²Vines and Shaddix define the CIT as a past-tense statement interpreting what the text meant then (*Power in the Pulpit*, 130).

Scene 3- As Spirit-filled believers confident in our sovereign God, we are emboldened by the gospel- vv. 23-31.³³

Figure 9. Narrative sermon outline of Acts 4:1-31

Prophecy. The prophet’s message can be written in prose or poetry, which adds to the difficulty of preaching such a genre.³⁴ Failing to recognize the diversity with which the prophets write will likely result in mishandling their messages not only in their interpretation, but particularly in their proclamation. Important to remember in sermonic structure is that the prophets are more than “seers”; their primary role is that of “covenant enforcers”—calling Israel to obey their covenant obligations with Yahweh.³⁵

Therefore, when preaching through the prophets the expositor must carefully note the historical timeframe of the author’s message, to establish its historical context, related to Israel’s infidelity toward God. These historical realities provide the basis for determining contemporary significance of the prophet’s message by way of analogy. Additionally, each prophetic book should be approached exegetically and homiletically according to the particular genre of the passage at hand.

³³Though the narrative sermon outline example is propositional and deductive in structure, as mentioned earlier, preaching a narrative text does not mean that the sermon must be narrative as well. Vines and Shaddix agree, saying, “Many proponents of a contemporary narrative homiletic suggest that because story is inductive by nature, then the sermon should be inductive. This assertion, however, overlooks the reality that the preacher has not been called merely to *retell* the biblical story but to *explain* it. Consequently, use the narrative design to structure your sermons from narrative texts, but do not neglect your responsibility to expose God’s truth through deductive reasoning. The two elements together can be a powerful combination” (*Power in the Pulpit*, 162). Thus, while structuring the sermon from a narrative text deductively and propositionally, the expositor may also use narrative elements in his delivery of the content of those same points in order to use both deductive and inductive aspects in the sermon. Beyond *explaining* the narrative, the expositor is to emphasize what the narrative does and the necessary response of the listener to it.

³⁴York and Decker speak of the prophets’ writings as a mixed bag of narrative, discourse, apocalyptic, poetic, or even a mixture of forms (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 94).

³⁵Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 772.

Furthermore, the expositor must be aware of the rhetorical impact that the specific genre used by the author is meant to have upon the listener.³⁶ For example, Jonah is a prophetic book by the prophet Jonah. As prophecy, the account rebukes Jonah's waywardness, and demonstrates God's grace to both the sailors and the people of Nineveh. Yet while a prophetic book, Jonah has narrative elements. The force of Jonah's message is partly disguised, as Longacre describes it, by its narrative genre. Whether it is a message of grace to pagan sailors and ungodly Ninevites or judgment upon a rebellious prophet, the force of Jonah's message is disguised somewhat throughout the storyline of the book. As with stories, the scenes of the book reveal the message of the author and the point and structure for the expositor.

Unless dealing with a narrative portion of prophecy, like Jonah, the basic unit of consideration within prophecy is the oracle, the divine speech given through the prophet.³⁷ Three steps for structuring the sermon of a prophet are helpful. First, the expositor must determine the limits of the oracle and its place within the larger structure.³⁸ Greidanus warns preachers against isolating a pithy prophetic saying for certain occasions because that saying functions biblically in its own historical and literary context.³⁹ For example, in order to bolster his church's giving, an expositor should not isolate Malachi 3:10a—"Bring the full tithes." The context of this passage deals with

³⁶Prophets essentially had three messages: repent, judgment, and hope (Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 252).

³⁷Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 773.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 250.

God's people who have completely turned away from Him. "Because the prophetic word," according to Greidanus, "was spoken in and for a specific situation, one should resist the temptation of isolating prophetic speech from its historical context, let alone isolating a fragment of prophetic speech from its literary context."⁴⁰

Second, the expositor must determine the genre and/or subgenre of the oracle and its structure.⁴¹ The careful expositor who pays attention to the subgenre will recognize the biblical author's clues and be more apt to proclaim faithfully the prophet's message.⁴² Third, the expositor must design the sermon around the structure of the text.⁴³ Köstenberger and Patterson clearly state, "The commitment, as usual, is to make the shape of your text the shape of your sermon."⁴⁴

⁴⁰Ibid., 250-51.

⁴¹Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 774. The authors explain several subgenres as follows: announcements of judgment (woe oracle, lament, covenant, lawsuit); salvation oracles (promise of deliverance, kingdom oracles, apocalyptic); instructional accounts (disputation, exhortation speeches, satire, wisdom sayings, prophetic narratives); and miscellaneous subgenres (vision/dream reports, prophetic hymns/songs, prophetic prayers, prophetic letters). See also Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 240-44. Important to note at this point is apocalyptic literature. Many scholars recognize apocalyptic as a separate genre found in the OT (e.g., Dan 7-12; Joel) and NT (e.g., Matt 24; Rev). I do not intend to separate apocalyptic from prophetic for my purpose here. John Collins defines apocalyptic as "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human percipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (*The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998], 5). According to Collins, the means of such revelation is often visions and other worldly journeys, supplemented by discourse and dialogue and occasionally by a heavenly book (ibid.). In general, the difference between prophecy and apocalyptic literature is that prophecy tells its audience that if they repent, disaster can be avoided and apocalyptic tells the faithful that the world is too far gone (Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 180).

⁴²Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 253. For example, clues used by the biblical author may include metaphors (e.g., Tyre is depicted as a "rock," Ezek 26:4-5); hyperbole (e.g., the rich women of Samaria likened to "cows of Bashan," which picture them as "choice cattle being fattened for the market," Amos 4:1); or forms and structures (e.g., forms such as the funeral dirge as a song of derision, Isa 14:4-15 or structures like chiasm, Isa 6:10).

⁴³Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 774.

⁴⁴Ibid.

However, structuring the sermon around the prophetic text dare not mean lifelessness or simply a running commentary. As the prophet addressed real conflict and urgent need, the expositor must do the same, for this is the point at which contemporary significance is generally found. Arthurs is certainly correct that because prophetic (and apocalyptic) literature is made of extremes, this produces tension. The expositor must not shy away from this tension (e.g., the faithful are oppressed). In fact, he must allow the tension to remain (Hab 1). He must also explain the hope that comes through trust in God.⁴⁵ Habakkuk, for example, exemplifies the tension between the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. Yet, the hope found in this small book is that God is sovereign over all of history (Hab 1:5-11) and He is worthy of our praise no matter what we face (Hab 3:17-19).

As an example of handling prophecy, a thematic outline and a sermon outline of Daniel 5:1-31 are given (see figures 10 and 11). Daniel is selected as an example because of its diversity, including narrative (chap 3), prophecy (chaps 4 and 5) and elements that are apocalyptic in nature (chaps 7-12). In short, Daniel calls believers to walk faithfully with God in an ungodly culture. Chapter 5 predicts Babylon's destruction, God's direct message of judgment to Belshazzar and the nation of Babylon for ignoring God's kingship. Thus, rhetorically, the chapter serves as directive, a warning. The expositor must capture this rhetorical aim in the sermon. While Daniel 5 is the story of God's judgment of rebellious Babylon, the chapter is also about us, about our

⁴⁵Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 188-92. While the prophets share this theme generally, each book, with its own context, contributes to what it means to hope in God. Yet, there is also an element where the theme of hoping in God is repeated throughout the OT because the people of God continually need reminding. Each generation and new context needs to hear this message of hope in a relevant and fresh way.

rebellion against God and His immanent judgment of us. Not only did Belshazzar and the nation of Babylon face God’s judgment for ignoring His kingship, but we, too, will face the same if we pretend that God’s judgment is not real.

The biblical author closes his chapter with a stark warning, for rhetorical impact (vv. 25-31). The expositor would do well to close his sermon with such a warning, that judgment is imminent unless something changes. In so doing, he will capture the essence of what the author is doing with what he is saying and the structure by which he says it.

Indeed, everyone’s days are numbered. And only by confessing one’s rebellion against God and submitting his or her life to King Jesus will the wrath of God be averted. Only in Christ alone will anyone escape the wrath of God, the rightly deserved punishment of God for one’s rebellion against Him. Jesus alone satisfies God’s wrath against sinners. What is true of Belshazzar is true of all, unless they repents of their sins and submits to God’s kingship. On one’s own, the scales of God’s judgment tip overwhelmingly toward their guilt and rebellion. But when one trusts in Jesus to take God’s wrath in his or her place, the scales balance out.

Prophetic Central Idea of the Text (CIT)- God’s judgment loomed over Belshazzar and Babylon as they ignored His kingship.	
I.	God’s judgment loomed over Belshazzar and Babylon as they ignored His kingship- vv. 1-31.
A.	God’s judgment did not disappear because the Babylonians ignored it- vv. 1-4.
B.	God’s Word was certain- vv. 5-16.

C. God said He would judge Belshazzar and Babylon swiftly for their defiance- vv. 17-24.
D. Belshazzar and Babylon were deficient on the scales of God's judgment- vv. 25-31.

Figure 10. Prophetic theme outline of Daniel 5:1-31

Prophetic Sermon Thesis- The judgment of God looms as you ignore His kingship.
Transition- It matters that you not ignore God's kingship because...
I. The judgment of God looms as you ignore His kingship- vv. 1-31.
A. Ignoring the judgment of God will not cause it to disappear- vv. 1-4.
B. What God has written is certain- vv. 5-16.
C. Defiance against God will result in His swift (certain) judgment- vv. 17-24.
D. You are deficient on the scales of God's judgment- vv. 25-31.

Figure 11. Prophetic sermon outline of Daniel 5:1-31

Parable. Parables are among the most hermeneutically and homiletically challenging and abused genres in Scripture.⁴⁶ After all, if the disciples had difficulty understanding Jesus' parables it is no wonder contemporary expositors do as well.⁴⁷ Learning to preach parables is necessary, however, since approximately one third of Jesus' teaching is given in this form.⁴⁸ The expositor, therefore, needs to realize that in

⁴⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 235. Köstenberger and Patterson note that the difficulty of parables is often attributed to the treatment of the parable as historical narrative or because of unduly spiritualizing every element in the parable (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 423).

⁴⁷Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 235. Of particular difficulty with parables is the multiplicity of interpretations and whether understanding the "author's intended meaning" is possible. Adding further difficulty for some is deciding which "author" is meant: Jesus or the evangelist? I would argue, however, that Jesus and the evangelist do not contradict one another.

⁴⁸Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 423; Osborne, *The*

order to understand what Jesus taught, he must understand how he taught.

C. H. Dodd asserts that parables are meant to “arrest the hearer.”⁴⁹ While the expositor need not preach in parabolic form, he does aim to “arrest the hearer,” at least for those who have ears to hear (Mark 4:9), and to proclaim the central message of the parable.⁵⁰ Parables by nature are stories. Therefore, following the guidelines of the narrative is helpful for the expositor. As with narratives, parables are inductive and most often make their point at the end of the story.⁵¹ Parables often have surprises for rhetorical impact. The hearer is “arrested” or surprised as the unexpected takes place—the lost are pursued at all costs (three parables, Luke 15:1-32), a mustard seed becomes the largest garden plant (Matt 13:31-32), a dinner host invites outcasts to his party (Luke 14:16-24). The expositor would do well to structure his sermon in such a way as to capture the unexpected nature of such parables for similar impact.⁵²

Hermeneutical Spiral, 235.

⁴⁹C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Scribner’s, 1961), 5.

⁵⁰Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 105. As a reminder from chap. 3, I argue that parables teach one central point. Stein asserts, “In the study of parables therefore we should seek the main point of the parable and not press its details” (*A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 163). So, for example, it does not seem important that in the parable of the Good Samaritan the man was going “down” from Jerusalem to Jericho. In fact, Jericho lies about 3,500 feet below Jerusalem, but the meaning would not change if it had said the man had been going “up” from Jericho to Jerusalem. Stein continues to explain the current danger of allegorizing among many interpreters today, particularly within reader-response hermeneutic. The early church fathers, like Augustine, were wrong in pressing every detail of a parable like that of the Good Samaritan. Craig L. Blomberg, while embracing a limited allegorical approach, says this about the early church fathers, “The church fathers wished to derive additional meaning from the text beyond that which a more straightforward reading would elicit, especially in narratives where there seemed to be a few explicit lessons or where characters’ actions seemed morally suspect” (*Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012], 34). He goes on to affirm two major problems with this allegorizing approach: (1) expositors rarely agree on what every detail stood for and (2) some of the meanings attributed to details in the parables were clearly anachronistic (*ibid.*, 35).

⁵¹Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God*, 104-05. More is said of the narrative element of parables later.

⁵²See David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), who argues that parabolic surprises (in the gospels) are about the surprising effect of the kingdom over against the established religion of His day. The shock-value in the parables should be retained in the contemporary

The expositor must also keep in mind that the purpose for which Jesus uses parables is to conceal the truth, at least from some people (Mark 4:11-12, quoting Isa 6:9-10). However, contemporary expositors should not assume that this goal of concealment is also theirs.⁵³ While not desiring to conceal, expositors, for example, do want to preach parables in such a way that Jesus' use of this genre to beguile, hold attention, cause people to ponder, or help doctrine lodge in one's memory occurs.⁵⁴ Again, the expositor is getting at what Jesus is doing by telling a particular parable.

Arthurs writes of two helpful qualities for preaching this genre properly.⁵⁵ First, realism is an essential quality not only for understanding this genre, but for communicating it today. Parables deal with the everyday life of homemakers, widows, virgins, servants, tenants, fathers, and sons in the ancient Near East.⁵⁶ "Because the parables plant their feet in the soil of the ancient Near East," says Arthurs, "it goes without saying that preachers must plow that soil."⁵⁷ To plow the soil of the ancient Near East, expositors must first discern how a first century Jewish culture would have understood the parable.⁵⁸

preaching of parables. For example, the story of the Good Samaritan shocks the listener as a reversal of expectations occurs (Luke 10:30-37). The hero in the story is the most unlikely candidate. Audiences today need to understand the shock of such a reversal of roles.

⁵³As a reminder, York and Decker explain the difference between Jesus' method and His purpose. While His method of preaching at times included parables, His purpose is to conceal understanding by using those parables. Yet, just as expositors today would not preach to conceal, they should not seek to emulate His method (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 16-17). Rather, parables are meant to "arrest the hearer" or jolt the listener who has ears to hear.

⁵⁴Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 106.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Robert H. Stein, "Interpreting the Parables of Luke," *S W J Th* 40 (1997): 10. Smith argues

Arthurs offers three rhetorical implications that flow from the realism of parables. The first is identification. By using parables, Jesus, for example, identifies with lowly shepherds and women (Luke 15), not just the mighty.⁵⁹ The second is imagination. Parables bring the message that the author is communicating into the concrete, not the abstract.⁶⁰ The realism of such concreteness ignites one's imagination—the rugged wilderness of a shepherd looking for his lost sheep or the dark home of a woman in search of her lost coin (Luke 15). The third rhetorical implication is an awareness that parables are “hidden land mines.” As Arthurs explains, “Realism prompts listeners to drop their defenses. . . . Your imagination is prodded, your feelings are aroused, and you listen with shields lowered but, before you know it, you discover that you're standing on a land mine. You might be the scoundrel!”⁶¹ This unexpected turn in the story is the heart of its notional structure. The unexpected takes place and is often explosive, as is the case with David, as he is confronted by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:1-15) or the teacher of the law who seeks to justify himself (Luke 10:25-37). In each of these two examples, the individual “steps on the land mine.” The expositor's goal, then, is to follow the notional structure of the parable, so that the audience “steps on the land mind.”

The second quality for the proper preaching of a parable is an awareness of its

that expositors must know the audience that received the parable from Jesus (*Recapturing the Voice of God*, 106). Knowing this audience will clue the expositor in on what Jesus was doing with the parable and how to connect it to the contemporary listener.

⁵⁹Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 108.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

narrative form.⁶² As a subgenre of the larger genre of narrative, parables have plot, character, setting, and point of view. There are two qualities of the parabolic story—simple plots and simple characters. These qualities enhance Jesus’ didactic purpose four ways. Stories disarm resistance. They also polarize responses; they force the audience to take sides. Further, simple stories engender memory, since these parabolic stories were transmitted orally. Lastly, the story focuses attention on the key point of the parable, often through “end stress” (e.g., Luke 15:32, the celebration over the repentance of the young brother).

As a whole, the goal in preaching parables is to reproduce the rhetorical impact of the genre. As a parabolic narrative, the expositor follows the simple plot and characters in his sermonic structure. While following the storyline of the parable, his ultimate goal is to reproduce the impact of the parable for modern listeners, conveyed in the notional structure of the unexpected turn.

The following brief principles are meant to be a guide for the exposition of parables.⁶³ First, knowing the cultural background aids the expositor in understanding and communicating the points of comparison that Jesus makes. Second, expositors must help the modern audience feel the shock of the parable, such as why a tax collector is righteous and a Pharisee is unrighteous (Luke 18:9-14). Such shock may be felt, for example, as the expositor makes a parallel between the Pharisee and tax collector with that of a long-time church member and a child molester. The key to this shock is that the unexpected takes place. Third, expositors should be clear about the point that the parable

⁶²Summarized from *ibid.*, 109-12.

⁶³Adapted from *ibid.*, 118-28.

is making. If the climax of the point comes at the end, which it often does with parables, then the expositor is wise to give careful consideration to make the climax come at the end of the sermon (e.g., Matt 18:21-35).⁶⁴ Let the structural impact from the sermon fall where it is located in the structure of the parable.

Fourth, reproducing the *effect* of the text is part of the purpose behind parables.⁶⁵ In particular, stimulating meditation through the use of imagination is to be sought where the parable calls for such a response. Clearly the question posed by Jesus after the parable of the Good Samaritan prompts serious meditation (Luke 10:36). Lastly, expositors may preach narratives with both inductive and deductive elements throughout. In other words, they may use inductive elements in preaching, but not to the neglect of deduction. As with narratives, parables follow scenes more than points. These scenes, however, do bring the audience to the point of the parable. The expositor, thus, may clearly communicate the point of the parable as that point becomes clear in the text.

As an example of the treatment of a parable, a thematic outline and a sermonic outline of Luke 10:30-37 are offered (see figures 11 and 12). Structurally, the parable divides naturally by the scenes and characters presented. Further, the immediate context of Luke 9 and 10 prepares the reader for the parable. Jesus speaks about the genuineness of being His disciple. In fact, there are certain recognizable traits in genuine Jesus followers. Among these recognizable traits is a love for God and others (Luke 10:25-29).

⁶⁴I disagree with Arthurs' next principle, as he says that preachers should not be afraid to *not* make a point in their sermon. See chap. 4 on the influence of the New Homiletic and an inductive approach to preaching. However, I agree with York and Decker that preaching may have inductive elements in it and still be deductive. They state, "We really cannot shy away from the fact that the preaching of the prophets and apostles was almost exclusively deductive and directly applicational" (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 17).

⁶⁵Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 125.

In chapter 10, a teacher of the law tests Jesus by asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks him what the Law says, and after the lawyer answers, in seeking to justify himself, he asks Jesus—“Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). Jesus replies with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which ends both with a question that calls for meditation and presents a “land mine.” Rhetorically, the parable is an expressive of the question, Who is my neighbor? The effect, therefore, intended by this parable is one that begins with personal reflection and leads to repentance and action toward being a good neighbor. The structure of the sermon from this parable should aim for the same effect. The sermonic structure considers the “land mine” from this parable, and then designs the sermon in such a way that the audience experiences it as their own.

Parable Central Idea of the Text (CIT)- Jesus called genuine disciples to love others unselfishly.
Scene 1- A tragedy occurred against one man- v. 30.
Scene 2- The religious leaders were not exempt from loving unselfishly- vv. 31-32.
Scene 3- The most unlikely person loved unselfishly- vv. 33-35.
Scene 4- The right question was asked and the right action was taken- vv. 36-37 (not who is my neighbor, but am I being a good neighbor?)
Land mine- Jesus called genuine disciples to love others unselfishly- v. 36-37.

Figure 12. Parable theme outline of Luke 10:30-37

Parable Sermon Thesis- Genuine disciples of Jesus love unselfishly.
Transition- The expositor is better served to leave the stated point at the end of the sermon.
Scene 1- (The setting and context of the story) A tragedy occurs- v. 30.
Scene 2- Religious leaders are not exempt from loving unselfishly- vv. 31-32. (This scene sets up the land mine)
Scene 3- The most unlikely are to love unselfishly- vv. 33-35.
Scene 4- Are we asking the right question and taking the right action?- vv. 36-37.
Land mine- If we are to be genuine disciples of Jesus, we are to be the most unlikely and to love unselfishly.

Figure 13. Parable sermon outline of Luke 10:30-37

Poetry. “In poetry, featuring the literary traits of imagery, figure, and parallelism,” writes Vogel, “the glory of God’s faithfulness is amplified, built up, and given magnificence.”⁶⁶ Poetry includes much more than traditionally thought of in books like Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Song of Songs, or Job. Poetry cuts across multiple genres and is therefore an important genre to understand and expound rightly.⁶⁷ Yet, because most poetic literature is found in the Psalter, the focus of poetry in this section will be upon the Psalter.

The difficulty of poetry lies not only in its imagery, figure, and parallelism, but

⁶⁶Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” 165.

⁶⁷Another reason for its importance is the impact of poetry, particularly the Psalter, upon the NT. Graeme Goldsworthy notes that in the NT the Psalter is one of the most frequently quoted or alluded to books of the OT (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000], 198).

also in how to preach such a genre. As psalms were accompanied with music, the contemporary preacher might wonder if he, too, must sing his sermon in order to be faithful to the psalm. Further, as personal, subjective experiences, how is the expositor today to preach such emotion and image?⁶⁸ As an aid for contemporary expositors, Walter C. Kaiser describes the Psalter in two categories: lament and praise.⁶⁹ Knowing the general type of psalm is helpful in discerning how to best capture the personal, subjective elements of the passage in the sermon, as well as what the author is doing with the psalm and what the intended response should be.

The selection of a psalm for preaching is different than that of other genres. Unlike other genres which are more difficult to discern the preachable unit, psalms are self-contained units. Expositors should preach the entire psalm, when possible, though some, like Psalm 119, may be of prohibitive length to preach in one sermon. Some psalms should be taken together (e.g., 22 and 23; 103 and 104).⁷⁰ Further, understanding the general layout of the whole of Psalms assists the expositor. Psalms 1 and 2 serve as an introduction to the Psalter; then it progresses from lament (Pss 3-41) to praise (Pss 42-150).⁷¹

⁶⁸Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 39.

⁶⁹Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 121, 153 (as he deals with each category). Kaiser divides praise into “descriptive praise” as the worshipper extols God’s person and “declarative praise” (thanksgiving) as the worshipper declares what God does (ibid., 153). See Grant Osborne as he describes eight types of Hebrew poetry (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991], 181-85).

⁷⁰Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 763.

⁷¹Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God’s Word*, 273. While this observation is general, it is helpful for the expositor. Further, Psalms is divided into five books: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150. Scholars differ on their explanation for such a five-part division, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For further interaction with the structuring of Psalms, see Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford,

The following principles are intended to assist the expositor in the preaching of the psalms. First, the expositor should identify the classification of the psalm.⁷² In general, as noted above, the psalm is either a lament or praise. Not only is this classification important for communicating the emotional content of the psalm, but knowing its classification often offers clues for the structure as well.

Second, the expositor should identify the structure of the psalm.⁷³ According to Kaiser, psalms of praise generally have a three-part structure. Pure praise psalms feature: (1) a call to praise; (2) the cause of praise; and (3) a conclusion or recapitulation of praise.⁷⁴ With a focus upon God's deliverance, thanksgiving praise psalms have a similar structure: (1) a specific call to praise; (2) a specific cause for praise; and (3) a testimony to God's help and prayer for the future.⁷⁵ A lament psalm is the expression of the psalmist to God concerning his current suffering. Kaiser notes seven common structural elements in a lament: (1) invocation; (2) pleas for God's help; (3) one or more complaints; (4) confession of sin or assertion of one's innocence; (5) imprecation on one's enemies; (6) confidence that God will respond; and (7) hymn or blessing.⁷⁶

"The Canonical Approach to Scripture and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford (Atlanta: SBL, 2014): 1-12.

⁷²Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 763.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 763-64. Again, these are generalizations. While two broad categories (praise and lament) can be identified with the psalms, as a reminder from chap.3, parallelism is the primary structural feature of this genre. David Jackman describes that parallelism works on three levels. It will either reinforce, explain, or contrast an idea (David Jackman and Robin Sydserff, *Preaching and Teaching Old Testament: Narrative, Prophecy, Poetry, Wisdom* (London: Proclamation Trust, 2008). See Figure 5, for examples, of various types of parallelism and references of each.

⁷⁴Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 154.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 123-24. Not every element appears in every psalm.

Third, the expositor should design the sermon around the structure of the psalm.⁷⁷ Upon discovering the classification and content of the psalm, the expositor should allow its structure to design the sermon.⁷⁸

David L. Larsen speaks of creating an “emotional outline.” The sermon, he says, needs “peaks and valleys. There need to be moments of effective intensity and then a backing off and moments of relief for the congregation. Working at half throttle all the time won’t do, nor will going at full bore throughout delivery, like lightning which flashes all over but strikes nowhere.”⁷⁹ The expositor, then, structures the sermon in such a way that the overall emotional flow of the psalm is captured. As verses in the psalm fall in the “valley” or “peak,” then the structure should reflect that emotional shape.

Arthurs offers a helpful example of an emotional outline from Psalm 77.

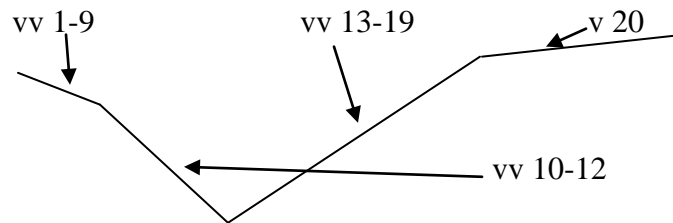


Figure 14. The “emotional shape” of Psalm 77

He explains, “The first nine verses angle sharply down, but then the psalm hinges in verses 10-12 and swings upward from that point onward as the author and readers . . . plow through the great deliverance at the Red Sea. Then the final verse ‘flattens out’

⁷⁷Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 764.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 70.

with a summary as the Israelites continue their journey toward the Promised Land.”⁸⁰

Psalm 77 leaves the reader higher than it started, and so, too, should the expositor’s sermonic structure. This emotional outline offers guidance as the expositor considers the structure and allows it to influence the rhetorical impact of the text within the sermon.

As an example of a sermon from a psalm, a thematic outline and a sermonic outline of Psalm 46 are offered (see figures 15 and 16). This psalm is a (communal) thanksgiving praise.⁸¹ The author is making a promise by what he is saying, and is thus calling listeners to praise God because they can trust Him. No historical context is given for it. The people of Israel are called to give a thanksgiving praise to God because He is their refuge and strength. Though the psalm does not begin with a call to praise, from the beginning it offers praise to God for His presence in Zion.⁸² The psalm is divided into three parts by the use of *Selah* (vv. 3, 7, and 11).⁸³ There are two refrains in this psalm (v. 7 and v. 11)—“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

Just as Psalm 46 uses repetition to emphasize God as a refuge and strength to those who trust in Him, the expositor should do the same throughout his sermon to drive home this truth. This is where the parallelism of the psalm is meant to reinforce the emphasis of the passage in sermonic form: the hope of God as a refuge to those in need.

⁸⁰Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 53.

⁸¹Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 155.

⁸²Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, in vol. 16 of *New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 216. This psalm is usually considered among the Zion songs. The authors write, “Zion/Jerusalem was ancient Israel’s sacred place of divine presence, a sacred place from which salvation and wholeness derive. The psalm likely came from cultic celebrations of the reign of God and God’s choice of Zion as a sacred place of divine presence and hope” (ibid.).

⁸³Ibid., 217.

The expositor, in keeping with the structure and rhetorical impact of the text, should reinforce the hope of this psalm in the sermon.

Psalm Central Idea of the Text (CIT)- In times of trouble, God was a refuge and strength as Israel trusted in Him.	
I.	In times of trouble, God was Israel's refuge and strength as they trusted in Him- vv. 1-11.
A.	In times of trouble, God was Israel's refuge and strength because of His presence- vv. 1-3.
B.	In times of trouble, God was Israel's refuge and strength because of His provision- vv. 4-7.
C.	In times of trouble, God was Israel's refuge and strength because of His power- vv. 8-11.

Figure 15. Psalm theme outline of Psalm 46

Psalm Sermon Thesis- In times of trouble, God is our refuge and strength as we trust in Him.	
Transition- We offer thanksgiving praise to God because . . .	
I.	In times of trouble, God is our refuge and strength as we trust in Him- vv. 1-11.
A.	In times of trouble, God is our refuge and strength because of His presence- vv. 1-3.
B.	In times of trouble, God is our refuge and strength because of His provision- vv. 4-7.
C.	In times of trouble, God is our refuge and strength because of His power- vv. 8-11.

Figure 16. Psalm sermon outline of Psalm 46

Epistle. Two considerations are helpful in the preaching of epistles: historical and literary matters. Because epistles are mostly directed to specific situations

historically, the expositor must understand that historical situation.⁸⁴ In so doing, he must grasp the principles/intentions from the text in order to transfer them to his audience today.⁸⁵ Speaking of the straight forward nature of epistles, Vogel writes that the theological propositions of this genre “serve to ground an argument or a logical inference in doctrinal texts or to provide the basis for a practical directive for the Christian life.”⁸⁶

Compared with the four previous genres examined, contemporary sermons resemble the epistle more than any other genre.⁸⁷ Greidanus insists that in the Greek tradition, the letter was a stand-in for the author.⁸⁸ D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris write, “People in Paul’s day saw the letter as a means of establishing personal presence from a distance, and this perfectly served the needs of the apostles in pastoring their flocks from a distance.”⁸⁹

The culture of the NT was one of orality, not literacy.⁹⁰ Accordingly, the letters of the NT are meant to be heard more than read. In other words, narrowing the

⁸⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 243.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” 166.

⁸⁷Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 152. As a reminder from chap. 3, the typical structure of an epistle has five parts: (1) salutation; (2) thanksgiving; (3) body; (4) exhortations; and (5) closing.

⁸⁸Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 314.

⁸⁹D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 231-32.

⁹⁰Ben Witherington, III, *What’s in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 7. Witherington adds, “The literacy rate in the cultures of the New Testament era seems to have ranged from 10 to 20 percent, depending on the culture and the subgroup within the culture that is being discussed. Not surprisingly, then, all ancient peoples, whether literate or not, preferred the living word (i.e., the spoken word)” (ibid). Witherington continues to argue that as best as can be determined, no documents in antiquity were intended to be read silently, and only a few were meant for private individuals to read (ibid., 8). John D. Harvey explains, “Speeches were given aloud; reading was done aloud; even writing was done aloud. Oral composition was the rule, not the exception” (John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul’s Letters* [Grand Rapids: Baker,

focus to the Pauline corpus, the letters are meant more for the ear than for the eye. Pieter J. J. Botha agrees that in Paul's day reading "was not experienced as a silently scanning, mainly mental activity. It was a performative, vocal, oral-aural happening. The reader literally recited, with vocal and bodily gestures, the text which he (most probably he) usually memorized beforehand."⁹¹ Therefore, the text was not only more heard than read in Paul's day, it was heard with a more sermonic tone.

Concerning the orality of the culture in Paul's day, the apostle is to be seen as an orator.⁹² P. T. O'Brien is correct in stating, "Paul specifies his primary, apostolic task as the preaching of the gospel (Gal 1:16). When he writes his letters, he does so as a preacher of the gospel. His letters, though real, are nevertheless similar in many ways to oral speech."⁹³ If these letters represent Paul's preaching had he been present, then the contemporary expositor should communicate carefully their content as well as consider their arrangement.⁹⁴

1998], 56). See Harvey for a detailed examination of the orality and literacy of the first century (ibid., 35-59).

⁹¹Pieter J. J. Botha, "The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters: Rhetoric, Performance and Presence" in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 413.

⁹²Leland Ryken, "Paul as Letter Writer," in *The New Testament in Literary Criticism*, ed. Leland Ryken (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1984), 273 (referencing P. C. Sands). For the view that sees Paul's work not as an orator but more as a herald, see Duane Litfin, "Swallowing Our Pride: An Essay on the Foolishness of Preaching," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 106-26. In short, Paul is both an orator and a herald.

⁹³P. T. O'Brien, "Letters, Letter Forms I: Paul," in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 709.

⁹⁴James W. Thompson argues for a strong echo of Paul's preaching in his letters by stating that "the oral/aural dimension of Paul's preaching undoubtedly determined both his style and his arrangement in the letters, inasmuch as they, of all written communication, may come closest to oral communication" (James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 33).

Several key structural principles for preaching the epistles may be identified. First, expositors should identify the structure of the whole letter.⁹⁵ Reading through the whole letter multiple times and developing a basic outline will give the expositor an overall understanding of the structure of the letter. The biggest difference in the structure from epistle to epistle will come in the body of the letter. The expositor must carefully note how the writer structures his argument.⁹⁶

Second, expositors should analyze the structure of the context to determine the textual unit for the sermon.⁹⁷ Choosing a passage that is an appropriate length for the congregation is essential.⁹⁸ As mentioned in chapter 3, the paragraph is typically the best point of reference for the textual unit.⁹⁹ Knowing the structure of the whole from the first step will assist the expositor in determining the appropriate textual unit.

Third, expositors should examine the structure of the text clause by clause.¹⁰⁰ York and Decker offer helpful suggestions for discerning three aspects of every passage: context, content, and concern. Specifically, as pertaining to the analysis of a text's structure clause by clause, content is determined first by structural analysis (micro- and

⁹⁵Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 781.

⁹⁶The opening of an epistle often involves the sender, the addressee, followed by a salutation or greeting, and even a thanksgiving and prayer (e.g., 1 Cor 1:1-9) (ibid., 455-56). The body of an epistle offers various structural elements, such as the disclosure of a certain subject (e.g., Phil 1:12); a request (e.g., Phlm 10); or an expression of astonishment (e.g., Gal 1:6) (ibid., 457). Other structural elements may be recognized in an epistle, such as a list of concerns (e.g., 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1) or a doctrinal section and an applicational section (e.g., Eph 1-3 and 4-6, respectively). For structural elements, see ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 36-38.

⁹⁹Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁰Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 782.

macro-level).¹⁰¹ Diagramming the passage is helpful in order to get at its micro-level.

Fourth, the expositor should design the sermon outline from the structure of the text. The main (and minor) points of the sermon must clearly come from the biblical text under examination. These main (and minor) points in the sermon structure should demonstrate what the author is doing based upon what he is saying, and call the audience to respond accordingly.¹⁰²

As an example of a sermon from an epistolary text, a thematic outline and a sermonic outline for 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 are offered (see figures 17 and 18). Paul seems to have written 2 Corinthians (Fall AD 55/56) around a year after writing 1 Corinthians. Upon explaining the reason for the change in his travel plans, Paul talks about how the gospel both motivates and determines his ministry.¹⁰³

The result, then, is two consequences: the worldly standards have ceased to count in the estimations that Christians make of people (5:16) and persons in Christ are new in the world and thus have new responsibilities (5:17-21). In the verses under consideration, Paul describes what Jesus does in a believer's life and the difference that it makes. Rhetorically, the force behind Paul's words is declarative—those in Christ are new. The effect, then, is active—you are ambassadors with a message of reconciliation.

¹⁰¹York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 62. They offer two other factors for discerning the content: thematic analysis and lexical analysis. Thematic analysis is particularly associated with structural analysis and is not meant here to separate it from structural analysis. In short, thematic analysis includes: conventions of composition (e.g., discourse markers, repetition, “zone of turbulence”), literary conventions (e.g., rhetorical devices such as *inclusion*, word order, or a chiasm), and theological conventions (e.g., what does this passage say about God?) (ibid., 69-75).

¹⁰²See Awbrey as he explains the importance of the sermon outline flowing from the text (*How Effective Sermons Advance*, 150).

¹⁰³Charles B. Cousar, “2 Corinthians 5:17-21,” *Interp* 35 (1981): 180.

The expositor, then, aims to challenge his audience to share the message of reconciliation because they are new in Christ.

Epistle Central Idea of the Text (CIT)- Paul reminded the Corinthians that Jesus changed their lives and called them to share the message of change.
I. Jesus changed their lives through reconciliation- v. 17.
II. Jesus was the mediator of their reconciliation- v. 18.
III. Jesus was the message of their reconciliation- v. 19.
IV. Jesus called the reconciled to the ministry of reconciliation- v. 20.
V. Jesus was the means of their reconciliation- v. 21.

Figure 17. Epistle theme outline of 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Epistle Sermon Thesis- Jesus changes our lives and calls us to share the message of change.
Transition- So how does Jesus change us and what are we to do about it?
I. Jesus changes our lives through reconciliation- v. 17.
II. Jesus is the mediator of our reconciliation- v. 18.
III. Jesus is the message of our reconciliation- v. 19.
IV. Jesus calls us to obey the ministry of reconciliation- v. 20.
V. Jesus is the means of our reconciliation- v. 21.

Figure 18. Epistle sermon outline of 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Structural Analysis of Two Sermons

Here, two sermons are summarized and analyzed, related to the structure of the text and the structure of the sermon. I chose two well known expositors for comparison,

Alistair Begg and John MacArthur.¹⁰⁴ Both men are highly regarded and have fruitful ministries. I also chose to examine sermons from the same selected text in order to understand how these two men approach the same passage in their sermons. I chose Mark 4, particularly the last half of the chapter, as it deals with several parables and then an explanation of Jesus' use of parables in verses 33-34. Both men follow the structure of the text except for one deviation. Begg begins his sermon with the explanation of Jesus' use of parables in verses 33-34, whereas MacArthur closes with these verses in his sermon. I first offer a tool for analysis in approaching any discourse and then summarize and analyze each sermon, beginning with Begg.

Analysis and Interpretation of Sermon Arrangement

Roderick P. Hart offers a set of four questions that are helpful in the analysis and interpretation of any discourse. These four questions deal with (1) message design (the use of standard structural devices); (2) message emphasis (the comparative treatment of individual ideas); (3) message density (the depth of coverage of individual ideas); and (4) message pacing (the distribution of ideas through time).¹⁰⁵ The first question, message design, asks, "Does the speaker use an *identifiable* traditional message

¹⁰⁴Alistair Begg serves as senior pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, OH, and has been there since September 1983. Begg has written several books and leads the ministry known as Truth for Life. His church can be accessed online at <http://www.parksidechurch.com/> and Truth for Life at <http://www.truthforlife.org/>. John MacArthur serves as senior pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, CA, and has been there since 1969. He is a prolific author and serves as president of and featured teacher of Grace to You, which was founded in 1969. His church can be accessed online at <http://www.gracechurch.org/> and Grace to You at <http://www.gty.org/>.

¹⁰⁵Roderick P. Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 111.

structure? Is this approach used throughout or only from time to time?”¹⁰⁶ The second question concerning message emphasis asks more specific questions like: “How rigidly does the speaker adhere to the *topic-proper*? Does the speaker roam widely from the subject matter or is the message highly constricted in content? Why? Does an idea’s *context* give it special importance or attractiveness?”¹⁰⁷

The third area of message density understands that structure argues; therefore, the depth of emphasis given to individual ideas in a given message will reveal the intention of the author. Questions of message density include: “Which points are *emphasized* and which are given short shrift by the speaker? How much time is spent on the introduction of *novel* information? How much time is spent recasting the familiar?”¹⁰⁸ The last set of questions pertaining to message pacing may include: “What is newsworthy about the *sequence* of arguments? Does the *beginning* of the message anchor later ideas and arguments?”¹⁰⁹ These four questions are applied to both Begg’s and MacArthur’s sermon from Mark 4 after a summary of each is offered.

Alistair Begg Sermon Arrangement Summary

The sermon under consideration by Begg is from Mark 4:26-34, entitled “The Kingdom of God.”¹¹⁰ In typical sermonic fashion, Begg begins his sermon with an

¹⁰⁶Ibid., (italics original).

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 116 (italics original).

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 118 (italics original).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁰Alistair Begg, “The Kingdom of God” (preached on 30 August 2009 at Parkside Church in Cleveland, OH), <http://www.truthforlife.org/broadcasts/2013/06/10/the-kingdom-of-god-part-a-/>; and <http://www.truthforlife.org/broadcasts/2013/06/11/the-kingdom-of-god-part-b-/>; (accessed September 25,

illustration in hopes of connecting with the audience and tying it to the thesis of his sermon. He speaks of John Winthrop sailing to the new world (1630), and while standing on the deck of the *Arbella*, off of the coast of Massachusetts, he delivers a message that sets the course for the dream of this New World. Speaking to those on board, Winthrop says, “We will be as a city on a hill.” Begg explains that this was a dream for a better world. Throughout history, as Begg notes in his introduction, people often look back, around, and forward. The prophet Isaiah speaks of a child who will come. When Mark tells the reader that Jesus came in 1:15, this understanding is to be read in light of all that the people brought to that instance—a supernatural deliverer, a king. Begg asserts that Jesus disavows any notion that he comes for a national restoration or a political revolution. Rather, Jesus comes telling stories, and Mark offers a selection of these stories for the reader.

From his introduction, Begg picks up with the last two verses of his text, verses 33 and 34. Begg argues that these two verses are given by Mark as a summary and should be used as the beginning of understanding Jesus’ story telling. He notes three things in these two verses: (1) a selection of parables, a taste of small plates are offered by Mark; (2) Jesus adapts words to the level of understanding of his listeners; and (3) when Jesus was alone with his disciples he gave them an explanation (v 11). The secret of the kingdom of God, as is spoken of in verse 11, has come in the person, words, and works of Jesus. Begg purports that this secret is not obvious. Jesus is king, but a veiled king—no crown, no palace, etc. He states that only faith will allow one to recognize the Son of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

2013).

Having made these observations about the last two verses, Begg offers a summary (vv 33-34). First, there is the *selection* of parables. Second, Jesus taught for the purpose of *connection*. Third, there is the *distinction* of the way Jesus spoke to the general population and his own disciples.

Begg's first point, therefore, comes from the last two verses of his text, which he identifies as the summary for Jesus' use of parables. Next, Begg speaks about the mystery of the seed sprouting in verses 26-27. The farmer has no idea how this sprout happens. Begg explains this sprouting as Jesus illustrating how God comes to reign in a person's heart. God forgives, cleanses, renews, and changes. While on the outside it seems as if nothing is occurring, then a tiny sprout appears. Begg then references Nicodemus in John 3 as an example of this mystery.

Begg moves to the second parable, his third point, which he labels as a contrast of initially/ultimately. In other words, the parable of the mustard seed is a contrast of something insignificant (the beginning of a mustard seed) to something impressive (a large plant with branches). The parable, according to Begg, is not about the process of beginning to end, but about the dramatic change brought about by the power of God.

Begg relates this truth to the seeming insignificance of the kingdom coming. At first the kingdom starts out as small and insignificant, but in the end it is large and triumphant. He then speaks of how the kingdoms of the world have tried to snuff out Christianity, to swallow it up as a bird swallows seed. Yet the kingdom continues to grow. Begg offers the example of Saul who sought to wipe out the believers in Acts. He who once tried to swallow up the seed now sits in the branches of the tree. Begg connects the passage with Mark's initial readers by saying that it appeared to them under

Roman tyranny that the world was coming down upon them. Yet, God will accomplish his purposes, and His kingdom will advance.

While nations may rise up against Christians, little by little the nations are being brought to take shelter in God's branches. Begg, in closing, asks, "What about your Monday? Winthrop fired the imagination of the people on the deck of *Arbella*. God's purpose transcends Winthrop's vision of a city. God's city is everlasting. God gathers into his city people from every tribe. There is no need to run from him in fear, if we run to him in faith." Begg concludes by recalling his points: the summary, the initially, and the ultimately. Now, if this is a kingdom that lasts forever, as Begg asserts, the only thing I can do is offer my life to him.

Analysis and Interpretation of Alistair Begg's Sermon Arrangement

The critical questions from Hart are now applied to Begg's sermon structure. The message design of Begg's sermon follows typical sermonic expectations. He has a defined introduction, body, and conclusion. Begg offers the listener consistent transitions, so that the audience can discern when he is moving from one major section to another. Begg also keeps the message emphasis throughout his sermon. He does not detract from the text at hand. From his opening illustration to his major points within the body of the sermon to his conclusion, Begg remains concentrated throughout his message upon the *topic-proper*. The preacher keeps the content restricted to the biblical text, continually emphasizing the kingdom of God as a mysterious work of God and an unstoppable force. In order to remain disciplined to the text before him, Begg continually refers the congregation back to the passage under consideration.

The message density of Begg's sermon revolves around the idea of the kingdom of God. The listener will have no trouble leaving the message knowing that Begg spoke about what the kingdom of God is like. While Begg's introduction seems a bit long, the message as a whole is well balanced with its various parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.¹¹¹ The body of the sermon includes the bulk of the time. However, the body is also well proportioned as he deals with the summary, the mystery, and the initial/ultimate. Since the body of sermon is proportioned well, Begg is able to emphasize the intention of the passage appropriately. As Hart maintains, structure does indeed argue. Begg allows the structure of the passage to dictate the structure of the sermon. In so doing, Begg is able to accent the authorial intention that Mark has in recording these two parables: the kingdom of God has come—while mysterious, it is triumphant.

While the arrangement of Begg's sermon typically follows the arrangement of Mark's text, the preacher does take some liberty to begin the body of his sermon with the closing two verses of his selected text. If it is true that structure argues, is the preacher arguing something different than what the biblical author argued when the expositor takes the liberty to rearrange the order of the textual presentation? While rearrangement of the passage can result in a different intent, the issue is whether or not the expositor captures what the biblical author is doing through his sermonic arrangement. In the end, density is about emphasis; therefore, the expositor's structure should capture the emphasis of the text.

¹¹¹See chap. 4 as I deal with the relationship of the five parts of the classical canon of arrangement with the arrangement of expositional sermons.

Closely tied to the density of the message is the pace of the message. While discerning the emphasis is important, it is also vital to understand how the points (ideas) are distributed throughout the sermon. In other words, what was the reason that the speaker chose to place his arguments in a particular order, and does the expositor tie those points together? Begg chooses to place Mark's summary of parables at the beginning of his sermon, though it appears at the end of the passage he preaches. Chapter four of Mark deals with three parables. The chapter begins with Jesus teaching the people in parables by the sea. Three parables are given by Mark, and then the summary verses are offered. For Begg's purpose, he places the summary first and shows how his points tie together throughout the sermon.

Begg's beginning illustration of Winthrop on board the *Arbella* is used to bring home the idea of God's city, His kingdom that transcends the American dream of freedom. Begg, therefore, anchors the beginning of his message with a cord that runs throughout it until the very end. With an analysis and interpretation of Begg's sermon offered, the next section will evaluate Begg's rhetoric of arrangement.

Evaluation of Alistair Begg's Arrangement

To offer a critical evaluation of the arrangement of Begg's sermon, a glimpse of his introduction is given, an overall assessment of the body of the sermon follows, and then a consideration of his use of rearranging a portion of the biblical text is discussed. Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors speak of the opening of a discourse that grabs the attention of the audience as "the hook."¹¹² This hook, for example, may include

¹¹²Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 268.

a provocative question, a startling hyperbole, or an intriguing paradox.

Begg certainly captures the attention of his congregation as he begins with the story of this sailing vessel in the Spring of 1630 setting its course on the New World. He moves naturally and smoothly into biblical examples of longing for a new world, and then to his chosen text for the day.¹¹³ Though some rhetoricians observe that it is more effective to seek for the attention of the audience later in the discourse, Begg demonstrates that “the hook” at the beginning of the message is a valuable way to garner the attention of the audience, and call for them to give their careful attentiveness from the onset.¹¹⁴

The overall body of Begg’s sermon is arranged in a typical fashion. The three main sections of the sermon follow the flow of an introduction, body, and conclusion. The body of the sermon is arranged according to the flow of the text.¹¹⁵ Robert H. Stein argues that parables essentially have one main point that the author is emphasizing.¹¹⁶ Begg is true to this hermeneutical approach to parables. The structure of Begg’s sermon is not so much concerned with drawing out certain points from each verse, but discerning the main point of the parable. While parables will give certain details, the point of parables is not to become weighed down in the details of the story, but to understand that

¹¹³See *ibid.*, 269.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 270.

¹¹⁵The lone exception to this is Begg’s use of his first point in conjunction with the last two verses of his text. This rearrangement is evaluated further in the next point.

¹¹⁶Stein writes that “a *parabolē* is an illustration, a comparison, or an analogy, usually in story form, using common events of everyday life to reveal a moral or a spiritual truth” (Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981], 16). Again, he further maintains that “the key to interpreting the parables is to remember that they are not extended allegories but that they tend to teach a single basic point. We should therefore focus our attention on the basic analogy in the picture part and its corresponding point in the reality part” (Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting*

it is a story for the purpose of driving home a central message. In the case of the back-to-back parables of the seed presented in Mark 4, Begg is correct to focus the listeners' attention on believing that the kingdom of God has come—while mysterious, it is triumphant.

Begg does change the actual order of Mark's explanation of the parable in his sermon. He begins his sermon with the end of the passage. Although Begg makes this change, the emphasis of the passage is still the focus of his sermon. By dealing not only with the surface structure, but the notional structure, Begg's change does not change the structure of the passage. In fact, he is able to communicate clearly the message of the passage and its intended response from the audience. The key to Begg's communication is placing proper emphasis on the heart of the message. While changing the order of some verses, Begg does not change the intent of the message.

John MacArthur Sermon Arrangement Summary

The sermon preached by MacArthur is from Mark 4:21-34 and is entitled, "How to Listen to the Lord."¹¹⁷ MacArthur reminds his Sunday morning congregation that as he preaches through Mark, the previous week's passage dealt with the parable of the soils from chapter 4, verses 1-20. In that parable, Jesus distinguishes between two kinds of soil. There is the soil that produces nothing, which does not hear nor respond to the gospel. Then there is the soil that is productive. The difference between the two soils is hearing the truth; hearing in the sense of not embracing it versus embracing it. He

the Bible: Playing by the Rules [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 149).

¹¹⁷John MacArthur, "How to Listen to the Lord" (preached on 13 December 2009 at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, CA); <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/41-20/how-to-listen-to-the->

states that while the greatest grace gift is salvation, there would be no knowing of salvation without Scripture. So, according to MacArthur, the greatest grace gift is divine revelation.

Alongside this gift of God's Word is the distinguishing characteristic of genuine Christianity. Genuine believers hear and believe the truth, the revelation of God's Word. Therefore, the fruitfulness (thirty, sixty and a hundredfold) of the good soil is evangelism. People receive the Word that is sown in order to sow seed. However, as with Mark 4:23, not everyone has ears to hear. What distinguishes believers from the crowd is what they hear. So as with verse 24, "Take care what you listen to." The idea is, listen carefully to the Word of God. MacArthur insists that this hearing is an immense privilege and we are to hear with real understanding. Therefore, the central proposition of MacArthur's selected text is hearing the Lord with understanding.

Finishing his introduction, MacArthur states that the text gives four characteristics of a good spiritual listener. In summary, number one, we listen obediently. Number two, we listen appreciatively. Number three, we listen dependently. Number four, we listen confidently. He says that these four words lay out how believers should listen. In relation to his proposition, he then moves to his first point from verses 21-22. Listening obediently is the innate characteristic of a believer. Believers have an innate obligation to let their light shine and not hide it. If you have received it, you are to spread it. Interestingly, MacArthur notes that many commentators view verses 21-34 as "a random assortment of disconnected parables and ideas that came from Jesus that Mark just sort of threw together to kind of get them all in, they don't hang together." He

lord; (accessed September 25, 2013).

counters this idea of random assortment by saying that notion is absurd. In fact, as he states, “The Holy Spirit led the writer to a clear, crystal-clear intention and nothing is random whatsoever, and certainly not this.”

Jesus, as MacArthur argues, shows the absurdity of placing a lamp under a basket (v. 21). Further, if you have truth to be disclosed there is a right or proper time for its disclosure (v. 22). In essence, here is Jesus’ point as MacArthur explains it:

“Temporarily hidden to be permanently revealed . . . temporarily kept secret to be permanently uncovered and disclosed.”

MacArthur’s second point states that believers listen appreciatively (vv. 24-25). He first touches briefly on verse 23, since it is his central proposition. MacArthur discovers the central proposition of the passage and shows how each point reinforces this thesis. In order to reinforce his proposition from verse 23, he next deals with verses 24-25. He states that we listen appreciatively because of the individual opportunity involved. In verse 24, Jesus is still in the agricultural mode.

In order to understand this parable, as well as the others, MacArthur reminds the audience of Jesus’ explanation of the parable of the soil. Once the disciples were given the paradigm for that parable, the rest of the parables become clear. He declares, “But notice in this one, again with this kind of sowing and reaping imagery, ‘By your standard of measure it will be measured to you.’ That is to say, God will give you back a return on what you sow, right? That’s the point.” In being faithful to sow the seed, God will be faithful to bring the return.

He then summarizes the essence of these two verses, saying, “So, I say we listen obediently and appreciatively because of the promise of reward the Lord has given

to us as faithful listeners who let what we hear be known to others. Whoever has, verse 25, to him more shall be given. It's repeated twice, once at the end of 24, and once at the beginning of 25."

Thirdly, he says that we listen dependently (vv. 26-29). He comments, "In this great enterprise of evangelism as we hear the Word of God, take it in and proclaim it, we have to understand our limitations." The last two parables in this section, as MacArthur points out, do not say, "And He was saying to them," but rather, "And he was saying." Why? The preacher notes, "They weren't explained to the crowd, they might have been explained to the disciples, the explanation isn't given because it really isn't necessary. They now understand the big picture. They got the paradigm in mind and it becomes obvious what these parables mean."

MacArthur then explains,

The farmer plants and then he goes to bed and given the conditions of the soil and the preparation of water, etc., etc., he really can't do anything but wait till harvest. He plays no role in the growth of the crop, that's the point. The sphere of salvation, the reign of God over the hearts of those who believe and our role in that is like a farmer who plants the seed and then goes home and goes to bed. I like that . . . I really like that. You don't need to live your life in a panic. You don't need to stay awake 24 hours a day. Go to bed. Plant the seed, shine the light and go to bed. You're not responsible for what happens. That's the wonder of it all.

He adds that sowers can only tell the truth; they cannot produce change in people's hearts. Only the Lord changes hearts. In fact, the work of salvation is divinely automatic (v. 28), and we simply enjoy the harvest (v. 29).

The fourth point is that we listen confidently (vv. 30-32). Jesus tells the people to listen confidently because of the inevitable outcome. In other words, looking at the end what is the outcome? Jesus uses the illustration of the mustard seed because everyone would understand that imagine. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed

that turns into a mustard tree. As the smallest seed used in planting in their day, the mustard seed's small beginning gives no indication of where this seed is going.

MacArthur captures the essence of this parable, saying,

They might have been much more comfortable if Jesus had said to them, "Just go everywhere and pronounce damnation on everybody." But You're just telling us we don't do that and You're telling us that we're going to have to let the light shine and sow the seed and this thing is going to go and this is going to be our calling and our commission. Just exactly what are the results going to be? And He said, "This is going to be massive, massively out of proportion to the size of its beginnings."

He closes these verses by clarifying that the birds nesting in the branches of the mustard seed (v. 32) are the nations that will be brought into the blessing of the tree, the gospel.

MacArthur closes his sermon with verses 33-34. He says, "So we are listeners. We hear with understanding. We are the privileged." The last two verses serve as a reminder, MacArthur notes. He wraps up the text by saying,

But with many such parables, He was speaking the Word to them so far as they were able to hear it . . . that's to the crowd . . . He didn't speak to them without a parable but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. And there we are back where we started, right? What's the greatest privilege of a Christian? To know the truth, right? What is the distinguishing mark of a Christian? To know the truth, obey the truth, love the truth, to be listeners. And how do we listen? Obediently and appreciatively, and dependently, and humbly and confidently. What amazing privilege has been granted to us, hasn't it? Think of it this way. If you're a believer, you speak God's language. When He speaks, you perfectly understand it. It's a foreign language to everybody else.

Thus, genuine believers listen to the Lord with understanding. The last two verses are a reminder and means of reinforcement.

Analysis and Interpretation of John MacArthur's Sermon Arrangement

As with Begg's sermon, Hart's critical questions are applied to MacArthur's sermon. The message design of MacArthur's sermon has a clearly defined introduction,

body, and conclusion. Like Begg, he follows conventional expectations for the sermon development. His transitions allow the audience to follow his train of thought from the introduction to the body to the sermon's conclusion. Further, in relation to the message emphasis, MacArthur continually brings the audience back to the central proposition or *topic-proper* of his sermon. Also like Begg, the preacher continually refers his audience back to the selected passage in order to focus their attention on the *topic-proper*. MacArthur does not stray from the emphasis of his text, although he often uses supporting passages to reinforce Mark 4.

The third question involves the message density. Again, questions around this element presuppose that structure argues. Therefore, the depth or density of emphasis upon certain ideas reveals the intention of the author. MacArthur's introduction is longer proportionately than what is expected. While certainly not longer than the body of his sermon, MacArthur spends thirteen minutes and five seconds in the introduction. However, in his introduction he is reminding the audience of the parable of the soil (vv. 1-20) and explaining the central proposition of the text, which he understands from vv. 23-24—be careful how you listen. He spends so much time in the introduction because he recognizes the value of the immediate context for discerning the current text's meaning. As MacArthur expounds on each main point, he continually reinforces the central idea of the text and thus the message.

The fourth question deals with message pacing. While he discerns the proposition from verse 23, he explains each parable as it is presented in the text. The emphasis at the beginning of the message anchors his argument throughout the sermon. He allows the text to determine the proposition and then he allows the major points to

support his proposition. In contrast with Begg's sermon, MacArthur allows the last two verses to remain as the summary and reinforcement of the proposition of the text. He ends the sermon with the end of the passage, instead of like Begg, beginning with the end. He ends by stating the privilege we have as being Christians. We hear the truth. In fact, as believers we speak God's language. We understand it. To everyone else it is a foreign language. MacArthur uses the last verses of the text as a reminder and reinforcement at the end of his sermon.

Evaluation of John MacArthur's Arrangement

In typical MacArthur fashion, he uses no "hook" in order to grab the attention of his audience.¹¹⁸ Here is how he opens the sermon:

Well, let's open our Bibles to Mark chapter 4 . . . Mark chapter 4 and this morning we're going to take a prolonged portion of Scripture. We're going to cover verses 21 to 34. And we could spend more time on these but as you remember, I'm trying to keep us moving through the gospel of Mark and I think it's appropriate for us this morning to take this as one unit so you're going to have to stick with me as we fly a little bit through this section . . . Mark chapter 4, verses 21 to 34.

He then recalls the parable of the soil from verses 1-20 for the congregation. He offers no "hook" as Hart describes it; rather, he simply refreshes the audience's minds and then begins to demonstrate the central point of the current passage. MacArthur's lack of using a "hook" does not mean that he disapproves of such. It simply means that his own approach to introductions is less likely to include such a "hook."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸E.g., see sermons: "Praising God for Your Salvation," 1 Pet 1:10-12, <http://www.gty.org/MediaPlayer/sermons/80-408>, (accessed September 25, 2013); "Jesus Teaches the Teacher," John 3:1-3, <http://www.gty.org/MediaPlayer/sermons/43-11>, (accessed September 25, 2013). These sermons demonstrate MacArthur's tendency to start the sermon without a "hook."

¹¹⁹In fact, the book *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, written by various faculty members of The Master's Seminary, spends chapter 13 dealing with introductions, illustrations and conclusions. In

The arrangement of the body of the sermon is easy to follow. Four primary points give structure to the sermon outline, although these four points do not seem to come easily from the text. MacArthur discerns the proposition of his passage to be “take care of how you listen.” Each of his four points describes the characteristics of a good listener. The points are taken in the order that they are presented in the passage. MacArthur agrees with the principle that a parable has one primary point. In his sermon each point, therefore, describes what it means for believers to be good spiritual listeners (of the Lord).

MacArthur differs from Begg’s arrangement particularly as it relates to the last two verses of the selected passage (vv. 33-34). MacArthur explains these two verses as a reminder. He states, “But with many such parables, He was speaking the Word to them so far as they were able to hear it . . . that’s to the crowd . . . He didn’t speak to them without a parable but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. And there we are back where we started, right?” In other words, in the closing verses, Mark reminds his readers of Jesus’ approach with parables and of the great privilege of being a listener of the Lord. And, as MacArthur describes it, we listen obediently, appreciatively, dependently, and confidently.

Therefore, MacArthur views the closing two verses of this section as a reminder. However, MacArthur’s sermon conclusion is more of an explanation than a

that chapter, Richard L. Mayhue writes, “Only a preacher’s imagination and creativity limit the kinds of effective introductions. The introduction used, however, should be tailored to fit a speaker’s relationship to his audience, the occasion for the message, and the intended outcome of the sermon” (*Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue [Dallas: Word, 1992], 244). MacArthur has the advantage of preaching to one congregation for many decades as well as preaching expositionally through the gospel of Mark. As Mayhue clarifies concerning introductions, MacArthur knows his audience and the occasion for the message well. Therefore, he sees no need to “hook” the audience in because he already is systematically taking them through each chapter.

charge to do something with what Jesus says. In contrast to Begg's sermon that ends by picking back up with the story of the *Arbella* and search for the new world, MacArthur's sermon conclusion is more explanatory. Instead of reinforcing the message of the author and the appropriate response of the audience in an impactful way, MacArthur's closing is rather mundane.

One preacher takes liberty to change the order of the verses presented and uses that new arrangement in a rhetorically impactful and yet textually faithful way, while the other keeps the original order and ends the sermon with merely an explanation. The former expositor chooses to keep the notional structure of the passage intact while adjusting the surface structure. In so doing, he remains both faithful to the heart of the message and the impact of the text. While the latter expositor communicates the notional structure, he does so in a less persuasive manner than the former. The goal of the expositor is to communicate the author's intention faithfully, as well as effectively. This type of communication may involve, at times, adjusting the surface structure while maintaining the notional structure.

Conclusion

Preaching that is textually-arranged, genre-sensitive, and rhetorically-informed understands the importance of not only filling the head, but of moving the heart. In order to accomplish this task the expository preacher recognizes the central place of preaching in the life of the believer, and he aims for the maturity of every Jesus follower through preaching (Col 1:28-29). He knows that faithful preaching is a call to persuade the listener, and he realizes that persuasion is best accomplished through structure, a structure that considers the text's own structure, genre, and rhetorical impact.

The canon of arrangement is not an arbitrary look at the organization of discourse. When particularly connected with the homiletical task, the canon of arrangement reveals the essential nature between substance and structure. As stated in this dissertation, structure argues. In the case of the preacher, his sermon structure must argue what the biblical writer is arguing in the most impactful way possible.

The preacher speaks a word from the Lord for contemporary listeners by not only carefully expounding the content of the biblical text, but also by reflecting the arrangement of the text in the arrangement of the sermon. In fact structure argues, then *what* the expositor says is closely connected to *how* he says it. *How* the preacher says *what* he says is accomplished best through careful consideration of the textual structure, sensitivity to the particular genre, and an awareness of the rhetorical impact.

Certain benefits attend the faithfully structured sermon. These benefits are grounded in the controlling principle that the text is king in sermon structure. In other words, the expositor allows the text to drive the outline. The main point of the sermon and the structure of the sermon should come naturally from the biblical text.

While he is sensitive to the genre by which the text is communicated, the expositor nonetheless is determined to expound what the author is doing through his use of that genre. Principles for structural consideration, genre-sensitivity, and rhetorically-informed sermons are given and sermon outlines are offered as a way to demonstrate sermon diversity. This diversity does not negate preaching deductively and propositionally for each genre, but it does account for the rhetorical impact that each genre plays upon the sermon.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to argue that sermonic structure which considers the arrangement of the text, is sensitive to the genre of the text, and aware of the rhetorical impact of the text assists the preacher in faithfully and effectively communicating the Word of God. Synthesizing the three elements of structure, genre, and rhetoric allows the expositor to not only communicate the meaning of the passage, but also what the author is doing in that passage and its intended impact. Being faithful to the passage is only part of the homiletician's aim; he desires also to be effective in his communication of that passage. Giving attention to the above three elements better ensures faithfulness to the passage and effectiveness in communicating it.

Treating the structure of the text, genre of the text and, rhetoric of the text separately certainly is helpful. My aim, however, is to show that these three areas, when joined together, assist the expositor more than if simply examined in isolation from each other. As I explain in this dissertation, others have expressed the importance of textual structure for the sermon structure, but I seek to show how that structure is also wed to its genre and rhetorical aim, and, therefore, should be reflected homiletically as well.

Findings

Preaching rises and falls on the revelation of God to mankind in the written

Word. If God has not spoken, then men have no message to declare. On the other hand, if God has spoken, then men speak His message.¹ Because I believe that God has spoken, chapter 2 begins with the Scriptures. The Scriptures were given by the inspiration of God, and this revelation involves both the content of that message as well as the medium through which it is conveyed—its structure. The church has always believed that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God.² This inspiration extends not only to what the biblical authors said, but how they said it. I argue in this chapter that just as the expositor does not have right to change the content of the biblical passage, he must not ignore the arrangement of the biblical structure. Both are equally inspired. Therefore, both the inspired content and structure must guide the content and structure of the expositional sermon.

Just how the inspired Scriptures are to be approached in order to be understood is of great importance. In chapter 3, I examine the importance of hermeneutics and genre. Faulty hermeneutics will lead to faulty exposition. I begin with an overview of hermeneutics. While the topic itself is vast, I offer a brief history and deal with where the locus of meaning is found. In short, the discipline of hermeneutics seeks to discern the biblical author's intent. Several factors aid the interpreter in discovering this intent.

After providing general principles, I deal with the crucial issue of biblical literature or genre. Genres have certain structures that must influence the expositor's structure. Important in this influence is understanding the difference between the surface and deep structures of the passage. In short, biblical author's make certain choices to

¹J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 97.

²Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids:

communicate most effectively their message (deep structure) through specific (surface) structures. Furthermore, speech act is helpful in discerning what the biblical author is doing through his choice of genre (structure). Beyond saying something (locutionary act), the author is using specific genre (structure) for force (illocutionary act) and effect (perlocutionary act). I end the chapter by offering hermeneutical and structural principles for five specific genres—narrative, prophecy, parable, poetry, and epistle.

While the expositor should readily note the essential nature of the doctrine of Scripture and the discipline of hermeneutics, he may be more surprised at the advantage of an ancient discipline—classical rhetoric. More specifically, within classical rhetoric the canon of arrangement is of importance to homiletics. In chapter 4, I explore this ancient discipline and establish its relevance for contemporary exposition. Classical rhetoric is viewed as a discipline where discourse is used for the maximum persuasion of an audience.³ Expositors can certainly affirm their desire to persuade their audiences to act upon the preached Word. Classical rhetoric is helpful for homiletics, particularly in answering just how this maximum persuasion is achieved, especially as it relates to the structure of specific genres and their intended impact.

In this chapter, classical rhetoric is highlighted, but the focus is primarily upon the canon of arrangement and its similarities and differences with structure for expositional preaching. The canon of arrangement teaches that structure argues.⁴ After examining the five parts of the canon of arrangement, I demonstrate how this canon

Zondervan, 2011), 59.

³Roderick P. Hart, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 107

⁴*Ibid.*, 110.

offers three areas of similarity for contemporary expositors. I then show how the other two parts of the canon of arrangement offer differences for expositors. Essentially, the expositor must consider the structure of the biblical passage and allow it to influence the structure of his sermon. Because structure argues, the expositor must give careful attention to his sermon structure. He must faithfully and effectively expound the passage by allowing the structure itself and the intended rhetorical impact to influence his homiletical arrangement.

In chapter 5, I synthesize my findings for textually-arranged, genre-sensitive, rhetorically-informed homiletics. I explore three avenues related to expositional preaching. First, the preacher must be aware of his need to preach for both head and heart impact. Preaching is more than the information of content; it involves engaging the heart. The structure of the sermon is not indifferent in engaging the whole person with the Word of God. Structure does argue; it does convince. God uses the structure of the biblical text to press upon the listener the need to respond to His Word. Hence, God uses various genres to connect with the whole person, not just the intellectual part of the person.

Accordingly, expositional sermons should follow the literary diversity of the Scriptures in their design. This diversity does not mean an exact replication of the genre, but certainly an influence of it. It does mean, however, sensitivity to that genre and its structure, a structure given by inspiration for the maximum impact upon the listener. I offer five genre-sensitive theme and sermonic outlines, noting where the expositor should reflect the genres and the rhetorical impact intended through their specific structures. I close chapter 5 by analyzing the structure of two sermons from two expositors based

upon the same text.

Conclusions

This study has allowed me to integrate several disciplines—theology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and homiletics. While theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics have been my interest for many years, recently the study of rhetoric has garnered a fond appreciation. Each of these disciplines is worth the study in its own right. Unfortunately, these particular disciplines are often studied in isolation without seeing their interrelation. This work has allowed me to combine them, not only to grow in my appreciation for each of them, but to see their collective value. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. is correct that these disciplines need not nor must not be kept in isolation of one another.⁵ They deserve to be together and in so doing their collective contribution to a balanced overall theology becomes apparent.

The relevance of classical rhetoric for contemporary exposition is clear generally, but also particularly as it relates to the canon of arrangement. Generally speaking, classical rhetoric finds convergence with homiletics in that the goal for both is the persuasion of the audience to embrace the message of the speaker. In part, this persuasion, as classical rhetoric affirms, occurs through structure. Thus, the structure of a

⁵Over three decades ago Walter C. Kaiser Jr. noted the current crisis in exegetical theology, saying, “A gap of crisis proportions exists between the steps generally outlined in most seminary or Biblical training classes in exegesis and the hard realities most pastors face every week as they prepare their sermons” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 18). See also James Dick Smart as he bemoans the problem between the text and the preacher, saying, “The predicament of the preacher has been created to a large extent by the hiatus between the Biblical and the practical departments in our theological seminaries. . . . And much more easily it happens that those who are engaged in the complex tasks of Biblical interpretation become isolated from those whose function it is to train future ministers in preaching and teaching. Hermeneutics is developed in one compartment while homiletics and Christian education go their way separately” (*The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 29).

given discourse, in general, and a specific expositional sermon, in particular, is a crucial component.

More specifically, homiletics finds benefit through studying the canon of arrangement. The canon of arrangement offers both similarities and differences for homiletics. The preacher has certain structural freedoms in the arrangement of his sermon as he communicates the intended meaning and rhetorical impact of the text. These freedoms, however, are closely connected to the principle that the text is king. As long as these structural decisions are rooted in the biblical author's intent, or are not contrary to it, then he is free.

This dissertation also gave me the opportunity to address an important issue related to expositional preaching—the structuring of the sermon in relation to the biblical text. While certain freedoms exist, homiletics is different than the canon of arrangement as it pertains to the source of the content (invention) and its subsequent arrangement. The preacher is bound to the text in what it says (substance), and must give careful consideration to how it says it (structure).

As I studied the relationship of the biblical text to the expositional sermon, I found that at times I have flat-lined the biblical passage without giving careful consideration to its structure, a structure influenced by its genre and rhetorical impact. Probably every expository preacher has been guilty of such flat-lining of specific passages regardless of generic and rhetorical influence. This guilt stems likely from an effort to be true to the meaning of the passage. Yet, a more faithful and effective approach to exposition is to allow the textual structure, genre and rhetorical impact to influence homiletical design.

Following the structural design of the passage does not mean that the expositor must replicate the exact genre in his preaching. It does, however, mean that it must be reflected. I offer five examples of thematic outlines and sermon outlines that seek to give consideration to each genre, while allowing the text to determine both the substance and the structure of the sermon. Certain principles apply for each genre as the expositor seeks to allow the substance and structure of the sermon to be reflective of the biblical text.

More work from able scholars is needed to address other genres used in Scripture. While I offer five examples, other structural genres remain to be explored, such as apocalyptic and proverbs, just to name a couple. However, regardless of the questions of genre, I establish that the inspired biblical text determines the substance and influences the structure of faithful and effective sermons. This faithfulness and effectiveness comes through sermons influenced by textual structure, generic sensitivity, and rhetorical impact.

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ABSTRACT

A TEXTUALLY-ARRANGED, GENRE-SENSITIVE, RHETORICALLY-INFORMED HOMILETICAL APPROACH

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Chapter 1 introduces the subject of this dissertation, which deals with the relationship between a biblical text's substance and structure to that of a sermon's substance and structure from that text. After stating the thesis of this dissertation—that expository preaching considers the arrangement of the text, is sensitive to the genre of the text and aware of the rhetorical impact of the text in order to faithfully and effectively communicate the Word of God—the introduction outlines the approach that this work follows.

Chapter 2 begins by exploring the origin of inspiration as that of both divine and human. B. B. Warfield refers to this divine-human cooperation as the Spirit of God working confluent through the work of men. The chapter emphasizes how this divine-human cooperation came through a verbal-plenary view of inspiration. If inspiration extends to not only the writer's thoughts but also his words, then the literary forms in the Bible are equally inspired. Therefore, the extent of the doctrine of inspiration to that of genre is of great importance to this dissertation.

Chapter 3 describes the importance of hermeneutics and genre. I state my

presupposition for authorial intent and single meaning of the text. Upon this authorial intent and single meaning foundation, I discuss principles for hermeneutics in general. More specifically, I establish the crucial role of literary sensitivity in the hermeneutical task. Essential in understanding the genre is an awareness of surface and notional structures, as well as what the author is doing (speech act) through that particular genre (structure). In short, to ignore literary form, as D. A. Carson insists, is to fall prey of two dangers: to insist that Scripture is saying what in fact it is not saying or to indeed miss what Scripture is actually saying. The chapter provides interpretative guidelines for genre sensitivity by exploring five primary genres found in the Bible.

Chapter 4 discusses the aim of rhetoric and, in particular, the significance of the canon of arrangement on a given discourse. After discussing the aim of rhetoric and homiletics as that of persuasion for maximum impact, this chapter focuses upon the canon of arrangement and, thus, the reality that structure argues. The chapter then offers similarities and differences of the canon of arrangement with that of expository homiletics.

Chapter 5 synthesizes a textually-arranged, genre-sensitive, rhetorical-informed homiletic. The chapter explores two areas of relevance for preaching: the need for head and heart and the need for textual sermonic structure. In particular, the first section deals with the primacy of preaching holistically. The second section addresses the necessary importance of textual sermonic structure around the consideration of biblical genre. The section offers sermonic examples from five genres, considering generic structures and rhetorical aim. The section concludes with a structural analysis of two sermons.

In conclusion, chapter 6 presents a restatement of the thesis and summary of my arguments. The chapter urges expositors to faithfully and effectively preach the Bible by considering the structure of the text, being sensitive to its genre, and being aware of its rhetorical impact.

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