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EDITORIAL

Every defense of biblical authority must maintain that this conviction is Scriptural, and affirmed by the Old Testament saints, Jesus, and the Apostles. They all regarded the Word of God with an attitude of complete trust, and recognized absolutely no errors within its holy pages. The authority of Scripture is not simply an inference conceived by godly minds; rather, the conviction is developed from the very Word of God. Authoritative formulas in the Old Testament, such as “thus said the Lord” and “the Lord spoke” are used more than 2,000 times. The biblical writers conveyed—without ambiguity—that they did not speak on their own, but God revealed to them a special message to record. The New Testament writers, likewise, reveal the divine authority that guided their writings. Throughout His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ regarded the Old Testament as written divine instruction. He continually referenced the Old Testament, and affirmed the historical integrity of its books. Authoritative formulas in the ministry of Jesus Christ, such as “it is written” and “have you not heard?” convey the authority of the Word of God to Israel. Prior to it being written, Jesus also indicated His divine authority upon the inspiration of the New Testament. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the words of both Old and New Testaments have the authority of God Himself. Sadly, there is a departure today from this biblical and historic position. There are people among the church today, who may not deny the deity of Jesus Christ, or His virgin birth and bodily resurrection, but they defy the very authority of Scripture. There are people in our denominations, institutions, missions, and pastoring churches who have departed from the classic biblical doctrine. Scripture must never be distorted to imitate the surrounding culture at this moment in history; rather, it is the Bible that judges culture and society. Evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical unless the authority of God’s Word is affirmed without reservation. For this reason, all the contributors to this issue of *the Journal of Dispensational Theology* have rearticulated in various manners the evangelical belief in the inspiration of the Bible, and its authority within the Christian community. The one exception is the article addressing the interpretation of Peter’s use of Joel 2 on the birthday of the church, but demonstrates how interpretation of this passage profoundly affects one’s doctrinal and theological convictions with regard to Christ, the church, and the future. May you be stimulated in your reading of these articles, and affirm with conviction that by its very nature, the Bible is absolute and instructional and does not speak in hopeless generalities.

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THE SKILL OF INTERPRETATION PRACTICED TODAY

Cliff Allcorn

It seems obvious that a person with a desire to send some message to another person originates any communication. It may be a love letter, declaring their great passion for the other person; it may be a theological treatise, elucidating fine points of doctrine; or, it may even simply be a story designed to entertain. However, all of them begin with the purposeful intent of the author to send a message to a specific audience. The “intent of the author” is a very important key to properly understanding any communication, as is the attempt to understand the specific historical context of the author’s intended audience. Nevertheless, the world today seems to want to deride these twin ideas as being necessary for a good and appropriate interpretation of a text. It also seems obvious that a failure to understand the author’s intent and audience’s specific context in any message ends by reducing the communication process to a lifeless and meaningless endeavor, fraught with subjective and unsustainable claims. Nevertheless, there are those in today’s world who accept, and even demand, such a hermeneutic approach.

These truths are doubly accurate with the interpretation of the inspired Scriptures whose texts have been prepared by God, through the work of His chosen messengers, for His people throughout history. They are designed to be used “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 3:16b-17). Their importance is well beyond that of any normal human communication and yet they are given to His people in the same format as a normal human text; therefore, they demand the same interpretational skills as all other documents. Unfortunately those interpretative skills are now sadly questioned both in the American and the worldwide educational systems. Such questioning is a situation very dangerous to the church who needs to be absolutely reliant on the Bible’s proper interpretation. Believers have only the Scriptures for understanding God’s truth for them as His people in this age of the world, with no other acceptable alternatives.

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The Bible claims that people wrote it with either access to special information about God and His works on Earth (i.e. Gen or Rev) or by eyewitnesses of historical events pertaining to God (as is most of the Bible). If this claim is taken seriously, also bearing in mind as well such passages as 2 Peter 1:16-19, clearly indicates that God desires His people to receive His inspired Scriptures in a manner that has a high regard for the intent of the authors; particularly as they were given their messages by God for their aid, comfort and ability to know Him. However, not all approaches to interpretation have such a regard for the intent of the message sender. Many of today's hermeneutic systems deny the importance of the original intent of an author and are taught, used and referenced in the scholarly world, both in Christian and public schools at all levels.¹

INTERPRETATION OF TEXTS AND TODAY'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

It has always been shocking that the educational systems in the United States (and elsewhere) no longer regard the intended meaning of an author as the goal of interpretation. As a youth, it was common to be told to attempt to discern the actual intent of a particular book, but that is no longer such a valued skill in the American educational system. Certainly people should be taught at the grade school level that they need to find the author's intended meaning as a normal skill but at this point in history, from the basic levels and beyond, the skill is not taught and at times is specifically condemned. Colleges and universities have a large volume of their catalogs devoted to classes that teach alternate methods of interpretation that deride the ideas of literal interpretation.² Professors teach philosophies, systems, and methods that intentionally place their own views into the text. In particular, political issues are regularly brought

¹ It is not being suggested that all such scholarly works be removed from Christian schools. Such materials need to be carefully studied and set in their own proper context for use by Christians in understanding today's world. As an example, the Apostle Paul was a fantastically well-educated person both in the Scriptures and in the wisdom of the Roman Empire. He used that knowledge to aid in the writing of the Scriptures to present God's truth to the world in which he lived. Furthermore, Paul used his knowledge of the Greek language, rhetorical styles, and even the Greco/Roman idols and philosophies for evangelistic purposes in places like those described in Acts 17. The position of this author is not solitary in suggesting that education is an important aspect for the Christian. As an example, see Moisés Silva's review of Calvin's secular education and his use of those systems in his interpretation of the Bible: "The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Theology*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg NJ: P&R, 2007), 74-94. Modern believers ought to recognize useful elements of the world's teaching, like Paul, and apply them to the study of the Scriptures (with all the warnings that are present in Silva's work).

² "Literal" means to regard a text as the author intended and to go no further.

into the interpretative process with intent to promote the views held by the professor. Examples of this can be seen in nearly every course including courses on literature, history, and philosophy. Many times the professor wins academic honors for such activities. These professors' views have impacted believers' view of texts and by doing so inevitably impact their reading of the Bible. It is prudent to examine some of these systems in an attempt to show that it is in the nature and goal of today's literary approaches to create an imaginative interpretation rather than identify the intended meaning of the text as defined by the author. The purpose of this article will be to examine examples from both secular and Christian systems in an attempt to see the similarities between the worldly system and those often used in the Christian world.

Hermeneutic Systems Today – Political Interpretations

Fredric Jameson is an example of a philosopher in the non-Christian world who has spoken on the process of interpretation. Jameson is a noted literary critic and a professor teaching comparative literature at Duke University. In 2008, he won a major award for his work in this area, the *Holberg International Memorial Prize*. The award was given for his work in the field of understanding the relationships between social formations and cultural forms. The award also recognized his work in hermeneutics, aesthetics, history, and several other areas. Jameson is a recognized and admired thinker in the field and one who has spoken clearly on the process of interpreting texts. It should be said that he is not a theologian, nor even one who claims to speak of Christian theology; indeed, he lists debates with regard to the nature of the Trinity among a string of "long dead issues."³

Jameson suggested that the process of interpreting messages does not involve seeking what the original author intended. Instead he claimed that all messages ought to be seen as part of a set of larger issues than those of the original author. For Jameson, it is a matter of the urgency of the message, and the intent of the author is not relevant in today's world.

These matters can recover their original urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of a single great collective story; only if, in however disguised and symbolic form, they are seen as sharing a single fundamental theme- for Marxism, the collective struggle to wrest the realm of Freedom from the realm of Necessity; only if they are grasped as vital episodes in a single vast unfinished plot. . . .⁴

³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981) 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* 19-20.

By this approach the reader takes any message not as the original author intended, but as a part of a larger political tale. Jameson instructed readers to retell the message in a manner that is consistent with the unfolding of a Marxist view of history.

Many will think that this system is from an obscure, unknown academic radical, but this is a respected and tenured professor from one of the most noted schools in the United States. Jameson received a doctoral degree from Yale in 1959, and taught at Yale, Harvard, and the University of California before joining the faculty of Duke University in 1985. Jameson is far from an obscure scholar at an unknown school as he has many published and cited works. Students across the United States, and more importantly Christian students around the world, are assigned his texts as a regular part of their studies. While his challenge to their thinking is of great value, his approach to hermeneutics cannot reflect a Christian approach of interpreting Scripture. Jameson himself would affirm to the world that his religion is not Christianity, but rather it is the religion of Marxism.

Jameson made it very clear that he does not avoid the charge of his views being religious at their heart; instead he welcomed and boldly affirmed it. He stated that the charge of religiosity for his Marxist views does not bother him, nor diminish his views of interpretation rather the charges help “rewrite certain religious concepts.”⁵ In particular they help to retell (in his typical approach to interpretation) the ideas of providence into “foreshowings of historical materialism.”⁶ Jameson then linked these ideas to Marx’s views concerning religion and the development of economic, social, and political history.⁷ He demonstrated his own interpretive approach to these ideas of the Christian religion by retelling them as a part of the human collective experience as he sees it. He is taking an approach that allows this radical reuse of the material by ignoring the original thinkers’ purposes and taking them in a completely allegorical manner on the name of his own Marxist faith.

It is Jameson’s view of hermeneutics that to approach any text properly one is forced to acquire meaning from the text by interpreting it allegorically and then rewriting it so that it tells the story that his ideology demands. He makes clear statements concerning this being his view and does not retreat from them at all. He stated, “Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a

⁵ Ibid. 285.

⁶ Ibid. 285.

⁷ Ibid. 285-87.

given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code.”⁸ For Jameson, the proper “code” for interpretation is one that shows that other codes are local in their approach and limited in their use and only a Marxist interpretive code can give meaning to a text. All written material, from a agricultural report from a feudal lord to the Holy Scriptures, are a part of Jameson’s view of the developing history of man, and need to be seen as directing history to his Marxist eschaton. His view of history is the only key to understanding any text and the intent of the author means absolutely nothing, even becoming a hindrance.

It seems clear that this approach is not useful for the Christian trying to understand God’s writings. Jameson viewed his own knowledge and thoughts, given to him through the *gnosis* provided by Marx, as far more important than the writings he has in front of him for interpretation. Such a secular Gnosticism is wildly inappropriate for someone seeking to know God’s word more fully; indeed, it is exactly the type of thinking Peter was dismissing in 2 Peter 1:16-21 when he claimed the title of an eyewitness in opposition to those who were denying Christ’s resurrection. Peter was saying to those with a position somewhat parallel to Jameson’s, “I was there and you were not; I saw it for myself and I am testifying about it to you.” Jameson could say little to this charge other than try to rewrite it according to his Marxist principles, making the whole point of the text moot and open to any interpretation imaginable. If believers use the system suggested by Jameson they would be left with a text with no meaning, and no way of reaching what God wants for His people from their reading of the text. Instead they would get a lifeless regurgitation of a worldly philosopher and in this particular case, decades of class warfare.

The prejudices of Jameson are intentionally designed to corrupt the real intended meaning of the author of a text, but he is far from alone in attempting to misuse the craft of interpretation by removing the intent of the author. Christians themselves have misappropriated the Scriptures for their own reasons since the first century. The list of such historic offenses against God’s word is beyond the scope of this article to fully expose and any text on historic heresies will catalog them in great detail. One thing all these historic heresies share is a sinful human desire at their heart rather than an idea of a clear exposition of Scripture based on the intent of the biblical writers. All the historic heresies are a result of a human prejudice taking the place that ought to have been reserved for God’s eyewitnesses. Peter warned of this directly.

⁸ Ibid. 10.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep (2 Pet 2:1-3).

Just as Jameson wants to use any text before him for his political religion, the “false Teachers” that Peter warned will exploit people with their own goals causing God’s truth to be maligned. Unfortunately for God’s people in today’s world, this type of practice is still alive and well, even within the church. For confirmation of this trend simply look at the sermons preached across the nation today about so many things that have little to do with the Scriptures. Countless sermons on diets, generating wealth, physical health, and every topic desired, but so few sermons on the topics God wants humanity to understand. The universal church today is doing exactly the same thing that Jameson suggested by creating one’s own religion and then twisting the text to fit its doctrines. One does not often use Marxism in this process, but instead one may employ a different set of doctrines invented by men rather than simply seeing the wonders of God’s words, just as Peter warned would occur. In the words of another human philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, “It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being.”⁹ Our modern prejudices are too often becoming the center of our teaching rather than the revealed truth of the God who was willing to die for His own.

Christians have no excuse for taking an approach, so like the secular scholar Jameson’s, which inserts their own belief system into the teaching of the Bible, no matter how important that belief may seem at the time. The church knows the glory of God because Jesus revealed it; Christians see the truth and live by means of faith in the message God sent via His only begotten Son (Heb 1:1-3). In spite of this knowledge, Christians are all too willing to insert concerns that are foreign to the text of the Bible when it suits their purposes. Convincing themselves that it is what God wants, believers teach such doctrines in the name of God and thereby bring shame onto the cause of Christ. From the crusades to prohibition, all the errors of Christianity can be traced to exactly this type of misappropriation of God’s teaching in favor of some very human goals. Christians seem to constantly insert their own desires into the text God gave to His people and cause the

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. Davis E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 9. Gadamer did not mean “prejudices” in a negative manner as the word is commonly used; instead, he meant that humans come with pre-understandings that define the manner in which one approaches any topic. The word will be used in that manner for the purposes of this article as well.

church to seem ineffective and misled. The cause of Christ is maligned due to the efforts of Christians that simply do not want to interpret God's words in their original intended meaning but instead use it to support their own prejudices.

In addition to these direct and visible consequences of the misinterpretation of Scripture, such activities are clearly contradictory of the direction of the Bible in Paul's letter to Timothy concerning the role of the Scripture for those who would teach. Paul told Timothy to "avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness" (2 Tim 2:16). The church should pay attention to what Paul was telling his child in the faith (1 Tim 1:2) and avoid the teachings of the world in the exposition of Scripture and instead do the work to discover what the messengers of God were trying to teach (2 Tim 2:15). The writers of the texts were led by God to write as they did and should be interpreted without the prejudices of today. Such prejudices are totally foreign to the minds of the original writers (2 Pet 1:20-21). The church ought to focus instead on understanding the prejudices, presuppositions, and belief systems of the writers and the original audience to give aid in interpreting what they wrote rather than inserting their own beliefs into the text, thereby corrupting the interpretation of God's pure words.

Philosophic Interpretation

It becomes apparent that an examination of prejudices (the modern reader's, the original audience, and the author's) is necessary when examining any written message, but is it possible to totally dismiss the modern concerns in favor of the concerns of people who lived at the time of the writing of the Scriptures? Is it possible to follow Paul's instructions to Timothy by ignoring the teachings one already has from the world and focus only on what the Scriptures teach? Hans Georg Gadamer is an example of one who thinks that it is not possible. In his book, *Truth and Method*, he wrote,

Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are [isolated] historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always a fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves. . . . In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new continually grow together to make something of living value, without either being explicitly distinguished from the other.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982) 273.

For Gadamer, the present reader and the past author's ideas fuse to form meaning and understanding, resulting in the continuation (or sometimes the creation) of a tradition. The meaning of a text becomes a mixture of the author's intents and the prejudices of the reader rather than what Paul implied to Timothy with regard to the meaning found in the Bible being set by the text itself. Gadamer continued his case later in his book when he spoke with regard to the meaning of a text being separate from the author's intentions. He stated, "The understanding of something written is not a reproduction of something in the past, but the sharing of a present meaning."¹¹ Clearly he believes that once a text is written then the thoughts of the author are no longer the controlling factor of its interpretation. As an example, if asked what this current text was intending, this author's answer would be as valid as any other in spite of the fact that he is the author of the text. So for Gadamer there is no possible way for Timothy (or the modern church) to obey Paul's command to "avoid worldly and empty chatter" as, for him, it is absolutely necessary for an individual to have such to gain any real understanding.

Gadamer was very concerned about the modern reader in the process of understanding, and such is natural because, as seen, the concerns of the reader can often affect the interpretation of any text.¹² Gadamer believed that this fact completely destroys any consideration of the intent of the author in the process of understanding. He stated, "What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships."¹³ Contrary to all the commands of the Scriptures, (Mark 7:5-9; Col 2:6-8; etc), Gadamer demanded that place himself into a tradition to understand the real meaning of the text. Such an attitude is destructive to building a system of thought based on the revealed word of God. Author Kenneth R. Cooper correctly compared poor hermeneutics for the interpretation of the Bible to having a lack of a warning system for alerting the group to approaching danger,¹⁴ which is exactly what Scripture teaches about the use of itself for the body of Christ (cf. Ps 1; 119; 1 Tim 1:2-7; 2 Tim 4:1-5; etc). Another author compared a poor hermeneutic approach to having a virus in one's theology, suggesting that the prevention of poor theology comes from proper understanding of

¹¹ Ibid. 354.

¹² One may witness the example of Fredric Jameson because his concerns certainly affect how he reads a text.

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 357.

¹⁴ Kenneth R. Cooper, "A Survey of the Case for Literal Interpretation of the Scriptures," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 10 (September 2006): 17.

the thoughts expressed in the Scriptures.¹⁵ Gadamer is an often cited thinker amongst many groups of Christians, and an examination of his views is instructive for exploring the impact of worldly reading systems on the interpretation of the Bible.

Commenting on Gadamer in an appendix of his text on biblical hermeneutics, author Grant Osborne made a compelling observation concerning his (Gadamer's) approach to finding meaning in the interpretation of texts. He stated, "Gadamer does not develop a methodology for distinguishing true from false interpretation."¹⁶ To the mind of someone with a serious commitment to understanding God's words to His people in history, such a lack of regard for the truth is painful to observe. Unfortunately, a method very like Gadamer's allowance of tradition to become part of interpretation is a guiding principle for many believers and can be found throughout the Christian church today. As example, many churches take their catechisms or doctrinal statements as far too important, holding them even over the very Scriptures they are supposed to describe, despite the fact that almost without exception they claim the Bible is the "only authority" for the church. Such practice is another demonstration of the dangers of human traditions that believers were repeatedly told to avoid in the Bible; something that the church of the living God, should have been learned from the medieval church. Ironically, it took the heroes of the Reformation, who were willing to die for the Word of God, to leave behind writings that their followers have turned into a human tradition that some now apply above the teachings of the Scriptures. All this in spite of the context of their creation! It is startling to see that the followers of Jesus, who repeatedly was confronted by the religious elite of the Scribes and Pharisees, would intentionally become like those who held tradition over the God, who they should have plainly seen was standing right in front of them. Christians, just like the scribes and Pharisees, create rules and doctrines that were not taught by Jesus or the Apostles and enforce them with social sanctions. Christians, like the

¹⁵ Robert B. Chisholm, "How a Hermeneutical Virus Can Corrupt Theological Systems," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (July-September 2009): 259-70. In this article, Chisholm addressed the misuse of generalizations from Scripture and how said abuse can infect the theological systems it touches. With regard to such misused generalizations, he stated, "Unfortunately in their quest to derive universal truths from Scripture, interpreters sometimes ignore historical and/ or literary contextual boundaries of passages and elevate contextually conditioned generalizations to the status of universal truths and principles" (p. 259). Chisholm's statement is precisely what Gadamer suggested as a normal rule of interpretation when he stated that by fusing horizons with the text one could wrestle a meaning into the interpretive task. Such a fusion by definition ignores the historical and literary boundaries set by the original author and can never create the interpretation that the Scriptures demand.

¹⁶ Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1991) 371.

Pharisees before them, have become “experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your [their] tradition” (Mark 7:9).

Impact of Modern Hermeneutics on Contemporary Christian Groups

The impact of using tradition in Christian hermeneutics is certainly not limited to a specific portion of believers, but this style of interpretation is active throughout God’s church, even from those who do not think they are vulnerable to this particular type of problem. From the “King James Only” belief system to the various postmodern Christian movements, many groups attempt to mix a human tradition with the truth found in Scripture. In spite of the Bible’s clear teaching to do otherwise, believers in this modern time seem to regard the traditions of the world as appropriate to fuse with the Scriptures, just as Gadamer claimed they ought to do. It may seem strange that even those who undoubtedly have contempt for the teachings of Gadamer use a system of thought directly parallel to his ideas; yet both of the groups mentioned previously mix a tradition with the pure milk of God’s Scriptures. Those who would undoubtedly most stringently resist this charge, and yet are guilty of it, are those who hold to the “King James Bible Only” position.

Advocates of this position cling to a doctrine that cannot be substantiated by use of only the Scriptures. They hold to the tradition that God preserves His Word beyond the first writing in a very specific written form. To give a justification of this teaching they refer to the Scriptures in an attempt to prove this doctrine.¹⁷ The verses they cite do indeed say that God’s Words will endure forever, but they are silent on it being in only one format. Such a perspective is where they fuse a human tradition with the truth of the Scriptures. They bring into their interpretation of these verses the prejudice that God’s chosen authors meant the *Textus Receptus* when those statements were written. Nowhere in those passages does it say how the Lord would accomplish His promise, nor does it even imply a specific means of accomplishing it; only the promise itself is enough for them when it is wedded to their tradition of assuming the superior position of the King James Bible.¹⁸ Such practice is an example of an interpretation done exactly parallel to Gadamer’s hermeneutic system. Advocates of the “King James

¹⁷ The King James Only movement refers to verses such as Psalms 12:6-7; 119:89, 152; Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33; 1 Peter 1:23, 25, etc.

¹⁸ The position of this author is like and usage of the King James Version at times, but it certainly was not on the minds of the original authors! To hold a translation (any translation) as the Word of God is to practice the approach of interpretation that the world has shown in Jameson and Gadamer. It requires bringing a human tradition (like Marxism or Gadamer’s fusion of horizons) into the passages when the original authors had no such concept in their thoughts.

Only” position claim that they are closely following a biblical standard, yet in this key area they have no support from the text of the Scriptures alone and must fuse the Scriptures to a human position to get the results they desire.¹⁹ In this way they are little different from the liberal theologians they despise and rightly oppose.

On the other end of Christianity, stand the postmodern Christians, who also use a system parallel to Gadamer’s. The postmodern movement is far too broad to categorize together, so as representative the Emerging and also the Emergent Church will serve as examples. These Christian movements are unabashedly postmodern and use many philosophers in their “fusion” with the Scriptures to form their belief systems. The “Emergent” Church has a different set of theological distinctive than does the “Emerging” Church. The Emergent Church relies on the theological liberalism of such individuals as Jürgen Moltmann while the Emerging Church makes an attempt to apply the thinking of deconstructionism to the major elements of traditional Christianity to become relevant to the young minds of today.²⁰

Jürgen Moltmann adopted an approach to interpretation that is illustrative of his general approach to Christian biblical theology. In this attempt he held that the author of a text ceases to set its meaning. With regard to *his own book*, he wrote,

But after that it slipped away from me and acquired a history of its own, a history that I had not intended and could never have predicted and that has since been given back to me in many different forms. . . . But the history of the impact of the *Theology of Hope* is a different matter. There I am really one person among others,

¹⁹ Many of these individuals are very versed in the Scriptures, for which they are to be commended. Indeed, many of these Christians are more adept than many of those who use more modern versions; but some take the position too far by claiming that if the King James Version differs from the original languages then those copies in the original languages were corrupted. Advocates of this latter position include Peter Ruckman who said, “the perverse Greek reads one way and the A.V. reads the other, rest assured that God will judge you at the Judgment on what you know. Since you don’t know the Greek (and those who knew it, altered it to suit themselves), you better go by the A.V. 1611 text” (Peter Ruckman, *The Christian’s Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* [Pensacola: Pensacola Bible Press, 1990] 138). His position is perhaps one of the most radical of the King James Only positions.

²⁰ Some of this is useful contextualization of the Gospel message, such as changing presentation styles of the teaching ministry of the church or changing how music is used in a service. However, when they begin to alter the doctrines of the church (in the name of postmodernism) is where they are practicing the same approach as Gadamer. When altering the teaching of the church by fusing it with postmodernism, they violate the clear instructions of Paul (and others in Scripture) by being taken captive by an empty philosophy (cf. Col 2:8).

someone who has been affected by the book's impact, and in this context I am perhaps the book's first reader rather than its author.²¹

In this area of thought, Moltmann seems to be in agreement with Gadamer when he claimed that the author at some point ceases to set the meaning of the work that he wrote, that it becomes a part of a tradition. An immediate and natural question is related to Osborne's statement about Gadamer cited earlier, does Moltmann have a way to distinguish true from false interpretation? Moltmann does not seem to have such a method; instead he simply redefined terms to fit his own current and contemporary prejudices. For Moltmann, all the theological thinking of Christianity needs to be seen against the perceived hope offered by God in both the Old Testament promises and the New Testament eschatology.²² In attempting such, he redefined theological words to fit his belief system and intentionally did not use the terms as they were intended. Such practice is from, among other things, what he regarded as "the revolutionary ethic that aims to transform the world until it becomes recognizably God's world."²³ So it is clearly about what is occurring in the world of the 1960s and not with regard to what the authors of the biblical text were saying or intending. For Moltmann, current events are to guide and steer the meaning of the text; they are neither what God intended nor what the chosen author decided as important when he wrote the text.

Moltmann went even further in this desire for revolutionary change when he plainly placed human reason and perception above authority of the Scriptures. He stated, "The truth of doctrinal statements is found in the fact that they can be shown to agree with the existing reality which we can all experience."²⁴ His statement is certainly not how the original authors of Scripture instructed believers to think; indeed, it is totally the opposite of their plain and clear instructions to believers. For Moltmann, however, one's current thinking is the test for Scriptural claims, not what was originally intended. For him, if it does not fit into the current paradigm then one ought to reject it because one cannot verify the truth of it by the means that is now demanded. For Moltmann, one is to accept truth only on his or her terms despite the fact that one's methods would be foreign to the thinking of the original authors.

As a single example (among many) of the Scriptures teaching on this topic, the Apostle Peter instructed believers to do the exact opposite of

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans James W. Leitch and Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993) 8

²² Ibid. 9.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. 18.

what Moltmann suggested. Peter most emphatically denied that believers ought to test the truth of any doctrines, no matter how fanciful they may seem on the surface, by simply seeing if they agree with the way one perceives reality. Peter said, “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).

Peter was basing this instruction on his own status of being an “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (1:16b). For Peter that meant that he saw, heard, and was present for what he was speaking and what a modern thinker (or an ancient thinker for that matter) may say about their need to verify was irrelevant to Peter. No one would be able to convince him he did not see what he saw. To deny what Peter was saying would require proving that Peter was a liar or deranged, otherwise his testimony must be accepted at face value. Peter was willing to die for what he said he saw, demonstrating that he was not a liar and his text seems cogent, demonstrating that he was not deranged. So Moltmann’s views about the verification of the doctrines by “the fact that they can be shown to agree with the existing reality which we can all experience”²⁵ is foolish hubris that Peter long ago clearly answered and refuted.

The Emergent Church does not seem to be interested in what the writers of Scripture say, but rather they seem far more concerned by what one today wants to use for interrogation. In essence they want their modern concerns answered rather than what the writers God chose wanted to discuss. Such an approach is arrogant before a God who certainly can be credited with knowing what is truly important! It is also a system of biblical interpretation that is wholly unacceptable to a person who is attempting to think with regard to topics within the bounds of Scriptural truth. It seems that this movement has completely abandoned the teachings of the Scriptures that the writers intended for the church. Instead they are centered on themselves and their limited cultural experiences to guide all interpretation. They are not centered on the pure words of God, rather on their own fallen culture and selves. Such practices are not an approach that would seem acceptable to a Christian seeking to please God, but what of the Emerging Church? Is their approach to the Scriptures different than this one?

In the Emerging Church there is a fusion of Christian and postmodern ideas that cripples a good reading of the Scriptures and the presentation of the truth of God to the world. An example of this approach is the thinking and doctrines of prominent Emerging Church thinker David Allis. In his

²⁵ Ibid.

Easter message of 2009, Allis attempted to refute the traditional approach to the doctrine of hell. His approach was basically an attempt to use the postmodern system of deconstructionism to approach the Bible's teaching on this important topic. The sad fact of the matter is that due to the failure of teaching good reading skills throughout the educational system, so few real Christians are able to follow what he was doing and are brought into a very unbiblical belief system by his writing.

Beginning his argument against the traditional doctrine of hell, Allis constructed a four part description of the doctrine. The four elements of the doctrine as he divided it were as follows: punishment, no escape, anti-universalism and eternal existence.²⁶ He then proceeded to deconstruct the doctrine with no attempt to show from the Scriptures the alternate view. Rather than the normal methods of doctrinal debate, he built arguments to play on the prejudices of his audience in his attempt to refute those who hold to what he himself called, "an incredibly important topic."²⁷ He was intentionally making a use of the system posited by Jacques Derrida (i.e. deconstructionism). Within the bounds of Derrida's philosophy, one takes a position to its basic structural level and then examines these thoughts through a violent circulation that puts the whole philosophy into question. Then Derrida's original philosophy demanded a reconstruction of the parts to attempt to show how it was first created.²⁸

A play to the prejudices of the audience came later in the piece when Allis began the final part of Derrida's approach, the attempted reconstruction of an idea, yet in this case without the real construction that Derrida's philosophy demanded. In his attempt to discredit the doctrine of hell, Allis asked some telling rhetorical questions. He asked his readers: "Has eternal suffering in hell been the only view in historical Christianity? Or have there been strands of other views that have run through history, but have been obscured by the dominant view?"²⁹

²⁶ David Allis, "The Problem With Hell" [online] (emergingchurch.info, Easter 2009, accessed 25 May 2009) available from <http://www.emergingchurch.info/reflection/davidallis2/index.htm>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, "A Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985) 2-3. Derrida stated, "But the undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures, in a certain sense more historical than the structuralist movement it called into question, was not a negative operation. Rather than destroying, it was also necessary to understand how an "ensemble" was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end." In this passage he was attempting to explain his philosophy to someone who was going to help translate his ideas into Japanese. He was there comparing his own idea to the structuralist movement in France in an attempt to aid in the translation process.

²⁹ Allis, "Problem With Hell."

He then attempted to suggest these ideas came from other sources outside Christian thinking such as Teutonic mythology, citing specifically the Norse myth concerning a goddess named Hel (who may indeed have been a source for the English word currently in use for the concept but was certainly not a factor in the writing of the Scriptures).³⁰ Allis' attempt is illustrative of the whole approach he adopted toward this topic; he was beginning by creating a group of ideas foreign to the text of Scripture, but common to those who were in his audience, for the purposes of applying Derrida's philosophy in order to cast doubt on the doctrine. In this attempt he withheld information from his audience concerning the real arguments concerning the doctrine because he had little desire to engage in a debate within the confines of the Scripture. He did exactly what Gadamer said he should; he fused his philosophical tradition with the teaching of the Bible to produce a meaning that is not what the author of the text wanted nor would ever expect.

The concern of this author needs to be clear here because it is certainly not the case that all these groups have consciously decided to follow the teaching of Hans-Georg Gadamer, rather it is the case that they are all independently (and sometimes unwittingly) read and apply the Scriptures in a manner consistent with Gadamer's approach. Their approach is not acceptable for people who claim to believe that the Bible is God's inerrant words and is the truth for all people who wish to follow God's commands. The inerrant Scriptures teach that Christians are not to place their traditions so high but rather avoid the philosophy and empty deception of man's nature (cf. Eph 5:6; Col 2:8, 23; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Pet 1:20-21; etc). Gadamer's manner of reading (and that of all those mentioned previously) lead to exactly what Jesus confronted in His earthly ministry in the Pharisaical tradition in Israel. All of those mentioned previously are in one way or another invalidating the word of God by their fusion of the Scriptures to some worldly philosophy. Such invalidation is the case even when many of those referenced as examples believe they are not doing so, but when looked at closely the results are the same as those of the Pharisaical legalism and a lack of real knowledge of God.

CONCLUSION

Is it possible to read without letting one's own background into the interpretive process? In this narrow question the answer must be "no" but that is not what Scripture commands nor requires. Rather the first audience was commanded not to let one's own prejudices (or a human tradition) get in the way of the intended meaning of the authors (cf. Eph

³⁰ Ibid.

5:6-10; Col 2:8, 20-23; 1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Pet 1:20-21; etc). Nowhere does God command that people cannot be educated and knowledgeable, instead believers are commanded not to allow that education to lead them astray (cf. 1 Tim 6:20-21). The church is told not to be held captive by philosophy and tradition, not to ignore the knowledge around them (cf. Col 2:4-12). Knowledge of the thinking of the human world is valuable when it is put into its proper place in a believer's life, which is, of course, service to the Lord. As one scholar has said, "The issue here is not whether such methods should be used, but whether it is appropriate to use them without careful reflection on their theological implications."³¹ Christians ought not reject the teaching of worldly scholars, but rather put them into the service of the Lord by using them to aid their interpretation of the revealed truth of God. The examples of this sort of process are legion in Scripture; indeed, one would be hard pressed to think of one writer of the Scriptures who was not educated in the world's systems and used that knowledge in service to God.

It also seems that Christians need to give far more attention to the original intended reader in the process of crafting their interpretation of God's writings. Christians ought to include the history, literary styles, and language of the original intended *readers* into their thoughts about the text because

a literary text is an act of communication from the writer to a reader. The text is the message. For it to communicate, the sender and receiver have to speak the same language. Through the use of conventional forms, the writer sends signals to the readers to tell them how they are to take the message.³²

Instead of reinforcing one's own prejudices, one can know what God is saying by focusing on the original author *and* the originally intended audience; by this method one can see what God instructed His people throughout history. A careful hermeneutic approach would require an avoidance of the methods used by the groups previously cited, no matter how attractive they might seem. Whether it is an attempt to seem scholarly or relevant to contemporary youth, or whether it involves attempting to be strongly countercultural or possibly wholly relevant in the modern culture, all of those approaches lead to an unbiblical approach to the interpretation of the Bible. A believer cannot compromise with the modern world in reading God's words and therefore must reject any approach that intrinsically brings the world into the interpretive process.

³¹ Silva, "Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics," 79.

³² Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, "Introduction," in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 29.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES IN THE ALLEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC OF AUGUSTINE

Cameron Cloud

The acknowledgement of Augustine's impact upon subsequent centuries of thinking is almost as universal as his influence. Historians,¹ in addition to theologians,² preface their comments with a reminder that the reader cannot "overestimate" his importance in every area of theological studies. Even those with considerable areas of disagreement recognize the tremendous effect his thinking had on both Catholic and Protestant doctrine.³ B. B. Warfield regarded him as "incomparably the greatest man who, 'between Paul the Apostle and Luther the Reformer, the Christian Church has possessed.'"⁴

His influence has been felt in every area of theology, but nowhere is it more evident than in eschatology generally and amillennialism specifically.⁵ Walvoord attributed this importance to two particular reasons: Augustine's priority as an orthodox theologian of influence to adhere to amillennialism, and the long-term acceptance of his viewpoint.⁶ These two points become the basis for the "historical norm" argument of many amillennialists.⁷

The purpose of this article is to argue that the varied influences of Augustine's life uniquely prepared him to have a hermeneutic that would both accept and establish amillennialism as an eschatological tenet. In order to demonstrate this conclusion, it will briefly detail the background

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¹ Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003) 79.

² Karlfried Froehlich, "Take Up and Read: Basics of Augustine's Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* 58 (January 2004): 5.

³ John Walvoord, "Amillennialism from Augustine to Modern Times," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 106 (October 1949): 420.

⁴ B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930; reprint, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2008) 114 (citing in part the following: Adolf Harnack, *Monasticism: Its Ideals and History and the Confessions of St. Augustine* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1901; reprint, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2007] 123).

⁵ Mal Couch, gen. ed., *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics: A Guide to the History and Practice of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000) 48.

⁶ Walvoord, "Amillennialism," 420-21.

⁷ Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001) 2-5.

of Augustine's life, noting the people and philosophies that would shape his method of interpretation. Furthermore, it will examine Augustine's hermeneutical system, its development, and the effects of these influences on it. Finally, it will establish the connection between their influence and Augustine's acceptance of amillennialism.

AUGUSTINE'S INFLUENCES

Born in 354 in North Africa, Augustine was the son of a pagan father and a devout Christian mother. In his early life, he accepted the faith of his mother without question. As a student, he excelled in every subject except Greek, a language he was never able to master.⁸ Augustine's deficiency in language would affect his exegetical abilities later in life.⁹

Hoping to complete his education, Augustine's parents sent him to Carthage where he studied to become a teacher of rhetoric. While in Carthage, he began the study of philosophy in search of truth. His search was sparked by his encounter with the writings of Cicero, the great Latin rhetorician and philosopher.¹⁰ His learning in rhetoric would later influence his approach to biblical interpretation, and his study of Cicero would lead him to reject the faith of his mother.

Straying from the moorings of his childhood faith, Augustine's search for truth led him to the Manichaeans. His search would have been an obvious step for someone in his situation. Harnack noted,

Anyone who had gained some impressions from the contents of the Bible, but held the ecclesiastical interpretation of the Bible as a false one – especially if he could not surmount the stumbling-blocks of the Old Testament; anyone who was determined to cast aside leading-strings and examine things freely for himself; anyone who sought to know what inner principle holds the world together; anyone who strove from the physical to grasp the constitution of the spiritual world and the problem of evil – became in those days a Manichaeon.¹¹

Harnack's description accurately portrays the condition Augustine found himself at the time. Though fervent in this sect, his study of pagan philosophy and science would eventually lead him to question their teachings, and ultimately leave their church.¹²

From Carthage he would move to Rome, and from Rome, to Milan. It was in Milan that he encountered another of the primary influences of his

⁸ Hill, *Christian Thought*, 80.

⁹ F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1886) 234.

¹⁰ Hill, *Christian Thought*, 80.

¹¹ Harnack, *Monasticism*, 150.

¹² Hill, *Christian Thought*, 81.

life, Bishop Ambrose. As he listened to Bishop Ambrose preach and began to read the Scriptures, the prayers of his mother and the power of the Word began to draw him to salvation. After three years of increasing inner turmoil, he was converted in 386.

Following a brief venture into monasticism, he returned to Africa where he continued his study of the Scriptures. Though he desired a quiet life contemplating faith and philosophy (to him the two were the same), he was ordained a priest at the insistence of the people. As a priest he would gain notoriety through his writing and debating against his former friends, the Manichaeans. In 396, he would become the Bishop of Hippo, a post he would fulfill till his death in 430.¹³ Augustine was known to be a godly, sincere follower of Christ and was well loved by his flock. His prolific preaching to his congregation would be the primary outlet for his exegesis and the evidence of his love for the Scriptures.¹⁴

The remaining years of his life would be characterized by his greatest literary accomplishments in addition to his most notorious controversies with “heretics.” *The City of God* and *On Christian Doctrine* are the most outstanding of the former, while the Donatists and Pelagius are the examples of the latter. Ironically, the hermeneutic of a Donatist theologian, Tyconius, would have one of the strongest effects on the interpretive method of Augustine. As one scholar noted, “It is ironic, that the Tyconian ecclesiological, bipolar, and mystical emphases would be extended over a thousand years by the strongest opponent of the Donatists.”¹⁵

AUGUSTINE’S HERMENEUTIC

One of the difficulties in evaluating Augustine’s approach to biblical interpretation is the continual evolution of his view of the Bible. Ranging the entire spectrum from “snobbish disdain to unrestrained admiration,”¹⁶ his opinion of the Scriptures would affect his interpretation of them. Further difficulty is encountered due to the contradiction between the principles he espoused, and the exegesis he practiced.¹⁷ Augustine’s tendency is well noted by scholars of interpretation. Berkhof noted, “He stressed the necessity of having regard for the literal sense and of basing the allegorical upon it; but at the same time, he indulged rather freely in

¹³ Hill, *Christian Thought*, 83.

¹⁴ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 14.

¹⁵ Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant I. Lovejoy, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002) 101.

¹⁶ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 5.

¹⁷ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970) 37.

allegorical interpretation.”¹⁸ Similarly, Virkler commented, “In practice Augustine forsook most of his own principles and tended toward excessive allegorizing. . . . In theory he articulated many of the principles of sound exegesis, but in practice he often failed to apply those principles in his own biblical study.”¹⁹ Farrar stated, “Nothing, indeed, can be theoretically better than some of the rules which he lays down. But when we read his actual comments these principles are forgotten. He was badly equipped for the work of exposition.”²⁰ It is this pattern of inconsistency that leads to the contradiction and complexity of his interpretations.

Following the rules of classical rhetoric, Augustine believed that the words of Scripture should be interpreted according to four categories:

- 1) History – showing what was done;
- 2) Aetiology – telling why it was done;
- 3) Analogy – confirming harmony between the two testaments; and,
- 4) Allegory – giving the figurative sense.

In keeping with his self-contradiction, he generally only interpreted according to the historical and allegorical approaches.²¹

Ramm listed twelve of Augustine’s most important guidelines for interpretation: (1) “A genuine Christian faith was necessary for the understanding of the Scriptures;” (2) “Although the literal and historical are not the end of Scripture, one must hold them in high regard;” (3) Scripture has more than one meaning and therefore the allegorical method is proper;” (4) “There is significance in Biblical numbers . . . the entire world of logic and numbers [are to be regarded] as eternal truths, and therefore numbers played a special role in human knowledge.” (5) “The Old Testament is a Christian document” and is full of prophetic references concerning Christ;” (6) “The task of the expositor” is to derive meaning from the Bible, “not to bring a meaning to it. The expositor is to express accurately the thoughts of the writer.” (7) The analogy of faith, the true orthodox creed, must be consulted when interpreting. “If orthodoxy represents Scripture, then no expositor can make Scripture go contrary to orthodoxy.” (8) “No verse is to be studied as a unit in itself.” The context of the verse must be noted (i.e. what the Bible states with regard to the same subject elsewhere). (9) “If an interpretation is insecure, nothing in the passage can be made a matter of orthodox faith;” (10) The Holy Spirit

¹⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950) 22.

¹⁹ Henry A. Virkler and Karelynn Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 55.

²⁰ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 234.

²¹ Corely, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 102.

cannot substitute for the necessary learning to understand Scripture. “The able interpreter must know Hebrew; Greek; geography; natural history; music; chronology; numbers; history; dialectics; natural science; and the ancient philosophers.” (11) “The obscure passage must yield to the clear passage;” and, (12) “No Scripture is to be interpreted so as to conflict with any other—the harmony of revelation.”²²

Augustine was not primarily an exegete. “St. Augustine is greater as an Apologist and as a Theologian than as an interpreter of Scripture.”²³ Unlike Jerome, his knowledge of the original languages was at best limited. He knew no Hebrew and had only a little understanding of Greek. “He was great in systematizing the truths of the Bible, but not in the interpretation of Scripture.”²⁴ Likewise, his inordinate affinity for the Septuagint resulted from this weakness.²⁵

Augustine developed a compromise in dealing with difficult passages. “That is, he interpreted the non-prophetic Scriptures literally and the prophetic Scriptures allegorically. This dualistic method of interpretation represents a new twist to the allegorical interpretation.”²⁶ According to Berkhof, he practiced a “mediating type of exegesis . . . harboring some elements of the allegorical school of Alexandria, but also recognized some of the principles of the Syrian school.”²⁷ He used the grammatical-historical approach to determine the author’s intent. Indeed, he would “defend the logical historical plausibility of narrative details everywhere, often to the breaking point, before considering a ‘twofold meaning’ or the purely prophetic signification of a verse or phrase.”²⁸ Once established, he allowed for the literal interpretation if it fit within church doctrine. If not, Augustine would follow the Alexandrian allegorical approach.²⁹

THE EFFECTS OF AUGUSTINE’S INFLUENCES

Having observed the people and philosophies that influenced Augustine, and having described his approach to biblical interpretation, it is of interest to note the part these influences played in the development of his

²² Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 27.

²³ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 234.

²⁴ Berkhof, *Biblical Interpretation*, 22.

²⁵ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 125.

²⁶ Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1988) 50-51.

²⁷ Berkhof, *Biblical Interpretation*, 22.

²⁸ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 7.

²⁹ Corely, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 102.

hermeneutic. His thinking was far less monolithic than often portrayed,³⁰ and, though it progressed beyond the various influences, it bore the mark of each.

Rhetoric

One of the earliest and most influential studies in Augustine's life was rhetoric. The study of speaking persuasively to a public audience³¹ was his first area of study during his early days in Carthage. Such study was a foundational philosophy affecting his entire system of thinking. Augustine regarded God as the master rhetorician³² and was impressed by the flawless use of rhetorical technique by biblical writers.³³ It was in his own rhetorical training that Augustine first encountered Cicero.³⁴ Cicero's instruction on the purpose of oratory would impact his methods in preaching,³⁵ but his exegesis was also strongly influenced by his rhetorical training.

The "four categories" of words, which were the center of his interpretive process, were based upon classical rhetoric. He further held that the most efficient training for homiletics and exegesis was the saturation in classical literature common to rhetorical schools.³⁶ In the words of one writer: "The socio-cultural location of Augustine's hermeneutics throughout all four books of the complete work (*On Christian Doctrine*) is found in his adaption of the tradition of exegesis developed for the reading of classical literature to the needs of a Christian culture built upon the books of the Bible."³⁷

Ambrose

When Augustine moved from Rome to Milan, he began attending the sermons of the city's bishop. His purpose in going was to gain insight on speaking from a great speaker. Instead, he was soon learning the truths of

³⁰ Froehlich, "Take Up and Read," 5.

³¹ Frances Young, "Augustine's Hermeneutics and Postmodern Criticism," *Interpretation* 58 (January 2004): 46.

³² Froehlich, "Take Up and Read," 5.

³³ *Ibid.* 14.

³⁴ Hill, *Christian Thought*, 81.

³⁵ Froehlich, "Take Up and Read," 15.

³⁶ Young "Augustine's Hermeneutics," 47.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 51.

Christianity.³⁸ Ambrose “was a highly influential figure, a champion of the Nicene faith against the Arians and a mentor to both Eastern and Western emperors.”³⁹ Though Augustine was impressed with his oratory,⁴⁰ it was his personality and pastoral concern that had the greatest impact on him. In Ambrose, he would experience the influence of a personality stronger than his own.⁴¹

Not only was the preaching of Ambrose instrumental in Augustine’s conversion, his exegetical approach would have enduring influence as well. It was through Ambrose that Augustine came under the influence of Origen⁴² and the Greek method of interpretation.⁴³ Ambrose had been led to faith by Origen and followed his belief that “the interpreter of scripture must leave behind the material level of a literal understanding and move to the spiritual level, scripture’s true sense, which concerns the fate of the soul, its predicament, and its salvation.”⁴⁴ It was through Ambrose’s sermons that Augustine was introduced to the spiritualizing interpretation of Old Testament passages. The experience removed the objections of his Manichaean past and brought great personal spiritual benefit.⁴⁵

Origen’s approach to interpretation would form the underlying framework for much of Augustine’s system. He sought to avoid slavery to the letter of the Scripture, instead seeking the deeper meaning. Frances Young described Origen’s approach: “The identification of metaphor and figure of speech, not to mention ambiguities and difficulties in the text, provides the stimulus to search for the deeper meaning of the text.”⁴⁶ Ambrose would defend his use of this method by quoting 2 Corinthians 3:6, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,”⁴⁷ a defense that would be later used by Augustine himself.⁴⁸

The “inherited” influence of Origen would continue throughout the development of Augustine’s hermeneutic. In his later years he would hold Origen’s high view of inspiration. “Not only do the human authors function as ‘the hands of Christ,’ but every word, even the entire process of

³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (London: Watkins, 2006), 107.

³⁹ Hill, *Christian Thought*, 82.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 107.

⁴¹ Harnack, *Monasticism*, 157.

⁴² Hill, *Christian Thought*, 44-45.

⁴³ Harnack, *Monasticism*, 156

⁴⁴ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 6.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 107.

⁴⁶ Young, “Augustine’s Hermeneutics,” 50.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 115.

⁴⁸ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 55.

transmission, is inspired, including scribal mistakes.”⁴⁹ The “exaggerated opinion of the sacredness of the Greek version,”⁵⁰ would be the source of some the most unique characteristics of his hermeneutic. His belief that David was the author of the entire book of Psalms, his debate with Jerome over the actions of Peter and Paul in Galatians 2, and his treatise on the harmony of the four Gospels were all results of his doctrine of inspiration.⁵¹ Furthermore, his belief in the miraculous translation of the Septuagint would cause him to question initially Jerome’s translation from the original Hebrew into Latin. Lacking, as he did, skill in the original languages, his exegesis would always be marked by glaring defects.⁵²

Tyconius

Of all the influences on Augustine’s biblical interpretation, most unexpected is that of Tyconius. As a Donatist lay theologian, he was a member of a sect which Augustine vehemently opposed, yet it was from his “Seven Rules” that Augustine’s twelve principles were drawn. Though endorsed with caution, Augustine gave resounding praise: “Now these rules, as expounded by their author, do indeed, when carefully considered, afford considerable assistance in penetrating the secrets of the sacred writings.”⁵³ Through Augustine’s use and recommendation these rules would affect interpretive method for over a thousand years.

In exegesis he would come to rely on two rules in particular: the second, “about the twofold division of the Lord’s body;” and, the sixth, “on recapitulation.” Of the former, Augustine wrote, “Now this rule requires the reader to be on his guard when Scripture, although it has now come to address or speak of a different set of persons, seems to be addressing or speaking of the same persons as before, just as if both sets constituted one body in consequence of their being for the time united in a common participation of the sacraments.”⁵⁴ The rule allowed him to attribute direct quotations from the Psalms to either Christ or to the church.⁵⁵ Describing rule six, he stated, “For certain occurrences are so related, that the narrative appears to be following the order of time, or the continuity of events, when it really goes back without mentioning it to previous

⁴⁹ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 7.

⁵⁰ Farrar, *History of Hermeneutics*, 125.

⁵¹ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 8.

⁵² Farrar, *History of Hermeneutics*, 234-35.

⁵³ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 4 vols. [online] (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed 3 September 2008) available from <http://www.ccel.org/a/augustine/doctrine>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 3:30.

⁵⁵ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 13.

occurrences which had been passed over in their proper place.”⁵⁶ The precept of this rule helped him to reconcile apparent incongruities in the chronological order of Gospel narratives.⁵⁷

AUGUSTINE’S AMILLENNIALISM

As the first and most influential theologian to adopt an amillennial viewpoint, Augustine moved that eschatology to the forefront and kept it there for over a millennium. He was the first whose position on the subject is undeniable. It would be the prevailing teaching of not only the Roman Catholic Church, but would influence, in various forms, the teaching of the Reformation.⁵⁸

Augustine’s hermeneutic was shaped by the formative influences of his life. From rhetoric, Ambrose, and Tyconius directly, and from Origen indirectly, he adopted a primarily spiritualized interpretation of Scripture. His interpretation led him to a view of Revelation as symbolic rather than prophetically literal.⁵⁹ Such an interpretation fit perfectly with the position and principles of Tyconius. From this, he proceeded easily to amillennial eschatology.⁶⁰ Interestingly, Augustine used a spiritualized approach primarily for interpretation of prophecy. His spiritualization of Revelation further required him to spiritualize prophecies of the Old Testament, but he refrained in other areas of theology.⁶¹ Such practice also fit comfortably with the dualistic approach he had learned from Origen through Ambrose. The four-fold sense impressed upon his thinking by his early training in rhetoric laid the foundation for this complementary approach to hermeneutics.

CONCLUSION

The various influences of Augustine’s life had the cumulative effect of producing a dualistic hermeneutic that lent itself easily to an amillennial conclusion. His interpretive approach coupled with belief in the “rule of faith,” would establish this eschatology, in addition to the complementary hermeneutic that produced it, as the orthodox position for hundreds of years. It is an effect that is still being experienced today.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 3:30.

⁵⁷ Froehlich, “Take Up and Read,” 13.

⁵⁸ Walvoord, “Amillennialism,” 421.

⁵⁹ Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 102.

⁶⁰ Larry V. Crutchfield, “Augustine,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, gen. ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996) 59.

⁶¹ Walvoord, “Amillennialism,” 424.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Ron J. Bigalke

The purpose of this article is to provide an understanding of differences in biblical interpretation. The ultimate purpose “for learning to interpret the scriptures correctly is the necessity to understand clearly for ourselves exactly what we are trying to communicate to others.”¹ The survey herein will introduce the alternatives to literal interpretation, and should help the reader appreciate the need to apply the literal method consistently.

PRE-CHRISTIAN AND CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Allegory is a form of extended metaphor. According to the allegorical interpretative method, actions, objects, and persons in the biblical narrative are equated with meanings outside the narrative itself. The “outside” meaning has moral, political, religious, and social significance, in which historical characters are mere personifications of abstract concepts such as good and evil. Therefore, an allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal and symbolic meaning.

The allegorical school considers the grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture as an insignificant step toward the deeper, hidden meaning of a biblical passage. The hidden meaning is thought as more profound and spiritual than a literal method of interpretation. Whereas the grammatical-historical method attempts to understand the meaning of the original writer, the allegorical method neglects the original intent in search of a deeper and more spiritual meaning.

Allegorical interpretation believes that beneath the letter (*rhētē*) or the obvious (*phanera*) is the real meaning (*hyponoia*) of the passage. Allegory is defined by some as an extended metaphor. . . . But if we presume that the document has a secret meaning (*hyponoia*) and there are no cues concerning the hidden meaning interpretation is difficult. In fact, the basis problem is to determine if the passage has such a meaning at all. . . . If there are no cues, hints, connections, or other

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¹ A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) vii.

associations which indicate that the record is an allegory, and what the allegory intends to teach, we are on very uncertain grounds.²

Ramm explained additionally that the Greeks had a religious heritage in Homer and the writings of Hesiod. However, the general population was drifting from the study of these works and becoming more atheistic and even denying the place of religion. In order to correct this problem, the Greek myths were allegorized and “were not to be taken *literally*.”³ Rather underneath the religious writings was the real or secret meaning (*hyponoia*). Regarding “one of the strange fates of history,” Ramm indicated, “The allegorical method arose to save the reputation of ancient Greek religious poets.” However, the Alexandrian (North Africa) Jews “were so impressed that they accepted the teachings of Greek philosophy.”⁴ As the Greeks distorted their sacred writings, so allegorists tend to change the message of Scripture to please the world.

Although Jewish allegorism began with Aristobulus (160 BC), it was Philo of Alexandria (or Philo Judaeus, ca. 15/10 BC–AD 45/50) who was “the outstanding Jewish allegorist.”⁵ He was the most important representative of Hellenistic Judaism. Philo wrote philosophical and religious essays, homilies, and responses to contemporary issues of his day. Philo was an avid allegorist⁶ as seen in his *Legum Allegoriae, I-III*.⁷ Philo even gave allegorical meanings to numbers, as in *Opificio* 3.13.⁸ The majority of evangelical hermeneutics disregard Alexandrian allegorism in the interpretation of biblical narratives; however, a significant number still apply it to major prophetic passages and especially the Song of Songs, and therefore offer illegitimate “spiritual” interpretations of the biblical texts.

² Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd rev. ed. (1970; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 24.

³ *Ibid.* 25.

⁴ *Ibid.* 26.

⁵ *Ibid.* 27.

⁶ Philo commonly interpreted literal people allegorically. *De Sacrificiis Abelis et Cain* and *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* are examples of Philo’s allegorical attempt to argue that Abel and Cain were not historical figures, but mere universal types of people or characteristics of humankind generally. He also interpreted places allegorically, such as Israel (*De Virtutibus* 1.4) and Jerusalem (*Mittantur Somnia* 2.38.250-2.39.260). The philosophical predisposition of Philo was clearly Platonic which means he sought a novel manner in which to merge Jewish theology with Plato’s theory of Ideas (e.g. *Sacrificiis* 31.102-103; cf. *De Opificio Mundi* and *De Vita Contemplativa*). Philo’s work *De Aeternitate Mundi* was an attempt to describe the *Logos* as an intermediary between the world and God.

⁷ Philo Judaeus, “*Legum Allegoriae, I-III*,” in *The Works of Philo*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 25-79.

⁸ Philo, “*De Opificio Mundi*,” 4; “*De Mutatione Nominum*,” 357.

Greek allegory was given greater influence by Origen through whom “it was bequeathed to the Christian Church.” As a hermeneutical system, allegory is a return to pagan Greek interpretation. Ramm wrote, “The allegorical system that arose among the pagan Greeks, copied by the Alexandrian Jews, was next adopted by the Christian church and largely dominated exegesis until the Reformation, with such notable exceptions as the Syrian school of Antioch and the Victorines of the Middle Ages.”⁹ Ramm continued his assessment of the allegorical system by quoting K. Fullerton who wrote, “When the historical sense of a passage is once abandoned there is wanting any sound regulative principle to govern exegesis. . . . The mystical [allegorical] method of exegesis, is an unscientific and arbitrary method, reduces the Bible to obscure enigmas, undermines the authority of all interpretation. . . .”¹⁰ Allegoricism elevates the subjective and obfuscates Scripture.

JESUS AND APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION

Those who interpret literally often reference Ezra’s approach to reading and explaining the text of Scripture.¹¹ Nehemiah recorded, “And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the meaning” (Neh 8:8).¹² Terry noted that it is possible to “date the beginning of formal exposition of the Scriptures at the time of Ezra.”¹³ Jewish developments in hermeneutics after the time of Ezra tended more toward hyper-literalism with an overemphasis on the letter of the Law. The hyper-literal methodology was strongly opposed by Christ Himself as recorded in the Gospels. Ramm explained: “It was the task of Ezra to give the meaning of the Scriptures by paraphrasing the Hebrew into the Aramaic or in other ways expounding the sense of the Scriptures. This is generally admitted to be the first instance of Biblical

⁹ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 28.

¹⁰ *Prophecy and Authority: A Study in the History of the Doctrine of the Interpretation of Scripture*, 75, as cited by *ibid.* 31.

¹¹ Paul Lee Tan, *Literal Interpretation of the Bible* (1967; reprint, Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1978) 11.

¹² The rabbinical view is reflected in the New American Standard Bible since Ezra and the leaders were *translating* rather than “explaining” the text (however, “explaining” is provided as a marginal note). The New International Version emphasizes the idea of translating in the margin. On the basis of linguistic and contextual considerations, both Derek Kidner (*Ezra & Nehemiah* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979] 106) and C. F. Keil (*Commentary on the Old Testament* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866-1891; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996] 3:230) argued against the idea of translation.

¹³ Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (1883; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 604.

hermeneutics.”¹⁴ It is important to note that Ezra gave sense, not *sensus plenior*, which is to say he communicated the normal (plain) sense of Moses¹⁵ as found in the written document.¹⁶

It is evident that Jesus employed a consistently literal method as He interpreted the Old Testament. For instance, He accepted the narratives of Abel (Matt 23:35), Noah (24:37-38), Abraham (3:9; 8:11; 22:32), Isaac and Jacob (8:11; 22:32), Moses (8:4; 19:8), David (12:3; 22:43, 45), and Jonah (12:40) as records of historical fact. Jesus never used an allegorical method of interpretation whenever He made application of the historical record. Indeed, He rebuked the religious leaders because they developed sophisticated methods for interpreting Scripture and replaced a literal understanding with their contrived traditions. No accusation of interpreting Scripture unnaturally or non-literally was ever attributed to Jesus by the Jews.¹⁷

In the same manner as Jesus, the Apostles interpreted the Old Testament literally. All the Apostles, including Paul, adopted the literal method. The New Testament writers did not change the meaning of the Old Testament by arguing for a deeper meaning. Farrar commented, “The better Jewish theory, purified in Christianity, takes the teachings of the Old Dispensation literally, but sees in them, as did St. Paul, the shadow and germ of future developments. Allegory, though once used by St. Paul by way of passing illustration, is unknown to the other Apostles, and is never sanctioned by Christ.”¹⁸

It is granted that certain New Testament citations *appear* to change the original meaning of the Old Testament text or *appear* to interpret the Old Testament in a non-literal fashion, but the more one examines the grammatical-historical context in the New Testament the writers can be seen to interpret consistently the Old Testament according to a normal

¹⁴ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 46.

¹⁵ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 21.

¹⁶ Ramm maintained: “Far removed from the land of Palestine, the Jews in captivity could no longer practice their accustomed religion (Mosaism) which included the land, their capitol city, and their temple. There could be no Mosaism with no temple, no land about which there were many regulations, and no harvest. Robbed of the national character of their religion the Jews were led to emphasize that which they would take with them, their Scriptures. Out of the captivities came Judaism with its synagogues, rabbis, scribes, lawyers, and traditions” (*Biblical Interpretation*, 46).

¹⁷ Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 54.

¹⁸ F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (1886; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961) 217.

(plain) interpretation.¹⁹ Virkler commented, “In conclusion, the vast majority of the New Testament references to the Old Testament interpret it literally; that is, they interpret according to the commonly accepted norms for interpreting all types of communication. . . . There is no attempt to separate the message into literal and allegorical levels. The few cases where the New Testament writers seem to interpret the Old Testament unnaturally can usually be resolved as we understand more fully the interpretive methods of biblical times.”²⁰

PATRISTIC (CHURCH FATHERS) INTERPRETATION

The Patristic Period (ca. 100-600) can be divided into three sub-periods: the Apostolic Fathers (100-150), the Alexandrian-Antiochan debate (150-400), and the deliberations of the church councils (400-590). The Patristic Fathers were endeared to the Old Testament and generally literal in their interpretation. However, they were fond of locating typological meanings in the Old Testament, such as Rahab’s scarlet thread as representing the blood of Christ. They also allegorized the six days of creation to represent six thousand years of earth history. Additionally, the *midrash* in the Qumran literature caused them to seek symbolic meanings for numbers in Scripture.²¹

Clement of Rome (ca. 30-95) quoted from the Old Testament copiously, and believed the Old Testament was preparation for Christ. In his seven letters to Rome, Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35-107) frequently referenced the Old Testament indirectly; his thinking was Christocentric and he generally rejected allegorizing. In his writing to the Philippians, Polycarp of Smyrna (70-155) frequently quoted the Old and New Testaments. The *Epistle of Barnabas* contains 119 quotations from the Old Testament; the writer allegorized Scripture extensively. Marcion disregarded the authority of the Old Testament and only accepted portions of Luke’s Gospel as accurate. He did not believe Jesus Christ was the Son of the God of the Old Testament. Consensus regarding interpretation was not prominent among the early

¹⁹ Although some evangelicals may use forms of allegorism in their interpretation (particularly regarding Bible prophecy) and remain evangelical in their overall theology, the allegorical school has moved historically in the direction of liberalism. For instance, if the language of Scripture regarding future events is not interpreted grammatically and historically then there is no control for discounting the virgin birth or spiritualizing the miracles of the Bible as customary to liberalism.

²⁰ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 58.

²¹ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 30-34; Thomas D. Ice, class notes of this author in AST 410 The History of the Teaching of Prophecy through the Centuries, Tyndale Theological Seminary, 2001.

church. The Alexandrian School generally and Origen particularly are the main reasons for the development of non-literal interpretation.²²

Throughout AD 180-250, the apologists used allegory to defend Scripture. They were confused concerning the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. For instance, typology and allegory were confused, and church authority was an effective means of opposing heresy. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-164) and Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160-220) used both literal and non-literal interpretation to defend Scripture. Polycarp and Papias educated Irenaeus (ca. 120-202). Kyle described his teaching as “perhaps the most complete expression of patristic premillennialism.”²³ Irenaeus was a stern defender of the literal interpretation of Scripture as opposed to allegorical interpretation. He did not ignore symbols and types in Scripture, but always sought the plain sense of the biblical text.²⁴ Crutchfield noted, “he espoused principles that today are regarded as essential to any sound hermeneutical method.”²⁵

A major debate would emerge between the church in Alexandria, and the church in Antioch of Syria. Whereas the Alexandrian School was strong in allegorizing, the Antiochan School was strong in literal interpretation. Clement of Alexandria was the dominant teacher in Alexandria; his successor, Origen, would have a tremendous influence in the church. Origen (ca. AD 185-254) was an Alexandrian theologian. He adopted an allegorical interpretation of Scripture. The literal interpretation of Scripture was the Jewish method of interpretation and it was regarded as incorrect because they crucified the Messiah. The literal return of Christ was spiritualized to a generic individual experience with Christ. Moreover, when Christianity became the state religion under Constantine the idea of an earthly kingdom was not as important as when the church was being persecuted.

Origen thought it was foolish not to understand that Scripture “is to be taken figuratively” (*De Principiis* 2.11.2).²⁶ Origen taught that the Spirit of God inspired the Scriptures but only those (like himself) who are “bestowed in the word of wisdom and knowledge,” are able to grasp the

²² John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959) 45.

²³ Richard G. Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 36.

²⁴ Larry V. Crutchfield, “The Early Church Fathers and the Foundation of Dispensationalism Part V—Dispensational Concepts in The Polemicists: Irenaeus,” *The Conservative Theological Journal* 3 (April 1999): 31.

²⁵ Larry V. Crutchfield, “Irenaeus,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, gen. ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996) 181.

²⁶ Origen, *Origen De Principiis*, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (1886; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 4:297.

meaning of Scripture (*De Principiis*, preface, para. 8).²⁷ Origen believed Scripture is not expounded “according to the historical, but according to the spiritual method of interpretation” (*De Principiis* 1.3.3).²⁸

The Antiochan School opposed the Alexandrian with a literal historical method of interpretation. One of the important representatives was John Chrysostom (354-407). He wrote more than 600 expository discourses (homilies). Chrysostom demonstrated that the only validity of a meaning beyond the literal was the practical application that made the passage relevant for all times. Terry wrote, “Chrysostom is unquestionably the greatest commentator among the early fathers of the church.”²⁹

Two late church fathers, Jerome and Augustine, made preparation for two emphases that would dominate the church until the Reformation: church tradition (authority) and non-literal interpretation. Jerome (ca. 347-419) originally followed the same approach as Origen. For instance, his commentary on Obadiah was his first exegetical work and it was allegorical. He did, however, become more literal through the influence of the Antiochan School, as evident in his last commentary of Jeremiah. Jerome believed a deeper meaning must be based upon the literal unless it was not perceived as moral. The *Vulgate* represents his desire to identify the original text.

Initially, Augustine (354-430) was a Manichean but their views created problems for him regarding the Old Testament. At the cathedral in Milan, he heard the slogan of Ambrose from 2 Corinthians 3:6 which led to his acceptance of allegorizing. One reason, Augustine rejected a literal interpretation of Scripture was its “crass materialism” that “envisioned an earthly paradise in which Christians enjoyed immoderate leisure and much carnal pleasure.”³⁰ Augustine was greatly influenced by the Donatist theologian Tyconius.³¹ Prophetic books were spiritualized to signify Christ’s present reign with the saints during the current church age.

In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine argued that the method for determining whether a passage is literal or not is to consult other clear passages, consider “the rule of faith” (the traditional understanding of the church), and consult the context of Scripture itself. The result was that church tradition became more authoritative than context. In the same work, Augustine also stated the principle of “the analogy of faith,” which

²⁷ Ibid. 4:241.

²⁸ Ibid. 4:252.

²⁹ Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 649.

³⁰ Kyle, *Last Days*, 39.

³¹ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 48.

meant no interpretation should be accepted if it conflicts the overall theme of Scripture. In his work, he also presented seven rules of interpretation, which he believed formed a rational basis for non-literal interpretation.³²

MONASTIC (MEDIEVAL) INTERPRETATION

During the Middle Ages (600-1500), hermeneutics experienced a transitory period from the prior influence of the Church Fathers until the Reformation. Allegorical interpretation continued as a dominant form of hermeneutics and was developed into four types of meanings: (1) literal; (2) allegorical; (3) moral; and, (4) anagogical. According to this methodology, a passage such as Isaiah 2:1-4 can have four meanings. The literal meaning of "Jerusalem" is the actual historical city. The allegorical meaning would be the influence of the church throughout the nations. The moral meaning is the requirement of the believer to teach biblical truth to others. The anagogical meaning is the heavenly Jerusalem, according to a passage like Hebrews 12:22.

Another method of interpretation during the Middle Ages was the more literal nature and approach of those like Jerome. Though not a dominant view during the time, it did represent the historical, literal methodology and was an influence for the Protestant Reformation that would later develop into scholasticism. The intellectualism of scholasticism was influential in monastic schools and the pre-Renaissance universities. The movement probably influenced the decline of the allegorical method toward the end of the Middle Ages.

Mickelsen rightly observed, "the Middle Ages were a vast desert so far as biblical interpretation is concerned."³³ During this period, there was no

³² Augustine discussed seven rules composed by Tyconius. The rules he discussed were intended to provide a rational basis for allegorizing Scripture. "And of these rules, the first relates to the Lord and His body." References to Christ are often applied to His body, the church. Second, "the twofold division of Lord's body" which means a mixed church of both hypocrites and true believers. The third relates to "the promises and the law." Some passages relate to grace and others to law, some to the spirit and some to the letter, and some to works and some to faith. The fourth relates "to species and genus." Some passages relate to the part (*species*) and some to the whole (*genus*). For example, believing Israelites in the Old Testament are a *species* of the *genus*, the church, which is spiritual Israel. The fifth relates to "times." Alleged discrepancies can be solved by including one statement within the other. The sixth relates to "recapitulation." Some difficult passages are explained by referencing previous accounts. Genesis 1-2 supplement, not contradict, each other. The seventh relates to "the devil and his body." Some passages, such as Isaiah 14, testify more with regard to the body of the devil, that is, his followers. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Version 6.02, 1998) 3:1189.

³³ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 35.

original thinking with regard to the Scriptures themselves. The copyists of Scripture seldom understood them or communicated their message. “During this period the principle was generally accepted that any interpretation of a biblical text must adapt itself to the tradition and doctrine of the church. The source of dogmatic theology was not the Bible alone, but the Bible as interpreted by church tradition.”³⁴ There was almost no creative scholarship during the Middle Ages since most merely worked to study the early Church Fathers. Tradition was the primary interpreter of Scripture, and the allegorical method was the dominant hermeneutic. Two noteworthy men during this period include Anselm and Aquinas.

Anselm (ca. 1033-1109) is regarded as founder of Scholasticism, a philosophical school of thought predominant during the Middle Ages. He is recognized as the originator of the ontological argument. His greatest work was *Cur Deus Homo* wherein he articulated the satisfaction theory of atonement. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) believed “the literal meaning of Scripture is basic, but that other senses are built on it” including the allegorical method.³⁵ His most important works are the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles* which were greatly influenced by Aristotle. Aquinas’ theology became the foundation for the theology of Roman Catholicism. He argued for both authorial and divine intent of Scripture; the divine aspect indicated the spiritual sense. Aquinas wrote, “The literal sense is that which the author intends, but God being the Author, we may expect to find in the Scripture a wealth of meaning. . . .”³⁶ The things signified by the words are the literal sense, but these words may also signify other things that indicated the spiritual sense.

REFORMATION INTERPRETATION

The Reformation (1500-1650) was a theological revolution, and biblical interpretation also witnessed a transformation because of it. Ramm wrote, “Although historians admit that the West was ripe for the Reformation due to several forces at work in European culture, nevertheless there was a *hermeneutical Reformation* which preceded the ecclesiastical Reformation.”³⁷ Zuck explained the forces at work as “the literal approach of the Antiochene school and the Victorines.”³⁸ The legacy of scholasticism was also a contributing factor to the Reformation since the biblical

³⁴ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 63.

³⁵ Zuck, *Interpretation*, 43.

³⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.1.10, as quoted by *ibid.*

³⁷ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 51-52.

³⁸ Zuck, *Interpretation*, 44.

languages were revived during this time. Men such as Luther and Calvin returned to the biblical text and the natural attractiveness of the more scientific, literal interpretation of Scripture.

As a monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546) did interpret allegorically. "His lecture on Romans and on the Psalms plus his own independent study of Scripture made him discontented with the traditionalism and allegorizing in the church of Rome."³⁹ Luther's dissatisfaction with some of the traditionalism of the scholastics and his desire for a perceived apostolic Christianity also motivated him. Since the early church only had Scripture, he developed the radical and nontraditional view of *sola Scriptura*. When Luther was studying Romans, he came to realize that Christ is not an allegory and he desired to know Christ. Luther denounced allegorizing as empty speculation and called it "dirt," "scum," and, "obsolete loose rags." However, as Ramm wrote, "He was not adverse to allegory if the content were Christ and not something of the papacy."⁴⁰

The importance Luther gave to literal interpretation also meant an emphasis upon the original languages. Rejecting allegory, Luther emphasized *sensus literalis*. He stated, "We shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained."⁴¹ Nevertheless, one must be more than a philologist, historian, or even theologian; the Holy Spirit must illumine the mind of the interpreter. The foundation of hermeneutics is Christ, and the grammatical-historical method is to lead to Christ.

Luther's writings were filled with eschatology, but he was not a revolutionary. He interpreted events in his time as fulfilling prophecy and believed that current events of his day were the fulfillment of eschatological events described in the Olivet Discourse. Current events, such as the so-called 1529 apparitions, the heat wave following a solar eclipse of 1540, the spread of syphilis, and the changing water level of one of the commercial waterways of central Europe were interpreted as signs of Christ's return.⁴² The papacy was considered the Antichrist and the Turks were regarded as the Antichrist's servants.⁴³ Luther's identification of the Antichrist meant "the last day is at hand" and the end of history was near.⁴⁴ Sometimes he spiritualized the millennium, whereas other times

³⁹ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 38.

⁴⁰ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 54.

⁴¹ Theodore G. Tappert, ed. and trans., *Luther's Works*, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 4:114-115.

⁴² *Luther's Works*, 54:134.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 54:346. Luther believed that the growth of the Ottoman Empire by the Turks was connected with the description of Gog in Ezekiel 38.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 54:134.

Luther taught that the millennium had already past. Luther did set dates for the end of the age and for the most part believed he was somewhere in between the millennium and the end of the age.⁴⁵ John Calvin also believed the papacy was equivalent to the Antichrist.⁴⁶

The Reformers abandoned the allegorical method of interpretation (characteristic of Catholicism) in all areas but eschatology. Amillennialism is the prophetic viewpoint of the Catholic Church, and it was also the prophetic viewpoint of the great Reformers. The reason that the Reformers retained the amillennialism of Catholicism was due to the time in which they lived. They did embrace a grammatical-historical interpretation of the Scripture in regards to soteriology and ecclesiology. Since eschatology was not a major issue, the Reformers did not have the opportunity to apply their hermeneutic consistently.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was perhaps the greatest exegete of the Reformation period. Calvin also rejected allegorical interpretations. John Calvin said, "It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say."⁴⁷ Those theologians who accepted Calvin's hermeneutic divided into two entirely different directions. The first group, which dominated the interpretative approach for the next 250 years, was exemplified by the interpretative methodology of Johannes Cocceius. The other group was exemplified by the interpretative methodology of Pierre Poiret. The hermeneutic of this last group remained dormant until the nineteenth century. Calvin also emphasized the Christological nature of Scripture, the grammatical-historical method, determining doctrine by exegesis, the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, and a reasonable approach to typology. Regarding the influence of the Reformers, Tan wrote:

The gift of the Protestant reformers to the Christian church consists not only in an open Bible but also in the literal method of interpreting the Bible. Unfortunately, however, the reformers refused to be involved in the issue of prophetic interpretation, and so the whole of Protestantism went the way of Roman Catholic amillennialism by default. This omission of the reformers is probably explainable by the fact that truths such as justification by faith and the problems of ecclesiology were claiming the immediate attention of the reformers as the latter sought to sift through the Roman debris.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Kyle, *Last Days*, 61; Gordon H. Johnston, "Reformation Hermeneutics," in *Premillennial Theology*, 164.

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on First John* [online] (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed 3 May 2010) available from http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_vol45/htm/v.iii.vi.htm.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Tan, *Literal Interpretation*, 54.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The Anabaptist movement began among the followers of Zwingli who believed the Reformer did not make a complete break with Roman Catholicism regarding the issues of church and state and infant baptism. The early leaders in Zurich referred to themselves as the “Swiss Brethren.” The Anabaptists stressed the ability of individuals to interpret Scripture by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the superiority of the New Testament to the Old Testament, the separation of church and state, and the willingness to suffer for the name of Christ. Some Anabaptists were extremists and maligned the reputation of Christianity.⁴⁹

POST-REFORMATION INTERPRETATION

Hermeneutics during the post-Reformation period (1600-1799) were often deficient because exegesis was subjugated to dogmatics; therefore, interpretation degenerated into proof-texting.⁵⁰ “The 200 years of the 17th and 18th centuries were noted for several influential movements and activities.”⁵¹ One of those movements is called confessionalism. Tan described this movement carefully.

After the death of John Calvin (1564), the immediate post-Reformation period was an age of creeds and the formulation of various theological systems. The Council of Trent delineated the proper bounds of Roman Catholic theology and the Protestant churches came out in kind with theological statements. With the emphases of the age on creeds and church interpretations, there was little progress in sound Scriptural interpretation. Nevertheless, after the Reformation, the literal method was firmly established as the proper method of Bible exegesis, and a large number of scholars and exegetes arose to follow in the footsteps of the reformers.⁵²

Pietism developed as a reaction to the dogmatic and frequently bitter exegesis of confessionalism. Pietists sought an end to theological controversies and encouraged the church to return to social welfare. Conversely, rationalism “stressed that the human intellect can decide what is true and false. The Bible, then, is true if it corresponds to man's reason, and what does not correspond can be ignored or rejected.”⁵³ According to rationalists, the reason of man was more authoritative than the Bible. If the Bible harmonized with what man deemed was acceptable those beliefs

⁴⁹ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 42-43.

⁵⁰ Ice, class notes; Mal Couch, class notes of this author in AST 404 History of the Diaspora, Tyndale Theological Seminary, 2003.

⁵¹ Zuck, *Interpretation*, 49.

⁵² Tan, *Literal Interpretation*, 54.

⁵³ Zuck, *Interpretation*, 51.

were accepted, but doctrines such as human depravity, hell, the virgin birth, and the resurrection were rejected.

Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) was a Jewish philosopher, and one of the foremost exponents of seventeenth century rationalism. Spinoza has been guaranteed a place in the intellectual history of the Western world, although his direct influence on technical philosophy has not been great. Throughout the eighteenth century, Spinoza was almost unanimously condemned as an atheist (sometimes he was even used as an example for atheistic ideas). He was not without criticism from men such as Pierre Bayle, a skeptical philosopher, and David Hume, a Scottish skeptic and historian.⁵⁴ Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791) was a German church historian and biblical critic, sometimes called the father of German rationalism. The liberal theory of accommodation is attributed to him. Ramm described the view as “the evisceration or enervation of the doctrinal content of the Bible by explaining doctrinal passages as accommodations to the thought-patterns of the times of the Biblical writers.”⁵⁵

David F. Strauss (1808-74) adopted a mythological approach to the Bible, which resulted in his denying grammatical-historical interpretation and miracles. Strauss was the first to achieve a consistent “demythologization” of the Gospels. It was in the nineteenth century that the First Quest for the historical Jesus *officially* began with David Strauss’ publication *Das Leben Jesu* (1835-36). He believed “that the Gospels could no longer be read straightforwardly as unvarnished historical records of what Jesus actually said and did.” Strauss’ argument was that one must acknowledge the use of myth in the Gospel accounts.⁵⁶ Others followed the lead of Strauss such as Joseph Ernest Renan’s *Vie de Jésus* (1860). It was the contention of Strauss that “unbiased historical research” needed to be accomplished to discern who Jesus of Nazareth was. Stephan Evans provided an answer as to why Strauss could no longer accept the testimony of the evangelists: “The quick answer is simply ‘modernity.’” In the era of the Enlightenment, intense optimism concerning man’s reason quickly led to the renunciation of the supernatural. Reports of miracles and resurrections were now to be considered as pre-scientific and mythological.⁵⁷ It was because so much of the Gospels dealt with the

⁵⁴ Martin Gilbert, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1990) 62, 82.

⁵⁵ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 101.

⁵⁶ Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995) 9.

⁵⁷ C. Stephan Evans, *The Historical Quest and the Jesus of Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 13.

supernatural that the New Testament documents were no longer considered historical.⁵⁸

Much of the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) addressed the subject of ontology. He maintained skepticism regarding the conception of God as a being of nothing more than a mere idea. Kant rejected the a priori argument of Anselm, and believed the sentence "God is" was nothing more than a grammatical statement which did not prove Anselm's God existed in reality. Ramm wrote, "Immanuel Kant made ethics or moral will the essence of religion." He focused merely "on the moral element of Scripture with its tacit rejection of theological interpretation."⁵⁹

The rationalism of the post-Reformation period resulted in the development of the historical-critical method, which was mainly the outcome of German universities of the early 1800s. Historical criticism became prominent in the nineteenth century. The approach was rationalistic and emphasized "human authorship of the Bible and the historical circumstances surrounding the development of the biblical text." Since the approach was rationalistic, the inspiration and miracles of the Bible were rejected.⁶⁰ Religious liberalism of the nineteenth century created a division in the orthodox position. The popularity of evolution resulted in critics rejecting the creation account. The attack on the Genesis record increased the division and proponents of higher criticism questioned all Scripture.

Two popular forms of historical criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism, developed during the first half of the twentieth century. The two methods, form criticism and redaction criticism, and the historical-critical method, are the foundation of biblical interpretation by two prominent theologians of the twentieth century: Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann.

In his *Commentary on Romans*, Karl Barth (1886-1968) responded to the spiritually inept liberalism. He advocated that the Bible is not a human document, the transcendence of God, and the sinfulness of humanity. Neoorthodox successors of Barth included Emil Brunner (1889-1966) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) who believed the Bible speaks only in divine-human encounters, and then becomes the Word of God. To these men, the Bible is merely a record and witness to revelation but it is not revelation itself. According to one critic, Niebuhr

claims to base his faith on the Bible, and calls it Biblical faith. But a careful examination shows that he corrects the Bible according to his own convictions.

⁵⁸ James R. White, class notes of this author in TH 615 Christology, Columbia Evangelical Seminary, 2001.

⁵⁹ Ramm, *Biblical Interpretation*, 68-69.

⁶⁰ Zuck, *Interpretation*, 52.

According to Niebuhr many of the truths of the Bible are presented in the form of myths. But myths are defective, he admits, and even Jesus and Paul were deceived by them.... Niebuhr corrects the errors of the Biblical authorities from Jesus down.⁶¹

Neorthodox theologians do not believe that Scripture is the sole authority for determining doctrine. They believe the individual may judge what portions of Scripture should be accepted and rejected. The danger is that man becomes the judge of the authority of the written Word of God, when Scripture is the judge for rejecting the sieve.

Influenced by Heidegger's existentialism, Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) taught that the New Testament should be understood existentially by "demythologization," that is, eliminating mythological "foreign" elements (e.g. deity of Christ, miracles, etc.). Bultmann's existential approach emphasizes a religious experience that is deemed the core of the Bible. His theology formed the basis for what is called "the new hermeneutic." Due to lack of quality scholarship, the new liberalism was not opposed with any success. Individuals like Barth created numerous questions against Scripture that were appealing to the humanistic view of the world. Barth, with the help of other critics, persisted in his attacks upon the infallibility of the Bible. For instance, Emil Brunner (1889-1966) was a proponent of an extreme school of biblical criticism that rejected the Gospel of John as a historical source. From Brunner's point of view, modern interpretation started with the notion that Scripture in itself is not revealed truth. Since Christ never wrote a book, the thinking was no action or saying of His could be attributed to Him with confidence.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55), the Danish philosopher considered "the father of modern existentialism," associated reason with the lowest level of human ability, rejected formal rationalism and unfeeling creedalism, and taught faith is a subjective experience in one's moment of despair. In spite of the appealing statements made by neoorthodox theologians, there are more disquieting features. The question could be raised about whether the Gospel is superrational, that is, the "upper storey experience," and is truth determined only by Kierkegaardian paradox. Ascertaining truth and approaching Scripture in this way can only lead to irresponsibility.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) is generally considered to have held a mediation position between liberalism and neoorthodoxy, idealism and realism, and Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. As an army chaplain, he regarded death and suffering as so distressing that he abandoned some of his idealistic emphases and turned to existentialist thinking. Although

⁶¹ Henry Nelson Wieman, "A Religious Naturalist Looks at Reinhold Niebuhr," in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, eds. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1956) 339-40.

Tillich abandoned philosophical idealism partially, he did abandon other issues and concerns of nineteenth century liberalism. Contrary to Barth and Brunner, Tillich did not abandon philosophical questions. He believed “the boundary line between philosophy and theology” was the “center” of his “thought and world” and argued that “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of the philosophers is the same God.”⁶² Tillich advocated the relationship between theology and philosophy, and argued contrary to Barth about the fact of a general revelation and the necessary relationship between religion and revelation.

CONCLUSION

The brief historical survey herein demonstrates the continuing tension between literal interpretation and non-literal interpretation. Much like the movement of a pendulum, one or the other of these interpretations have dominated at a given time. Whenever times of literal interpretation dominated, there has been an increase in biblical knowledge and spiritual awakening. Conversely, whenever non-literal interpretation dominated, there has been moral and spiritual decline, in addition to spiritual ignorance. Whenever non-literal interpretation dominates, ignorance of the truth of God’s Word prevails. The consistent literal interpretation of Scripture provides confidence in its authority, and understanding of its eternal truths. Whenever so-called “experts” control interpretation, as is common with allegorical and non-literal interpretation, the influence and power of God’s Word is eventually depreciated to a state of obsolescence.

⁶² Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) 83.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

Jacob Gaddala

From the Enlightenment there has arisen the strong tendency in theological circles to bifurcate, to dualistically separate, the text of Holy Scriptures from “the Word of God,” which is something reckoned to be necessarily other than all texts as such, whatever “the Word of God” is understood to be. The chasm between text and Word grew through the nineteenth century as a result of philosophical developments and, especially, the further development of historical-critical approaches to the study of Scriptures.

Karl Barth, the main proponent of the neoorthodox movement, gave ascendancy to this distorted view of the inspiration of Scriptures. According to him, “The Bible is God’s Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it.”¹ Scripture, therefore, according to Barth “is the literary monument of an ancient racial religion and of a Hellenistic Cultus religion of the Near East, a human document like any other.”² In the light of these arguments, this article focuses on the critical evaluation of the theology of Karl Barth especially in regard to the inspiration of Scriptures and whether the Bible is an ordinary book like any other book or divinely inspired and infallible.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BARTHIAN THEOLOGY

Karl Barth’s roots lie deeply embedded in the Reformed or Calvinistic wing of the Protestant Reformation. During his youth, Barth’s father was professor of New Testament and later of church history in the Protestant theological faculty of the University of Bern in Switzerland. Known for his mediating conservative theological position, he was concerned for the nurture of his children in the Reformed faith. Such an experience accounts for the fact that Barth could subsequently say that his faith was nourished in positive evangelical theology. In both home and church he gained an

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¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. George T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936) 107.

² Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928) 60.

appreciation of sacred scholarship in the service of the Gospel.³ Late in life, Barth recalled that his appetite for theology was first whetted through confirmation instruction at the age of sixteen. He was challenged not only to know something of the content of the Swiss Reformed Confessions, but also to be able to understand them from within.

Barth's theological training during the heyday of Protestant liberalism gradually led him from his Reformed roots and into the liberal camp. At the conclusion of his theological studies in 1909, Barth saw himself as a somewhat tentative liberal. He designated the two emphases of liberal theology as "religious individualism" and "historical relativism." Since liberal theology rejected the traditional view of the absoluteness of both biblical revelation and the Scriptures, the believer's final authority was his or her own Christian experience.⁴ It was these twin emphases that Barth found to be increasingly untenable and unfounded.

Confronted with the task of preaching weekly in Sanfenwil, Barth found himself wrestling with the subject matter of the Bible. Increasingly he found the liberal historical-critical commentaries inadequate. He did not reject the historical-critical mode of biblical inquiry. The issue was rather that the historical critics failed to confront the real subject matter of the texts; that is, they failed to seek the Word of God to which Scripture pointed. In search of guides for comprehending Paul's epistle to the Romans, Barth found help in the commentaries of Luther, Calvin, and interpreters like J. T. Beck and Adolf Schlatter, whose perspective was informed by that of the Reformers.

At the age of thirty-five, Barth became the honorary professor of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen in Germany. Aware of his still inadequate grasp of his own Reformed tradition and the pressure of a neophyte lecturing in Reformed dogmatics, Barth came across a new edition of Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics*, a compilation of seventeenth century orthodox Reformed theology.⁵

In his initial lectures, Barth treated theological topics related to his own Reformed heritage. During this period, Barth traced his theological ancestry backward through Kierkegaard, Calvin and Luther, and finally to Paul and Jeremiah. His increasing and deepening polemic against Protestant liberalism resulted from his ever more certain conviction that it represented a defection from the Reformation tradition. In 1928, Barth

³ T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1962) 15.

⁴ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937) 7.

⁵ David L. Mueller, "Karl Barth and the Heritage of the Reformation," *Review and Expositor* 86 (Winter 1989): 46-47.

even said that were he forced to choose between liberalism and Catholicism, he would prefer the latter as the lesser of two evils.⁶

THEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS OF KARL BARTH

Karl Barth was raised in liberal circles in Germany at the time of the First World War. In his earlier days he realized that the message that Calvin and Luther had preached four hundred years earlier had been efficacious in producing sincere Christians and a vital Christian faith. Consequently, Barth began to preach the message of Calvin and Luther, and he found it worked. People came to Christ and the church was filled. Actually Barth did not preach the entire Reformation doctrine of Calvin and Luther, but he preached enough of it that striking results were evident. Unfortunately, in Barth's thinking he sought to hold to biblical criticism and at the same time to a theology which at many points approached that of orthodoxy.

Since the Bible is the foundation of what Christians believe, the Barthian who accepts biblical criticism finds himself in the contradictory position of trying to sustain a superstructure of a somewhat conservative theology which rests on a biblical criticism which removes real authority from the Bible. Such acceptance leaves one's superstructure without real foundation. In the physical world, a superstructure without foundation would fall to the ground immediately. In the theological world, the collapse is just as inevitable, but sometimes less apparent for a time.⁷

The Göttingen Dogmatics belonged to a series of lectures offered by Barth during his years as the honorary professor of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen (the lectures never published by him).⁸ A basic discussion of dogmatics and its task leads to the initial chapter, "The Word of God as Revelation," in which Barth posed a dialectical relationship between God speaking and man in a "pilgrim" relation to God, and then presented his doctrines of the Trinity, incarnation, and human faith and obedience. The discussion is followed in sequence by chapters on "The Word of God as Holy Scripture" and "The Word of God as Christian Preaching," wherein Barth returned on another level to the concepts of doctrine and dogmatic.

Barth's own attempt at the careful, orderly business of dogmatics reflects on the theological problems with and after but not infrequently

⁶ David L. Mueller, *Karl Barth* (Waco: Word, 1972) 30.

⁷ Joseph P. Free, "Archeology and Biblical Criticism — Part V: Archeology and Neo-Orthodoxy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114 (April 1957): 123.

⁸ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1976) 155-56.

also against old Reformed orthodoxy. Therefore, Barth began with prolegomena on dogmatics, much as the older dogmaticians initially defined theology and he even addressed the question of whether dogmatics can be a science and, with the orthodox, declared that dogmatics is a reflection on the Word of God.

Nonetheless, because he did not identify the Word of God as Scripture in the traditional manner, Barth departed from the Reformers and the orthodox and introduced a series of chapters that point toward the exposition in his later *Church Dogmatics* wherein he discussed “The Word of God in Its Threefold Form” as revelation, as Scripture, and as preaching. Of course, the Reformers and the orthodox understood preaching as a form of Word, and they assumed that God’s revelation was by means of the eternal Word; but, unlike Barth, they clearly distinguished the revealer from the revelation and they assumed a closer relationship between the revelatory work of Word and Spirit and the text of Scripture than did Barth.⁹

Even so, Barth’s emphasis on the identity of word, revelation, and the person of the Logos led him to bring forward the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation as foundational even to his discussion of Scripture, and therefore also, as prior and foundational to his doctrine of God. His movement from Word to Trinity, to Scripture and preaching, and then to the doctrine of God is virtually identical to the pattern of the *Church Dogmatics*. It also indicates a view of revelation and of the doctrine of God rather different from that found in Protestant orthodox theology and, for that matter, in the theology of the Reformers, where revelation is understood as a work of the triune God, not identical either with the being of God or with the person of the Word, and where there is no hint of a subordination of the doctrine of the divine essence and attributes to a principle of incarnation.

Here Barth reflected not only his teacher, Herrmann, but also Ritschl, whose *Unterricht* spoke of the complete revelation of God through Christ granting Christ’s attribute of Godhood and, in relation to the doctrine of God, declared that Jesus Christ is the complete revelation of God as love, grace, and faithfulness. Indeed, Ritschl’s entire system, like that of Herrmann, assumes the Christological ground of the divine attributes and militates against the intrusion of metaphysics into the doctrine of God in the form of a traditional doctrine of the divine attributes.¹⁰

⁹ Richard A. Muller, “Barth’s Göttingen Dogmatics (1924-26): A Review and Assessment of Volume One,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (Spring 1994): 123.

¹⁰ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) 270-84.

Barth's system is called the theology of crisis. He loved to describe man as walking dangerously on a narrow ridge, a knife-edge of rock between two chasms. Moral and spiritual life is perpetual crisis, tension, strain. The dialectic theology is this perpetual balancing upward where nothing is between earth-rock and sky, where time is tangent to eternity. The paradox is the collision of two contradictory truths, not flatly supporting a new Hegelian synthesis that reconciles their contradiction, but by the impact of their collision up the sharp and deadly ridge. The mountaineer pilgrim on the narrow ridge is in peril of judgment; misstep means fall. Barth's dialectic method often involved contradictory statements that marked points on this side of the wall that separates from the other side of eternity. Like a flowerbed hidden by the wall, the truth is supposed to lie on the other side somewhere between the marked points.¹¹

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF BARTHIAN THEOLOGY

To interpret the Bible properly, one's hermeneutical principles must be based upon a correct understanding of biblical revelation. For some years now, God has been illuminating His church with the understanding that biblical revelation is progressive. However, an unbiblical view of progressive revelation has been proposed by the religious evolutionists, who recognized the progressive waves upon the surface of the divine ocean, but viewed evolutionary development as the cause. They assumed that Israel's religion, along with that of the pagans, arose from polytheism and then gradually progressed in the minds of the Israelites into a monotheistic concept. Such a view was advocated by W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, who said: "Hebrew religion, as the study of Semitic Comparative Religion abundantly proves, was very closely related to the religion of all the Semitic nations; indeed it was made up of elements common to the religions of all early Semites."¹²

Therefore, they believe that biblical revelation is a record of man's search for God and not the scriptural view of God's revealing Himself to man in infallible words. Neither does neoorthodoxy rise higher than classical liberalism in its view of biblical revelation. Karl Barth's view of the inspiration of Scripture closely parallels that of Oesterley and Robinson.

Not for all ages and countries, but certainly for our own, it is part of the stumbling block that like all ancient literature the Old and New Testament know nothing of the

¹¹ William T. Riviere, "The Philosophy Underlying Barth's Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 91 (April 1934): 174.

¹² W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1930) 17.

distinction of fact and value which is so important to us, between history, on the one hand, and saga and legend on the other. . . . But the vulnerability of the Bible, *i.e.*, its capacity for error, also extends to religious or theological content.¹³

Both of these views affirm that man's search for God evolved from much error mixed with little truth to less error mixed with more truth. Consequently, neither classical liberalism nor neoorthodoxy has any concept of an authoritative, final revelation of God to man in infallibly recorded words, for both maintain that revelation is imperfect and still continues. In contrast to classical liberalism and neoorthodoxy, biblical progressive revelation with its organic unity of Scripture requires perfection of doctrine at every stage, from Genesis to Revelation. A valid, biblical definition of the proper attitude toward progressive revelation was given by Bernard Ramm: "By progressive revelation we mean that the Bible sets forth a movement of God, with the initiative coming from God and not man, in which God brings man up through the theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament."¹⁴

Barthian writers frequently tend to identify their view of Scripture with that of the sixteenth century Reformers, especially Luther, in contrast to the doctrine on inspiration developed by the theologians of the succeeding era of Protestant orthodoxy. Excellent men as they were, Luther and Calvin were not inspired men. They could therefore have erred in their views of the authority and inspiration of Scripture, as they did err in their view of the Sabbath. Nevertheless, it must be granted that an anomalous situation would result, were it shown that the orthodox thinkers of the Lutheran and Reformed confessions had departed from the position of Luther and Calvin on the fundamental issue of the authority of Scripture. Liberal and neoorthodox writers would also be deprived of a specious pretext for overlooking the heterodox character of their position, were it demonstrated that they have not the slightest basis for appealing to the Reformers as setting a precedent for their denial of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.¹⁵

Note should also be taken of an anti-supernaturalistic attitude underlying Barth's criticism of the orthodox doctrine of inspiration. Such an attitude appears in his objection to the miraculous character of inspiration, as distinct from his own irrationalistic conception of mystery. Together with his denial of this super naturalistic conception to the Reformers must be coupled his severe criticism of it as it appeared in the

¹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 203.

¹⁴ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1956) 102.

¹⁵ William Young, "The Inspiration of Scripture in Reformation and in Barthian Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 8 (November 1945): 4.

high orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding the fact that Tillich criticized Barth for the “supernaturalism” of his theology, on the crucial question of inspiration, Barth stands alongside Tillich on anti-supernaturalistic ground.¹⁶

Barth confused the inspiration of Scripture with the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Scripture and proceeded to ascribe this same confusion to the Reformers. The confusion in Barth’s thought on this matter is symptomatic of the predominant subjectivist component in his dialectic, which excludes from the circle of his concepts the notion of an objectively given revelation. Barth early grappled with this difficulty in the first half volume of the *Dogmatics*.

The Bible therefore *becomes* God’s Word in this event and it is to its *being* in this *becoming* that the tiny word ‘is’ relates, in the statement that the Bible *is* God’s Word. It does not become God’s Word because we accord it faith, but, of course, because it becomes revelation for us. But its becoming revelation for us beyond all our faith, its being the Word of God also against our unbelief, we can, of course, allow to be true and confess as true in us and for us only in faith, in faith against unbelief, in the faith in which we look away from our faith and unbelief to the act of God, but in faith and not in unbelief. And therefore precisely not in abstraction from the act of God, in virtue of which the Bible must from time to time become His Word to us.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the subtlety of Barth’s dialectic and the psychological acuteness of the analysis of faith’s relation to its object, Barth did not escape the antinomy between the subjective acts of faith requiring an object independent of itself, which latter he could not really admit. The act of God in which he seeks transcendent objectivity is pure abstraction when lacking reference to a concrete objective revelation. Could Barth succeed in finding the objectivity lacking in the creation, namely in Scripture, in the Creator (i.e. in the Creator’s gracious act), his transcendence would at once become immanence in the most overt pantheistic sense. Inasmuch as objectivity is the correlative of subjectivity, the transfer of objectivity from the creature to the Creator involves the ascription of an essential component of the structure of the created world to the being of God, with the consequent obliteration of the boundary line between the finite and the infinite which Barth claimed for a starting point. From this negative dialectic Barth could not extricate himself.¹⁸

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, “What is Wrong with the Dialectic Theology,” *Journal of Religion* XV (1935): 127–45.

¹⁷ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (New York: Scribner’s, 1936) 124.

¹⁸ William Young, “Inspiration of Scripture,” 13.

The fact that Barth placed preaching and Scripture on the same level as means through which the Word of God comes to man reveals his view of Scriptures. When God spoke to a man through the Bible, then that is the Word of God to him. Of course, Barth is right in holding that a man may read the Bible without God's speaking to him through it; but he is wrong in thinking that the Bible is not God's Word in that case. Barth has made a radical separation between reason and revelation which is very fine, but he pushed the consequences much too far. Leonard De Moor gave a very fine analysis of "The Concept of Revelation in Barthianism" in *The Journal of Religion* XVII (April 1937) in which he concluded as follows:

The Barthians forget that in the midst of this world of limitations God has nevertheless really revealed himself, and that the experience of revelation and of faith takes place in the midst of the sphere of things conditioned. Barthians separate so radically the hearing of the word of God, and the human capacity to apprehend that it is questionable whether it is even possible for them to speak about a human apprehension of revelation. The complaint is therefore justified that because in Barthianism revelation is conceived wholly in transcendent terms we do not really have revelation here at all. Theirs is just the opposite error from that of the theologians from Lessing on. Barthianism is in this respect thoroughly liberal. Barthianism therefore fails to give us a solution to the problem of revelation, because, just as its predecessors, it fails to weave into an organic and vital unity the divine content or supernatural reality and the historical or empirical medium. Only when a synthesis of these two is maintained do we have a sound and adequate conception of this crucial theological doctrine.¹⁹

Karl Barth's charge that the Bible is no different than any other book in its formation, and that it only becomes inspired, or the Word of God when the reader is inspired by it, and it reveals to them Jesus Christ, is weak in the fact that while Barth emphasized the need for illumination now, he denied the idea that it was inspired then, when originally written. He admitted that there is inspiration, but not in the original autograph, and its not inherent in the text itself, but in the experience with the text on an individual basis. Such an argument ignores the relevant biblical data, and only pushes the idea of inspiration one step past the original writings.²⁰

CONCLUSION

Although the term "inspiration" occurs infrequently in modern versions and paraphrases, the conception itself remains firmly embedded in the Scriptural teaching. The word *theopneustos* (2 Tim 3:16), literally means

¹⁹ As quoted by Miner Brodhead Stearns, "Protestant Theology Since 1700," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 105 (January 1948): 70.

²⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 37.

“God outbreathed,” and affirms that the living God is the author of Scripture and that Scripture is the product of His creative breath. The biblical sense, therefore, rises above the modern tendency to assign the term “inspiration” merely a dynamic or functional significance (largely through a critical dependence on Schleiermacher’s artificial disjunction that God communicates life, not truths about himself). Barth emphasized the “inspiring” of Scripture, that is, its present use by the Holy Spirit toward hearers and readers, but the Bible itself begins prior with the very “inspiredness” of the sacred writings. The writings themselves, as an end product, are asserted God-breathed. Precisely this conception of inspired writings, and not simply of inspired men, sets the biblical conception of inspiration pointedly over against pagan representations of inspiration in which heavy stress is placed on the subjective psychological mood and condition of those individuals overmastered by divine afflatus. Karl Barth’s view of divine inspiration is wrong because the Scriptures are divinely inspired and also infallible, and the Bible is not like any other document or book.

**A FRESH LOOK AT DARRELL BOCK’S INTERPRETATION
CONCERNING PETER’S USE OF JOEL 2 IN ACTS 2
WITH REGARD TO ENACTMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT**

Timothy L. Decker

It has been seventeen years since “the search for definition” officially began in a published book format for what is now known as progressive dispensationalism.¹ Some might argue that the search is still ongoing, but what is certain is that the ripple effects of *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* and *Progressive Dispensationalism* have been felt throughout evangelicalism and the academic institutions therein.²

One might ask why a theological concept proposed from a chapter in a book published seventeen years ago is being re-examined. It is the contention of this author that a system, which is very logical in its construction, albeit flawed in its final results, can only be fully exposed by returning to the foundation of the system. If the foundation is wrong, then the logical construction built upon it will also be wrong. It is at the foundation of progressive dispensationalism that the primary error is uncovered. In this case, the foundation is a matter of hermeneutics.

In many different published writings, Darrell L. Bock sought to prove or discuss a current Davidic reign in an “already” form of the Messianic kingdom.³ To do this, he sought to show that the Bible speaks of Christ enacting His messianic authority, which by default implies a Davidic rule. This messianic authority to which is referred is, but not exclusively, the

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¹ Craig A. Blasing and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

² Ibid; Craig A. Blasing and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

³ Darrell L. Bock, "Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment," *Trinity Journal* 15 (1994): 55-87; "Why I am a Dispensationalist with a Small 'd'," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (September 1998): 383-96; "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (October-December 1993): 440-57; and, "The Reign of the Lord Christ," *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 37-67. Also see, Bock's 2 chapters and 2 responses in Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999).

Messiah enacting New Covenant fulfillment upon the church. Instead of militating the view of a current reign of Jesus on a throne (Davidic or otherwise) or an “already” kingdom, it might be more prudent to examine and refute the foundation which has resulted in such a construction as a current Davidic reign during the church age within a dispensational system. To do this, one must take a fresh look at Bock’s chapter, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*.

THE PRESENT ISSUE

Unquestionably, Pentecost of Acts 2 was a monumental day in human history, redemptive and otherwise. It marks the beginning of the Church as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among other pneumatological blessings. Peter, in the recorded portion of his sermon, quoted from many Old Testament passages that day. How interpreters handle these quotations will develop the theological system they adhere to. For instance, to prove the messianic reign of Jesus Christ has begun in the church, Bock stated that “Jesus’ distribution of the Spirit is an exercise of promised messianic authority. . . . Jesus acts in fulfillment of Davidic promise.”⁴ Here, Bock made the argument that since Christ is outpouring the Holy Spirit, this is a partial fulfillment of the New Covenant, and thus Christ must be fulfilling the Davidic Covenant.

In the chapter, “The Reign of the Lord Christ” of *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, Bock sought to demonstrate an “already” reign of Jesus Christ currently ruling as the Messiah. Bock, who has painstakingly spent an enormous amount of time, effort, and study in the theology of Luke-Acts,⁵ put forth his premise based largely from Lucan literature. He also compared his view of a current reign of Jesus in Lucan literature with the Book of Revelation. Such comparison is only to be expected since Christ’s second coming and ultimate messianic/millennial reign culminates in Revelation. If John’s apocalypse matches themes from a Luke-Acts idea of kingdom reign, then Bock has a strong case for his supposition of an “already” reign of Jesus Christ.

⁴ Bock, “Current Messianic Activity,” 78.

⁵ Not only did Bock write his Ph.D. dissertation which was later published, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), but also he has written highly acclaimed commentaries for the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, which includes *Luke*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 1996) and *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). He has also completed a more condensed commentary on Luke for The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). Bock is a professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary where he is said to be an expert of Luke-Acts.

There are strong statements, which are startling to some, in the summary of Bock's chapter. He first admitted, "the reign of Jesus Christ in the plan of God is a key concept, *although a complicated one*"⁶ (emphasis added). He also summarized his view of partial fulfillment saying, "The new covenant itself stands inaugurated, but not totally consummated." Of the church, Bock stated, "The new community, the church, is the showcase of God's present reign through Messiah Jesus, who inaugurates the fulfillment of God's promises. The church is a new institution . . . [and] a sneak preview of what is to come."⁷ Bock revealed his primary methodology saying, "The key to the picture [of the already/not yet Kingdom concept] is found not in a particular term but in a mosaic of concepts brought together so that a clear portrait of God's plan emerges."⁸ He stated further that many of these ideas are based on a "Lukan linkage of various key promise-fulfillment concepts."⁹

Coming to the issue at hand, Bock stated, "Joel 2:28-32 (3:1-5, LXX) . . . is offered as the explanation for what has just occurred in Acts 2."¹⁰ Essentially, he used Peter's quotation of Joel two to prove that the New Covenant has been partially fulfilled in the church with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It is with this view that Bock supported his claim that Christ has begun His messianic reign. The question is, was Peter's purpose in quoting Joel two to show that Pentecost was the fulfillment (partial or total) of the Joel 2 prophecy? Was Peter insisting that the New Covenant has been inaugurated with the church? Or, was Peter just citing an Old Testament passage as an illustration to help clarify the strange phenomena that occurred on the Day of Pentecost? The goal of this article is to examine the progressive dispensational view of Acts 2 in Peter's citation of Joel 2 and refute the proposition that the church is literally fulfilling the prophecy of Joel 2 and thus partially fulfilling the New Covenant.

⁶ Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ," 65. To reveal how complicated, Bock admitted that the burden of proof of a current Messianic reign and an "already" Messianic kingdom lies with the progressive dispensationalist. He stated, "The burden of proof falls on the person who argues for the presence of a concept in terms other than rule. I gladly accept that burden" ("Current Messianic Activity," 66).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 67.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. 47.

FOUR METHODS FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT USE
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The purpose of this article is not to be a hermeneutical analysis on how the New Testament uses the Old Testament.¹¹ However, since the issue at hand is a New Testament passage quoting an Old Testament prophecy, it will be dealt with briefly using the 4 principles provided by Fruchtenbaum from *Israelology*.¹² The foundational principle of stable meaning also has relevance in this area. It is maintained that the original writers of the Old Testament had an intended meaning in their writings. The New Testament writers never change the intended meaning. The use of the Old Testament in the New “was a typical Jewish way of quoting the Old Testament in that period and the writers were Jews. They often gave . . . a new *application* to an Old Testament text without denying that what the original said literally did or will happen. There is one example of each of the four ways in Matthew two. . . . (emphasis added)”¹³

The first use of the Old Testament in the New Testament is “literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment,”¹⁴ which is the most basic use of the Old Testament in the New. Matthew 2:6 quotes Micah 5:2 naming the exact birthplace of the Messiah. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 was fulfilled literally when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

The second usage of the Old Testament in the New Testament is called “literal plus typical. This example is found in Matthew 2:15, which is a quotation of Hosea 11:1. However, the original context [of Hosea] is not a prophecy, it is an historical event. It is a reference to the Exodus when Israel, the national son of God, was brought out of Egypt. . . . Israel as the national son of God coming out of Egypt becomes a *type* of the individual

¹¹ The issue is currently under more development. Even with the recent publication of Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, gen. eds., *Three Views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), there is still not a good, consistent approach for the New Testament use of the Old Testament that adequately fits into the dispensational system. Writing for the traditional dispensational perspective in the book mentioned, Enns advocated *sensus plenior* as do many other dispensational writers. Bock dealt with this inconsistency purported by many in the traditional dispensational system in “Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New, Part 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (July-September 1985): 212-16.

¹² Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1989), 842-45. Fruchtenbaum’s hermeneutical proposal of the 4 uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament is used for its lack of reliance on the theory of *sensus plenior*.

¹³ *Ibid.* 843.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Son of God, the Messiah coming out of Egypt.”¹⁵ Walvoord concurred with this interpretation saying “Matthew draws the contrast between Israel, as the Son of Jehovah going to Egypt and returning, to Christ, the greater Son who also came from Egypt. In both cases, the descent into Egypt was to escape danger. In both cases, the return was important to the providential history of the nation Israel.”¹⁶ Therefore, the usage of the Old Testament here is seen as a type of what literally occurred in the Old Testament. It is clear that Matthew’s intended purpose was not to change the meaning of Hosea 11. Matthew, in fact, used Hosea to help make a typological point (keep in mind the Jewish nature of the Gospel of Matthew).

The third way the New Testament uses the Old Testament is called “literal plus application.” Fruchtenbaum explained.

This example is found in Matthew 2:17-18 which is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:15. In the original context, Jeremiah is speaking of an event soon to come as the Babylonian Captivity begins. As the Jewish young men were being taken into captivity, they went by the town of Ramah. Not too far from Ramah is where Rachel was buried and she was the symbol of Jewish motherhood. As the young men were marched toward Babylon, the Jewish mothers of Ramah came out weeping for sons they will never see again. Jeremiah pictured the scene as Rachel weeping for her children. This is the *literal* meaning of Jeremiah 31:15. The New Testament cannot change or reinterpret what this verse means in that context, nor does it try to do so. In this category, there is a New Testament event that has one point of similarity with the Old Testament event. The verse is quoted as an *application*. The one point of similarity between Ramah and Bethlehem is that once again Jewish mothers are weeping for sons they will never see again and so the Old Testament passage is applied to the New Testament event.¹⁷

This usage of the Old Testament in the New Testament is the center of most debate. However, it does seem very natural for such a usage to exist as Fruchtenbaum explained. In support of Fruchtenbaum’s assessment, Walvoord said, “This prophecy [in Jer 31:15] referred to the captivity in Babylon and the slaying of children in the conquest of Judea by Babylon. The *parallel* in Bethlehem is all too evident”¹⁸ (emphasis added).

The final method of the New Testament use of the Old Testament is called “summation. The example is found in Matthew 2:23 . . . however, no such statement is found anywhere in the Old Testament. Since Matthew used the plural *prophets*, one should be able to find at least two, yet there is not even one. The fourth category does not have an actual quotation as in the first three categories, but only a summary of what the prophets

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1974) 23.

¹⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 844.

¹⁸ Walvoord, *Matthew*, 24.

actually said.”¹⁹ This method explains that what was said of the Messiah was summarized in the statement of Matthew 2:23. “The prophets did teach that the Messiah would be a despised and rejected individual (e.g. Isa 53:3) and this is summarized by the term, *Nazarene*.”²⁰

These four categories of how the New Testament used the Old Testament will give a basis when one approaches Joel 2 in Acts 2. The summation category can already be excluded due to the simple fact that it is a direct quote from Joel 2. The second category, literal plus typical, is mostly seen in non-prophetical quotations. Therefore, it is reasonable to exclude this category as well since, in its plainest sense, Joel 2 is a prophecy of a future event. Only two other options remain: a literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment or a literal prophecy plus application/illustration.

Again as a reminder, there should be no fifth category in which the New Testament changes the meaning of the Old Testament. The stable meaning of the Old Testament is verified in the teaching of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 in which *all* Scripture is inspired and profitable. No priority should be given to one Testament over the other. Both the Old and New Testaments are seen as inspired and profitable for doctrine. If meaning in the New Testament is stable, then that would also be true of the Old Testament as well since both are equally inspired.²¹

REFUTATION OF BOCK'S FOUR POINTS OF PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF JOEL 2 IN ACTS 2

Bock provided four proofs to confirm that what was prophesied in Joel 2 “is offered as the explanation for what has just occurred in Acts 2” and overall prove his premise of “the ‘already’ reign”²² of the Messiah. What is unclear in this statement is whether Bock was referring to “explanation” as *literal fulfillment* or *application/illustration*, which are the only two options left for the New Testament use of the Old. He explained that Joel 2 in Acts 2 is “used to denote fulfillment . . . concerns the time of fulfillment . . . [and] the program of fulfillment has begun.”²³ These statements indicate that he has a literal fulfillment in mind.

¹⁹ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 845.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Part of this issue also deals with the progressive dispensational idea of a complementary hermeneutic. The purpose of this article is not to delve into that hermeneutical theory so it will only be addressed indirectly.

²² Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” 47.

²³ *Ibid.* 47-48.

If Bock was correct in interpreting Peter's usage of Joel 2 as being literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment (whether partial in the progressive dispensational case or total in the covenantal amillennial case), then he would have reason to assume that the New Covenant has been partially fulfilled in the church and the Messiah is currently distributing His messianic authority by outpouring the Spirit upon those believers. For this reason, one's view of Joel 2 in Acts 2 is so pivotal. The interpretation of Peter's use of Joel 2 can have serious consequences on one's Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

Point #1

Bock's first point in proving that Joel 2:28-32 (quoted in Acts 2:17-21) is a partial fulfillment in the church was actually seen in Acts 2:16. "The quotation is introduced in Acts 2:16 with as explicit a citation formula as could be used to denote fulfillment: τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ εἰρημένον (this is that which is spoken)."²⁴ At first glance, the translation of this phrase would seem to indicate that a literal fulfillment was in mind. However, there are some reasons that would deter from such an interpretation.

First of all, this "citation formula" might be better understood with a more literal translation of the entire phrase – "But this is the thing having been said through the prophet Joel." A more literal translation could also allow for this quotation to be interpreted as an illustration/application rather than only a "citation formula" for literal fulfillment.²⁵ It then becomes an issue of what "this" (τοῦτό) and "the thing having been spoken" (τὸ εἰρημένον) refer to – either something specific or ambiguous. The neuter τοῦτό and the neuter substantival participle τὸ εἰρημένον likely communicate something ambiguous simply based on their neuter gender. If verse 16 was an introduction meant to be "as explicit a citation formula" as Bock stated, then a more direct word like "this *event*" or "this *happening*" would have been used by Peter. Indeed, the word "fulfillment"

²⁴ Ibid. 47.

²⁵ Zane Hodges, a traditional Dispensationalist, similarly regarded this as a fulfillment of Joel 2 in a simple sense. Peter was referring to "the outpouring of the Spirit . . . [and] this is no way clashes with fundamental dispensationalism convictions. Dispensationalists correctly recognize that the church is not prophesied in the Old Testament. And it should be noted that Joel 2 does not prophesy it!" Later he added, "This outpouring is seen by Joel as fundamentally an endowment, widely spread among Israelites . . . which enables men and women, young and old, and bondslaves of both sexes to engage in prophecy." Hodges, like Bock, also sought to build his case based on Qumran findings. For example, see "A Dispensational Understanding of Acts 2," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Wesley R. Willis and John R. Masters, gen. eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994) 168-69.

or “fulfilled” is not even present as it is in other places where the New Testament uses the Old Testament in one of the 4 different methods mentioned previously.²⁶ Likely, Peter left τοῦτό without any descriptive word like “event” because he wanted to convey an ambiguous thought. Had Peter intended to communicate a partial fulfillment of Joel 2, he could have been more specific and clear.

Wallace explained, “the neuter of οὗτος [τοῦτό] is routinely used to refer to a phrase or clause. In such cases, the thing referred to is *not a specific noun or substantive*”²⁷ (emphasis added). Wallace not only said that τοῦτό is not specific, but also that it refers to a clause or a phrase. He also cited 5 passages as examples, 2 of them being from Luke (the author of Acts). Also, Thayer indicated this use adding that it “refers to what *precedes*”²⁸ (italics mine), which raises the question of what the τοῦτό was referring *back*?

The context leading to Acts 2:16 is about the apostles’ strange spectacle of speaking in foreign tongues. Peter explained that “this” (τοῦτό) phenomena of speaking in tongues is like “the thing having been said” (τὸ εἰρημένον) by Joel. Rapp made the point, “While it is true that Peter does use the demonstrative pronoun [τοῦτό] to introduce a fulfillment (Acts 4:11), that is not his only way of using it. In 1 Peter 1:25b, Peter appended to a quotation from Isaiah the explanation that, ‘*This is the word that was preached to you.*’ Certainly he means, ‘This is the kind of word that was preached to you’ (i.e., an everlasting word). He does not imply that Isaiah 40:6–8 was fulfilled in the congregations to whom he was writing. The context must determine usage and Acts 2 cannot be a fulfillment.”²⁹ Therefore, it is not better to look at τοῦτό as “this *event*” of the outpouring of the Spirit as Bock would have it but rather “this *miraculous phenomena*” of speaking in tongues. Since Peter was talking about a miraculous phenomena and not the event itself, then the content of the miraculous phenomena must be taken into account as well.

Fruchtenbaum dealt with this issue quite well when he said,

²⁶ See especially Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; and, 27:9; though that does not even guarantee literal fulfillment as is the case in some of these passages.

²⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 333.

²⁸ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005) 467.

²⁹ Clifford Rapp Jr., “A Doctrinal Study of Acts 2:14,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1995) [online] (Chafer Theological Seminary, accessed 21 April 2009) available from http://www.chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/v1n1-Rapp.pdf.

Nothing that happened in Acts two was predicted by Joel two. What actually did happen in Acts two (the speaking in tongues) was not mentioned by Joel. What Joel did mention (dreams, visions, the sun darkened, the moon turned to blood) did not happen in Acts two. Joel was speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the whole nation of Israel in the last days, while Acts two speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Twelve Apostles or, at most, on the 120 in the Upper Room. This is a far cry from Joe's *all flesh*. However, there was one point of similarity, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in unusual manifestations. Acts two does not change or reinterpret Joel two, nor does it deny that Joel two will have a literal fulfillment when the Holy Spirit will be poured out on the whole nation of Israel. It is simply applying it to a New Testament event because of on point of similarity.³⁰

The points of difference between Joel 2 and Acts 2 would argue that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not a literal fulfillment of any OT covenant. Indeed, it would argue more for the illustrative/application method of the New Testament use of the Old Testament. As Fruchtenbaum indicated, Acts 2 is dealing with speaking in foreign tongues while Joel 2 is about dreams, visions, and astrological changes in the sun and moon.

Bock did cite as a proof that Peter's statement was established as a *peshet* formula.³¹ His point may be a use of Peter employing *peshet*, but that simply does not account for a literal fulfillment in Acts 2. Indeed, using *peshet* might fit the idea of an illustrative/applicative use of the Old Testament in the New Testament considering the loose practices of Scripture citing and disregard for context with *peshet*. Bock's main point in raising this issue is that verse 16 exhibits similar wording to *peshet* construction of "this is that"³² and therefore has an intended meaning of literal fulfillment. Perhaps it is better to examine the rest of Scripture and the use of the biblical writer (Luke in this case) rather than Qumran documents and second Temple literature.³³

The words τὸ εἰρημένον can be limited to three instances in Lucan literature (Luke 2:24; Acts 2:16; 13:40) and one in Pauline (Rom 4:18). Each case is used as a reference to an Old Testament quotation. Second Peter 3:2 and Jude 17 make similar use of an expanded form of the word ἔρω to refer to Old Testament prophets (both passages read "τῶν προειρημένων"). Luke 2:24 and Romans 4:18 should be taken as a citation formula for literal fulfillment or literal historical reference. However, Acts 13:40 seems to be used in a manner of an Old Testament illustration/application. Though a *peshet* formula is not used in this

³⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 844-45.

³¹ Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ," 47.

³² See Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

³³ For more against the *peshet* argument, see Rapp, "A Doctrinal Study of Acts 2:14."

passage, it can be seen that Luke recorded Paul employing the words τὸ εἰρημένον to cite an Old Testament passage in a manner other than literal fulfillment. Therefore, the immediate context of Acts 2:16 should be the primary argument for the force behind τὸ εἰρημένον being either literal fulfillment or illustration/application. Reliance on *peshet* formulas and Qumran documents has the tendency to obscure the meaning of the biblical text.

With the ambiguity of the neuter τοῦτό and the context which the τοῦτό references (the speaking in tongues *not* the signs, visions, and cosmic changes of Joel), Acts 2:16 is hardly an “explicit a citation formula as could be used to denote fulfillment.”³⁴ Had Peter meant to be as explicit as possible, he would have titled the τοῦτό with “event” or something to that effect. However, what is observed is that τοῦτό was left alone to be purposefully ambiguous. For this reason, it would be more natural to see Acts 2:16 dealing more with the literal plus application/illustration category of the New Testament usage of the Old and not literal fulfillment.

Point #2

Bock’s second argument dealt with how Peter changed the quote in Acts 2:17 from the Septuagint (LXX) version of Joel. “The *one major change* in the Joel citation concerns the time of fulfillment. Rather than saying ‘after these things’ as Joel does, Peter says, ‘in the last days,’ a phrase that shows how Peter sees the period into which humankind has fallen as a result of recent events. The period of the ‘last days’ is by its very nature a period of recent events”³⁵ (emphasis added). In other words, Bock only saw one major change in Peter’s quotation and equated Peter’s use of “the last days” to “recent events.” The matter here deals with authorial intent. It must be proven that it was Peter’s intent to change Joel 2 to make a theological point. Otherwise, such a change may have been a better translation from the Hebrew text or just a memory lapse on the part of the speaker. The doctrine of inspiration goes to what is written not the one writing or the one being quoted. Peter was not inspired, but the words that are recorded here in Acts 2 are. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that Peter misquoted Joel or better that he interpretively changed the quote. In either case, the burden of proof lies with Bock to prove that this change was Peter’s intent to make a theological point, yet Bock was more silent to that issue.

³⁴ Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” 47.

³⁵ Ibid.

There are, however, some ways to know that Peter’s intent was *not* likely to make a change for the purpose of proving a theological point. First of all, Peter also changed other parts of the Septuagint translation of Joel 2:28 (Joel 3:1 in the LXX) as demonstrated in the diagram below.

(LXX) Joel 2:28	Acts 2:17 (UBS)
Καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ταῦτα	Καὶ ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις
καὶ ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα	λέγει ὁ θεός, ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα
καὶ προφητεύσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν	καὶ προφητεύσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν
καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνύπνια ἐνυπνιασθήσονται	καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὀράσεις ᾔψονται
καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὀράσεις ᾔψονται.	καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνυπνίῳ ³⁶ ἐνυπνιασθήσονται.

At quick glance, one can see that the word order of Joel 2:28 has been changed. The changes in word order might indicate a memory lapse in Peter or a textual variant in the copies of the Septuagint manuscripts which Peter had access. In other places, words that are not equivalent, like λέγει ὁ θεός, were added in Peter’s quotation.

Along with these changes in verse 17, there are *eight other word additions* in Acts 2:18-19 that are not found in the Septuagint!³⁷ These additions could simply be construed as a memory lapse on the part of Peter. If changes are to be seen as theologically significant to Peter’s message, as Bock seemed to argue, then perhaps he should have mentioned these major changes.³⁸ Furthermore, Bock only indicated “one

³⁶ There is a textual variant in Acts 2:17, but there is decent manuscript evidence in addition to editorial support from the Majority Text and the *Textus Receptus* which match the Septuagint reading of ἐνυπνία exactly (it is common for Byzantine texts to match precisely the Septuagint in quotation).

³⁷ There are 2 more additions of the definite article in verse 20 which are textual variants. If determined to be original, it would argue largely for Peter interpretively changing the passage for clarity but not necessarily to make a theological point.

³⁸ For more information on these changes as they relate to “meaningful differences that the various attested readings would bring about from the standpoint of discourse grammar” and other possible reasons for the changes, see Steven E. Runge, “Joel 2:28-32a in Acts 2:17-21, The Discourse and Text-Critical Implications of Variation from the LXX.” Paper presented at SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 2007 [online] (NT Discourse, accessed 10

major change” in this quotation. There are many changes in the quotation, some of which seem just as significant.

To further indicate the differences between Joel 2 and Peter’s quotation recorded in Acts 2, Metzger wrote,

The quotation from Joel 2.28-32 (=LXX 3.1-5) is preserved in two forms, represented by codex Vaticanus [B] and by codex Bezae [D]. The former agrees almost exactly with the text of the Septuagint, whereas the latter embodies a series of changes from the Septuagint, most of which make the quotation more suitable for the occasion. This adaptation may be the work of the original author, and the agreement of the B-text [Vaticanus] with the Septuagint may have been produced by an editor. On the other hand, however, it is equally possible that the author copied exactly, or nearly so, from his Septuagint, and that the modifications were introduced by the Western reviser. In favor of the latter view is the fact that in other formal quotations the author of Acts displays a remarkable degree of faithfulness to the text of the Septuagint. Moreover, several of the Western modifications appear to reflect an emphasis on Gentile interests, sometimes approaching what has been called the anti-Jewish bias of the Western reviser. The problem is a complex one, however, and the possibility must be left open that occasionally the text of B represents a secondary development.³⁹

So what might account for Peter’s change from μετὰ ταῦτα (“after these things”) to ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (“in the last days”) in Acts 2:17? According to Bock, the phrase “in the last days” referred to “the period into which humankind has fallen as a result of recent events”⁴⁰ and thus the change was intentionally made to emphasize a theological point. Another possibility for this change is that Peter might have accidentally misquoted the Septuagint version or just had a memory lapse. After all, Peter was speaking extemporaneously and, as far as is revealed, without a copy of the Septuagint before him. Another good option for the change is that μετὰ ταῦτα of the Septuagint did not emphasize the endtime fulfillment as strongly as the phrase did from the original Hebrew text – אַחֲרָיִם כֵּן (“following afterwards” or “afterwards after”). Notice that both words can denote a meaning of “after”⁴¹ which makes Joel 2 a strong eschatological passage by putting these two words together. Therefore, the Septuagint phrase, μετὰ ταῦτα, did not emphasize as strongly the eschatological event

April 2009) available from http://www.ntdiscourse.org/docs/Runge_Joel_in_Acts.pdf. Runge’s paper will be published in Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, eds., *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009).

³⁹ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Germany: United Bible Society, 1994) 255.

⁴⁰ Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” 47.

⁴¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, n.d.) 29-30, 486.

prophesied in the original Hebrew wording, which could explain why Peter might have chosen to *interpretively change* the wording to “in the last days” instead of “after these things.”

It is also hard to understand the very beginning of the church as the “last days” as Bock would have it. While it is admitted that Peter said “the end of all things is near” in 1 Peter 4:7 and “in the last days mockers will come” in 2 Peter 3:3, Peter was not likely making the same kind of statement in Acts 2 in staying with the quotation of Joel 2:28. Such an admission can be seen in that all three phrases are distinctly different from one another⁴² as well as the fact that the context of 1 Peter 4:7 is about reacting to suffering and persecution and 2 Peter 3:3 is in reference to mockers of the second coming of Christ. Therefore, the context determines the meaning and not the linking of separate verses with separated ideas. The apostle John mentioned that the church has entered into the “last hour” in 1 John 2:18. However, the difference is that John was not writing at the very birth of the church. It is one thing to say that the church age is the last hour. It is another to suggest that the birth of the church is the last days. The connection that Bock made due to Peter’s word change should not be read as significant. There is no clear argument to imply that Peter saw a partial fulfillment and indicated so by changing the words of Joel 2, which is reaching farther than Peter intended his audience to go.

Point #3

Bock made his third point by saying, “The *event* . . . which fulfills Joel is the pouring out of the Spirit on all believers. . . . This *event* must be the ‘promise of the Father’ that was spoken of in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4”⁴³ (emphasis added). Notice, first of all, that Bock saw this as an “event.” However, as was noted previously, the τοῦτό of verse 16 showed that a *miraculous phenomenon* was in Peter’s mind not an “event.” Peter was not emphasizing “this”/τοῦτό as a time period but rather a strange phenomenon that took place during the day. “This”/τοῦτό in verse 16 refers to the *content* of the day not the *day* itself.

Bock was correct, however, with the main idea in using Joel 2 being the outpouring of the Spirit. However, the question still remains, is this even a partial fulfillment of Joel 2 or a similar yet distinct experience of the future, eschatological fulfillment of Joel 2? Again, the issue comes down to the New Testament usage of the Old Testament. In this case, the vast

⁴² Acts 2:17 reads, ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις; 1 Peter 4:7 reads, τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν; and, 2 Peter 3:3 reads, ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν.

⁴³ Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” 48.

differences between the Day of Pentecost and the day prophesied by Joel argue that the use of Joel 2 in Acts 2 falls under the category of a literal prophecy plus application/illustration.

Bock mentioned that “the promise is referred to directly in Acts 2:38-39, as it is in 2:33. . . . The term in verse 33 is ἐξέχεεν (he outpoured), which is the same verb as appears in verses 17 and 18, where Peter cites Joel’s promise of the Spirit’s outpouring.”⁴⁴ The word matching might be Bock’s strongest argument, but even the same words can be used and not refer to the exact same thing.⁴⁵ The point is, Acts 1:4 indicates that being filled with the Spirit brought about the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, but Joel’s prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit deals with more than verbal prophecies. It deals with revelatory visions as well which did not happen on Pentecost. Bock may be reading more into the wording of Peter’s sermon than is necessary when employing this dangerous game of word linking.⁴⁶

Perhaps if the tense, voice, and mood of ἐκχεῖν matched in verse 18 and 33, then Bock might have a strong argument for linking these ideas based on the word alone. However, the context of Acts 2:33 indicates that the emphasis is not on the outpouring of the Spirit, but rather the One who is outpouring the Spirit – namely Jesus Christ. Acts 2:34 seems to emphasize that fact further in that it was not David but Christ who did this. Since the emphasis is on the Outpourer and not the outpouring in Acts 2:33-34, it is hard to link the idea that Peter was trying to show a literal fulfillment of Joel 2.

To further emphasize the application/illustration aspect of Joel 2 in Acts 2, one would wonder why Peter chose not to use any other prophecy

⁴⁴ Ibid. He also made this point in “Current Messianic Activity,” 76-77, and even delved more into his exegetical system of word linking.

⁴⁵ For instance, Acts 13:33-34 uses the word ἀνίστημι two times, once in each verse but with different references. Though the apostolic message centered on the resurrection of Jesus and even the content of this sermon in chapter 13 was largely about matters of the Messiah’s resurrection (cf. 13:30, 34, 35, 36, 37), verse 33 is not about the resurrection when ἀνίστημι is used. Such truth can be seen in the use of the comparative ὡς with the Psalm 2:7 quotation which has absolutely nothing to do with the resurrection. However, in verse 34, ἀνίστημι does refer to the resurrection from the dead as the verse clearly states. Context is the driving force to these word emphases and not just an arbitrary word linking.

⁴⁶ Bock built a case for a current Davidic reign by linking the word “sit” in Acts 2:30 and 34: “The word ‘sit’ occurs in verses 30 and 34. This repetition of the word serves to associate certain ideas. . . . In Acts 2:30 and 2:34 the word ‘sit’ links the allusion to Psalm 132:11 and Psalm 110:1” (“The Son of David and the Saints’ Task,” 452). Bigalke and Gunn soundly dealt with Bock’s word linking system in Ron J. Bigalke Jr., gen. ed., *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 179-204.

of the outpouring of the Spirit (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Zech 12:10) or New Covenant passage dealing with the Spirit (Isa 59:21; Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14). Had Peter meant to use Joel 2 as a literal prophecy plus a literal fulfillment, it would seem logical that other passages dealing more specifically with the New Covenant would have been quoted as well. While this is an argument from silence, it does leave one to question whether Peter really meant to emphasize a literal fulfillment of any kind with the New Covenant.

Point #4

While Bock really did not argue a fourth point, his next paragraph dealt with the partial literal fulfillment view versus the total literal fulfillment view of Joel 2 in Acts 2. “Against a total fulfillment is the reference to the approaching Day of the Lord in verse 20. Also against a total fulfillment is the absence of any cosmic signs in Luke-Acts like those described in Acts 2:19b-20b.”⁴⁷ If Bock understood Joel 2 as not being a total literal fulfillment in Acts 2 due to the fact that the events in Joel 2 have not taken place, then why is it so hard to accept the application/illustration view? The differences between the two passages seem to argue more for an application/illustration than a literal fulfillment of any kind (partial or total).

With a plain reading of Joel 2:28-32, one will realize that the events spoken of were prophesied to take place at one time, not in spurts throughout different dispensations. Joel 2 sees everything being fulfilled at one time. It is very likely that Peter would understand this if he knew Joel 2 well enough to quote it. If a literal fulfillment of Joel 2 is to occur, then the events in Joel 2 must take place, otherwise Joel 2 has not been literally fulfilled partially or totally. Indeed, there would be no purpose for the cosmic signs in Joel 2 if they were not going to be used in fulfillment? Bock’s interpretation leads to arbitrary meanings in Scripture.

A PREFERABLE VIEW OF PETER’S USE OF JOEL 2 IN ACTS 2

After weighing the evidence and noting the extreme dissimilarities between the content of Joel 2 and Acts 2, it is reasonable to interpret Peter’s quotation of Joel 2 in Acts 2 as being a literal prophecy with an application/illustration in the New Testament.⁴⁸ What should be

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For other articles that support this view, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “Rabbinic Quotations of the Old Testament and How it Relates to Joel 2 and Acts 2” [online] (Pre-Trib

highlighted in the early portions of Acts 2 is the fact that the Holy Spirit had come just as Christ said He would. The miraculous phenomenon of speaking in tongues vouch for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Peter cited Joel 2 to defend this strange phenomenon of speaking in tongues due to the outpouring of the Spirit and not alcohol. The outpouring was not the exact same outpouring in Joel 2 since the outpouring of Acts 2 dealt with speaking in tongues whereas Joel 2 dealt with visions, prophecies, and cosmic changes. "Peter was looking for a way to help his hearers understand what was taking place on Pentecost. He looked for an Old Testament analogy that was tied-in to a call for a response on the part of those who would receive the Spirit."⁴⁹

A good rule in hermeneutics is that similarities do not make equals. The two similar experiences of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the first being on the Day of Pentecost and the second yet to occur at the fulfillment of the New Covenant, must not be equated or seen as the same outpouring. The church is a distinct program in the plan of God. While the church might have a similar blessing of the outpouring of the Spirit with the New Covenant, the church also has other pneumatological blessings not explained within the New Covenant (such as Spirit Baptism). Spirit Baptism is a distinct act of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer during the church dispensation is baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

CONCLUSION

Acts 2:21 quoting from Joel 2:32 ends with a profound evangelistic call – "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The verse may be the very reason Peter decided to quote from Joel 2 and not another prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Spirit at the fulfillment of the New Covenant. The evangelistic nature of Peter's sermon would necessitate such a call to Christ. It is with this understanding that helps to build a proper interpretation of the usage of Joel 2 in Acts 2. Had Peter's purpose been to make the point of the inaugurated New Covenant, clearer passages concerning the New Covenant would have been used rather than Joel 2:28-32. It seems that the "search for definition" will continue for now. Whether it be complementary hermeneutics or an

Research Center, accessed 10 April 2009) available from <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Fruchtenbaum-RabbinicQuotationsoftheOl.pdf>; Thomas Ice, "Peter's Quotation of Joel in Acts 2" [online] (Pre-Trib Research Center, accessed 10 April 2009) available from <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-PetersQuotationofJoe.pdf>; and, Rapp "A Doctrinal Study of Acts 2:14."

⁴⁹ Rapp, "A Doctrinal Study of Acts 2:14."

“already” Davidic reign, the tenets of progressive dispensationalism need to be rebutted, even down to the minor points. Perhaps these minor points which make up the foundation to the system of progressive dispensationalism should gain more attention. A prime example would be Bock’s interpretation of a partial literal fulfillment of Joel 2 in Acts 2.

BOOK REVIEWS

What Is the Gospel? by Greg Gilbert. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2010. 128 pp., paper, \$12.99.

Gilbert's well-written book was first encountered by the recommendation of a fellow church pastor, who lamented that such a book even needed to be written. Almost two thousand years following His death on the cross, the church is still debating why Jesus came. Of course, this should not be surprising given the vast importance of the Gospel and the fierce enemy of the church who does all in his power to keep mankind in spiritual darkness. Therefore, it is with thankfulness that this reviewer welcomes Gilbert's clear presentation of the Gospel as found in Scripture.

What Is the Gospel? is part of the 9Marks series of books which has two basic premises: the local church is far more important to the Christian life than many Christians realize *and* local churches grow in life and vitality as they organize their ministries around God's Word (p. 11). To this end, 9Marks addresses nine practices that are often overlooked today, including a solid biblical understanding of the Gospel (pp. 11-12). Gilbert has written this little volume to address this latter neglected issue.

In the opening chapter, the author addressed the heart of the matter by presenting the New Testament's teaching with regard to the Good News. According to Gilbert, the Gospel can be enveloped around four words: God, man, Christ, response. In other words, man is accountable to God; his real problem is rejection and rebellion against God; God's solution is found in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and, humanity is responsibility to respond to this message in repentance and faith (pp. 28-31). Said another way, Gilbert believes the Gospel answers four crucial questions: who made man, what is the problem of humanity, what is God's solution, and what makes all of this Good News (p. 31)?

Each of the next four chapters developed one of the previously mentioned points. In chapter two, Gilbert affirmed that if one misses the answer to the first question everything else that follows would be wrong as well. Chapter three not only discussed the fundamental problem with sin, but also it pointed to four misunderstandings: confusing sin with its effects, reducing sin to a broken relationship, confusing sin with negative thinking, and confusing sin with sins. Chapter four maintained the importance of the substitutionary death of Christ. In chapter five, Gilbert stated the response to the Gospel message as the act of faith alone as understood through the inseparable acts of repentance and belief. He wrote, "A Christian is one who turns away from sin and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing

else—to save him from sin and the coming judgment” (p. 73). He defined repentance as “turning away from sin, hating it, and resolving by God’s grace to forsake it, even as we turn to Him in faith” (p. 74). Furthermore, “if we understand repentance rightly, we’ll see that the idea that you can accept Jesus as Savior but not Lord is nonsense” (p. 80). The real change, produced by salvation, will by necessity bear real fruit (p. 82). Gilbert rejected any idea that the Gospel, as he outlined it, needs supplementation, or even substitution. For example, the popular teaching today that the “full” gospel includes cultural transformation is not Christianity, but moralism (pp. 103-09). The book concluded with a nice chapter on the power of the Gospel and the need and privilege of the church to proclaim it.

Despite all the excellent qualities of this work, the teaching with regard to the kingdom is problematic. Using Matthew 3:2, for example, he claimed that Jesus said His kingdom had come. *First*, it was John, not Jesus, who uttered these words and John said that the kingdom was near, not “had come” (p. 88). Gilbert assured his readers that “come near” could be translated “had come” but he is incorrect. Based on this faulty translation, the reader is told that this means many of the blessings of the kingdom had come (p. 89) and that “the church is where God’s kingdom is made visible in this age” (p. 97). Gilbert does not believe the church is equivalent to the kingdom (p. 95), and that a future completed kingdom awaits the return of Christ (pp. 90-92). Jesus, however, has inaugurated the rule of God on earth and has begun reversing the curse of sin (pp. 62-64). The author clearly adopted an “already, not yet” approach to the kingdom, but this reviewer questions his exegesis in this regard, and especially his use of Romans 6 as proof that Christians are in the kingdom (p. 96).

One other matter of concern is his use of J. R. R. Tolkien as one who had professed faith in Christ. As a devout Catholic, Tolkien’s understanding of the Gospel would be works-plus-faith as found in the sacramental system. The Roman Catholic Church has condemned faith alone in Christ alone. To use a Catholic as an example of a Christian in a book on the Gospel is quite confusing at best. Excepting these final two issues, this work is a solid and most helpful entry in a debate that is very much alive in the church today. However, its greatest benefit will be in the clear presentation of the Gospel to those who need better understanding, minus the complications that engulf the larger theological discussion.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

The Gospel-Driven Life by Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 271 pp., cloth, \$19.99.

Horton's volume is a sequel to *Christless Christianity* in which the author admonished the evangelical community for leaving Christ clear of, or at least on the fringes of, its ministries and message. *The Gospel-Driven Life* was written for those tired of the hype and chasing the latest fad (pp. 13, 17) who simply want "to reorient our faith and practice as Christians and churches toward the gospel: that is, the announcement of God's victory over sin and death in His Son, Jesus Christ" (p. 11).

Horton accomplished his stated goal, emphasizing repeatedly from every conceivable angle that the essence of Christianity is the good news (p. 20). The author persistently pointed the believer to the external facts of Christ and His redemptive work and away from an inner, subjective introspection. He challenged pragmatism (pp. 24-25, 69, 72) including Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Life*. Rather than purpose-driven, believers should be promise-driven (p. 133). Horton also addresses mysticism with its inward focus and works-based sanctification (pp. 20, 23, 26, 78, 146-49, 156-57). In particular, he almost too graciously exposed Richard Foster and his stable of Roman Catholic mystics (pp. 146-55). Concerning the enemies of Gospel-centered living Horton summarized, "The greatest threat to Christians is never vigorous intellectual criticism but a creeping senility that transforms truths into feelings, public claims into private experiences, and facts into mere values. Christianity is either true or false, but it is not irrational" (p. 262).

Of a positive nature, Horton exhorted churches to center their attention and energy on the Gospel, the exposition of Scripture, and the sacraments, rather than developing endless programs that aim to make believers feel better, solve their problems, meet their felt-needs, and offer Christians exactly what the world offers but in sanctified wrapping. The church is to concentrate on giving what no one else can: the Gospel, Christ and truth. "Satan does not care," Horton claimed, "if our churches are full, as long as people are not being clothed with Christ" (p. 198).

Horton's covenantal theology was evident on occasion, even to the point of at least bordering on sacramentalism. He spoke of believers continuing to pray for salvation (p. 106), the Law serving as the believer's guide in the Christian life (p. 139), baptism making the church beneficiaries of God's commitment (p. 201), Christ giving Himself to believers as their food and drink at the Lord's Table (pp. 202-03), and children of believers being in the covenant (pp. 206-08). He implied that such children are already regenerate when he wrote, "The children of

believers are often treated in the church as non-Christians who need to ‘get saved’” (p. 206), and other similar statements (cf. pp 206-08). Such an understanding does not flow from Scripture, but from the covenantal theological system. Overall *The Gospel-Driven Life* is a powerful reminder of the centrality of the Gospel and of the church’s need to be shaped by the finished work of Christ. It is the Gospel that the church is to live and proclaim.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

The Courage to Be Protestant by David Wells. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 253 pp., cloth, \$26.00.

David F. Wells, the Andrew Mutch distinguished professor of historical and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is a prolific writer. For some forty years he has addressed many complex subjects in theology with a sincere pastoral heart for the church. Wells could well be considered the one Christian writer who over the past 20 years best articulates the pulse of evangelicalism in this world. Whether or not one agrees with Wells, one thing is certain, he will make you think.

The current book under review, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, is a volume which builds on four previous books by Wells: *No Place for Truth* (1993); *God in the Wasteland* (1994); *Losing Our Virtue* (1999); and, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs* (2005). In *No Place for Truth* Wells provided a keen study of evangelicalism in the 1990s. Then in *God in the Wasteland* the author rightly portrayed the church within the “wasteland” of Western culture as having lost its sense of God’s holiness and sovereignty. Wells issued a call for real change. Five years later in *Losing Our Virtue*, Wells continued his cultural analysis of the late twentieth century by explaining how the church has been shaped by an immoral culture. More recently Wells penned *All Earthly Pow’rs: Christ in a Postmodern World* in which he rightly mourned for the church’s loss of the sense of the transcendent glory of God. Instead, the church has become too much like the postmodern culture in which it is planted.

Wells rightly said of the culture today: “The constant cultural bombardment of individualism, in the absence of a robust theology, meant that faith that had rightly been understood as personal now easily became faith that was individualistic, self-focused, and consumer oriented.” Today there is the emergence of the Emergents, which Wells regarded as “doctrinal minimalists.” He said further, “They are ecclesiastical free spirits who flit around a much small doctrinal center. . . .”

Wells divided *The Courage to Be Protestant* into seven chapters. In chapter one, “The Lay of The Evangelical Land,” Wells divided the evangelical world into three constituencies: classical evangelicals, marketers, and emergents. The later two groups are, historically speaking, new. In chapter two, entitled “Christianity for Sale,” Wells rightly accused much of the modern church of marketing the Gospel. The church today exists only to give the “customer” what he wants! In chapters three through seven, Wells touches on five key concepts which modern day Christianity has corrupted: chapter three: “Truth;” chapter four: “God;” chapter five: “Self;” chapter six: “Christ;” and, chapter seven: “Church.”

Wells explains that while the American culture is very “spiritual, it is, however, a truthless spirituality. God, in this culture, has been “privatized.” Truth is sacrificed on the altar of what the consumer wants. Bible preaching has fallen on hard times since the average postmodern person distrust what comes through anyone else and therefore the “self” is the sole arbiter of truth. Wells described how this culture has made God an “inside God” and not an “outside God.” He no longer is the transcendent and glorious Creator but very personalized to every individual’s own concoction. He rightly said of today’s culture, “What is sacred is within and indistinguishable from the self.” “Self” is really the object of one’s pursuit, not God. “Christ’s” work on the cross is really of no consequence to today’s postmodern, who wants what he wants and not what God has provided in the finished work of Christ. Since “faith” has been much privatized, the local church has little significance. Why join or participate in a local church? In this reviewer’s opinion, *The Courage to Be Protestant* is mandatory reading for anyone interested in obtaining a clearer understanding of today’s American spiritual culture. Knowing the cultural mindset, as Wells has articulated it, will enable the church to deal more effectively with people in the current century.

David J. Georgeff, missionary/pastor, Biblical Ministries Worldwide

Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God by Francis Chan. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008. 192 pp., paper, \$14.99.

The basic thesis of *Crazy Love* is sound. Since God loves His people with a crazy, inexplicable love, their love for Him should be just as crazy and their resultant lifestyle should be radical in its sacrifice for Christ. Chan has no patience for “lukewarm Christians” (pp. 22, 65-88, 97-98), who are chasing the American dream rather than passionately following Christ. This is an important and needed message for many in the Western church today,

which may explain the popularity of *Crazy Love*, especially among the youth, many of whom are not content with the status quo. In attempting to stress his theme and persuade his audience Chan did well in pointing them to the greatness of God (pp. 30-38), telling them, “frankly, you need to get over yourself . . . your part is to bring Him glory” (p. 44). So far so good; sadly not much else is helpful in *Crazy Love*.

Crazy Love lacks balance, solid arguments and careful exegesis, draws bad conclusions, is poorly written and redundant, skips from topic to topic with little explanation, is inconsistent and contradictory, comes across arrogant, motivates by fear and guilt, and offers outlandish and in some cases clearly unbelievable stories. Chan apparently ministers among people who do not or cannot challenge his pronouncements (see his response to criticism on p. 136). Too bad, for it seems that Chan truly loves Christ and wants others to have the same enthusiasm. However, his approach lacks grace, is too close to legalism, and is frequently unbiblical. Quite frankly, it does not make sense. Are people so thirsty for someone to tell them they need to mean business with God that they will overlook the obvious errors, extremes, and ranting to hear that message? A little biblical discernment is necessary. Provided are an examination of some details.

- Chan spent a great deal of time criticizing lukewarm Christians, calling them to step up and sell out to Christ (pp. 22, 65-81) only to ultimately declare that there is no such thing as lukewarm Christians (pp. 83-84). Through poorly selected passages of Scripture he tells us that lukewarm Christians (who remember are not Christians at all) do not attend church much, give little, choose what is popular, rarely share their faith, love Jesus who is only part of their lives, do not love God or others as much as they love themselves, have limits on their use of time, money and energy, think about life on earth more than life in heaven and so forth. In short they sound like all people, including Chan as he occasionally admitted. However, why would he expect anything more of the unregenerate? And why later (pp. 97-98) did he speak to Christians and warn them not to grow lukewarm? Chan is highly inconsistent throughout this discussion.
- While he occasionally spoke of love, Chan’s motivational tools are fear and guilt. Much of the book reads like a diatribe hammering at the “lukewarm” who do not define the Christian life as Chan does (pp. 81-97).

- Chan believes people are to live as simply as possible in order to give more to the poor. He wanted to “start a movement of ‘giving’ churches. In so doing, we can alleviate the suffering in the world and change the reputation of His bride in America” (p. 21). While Scripture certainly calls for Christians to be generous and care for the poor, could anyone demonstrate where alleviating suffering of the world’s needy is given as a mandate to the church? Nevertheless, one of Chan’s major themes is giving to the poor (pp. 33, 75, 78, 117-22, 140, 160-64, 181) and he is on the board of Children’s Hunger Fund. One should also give careful consideration as to whether it is the goal of the Christian to change the reputation of Christ’s bride by such action. Are not believers rather warned to expect misunderstanding and persecution (Matt 5:11-12; 1 Cor 1:18-25; 2 Tim 3:12)? Chan has the wrong mandates and aspirations because he relied upon his cures from the culture rather than Scripture.
- Chan used guilt so heavily in his book that even he fears, halfway through, that he is evoking both fear and guilt (he is). “[He] hopes [we] realize . . . that the answer is love” (p. 101), but there is little about love in this book (see pp. 145-148, 203).
- Strangely Chan’s theology is only slightly different from a form of the prosperity gospel. While Chan called for simple and sacrificial living, it seems to be for the purpose of personal gain. “By surrendering yourself totally to God’s purposes, He will bring you the most pleasure in this life and the next” (p. 21) (see further pp. 117-27, especially the story on p. 122).
- He condemned turning saints into celebrities (p. 137), then did exactly that through some of the most extreme examples imaginable (pp. 150-64).
- Chan claimed he is not motivated by the fear or even the awe of God, but by love (p. 139). This is too bad since the Scriptures are full of examples of being motivated by awe (cf. Isa 6:1-5; 2 Cor 5:11) and the clear teaching that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7; 9:10).

- Some of his stories/examples are beyond bizarre and frankly stretch credibility (pp. 150, 155-56, 159).

Chan never went to the extreme of demanding that every Christian follow the examples he gives that supposedly exemplify crazy love (e.g. sell your house, pull out all your teeth, live in your car and spend the taxpayers' money on the homeless instead of getting a job). Instead he asked his readers to listen to the Holy Spirit, who will tell them what to do (pp. 166-68, 172, 191-92, 198-99, 203). This is perhaps the most dangerous part of the book, since Scripture does not tell Christians to listen to the subjective voice of the Holy Spirit to discern how to live but rather to the revealed Word of God. This is a recipe for spiritual disaster. In *Crazy Love*, Francis Chan attempted to motivate Christians to action. This is great but surely believers are to be motivated by biblical instructions rather than random diatribes. If one needs a challenge, a better recommendation is David Well's *Dare to Be Protestant* or Michael Horton's *The Gospel-Driven Life*, and leave *Crazy Love* on the shelf.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine by John D. Hannah. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007. 416 pp., cloth, \$24.99.

John Hannah, professor of historical theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, has provided the serious student of the Word a valuable tool in *Our Legacy*. In approximately 350 pages, Hannah was able to give a reliable and objective synopsis of the history and development of seven essential doctrines: Scripture, the Godhead, the person and work of Christ, salvation, the church, and end times. Hannah maintained that the earliest church fathers believed and proclaimed the core teachings of Scripture but did not explore detail or systematize theology until forced to do so when contrarian opinions and false teachings arose. As the need became evident, the truths of Scripture were studied and established and stated in various creeds. However, as new challenges and disagreements developed various divisions of theological expression arose.

Hannah identified many of the key views and theologians that have influenced theological thought by discussing them within the periods of church history. Each chapter briefly addressed: the church fathers (100-50), the apologists (150-300), the theologians (300-600), the medieval church (600-1500), the early modern churches (1500-1700) and the late modern churches (1750-present). Hannah also described how each

doctrine is understood within the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox traditions. Of course with each tradition there is variance, which is especially true within Protestantism. Therefore, Hannah devoted much attention to the development of theological systems including liberalism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Wesleyanism. Such attention provides a helpful understanding of the present day teaching of various branches of Christianity. In this overview, certain names appear repeatedly such as Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Calvin, Luther, Origen, and Augustine.

Our Legacy has helpful charts and good indexes and is filled with numerous primary quotes. The book skillfully assembled much that is seen today on the theological landscape with the past. It is not a book of systematic theology; rather, it serves as a companion resource. Toward that end I will be turning to *Our Legacy* repeatedly in my studies of theology and church history. The only disappointment with the book, as is often true of such volumes, is that present day movements and key individuals were not addressed. A most helpful sequel would be to trace the history of theology to modern trends such as the seeker-sensitive movement, the emergent church, and the increasingly popular concept of the kingdom of God being manifested through social action and attempts at fulfilling the so-called “cultural mandate.” Nevertheless, for its intended purpose, *Our Legacy* would be difficult to surpass.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

Psalms 42-89 by John Goldingay. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. 740 pp., cloth, \$49.99.

Goldingay’s volume completes a 3-volume set on the Psalms publishing by Baker. The editor of the series is Tremper Longman III. Each psalm is analyzed from three aspects: the author’s translation, a passage-by-passage Interpretation, and a few paragraphs on theological implications. The author’s translation presented alternative readings but overall was stilted. The passage-by-passage interpretation began with an overview and then addressed more details.

The commentary is technical yet the author did state the audience he was addressing to be seminary students (p. 8). In total, there are three indices (subject, author, Scripture) in addition to a glossary with some 85 terms. The glossary is disappointing in that words used frequently in the body of the volume were not listed. For example, “colon” is not found in either the glossary or the subject index. On the positive side, there are hundreds of footnotes for further research, and a fairly extensive

bibliography. Those students seeking a commentary with an emphasis on the literary features of the Psalms will find a valuable resource.

Charles Ray, chair, doctoral committee, Tyndale Seminary

Psalms 76-150 by Steven Lawson. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006. 384 pp., cloth, \$19.99.

Lawson's work is volume 12 in Broadman and Holman's Old Testament Commentary series. Max Anders is the general editor. It concludes the 2-volume set on the Psalms. The first volume (11 in the series, also written by Lawson) covered Psalms 1-76. Lawson is the senior pastor of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama. The series is based on the New International Version (with some NKJV quotes) but little of the text is printed on the pages. Similar to the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, key words are in bold within the running commentary. Each chapter covered one psalm (it required five chapters to complete 119). Though this is not a heavily academic work (in fact, what the editors highlight is its emphasis on application), the series was not intended to be so. The busy preacher (which would apply to all pastors) will find this work quite useful. For each chapter there are as many as eight sections. Those sections might include (a) an appropriate quote from a well-known Christian; (b) an introduction to that psalm; (c) the commentary proper; (d) a conclusion; (e) a life application; (f) a suggested prayer; (g) a section called "deeper discoveries which may present information on word studies, historical background, etc.; and, (h) an outline, usually alliterated or otherwise memorable. At the end of the volume, one finds a glossary and bibliography.

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A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction by Gleason Archer. Chicago: Moody Press, 2007. 509 pp., cloth, \$39.99.

Archer's work was originally published in 1964. This revised and expanded edition is filled with information. It is over 500 pages, and has more than 100 maps, charts, illustrations, color photos, etc. Archer did not spend much time on matters which are commonly agreed upon. He concentrated on more difficult issues (author of Pentateuch, date of Daniel, etc.). His volume has a number of articles on helpful topics such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the canon of the Old Testament, lower criticism, higher criticism, inspiration, the Documentary Hypothesis, and archaeology among others.

Additional information is found at the end of the book. The reader is treated to four appendices, three excursuses, and three indices. This glossy-paged, hard-backed book is fairly technical but it should be of immense help for just about any level of scholarship. This work may be the best of its kind on the market.

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