On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries

Festschrift for Grant R. Osborne on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday

EDITED BY

Stanley E. Porter and Eckhard J. Schnabel

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Edited by

Stanley E. Porter and Wendy J. Porter

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EDITORS' PREFACE

With essays in this volume, the editors and contributors honor Professor Grant R. Osborne on his seventieth birthday. Professor Osborne's interest in the interpretation of biblical texts has occupied a central place during his long life as a New Testament scholar and as a theologian who loves preaching. Having written many commentaries himself, the editors thought it befitting to show our appreciation of his contributions to biblical scholarship by asking former students, colleagues, and friends to write about commentary writing. Commentaries focus on texts written by others. The implication that the enterprise of commentary writing thus requires a certain humility readily agrees with Professor Osborne's conviction that the most important text written by an Other was the biblical text.

Six essays explore the genre of the biblical commentary in the context of historical-philological exegesis. The editors discuss commentary writing in the ancient world in more general terms and the linguistic competence displayed by New Testament scholars when they write commentaries. Douglas J. Moo comments on the translation of the Greek Text in New Testament commentaries, Craig L. Blomberg on the significance of genre, Douglas S. Huffman on the historical competence of New Testament commentaries, and Craig A. Evans on the discussions about the historical Jesus in commentaries. The next seven essays explore the understanding of the hermeneutical task exhibited in commentaries written by Old and New Testament scholars. Richard S. Hess writes on the treatment of the use of the Old Testament by New Testament scholars, D. A. Carson on the hermeneutical competence of New Testament commentators, Daniel I. Block on the interpretation of the phrase "the name of the Lord" in Romans 10:13 in the context its meaning in Old Testament texts, David W. Pao on the relevance of New Testament commentaries for ethics exemplified through a discussion of Romans 13:1–7, Robert W. Yarbrough on the relevance of New Testament commentaries for pastoral ministry, Walter L. Liefeld on the importance of commentaries for the task of preaching, and Scott M. Manetsch on the theological and pastoral focus of Wolfgang Musculus's commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans, written in the post-Reformation period. Three essays explore the relationship between theology and commentaries on the biblical text. Kevin J. Vanhoozer writes on the theological interpretation of Scripture, Daniel J. Treier on the significance of Christology in a theological interpretation of Scripture, and Linda L. Belleville on Christology in commentaries in the Pastoral Epistles. Four essays evaluate commentaries in the four areas in which Professor Osborne has written commentaries himself: Darrell L. Bock writes on commentaries on the Gospels, Stanley E. Porter on commentaries on Romans, Scot McKnight on commentaries on James, and Lois K. Fuller Dow on commentaries on the book of Revelation. The volume concludes with reflections by Daniel Reid on the role of editors and publishers with regard to biblical commentaries, apropos not only because without editors and publishers no commentary would "move" from the commentator's desk to the desk of students and pastors, but also because Professor Osborne has served on the editorial board of two commentary series.

The editors thank the contributors for their willingness to write on an assigned topic for this *Festschrift*. They thank Stephen B. Smith, one of Professor Osborne's teaching assistants who compiled the list of publications by Dr. Osborne, and Gregory P. Fewster, Wally V. Cirafesi, and Ben Snyder for helping with proofreading and for compiling the indices. They thank the Carl F. Henry Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in particular Dr. Douglas A. Sweeney, for their support of this project. And they thank the publishers at Brill for their willingness to take on this project at a time when the publication of a volume of essays has become a major challenge.

Stanley E. Porter
Eckhard J. Schnabel

FOREWORD

PROFESSOR GRANT R. OSBORNE

Eckhard J. Schnabel and Stanley E. Porter

Scholars honored with a *Festschrift* are unwittingly made aware of their age. It is old scholars who are honored with a collection of essays written by colleagues and friends, the term "old" used in the politically correct sense of Greek and Roman society. In the Greek world, the age of "young people" was reckoned from 18 to 30 years, and the age of an "old man" from 50 years onwards. In Rome and Italy, the *iuniores* were 17 to 46 years old, the *seniores* were the men from 47 to 59 years of age, and the *senes* were men over 60 years of age.[1] A seventy year old is a γέρων, a πρεσβύτης, a *senex*. In Rome, 60 years of age was the upper age limit for compulsory service to the state, outside Rome it was 70 years of age.[2] In his evaluation of the elderly Cato's refutation of four prejudices regarding old age, Cicero argued that an old man can and should indeed continue to be involved in the political affairs of the state, that mental capacities compensate for physical frailty, that the general decline in old age of the significance of emotions allows the old man to show greater concern for the individual and his spiritual interests, and that the old man, assuming that he is an upright individual, does not fear death since he knows that either oblivion or bliss awaits him.[3]

The purpose of this *Festschrift* is not to save Professor Grant Osborne from oblivion or provide him with the bliss of scholarly recognition. As a

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1 Gerhard Binder, "Age," in *Brill's New Pauly* (ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1:331–35, here 331–32. Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd rev. ed. by F. W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 667 s.v. *neanias* defines "youth, young man" as from "about the 24th to the 40th year" (with reference to Diogenes Laertius 8.10 and Philo, *Cher*. 114). This is only one of many classifications of the stages of life in antiquity. In the Roman Empire, the age at marriage for young men was between 20–30 years of age; cf. Josef Wiesehöfer, "Marriage, Age at," in *Brill's New Pauly* (ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 8:394–995; R. Larry Overstreet, "The Greek Concept of the 'Seven Stages of Life' and its New Testament Significance," *BBR* 19 (2009): 537–63.

2 Seneca, *De brevitate vitae* 20.4.

3 Cicero, *Cato major de senectute* 15–20, 35–38, 49–50, 84–85.

practicing Christian, he knows that believers in Jesus Christ are assured of "the final glory that will be ours at the eschaton," as he writes in his commentary on Rom 5:2.[4] This assertion follows the comment that Paul forbids "bragging over human achievement" in Rom 3:27, while in Rom 5:2 "pride is encouraged regarding what God has accomplished on our behalf." If it is indeed true that "there is always something old that sounds through Cato's wandering garrulity, something valedictory, retired, in retreat,"[5] we hasten to clarify that Professor Osborne exhibits none of these somewhat depressing traits. His colleagues and students can attest to his genuine concern for others, although he presumably would dispute the suggestion that this is the result of a general decline of emotions in old age! While not involved in political activity (from which he would be exempted at the proud age of 70 years living outside of the city of Rome), his scholarly acumen and his literary output amaze many younger scholars: in the last ten years Dr. Osborne has published six commentaries, two of which are major contributions to the commentary literature.[6]

Grant R. Osborne was born on July 7, 1942, in Queens in New York City, where his parents were working as professional musicians. His father, a trumpet player, played with virtually every big band in town and beyond. During the Second World War the family moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where they started to attend a local church and became committed Christians. Grant was introduced during his high school days to the serious study of the Bible in meetings of Youth for Christ, which prompted him to memorize books of the Old and New Testaments and eventually to attend Fort Wayne Bible College, where he majored in missions and pastoral training. During his undergraduate studies, Grant served as a student worker with T.E.A.M. for six months, living in Abbottabad in North Pakistan. Since chronic bronchitis prevented missionary ministry overseas, Grant entered pastoral ministry, serving for three years as the pastor of First Christian Union Church in Newark, Ohio. Grant introduced

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[4] Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (The IVP New Testament Commentary 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 128; the following quotations ibid.

[5] John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of Genre* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 155.

[6] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), with 869 pages, and Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), with 1154 pages. The four commentaries that target readers less interested in technical details are Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (The IVP New Testament Commentary 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Grant R. Osborne, *John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2007); Grant R. Osborne, *James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2011); Grant R. Osborne, *Mark* (Teach the Text Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

expository preaching to the congregation while meeting the numerous and time-consuming expectations of his church, which included directing an all-churches choir (Grant conducted performances of Handel's Messiah!). Experiencing the task of preparing three sermons each week as utterly stimulating, being invigorated by working consistently with the Greek text, Grant was eager and ready to engage in further studies. He enrolled at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he earned a Master of Arts degree in New Testament studies in 1971. Taking up the challenge of Richard Longenecker, one of his professors at TEDS, to earn a Ph.D. in Great Britain, Grant prepared for doctoral studies in Europe by teaching Greek and Hebrew at TEDS, driving a school bus, and filling in as interim pastor in a church in the Chicago area, while his wife Nancy, whom he had married during his Ohio days, taught elementary school. Grant has the distinction of being the first doctoral student of I. Howard Marshall at Aberdeen University. His Ph.D. dissertation, with the title "History and Theology in the Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study," was passed in 1974. Dr. Osborne accepted a call to Winnipeg Theological Seminary (now Providence Theological Seminary) in Canada, where he taught from 1974 to 1977, and then moved to Deerfield where he has been Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School since 1977 for thirty-five years. Grant has spent research semesters at the University of Cambridge in England and the Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany, and has lectured in Korea, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. He has served as New Testament editor of *TSF News and Reviews*, as general editor of the *IVP New Testament Commentary* series (InterVarsity Press), and as one of the editors of the *Life Application Commentary* (Tyndale), the *Three Crucial Questions* series (Baker), and the *New Living Translation*.

A major area of interest of Professor Osborne has been hermeneutics, a fact that he connects with both his dissertation research and his missionary interests and pastoral duties, and which entails "moving" the meaning of Scripture from the biblical text to its contemporary listeners. Grant used the tools of redaction criticism, introduced twenty years earlier by Hans Conzelmann,[7] Willi Marxsen,[8] and Günther Bornkamm,[9] in his

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[7] Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit. Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (BHTh 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1954).

[8] Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus. Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (FRLANT 67; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956).

[9] Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Überlieferung und Auslegung in Matthausevangelium* (WMANT 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960).

dissertation on the resurrection narratives in the Gospels.[10] He revisited redaction criticism in several articles for dictionaries,[11] textbooks on exegetical method,[12] journals,[13] and books,[14] defending the appropriateness of employing the techniques of redaction criticism in Gospel studies, especially against evangelicals who argued that redaction criticism and a conservative view of Scripture are incompatible.[15] Using a boxing metaphor, Grant describes the first round in the evangelical debate about redaction criticism as the attack by John Warwick Montgomery at the Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1978[16] against his 1976 and 1978 essays in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, against which he vigorously defended himself,[17] arguing that in no instance did he suggest that the evangelists created events or sayings of Jesus. The second round began with the publication of Robert Gundry's commentary on the Gospel of Matthew,[18] which was criticized by some evangelical scholars.[19]

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[10] Grant R. Osborne, "History and Theology in the Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Aberdeen University, 1974), mentioned a few years later in Thomas Pola, "Urchristlicher Osterglaube. Bibliographie 1972–1980," *ANRW II/25.1* (1982): 873–90, here 885, and eventually published in a revised version as Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984).

[11] Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 662–69.

[12] Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," in *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation* (ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 199–224.

[13] Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism and the Great Commission: A Case Study Toward a Biblical Understanding of Inerrancy," *JETS* 19 (1976): 73–85; Grant R. Osborne, "Redactional Trajectories in the Crucifixion Narrative," *EQ* 51 (1979): 80–96.

[14] Grant R. Osborne, "John 21: Test Case for History and Redaction in the Resurrection Narratives," in *Gospel Perspectives II: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 293–329.

[15] Grant R. Osborne, "Round Four: The Redaction Debate Continues," *JETS* 28 (1986): 399–410.

[16] John Warwick Montgomery, "Why Has God Incarnate Suddenly Become Mythical?" in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* (ed. K. S. Kantzer and S. N. Gundry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 57–65.

[17] Grant R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism: Critique and Methodology," *JETS* 22 (1979): 305–22.

[18] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[19] D. A. Carson, "Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review," *TrinJ* 3 (1982): 71–91; Douglas J. Moo, "Matthew and Midrash: An Evaluation of Robert H. Gundry's Approach," *JETS* 26 (1983): 31–39; Norman L. Geisler, "Methodological Unorthodoxy," *JETS* 26 (1983): 87–94; R.T. France, "Jewish Historiography, Midrash, and the Gospels," in *Gospel Perspectives III: Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 99–127; Philip Barton Payne, "Midrash and History in the Gospels with Special Reference to R. H. Gundry's Matthew," in *Gospel Perspectives III: Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (ed. R. T. France, D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 177–216.

The third round witnessed a symposium of evangelical scholars organized by *Christianity Today*,[20] and a position paper by the faculty of Talbot School of Theology.[21] A comment on the bout illustrates Grant's willingness to change or modify a position that he held: responding to the charge that redaction critics tend to deny the possibility of harmonizing Gospel accounts in order to arrive at a chronological life of the historical Jesus, and that they tend to doubt the possibility of reconstructing the theology or the exact words of Jesus, he asserted in his 1986 essay, "I will admit that this applied to me for a while. In my original dissertation on the resurrection narratives I played down the possibility of harmonizing the accounts. However, as I reworked my thesis over a period of seven years I gradually realized not only the viability but the importance of doing so to the extent that the data allowed."[22] This openness to correction and continued learning was evident in a recent Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society when a student from his own divinity school (who was younger than the number of years Grant has been teaching) challenged a particular position of his. At the end of the presentation, Grant raised his hand to comment, told the student that he convinced him, and emphasized that when you write you have to be willing to be wrong.

Unlike some scholars who devote their career to the use of one particular method of interpretation, Grant has also written on historical criticism,[23] tradition criticism,[24] genre or form criticism,[25] literary theory,[26] typology,[27]

Robert Gundry answered his critics in several "Responses" in *JETS* 26 (1983): 41–56, 71–86, 95–100, 109–116.

[20] Christianity Today Institute, "Redaction Criticism, Is It Worth the Risk?" *Christianity Today* 19/15 (18 October 1985): 1–12 (insert).

[21] Wendell G. Johnston et al., "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism in the Synoptic Gospels," *Talbot Review* 1 (1985): 8–13.

[22] Osborne, "Round Four," 407.

[23] Grant R. Osborne, "Historical Criticism and the Evangelical," *JETS* 42 (1999): 193–210; Grant R. Osborne, "Historical Narrative and Truth in the Bible," *JETS* 48 (2005): 673–99.

[24] Grant R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and *Traditionsgeschichte*," *JETS* 21 (1978): 117–30.

[25] Grant R. Osborne, "Genre Criticism—*Sensus Literalis*," *TrinJ* 4 (1983): 1–27; Grant R. Osborne, "Genre Criticism—*Sensus Literalis*," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible. Papers from ICBI Summit II* (ed. E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 163–90.

[26] Grant R. Osborne, "Literary Theory and Biblical Interpretation," in *Words and the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory* (ed. D. G. Firth and J. A. Grant; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 17–50.

[27] Grant R. Osborne, "Type, Typology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 1117–19; Grant R. Osborne, "Typology," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ed. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–88), 4:930–32.

contextualization,[28] and biblical hermeneutics in general.[29] Of particular significance is his influential textbook *The Hermeneutical Spiral*,[30] which was a 1993 *Christianity Today* Critics' Choice Award winner in theology and biblical studies. The hardcover edition of 1991 was followed by a paperback edition in 1997 and an expanded second edition in 2006. By October 2011, these three editions combined had sold over 50,000 copies.[31] It has been translated into Chinese, Hungarian, and Portuguese, and is in the process of being translated into Arabic, Indonesian, and Korean.

Grant's scholarship has not only been prodigious, but his direct influence upon students has been profound as well. Many of the contributors to this volume were students of Dr. Osborne at TEDS, and several served as his teaching assistants. To work with Dr. Osborne was a privilege and created an opportunity to see him up close. It allowed the student to be able to talk with him more intimately about issues in ministry, especially in New Testament studies, and even to read and proofread his major works—to be in the know, as it were—before they appeared in print. It is hard to describe the privilege of having been asked to read and respond to an article that, one realized both then and now, took evangelical scholarship into previously uncharted waters. Students in Dr. Osborne's courses will remember the voluminous notes that he prepared for them to read

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[28] Grant R. Osborne, "Preaching the Gospels—Methodology and Contextualization," *JETS* 27 (1984): 25–42.

[29] Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church," *JETS* 20 (1977): 337–52; Grant R. Osborne, "Christology and New Testament Hermeneutics: A Survey of the Discussion," *Semeia* 30 (1984): 49–62; Grant R. Osborne, "Evangelical Interpretation of Scripture," in *The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures* (Marquette Studies in Theology 4; ed. K. Hager; Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1985), 129–59; Grant R. Osborne, "Interpreting the New Testament," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Interpretation, 1988* (ed. R. Jackson, J. I. Packer, and D. Vestal; Nashville: Broadman, 1989), 137–67; Grant R. Osborne, "Meaning in a Meaningless World: Hermeneutics and the Scholar," *Journal for Christian Studies* 12 (1993): 1–16; Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics/Interpreting Paul," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 388–97; Grant R. Osborne, "The Many and the One: The Interface between Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant Hermeneutics," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995): 281–304; Grant R. Osborne, "Evangelical Biblical Interpretation," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John Hayes; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 1:357–61; Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (ed. A. C. Moreau; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 430–32; Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Theological Interpretation," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century* (FS D. A. Carson; ed. A. Köstenberger and R. W. Yarbrough; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 62–86.

[30] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

[31] We thank Dan Reid from InterVarsity Press for this information.

in advance—in essence a compendium of scholarship on the respective topic or New Testament book—and that formed the backdrop for classroom discussion. The notes for a course in hermeneutics were the basis of what was to become *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, one of Grant's most significant publications. At the time the notes were written, students at TEDS were probably among the few in all of evangelical scholarship who were being exposed to structuralism and other less traditional forms of hermeneutical thought. One of the editors remembers vividly being in a Johannine literature course—at TEDS called Leftovers, because it was not the Synoptics or Acts and Paul—when, near the end of the course, one of the students asked Dr. Osborne how he would preach a particular passage using the material that had just been studied and discussed. Immediately, and with great passion, Dr. Osborne launched into what can only be described as a profound and deeply moving sermon—and not a short homily—on the Johannine passage, demonstrating both how to make the seamless transition from text and scholarship to application, and, perhaps more importantly, the spiritual fervor and genuine devotion to God's word that Grant always professed and lived and continues to live before all of his students and colleagues. That impromptu sermon, born out of years of studying and meditating on God's word, remains a vivid memory among many such memories from several years under Grant's tutelage.

For Grant, the focus on hermeneutics was never an end in itself nor a theoretical discipline, but invariably driven by theological and ultimately pastoral concerns, as several essays[32] and numerous dictionary entries[33] demonstrate. His preaching and teaching ministry in many churches in the Chicago area and beyond confirms his dedication to the church. One of the joys of his last ten years has been his strategic involvement in teaching pastors from mainland China. What seems to be Grant's last major project corroborates this assessment: he has started working on a

[32] Grant R. Osborne, "Mind Control or Spirit-Controlled Minds?" in *Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World* (ed. John D. Woodbridge; Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 55–70; Grant R. Osborne, "Devotions and the Spirit-Controlled Mind," in *Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World*, 95–114; Grant R. Osborne, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (ed. Clark Pinnock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 243-60; Grant R. Osborne, "Women in Jesus' Ministry," *WTJ* 51 (1989): 259–91; Grant R. Osborne, "Theodicy in the Apocalypse," *TrinJ* 14 (1993): 63–77; Grant R. Osborne, "History and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels," *TrinJ* 24 (2003): 5–22;

[33] See in the List of Publications by Grant R. Osborne his contributions to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (1984, second edition 2001), *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1986, second edition, 1995), and the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1988).

biblical theology of the church, proving the point that, for him, truly biblical scholarship always benefits the church.

Colleagues and students have always appreciated Grant's cordial agreeability, cheerful disposition, unmitigated affirmation of friendship, deep humility, concern for the truth, and love of the Word of God. In addition, there is his sometimes hilariously self-deprecating sense of humor. It is quite possible that he will be embarrassed by this volume and the attention that it directs his way. He may agree, however, that if the essays on commentary writing collected in this volume help scholars to write better commentaries and prompt pastors to preach better sermons, the overriding concern of his own life as scholar, theologian, and pastor will have been served: Soli Deo Gloria.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS BY GRANT R. OSBORNE

Compiled by Stephen B. Smith

1971

"The Transfiguration: A Critical, Exegetical and Theological Study." Master's thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1971.

Co-authored with Clark H. Pinnock. "A Truce Proposal for the Tongues Controversy." *Christianity Today* 16 (October 1971): 6–9.

1974

"History and Theology in the Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1974.

1975

"Exegetical Notes on Calvinist Texts." Pages 167–89 in *Grace Unlimited*. Edited by Clark H. Pinnock. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975.

"Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews." Pages 144–66 in *Grace Unlimited*. Edited by Clark H. Pinnock. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975.

1976

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ACCSNT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
AGLB	*Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel*
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princenton, 1969
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASV	Authorized Standard Version
AV	Authorized Version
AzTh	Arbeiten zur Theologie
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BBET	Beitrage zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BLE	*Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CC	Continental Commentaries
CCSS	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
CEB	Common English Bible
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CGST	China Graduate School of Theology
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CRINT	Compendium Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DSB	Daily Study Bible
EBib	*Etudes bibliques*
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESV	English Standard Version

ETR	*Études théologiques et religieuses*
ExAu	*Ex Auditu*
FS	Festschrift
HALOT	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–1999
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HTA	Historisch-Theologische Auslegung zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
IBC	International Bible Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
Int	*Interpretation*
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KJV	King James Version
LD	Lectio divina
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NET	New English Translation
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary: New Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997

NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Translation
NPNF	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr. Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1994
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplementum
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTC	The New Testament in Context
NTL	New Testament Library
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OSHT	Oxford Studies in Historical Theology
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
OTL	Old Testament Library
PCS	Pentecostal Commentary Series
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
P.Oxy.	Oxyrhynchus Papyri. Edited by B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt et al.
ProEccl	*Pro ecclesia*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SB	Sources bibliques
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation

TB Theologische Bücherei
TBei *Theologische Beiträge*
TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
THNT Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
THNTC Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
ThTo *Theology Today*
TKNT Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNIV Today's New International Version
TNTC Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TPC The Preacher's Commentary
TrinJ *Trinity Journal*
TSAJ Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*
VTSup Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZECNT Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNW *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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PART ONE

COMMENTARIES AND EXEGESIS

ON COMMENTARY WRITING

Eckhard J. Schnabel

Commentaries, defined in the singular as "a treatise consisting of a systematic series of comments or annotations on the text of a literary work; an expository treatise following the order of the work explained" (Oxford English Dictionary), are needed by readers of a text they have not written themselves. Authors who read their own texts do not need an explanation—their readers do, if and when the text is difficult to understand, thus requiring explanation for a wider readership, or if and when the text is removed in time and culture from the original context, thus requiring explanation for readers who live at a later time and in a different place. Modern readers of the New Testament live two thousand years removed from the original authors of the New Testament texts, and they live in a different culture, even if they happen to live in modern Israel, Syria, or Turkey.

1. *Origins of Commentary Writing*

The Latin term *commentarii* denotes continuous records in the form of note-books, memoranda, or minutes that document the activities of official bodies and their representatives, such as city councils, *collegia* (e.g. priestly orders) and commercial businesses (e.g. large households).[1] The diversity of interests and content corresponds to a variety in the level of standardization, documentation, and publication, the latter being required in the case of agreements, wills, and laws. The individual record (*commentarius*) was almost always part of a larger body of records. By the late Republic, the term *commentarii* was used in the sense of written "memory aid" or *memorandum* for drafts of speeches, notes for public

[1] Cf. Jörg Rüpke, "Commentarii," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3:628–29. On the genre and the relevant terminology for commentaries in antiquity, understood narrowly as "eine dem Text linear folgende, möglichst vollständige Erklärung von Sprache u[nd] Inhalt," see Ludwig Fladerer and Dagmar Börner-Klein, "Kommentar," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 21 (ed. T. Klausner; Stuttgart: Hiersmann, 2006), 274–329, 274–82.

lectures, or reports that took the place of oral delivery. According to Jörg Rüpke, "this type of secondary documentation, and use of the term to describe 'a collection of cases', explains the use of *commentarii* to describe commentaries on primary texts, especially in the legal sense (*commentarii in XII tabulas*) and in Christian exegesis (on OT/NT)."[2] This sense of *commentarii* was derived from the Greek term ὑπόμνεμα ("memory," then also "notice, memory aid, record") which was used for works with historical, geographical, medical, philosophical, rhetorical, and mixed content.[3] Since the Hellenistic period, the term ὑπόμνεμα designates a running commentary on literary texts. These commentaries, which are usually organized as sequences of lemma (a portion of the text) and exegesis, "exhibit various interests and contents, from the simple glossographic explanation of individual words to the explanation of philological, exegetic, antiquarian or mythographical problems; from language and word usage, rhetorical figures, stylistic observations, proverbs, anecdotes and biographical questions to aesthetic and moral judgements on the work and eventually to allegoresis."[4] Texts which comment on other texts are not always called "commentary." Other terms that were used include γλῶσσα, which refers to the explanation of the meaning of an individual word, and σχόλιον, a general term that is used for the elucidation of a "dark" passage that is in need of explanation. Glosses and *scholia* were often written in the margins of texts. A "commentary" is usually understood in terms of an independent, separately published text that consists of a series of *scholia*.

The practice of writing philological commentaries on texts can be traced back to the Athenian schools of the fifth century B.C.[5] The Alexandrian philologists consolidated the commentary genre. They presented

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[2] Rüpke, "Commentarii", 628. Other Latin terms for the designation of the consecutive exegetical texts include *expositio, tractatus, enarratio, libri, volumina*, and *explanatio*; cf. Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar", 278.

[3] Cf. Franco Montanari, "Hypomnema," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 6:641–43, who refers to Polybius 1.1.1; Ptolemy, *Geographica* 1.6.2; Galen; Diogenes Laertius 4.4; Ps.-Longinus, *De sublimitate* 44.12; Aristoxenus, *Symmikta hypomnemata*; Callimachus, *Hypomnemata*.

[4] Montanari, "Hypomnema", 642–43. Examples are the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias (second century A.D.; translations are published in the series Ancient Commentators on Aristotle by Cornell University Press).

[5] Note the interesting example of a "commentary on a commentary" preserved in P.Oxy. XV 1808, dating to the second century A.D. This (fragmentary) copy of a commentary on Plato, *Respublica* 8, preserves shorthand notations, attesting to an educated reader who had learned to write shorthand. Cf. Kathleen McNamee, "A Plato Papyrus with Shorthand Marginalia," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001): 97–116.

texts on the basis of a systematic comparison of manuscripts, complete with text-critical comments and explanations of difficult passages with references to learned authorities, mythology, antiquarian traditions, sources, parallel texts for unusual forms, and rhetorical figures.[6] Not surprisingly, Aristotle was the philosopher whose work was commented on most frequently, beginning in the first century B.C.[7] The most important Greek grammarian of the first century B.C., Didymus of Alexandria, who was renowned for having written between 3,500 and 4,000 books (thus his nickname Χαλκέντερος, "Brazen-guts")—he forgot the precise number, which earned him the nickname Βιβλιολάθας, "Book-forgetter"—was the most prolific commentator of antiquity, commenting on Homer, Bacchylides, Pindar, Sophocles, Euripides, Ion, Aristophanes, Phrynichus, Menander, Thucycides, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Hypereides, Isaeus, and others as well.[8] Sextus Aelius Paetus Catus (consul 198 B.C.), the founder of legal technical literature, published in his work *Tripertita* the text of the Twelve Tables, with interpretation followed by legal procedures.[9] The earliest Latin commentary consisting of glosses on a literary text is Lucius Aelius' interpretation of the Song of the Salii, written around 100 B.C.[10]

[6] Ulrich Püschel, "Kommentar," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (ed. G. Ueding; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 4:1179–87, 1180; Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar", 282–83. See Eleanor Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises, from their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period* (American Philological Association Classical Resources 7; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[7] Cf. Hans B. Gottschalk, "The Earliest Aristotelian Commentators," in *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence* (ed. R. Sorabji; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 55–81. See Karl Praechter, "Die griechischen Aristoteleskommentare [1909]," in *Kleine Schriften* (ed. H. Dörrie; Collectanea 7; Hildesheim: Olms, 1973), 282–304; Richard Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar," 289–96; Richard Sorabji, ed., *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook* (3 vols.; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Miira Tuominen, *The Ancient Commentators on Plato and Aristotle* (Ancient Philosophies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). The series *The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*, edited by Richard Sorabji (Duckworth and Cornell University Press), has published the ancient commentaries since 1987—most recently Philoponus, *Against Proclus, On the Eternity of the World, 9–11* (trans. Michael Share; Ancient Commentators on Aristotle; London: Duckworth, 2010).

[8] Cf. Franco Montanari, "Didymus [1] of Alexandria. A. Philological Activity," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 4:396–98.

[9] Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar", 285.

[10] Cf. Robert A. Kaster, "Commentary II. Latin," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3:630–31; cf. ibid. for the following comment.

Specialists also wrote commentaries on legal texts.[11] The earliest extant Latin commentary is Servius' commentary on the poetry of Virgil, written in the fifth century A.D.[12]

In the Christian tradition, commentary existed right from the beginning. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus began his public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth by reading and commenting on Isaiah 61:1–2 (Luke 4:16–30). While Jesus' interpretation of Israel's Scriptures may be called "messianic interpretation,"[13] the more extensive scriptural expositions of the Apostle Paul, a trained rabbi, have more "scribal" characteristics.[14] Both forms of scriptural commentary in the New Testament—the powerful prophetic and messianic explanation of biblical texts and the authoritative quotation and explication of biblical texts in the context of theological argumentation—actualizes the biblical text and applies its meaning to a contemporary audience.[15] The importance of Scripture commentary in the early church is hardly surprising, given the authoritative significance of the Torah in Israel and the normative significance of the

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[11] Gaius (A.D. 140–180), the author of the *Institutiones*, a synopsis of Roman civil law, wrote the commentaries *Ad edictum provinciale* (thirty books), *Ad legem Iuliam et Papiam* (fifteen books), *Ad edictum praetoris* (ten books), *Ad legem duodecim tabularum* (six books), and *Ad edictrum aedilium curulium* (two books). See Tomasz Giaro, "Gaius [II.2]," in *Brill's New Pauly* (ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 5:642–44.

[12] *Servius' Commentary on Book Four of Virgil's Aeneid: An Annotated Translation* (ed. Christopher M. McDonough, Richard E. Prior, and Mark Stansbury; Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2004). Cf. Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar", 288–89.

[13] Cf. Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christanity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Emerson Byron Powery, *Jesus Reads Scripture: The Function of Jesus' Use of Scripture in the Synoptic Gospels* (Biblical Interpretation 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[14] Cf. E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (1957; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (BHTh 69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

[15] Christoph Markschies, "Origenes und die Kommentierung des paulinischen Römerbriefs. Einige Bemerkungen zur Rezeption von antiken Kommentartechniken im Christentum des dritten Jahrhunderts und ihrer Vorgeschichte," in *Commentaries—Kommentare* (ed. G. W. Most; Aporemata 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 66–94, esp 69. See generally Martin Hengel and Hermut Löhr, eds., *Schriftauslegung im antiken Judentum und im Urchristentum* (WUNT 73; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). For an analysis of the individual Old Testament quotations and allusions in the New Testament, see Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

Hebrew Scriptures in Judaism.[16] The earliest Christian commentary was, probably, the five volume work λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξήγησις ("Exposition of the Logia of the Lord") by Papias of Hierapolis, written at the beginning of the second century.[17] Apparently Pantaenus, head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, wrote many commentaries,[18] none of which survive. Heracleon, a disciple of the gnostic Valentinus, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John in the tradition of the Alexandrian commentary practice around A.D. 170.[19] Hippolytus of Rome produced biblical commentaries, including a commentary on Daniel written between A.D. 200–205.[20] Origen (185–254) wrote several commentaries, among them multi-volume commentaries on Matthew, John, and Romans.[21] The commentators of

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[16] Cf. Michael Fishbane, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation. Vol. I/1: Antiquity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 33–48; Johann Maier, "Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation in the Qumran Literature," in ibid., 108–29; Folker Siegert, "Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style," in ibid., 130–99. See also David Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE* (TSAJ 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). On Philo see Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for his Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[17] Papias's commentary has not survived; for a collection of fragments, see Joseph B. Lightfoot, et al., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations.* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 722–73. Cf. Armin D. Baum, "Papias als Kommentator evangelischer Aussprüche Jesu. Erwägungen zur Art seines Werkes," *NovT* 38 (1996): 257–76. Markschies, "Origenes", 73, remains skeptical. For histories of the Christian exegesis/commentary on Scripture, cf. Bertrand de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis* (Petersham: St Bede's, 1994); Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation* (4 vols.; Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 50, 61–63; Leiden: Brill, 2009–10).

[18] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 36.3.

[19] Cf. Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar," 311; Markschies, "Origenes," 77; cf. Jean-Michel Poffet, *La méthode exégétique d'Héracléon et d'Origène. Commentateurs de Jn 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains* (Paradosis; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1985); Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus. Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

[20] Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel* (trans. Tom C. Schmidt; CreateSpace, 2010). His commentary on the Book of Revelation (cf. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61.2) has been lost. On Hippolytus, see John A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On patristic exegesis, see Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Bible in Ancient Christianity 1; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[21] Origen, *Matthäuserklärung* (3 vols.; ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz; Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller 38.40.41; Leipzig: Hinrich, 1933–41); Origène, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon Matthieu* (Robert Girod; Sources chrétiennes 162; Paris: Cerf, 1970); *Origenes Werke: Der Johanneskommentar* (ed. Erwin Preuschen; Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller 3; Leipzig: Hinrich, 1903); Origène, *Commentaire sur saint Jean* (5 vols.; ed. Cécile Blanc; Sources chrétiennes 120.157.222.290.385; Paris: Cerf, 1966–92); Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John: Books 1–10, 13–32* (2 vols.; trans. Ronald E. Heine; The Fathers of the Church 80.89; Washington D.C.: Catholic University

the Antiochene tradition, among them Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom, rejected the allegorical method as a technique to consistently find a deeper meaning.[22]

In Jewish rabbinic tradition, there are three major ways of linking the text of Scripture with commentary. There is the Targum (e.g. the *Targum Onqelos*),[23] the Aramaic translation of the Jewish Scriptures, which provides an explanation of the Hebrew text in the wording of the translation, either by choosing Aramaic words that interpret the Hebrew words, or by adding paraphrastic expansions.[24] The second major form of rabbinic commentary is Midrash.[25] The exegetical Midrashim quote a portion of the biblical text (lemma) and then provide a commentary of varying length (e.g. *Genesis Rabbah*).[26] The homiletical Midrashim (e.g. *Leviticus Rabbah*)[27] comment on selected verses or on the main theme of the weekly reading from the Torah and the Prophets, while the halakhic Midrashim (e.g. *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishamel*, a commentary on portions of Exodus)[28] interpret the mostly legal material from Exodus to Deuteronomy. The third main form of Jewish commentary is the *Mishnah*, a commentary on the legal material of the Hebrew Bible, which is presented independently of the biblical text.[29]

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of America Press, 1989–93); Theresia Heither, *Origenes Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos. Römerbriefkommentar* (Lateinisch/Deutsch; Fontes Christiani 2/1–4; Freiburg: Herder, 1990–94); Origenes, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes. Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins* (C. P. Hammond Bammel; AGLB 16.33.34; Freiburg: Herder, 1990–98); Origenes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ed. Thomas P. Scheck; The Fathers of the Church 103–104; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001/2002).

[22] Cf. Fladerer and Börner-Klein, "Kommentar", 313–15.

[23] Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 6; Wilmington: Glazier, 1988); Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onkelos to Exodus; Leviticus and Numbers; Deuteronomy* (The Aramaic Bible 7–9; Wilmington: Glazier, 1988).

[24] Cf. Roger Le Déaut, *Introduction à la littérature targumique* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966); Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (CRINT II/1; ed. M. J. Mulder; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 217–54.

[25] Cf. Hermann L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 233–359.

[26] Hanokh Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary* (3 vols.; 1912–1936; repr., Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965).

[27] Marsha Mirkin, *Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1956–64); Jacob Israelstam and Judah J. Slotki, *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus* (London: Soncino, 1938).

[28] Cf. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition on the Basis of Manuscripts and Early Editions with an English Translation, Introduction and Notes* (3 vols.; Library of Jewish Classics; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933–35).

[29] Abraham Goldberg, "The Mishna—A Study Book of Halakha," in *The Literature of the Sages. Part 1: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (ed. S. Safrai; CRINT II/3; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 211–62; Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*,

There are three main reasons why commentaries are written.[30] First, the texts that are commented on are older than the commentary—in the philological tradition several hundred or, in the case of modern commentaries, several thousand years older. Historical distance implies changes in language (thus Alexander of Aphrodisias clarifies the Greek diction of Aristotle who lived six hundred years earlier),[31] or a different language altogether (Stavros Tsitsiridis comments in German on Plato who writes in Greek),[32] and a different world of *realia* that needs to be explained. Second, since authors of texts are selective in what they write, they omit material that they presume their readers to know. Commentators seek to fill such gaps and clarify difficulties that the text presents for readers, especially if the latter have not been initiated into the subject matter (a modern philosopher who easily reads classical Greek needs less philological commentary on an Aristotle text than a philosopher who reads only English). The third reason why commentaries are necessary is linked with the fact that some texts are canonical texts for a community, requiring a common understanding of the text. This connection will be further explored below.

2. *The Form of Commentaries*

In Greek commentaries the logical and temporal posteriority of the commentary to the text is often signaled typographically by the use of diacritical signs, which refer the reader to a commented passage (*lemma*), and by the arrangement of the commentary above, below, or beside the reference text, or in separate notes below the text or after the text, or

108–48. On Jewish commentaries see also Fladerer and Börner-Klein, “Kommentar”, 296–309.

[30] Wolfgang Raible, “Arten des Kommentierens—Arten der Sinnbildung—Arten des Verstehens,” in *Text und Kommentar* (ed. J. Assmann and B. Gladigow; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; München: Fink, 1995), 51–73, 55–56.

[31] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle’s “On Coming-to-be and Perishing 2.2–5”* (trans. Emma Gannagé; Ancient Commentators on Aristotle; London: Duckworth, 2006); Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle’s “Prior Analytics 1.23–31”* (trans. Ian Müller; Ancient Commentators on Aristotle; London: Duckworth, 2006); Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle’s “Prior Analytics 1.32–46”* (trans. Ian Müller; Ancient Commentators on Aristotle; London: Duckworth, 2006).

[32] Stavros Tsitsiridis, *Platons Menexenos. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 107; Leipzig: Teubner, 1998).

in a separate volume.[33] Greek grammarians developed sigla that allowed scholars to include notes. The best known system of sigla was devised by Aristarchus, the most famous Alexandrian grammarian (ca. 216–144 B.C.), for texts of Homer. An obelus marked spurious lines, the diple periestigmene marked passages where Aristarchus' readings disagreed from Zenodotus' readings, the asteriscus marked genuine Homeric lines which were found, incorrectly, in other sections of the poem, and asteriscus plus obelus marked genuine lines that belonged elsewhere in the text, and the diple marked a variety of observations and learned notes.[34] The most common siglum in literary papyri is the simple penstroke which serves as a simple check-mark, or it marks a text containing variants, errors, omissions, or restorations, or it precedes marginal notes or separate lemmata from comments.

New Testament commentaries, not surprisingly, use different formats. In the commentary on the Book of Acts by Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury, the text (in English translation) is placed at the top of the page with the commentary printed below a separating line, tagged to the text by reference to the verse numbers.[35] Similarly, the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* prints the commentary below the text (in German translation), which is placed at the upper part of the left page only; the commentary is a "running commentary" in the literal sense of the word: there are no paragraph breaks, except in the case of excursus-type explanations.[36]

Few modern New Testament commentaries print the Greek text. Bernard Weiß, in his commentary on the New Testament books, prints four to ten lines of the Greek text at the top of the page with explanatory notes filling the rest of the page.[37] The commentary on the Greek text of the

[33] Roger Lüdeke, "Kommentar," in *Kompendium der Editionswissenschaften*. Cited November 10, 2010. Online: http://www.edkomp.uni-muenchen.de/CD1/C/Kommentar-C-RL-print.html.

[34] Cf. Kathleen McNamee, *Sigla and Select Marginalia in Greek Literary Papyri* (Papyrologica Bruxellensia 26; Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1992), 8–9; the next comment ibid. 17.

[35] Frederik J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part. I: The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. IV: English Translation and Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1933).

[36] See e.g. Hans Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Zweite Auflage; 1963; repr., *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* 7; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972). The English translation in the *Hermeneia* series changed the format: the commentary was placed after the (English translation of the) text; cf. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

[37] Bernhard Weiß, *Das Neue Testament. Handausgabe* (Zweite Auflage; 1896; repr., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902).

Book of Acts by F. F. Bruce prints the Greek text at the beginning of each pericope, without translation.[38] The *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* series prints not only an English translation (in a graphical layout which aims at helping the reader to visualize the flow of thought within the text), but for each individual verse it repeats the English translation, which is followed by the Greek text in brackets.[39] The *Word Biblical Commentary* prints an English translation of each pericope; in the verse by verse commentary lemmata in Greek are presented with the English translation of the lemma repeated in quotation marks.[40] Most academic commentaries print a translation of the text, placed at the beginning of the pericope.[41] Some commentaries print a translation at the beginning of each verse.[42] Commentaries for a wider readership sometimes include a translation,[43] sometimes dispensing with printing the translated text.[44] The older volumes of the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* include neither the Greek text nor the commentator's translation. It is curious that commentaries written for the general reader and for pastors do not use the translations produced by the

[38] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd rev. and enl. ed.; Leicester/Grand Rapids: Apollos/Eerdmans, 1990); the first edition of the commentary, with the same format, was published in 1951 by Tyndale Press, London. Bruce's English commentary on Acts, in keeping with the format of the New International Commentary on the New Testament series, prints only an English translation; cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. ed.; New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

[39] Cf. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

[40] Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (Word Biblical Commentary 38 A–B; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988).

[41] Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; Herders Theologischer Kommentar 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1980–82); C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–98); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Anchor Bible 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998); Richard I. Pervo, *Acts* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 2008); Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres (1–12)* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament 5a; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007).

[42] Cf. David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

[43] Cf. Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Das Neue Testament Deutsch 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

[44] Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentary; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980); David J. Williams, *Acts* (New International Biblical Commentary 5; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990); James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth, 1996).

authors of historical-critical commentaries (analogous to study editions of classical texts, which, ideally, use the text established by historical-critical editions).[45] They either offer their own translation, e.g., the Anchor Bible, which aims at "the general reader with no special formal training in biblical studies" (series preface by W. F. Albright and D. N. Freedman), and the Word Biblical Commentary, which "seeks to serve the needs of professional scholars and teachers, seminary students, working ministers" (dust jacket text). Or they use an existing translation; e.g., the New Century Bible Commentary uses the Revised Standard Version; the Pillar New Testament Commentary uses the New International Version; the older volumes of the New International Commentary on the New Testament used the American Standard Version (1901), revised or newly written volumes switch to the New International Version[46] or provide the author's new translation.[47]

New Testament commentaries written for an academic audience usually include a bibliography of other commentaries and secondary literature, such as those in the following series: Anchor Bible, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar, Herders Theologischer Kommentar, International Critical Commentary,[48] Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar, New International Greek Testament Commentary, and the Word Biblical Commentary. Some commentary series point the reader to secondary literature in footnotes, e.g. the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. Commentaries for a more general readership include brief bibliographies as part of the introduction, e.g. Epworth Commentaries, Pillar New Testament Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Zondervan Application Commentary.

Academic commentaries generally have different sections in which text-critical, source-critical, redaction-critical, form-critical, and structural questions are addressed, before each verse of the text is explained. Commentaries written for a wider readership sometimes, albeit briefly, provide explanations of sources, redaction, genre, and structure; more often than

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[45] Cf. Dirk Göttsche, "Ausgabentypen und Ausgabenbenutzer," in *Text und Edition: Positionen und Perspektiven* (ed. Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, et al.; Berlin: Schmidt, 2000), 37–63, here 54.

[46] Cf. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[47] Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

[48] I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), provides more detailed bibliographies than C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–98).

not such "technical" discussion are omitted as irrelevant for non-academic readers: instead, the focus is on explanations of the context, difficult words and historical details, the flow of the text or argument, and the theological emphases of individual statements or paragraphs. The technical nature of commentaries written for an academic readership explains why most academic series allow commentators to use footnotes for further discussions and references to primary and secondary sources (notable exceptions are the Anchor Bible and Word Biblical Commentary series).[49] Commentary series for academically trained readers who use commentaries for preparing sermons on the biblical text and for Bible studies, rather than for research and writing, either allow (Pillar New Testament Commentary, Zondervan Application Commentary) or do not allow (Das Neue Testament Deutsch, Ökumenischer Taschenkommentar; the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament has minimal footnotes) for the use of footnotes. Rather than seeking to make a contribution to research, these commentaries summarize research (and thus fulfill the same task as study editions compared with historical-critical editions of texts).[50]

The length of commentaries has been a problem for a long time. One line of Aristotle triggered more than twenty lines of commentary by the ancient commentators.[51] Averroes (Ibn Rušd) wrote 758 lines of commentary on four lines of text in Bekker's edition of Aristotle's *De anima*.[52] Erich Koestermann needs 400 pages of commentary[53] for the 100 (smaller) pages of Tacitus' *Annales* 14–16 in the Teubner edition.[54] Theodor Heinze's

[49] Curiously, the *International Critical Commentary* is not consistent: while Barrett, *Acts* has footnotes only for the English translation, giving alternative renderings, Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, has ample footnotes.

[50] Cf. Siegried Scheibe, "Plädoyer für historisch-kritische Editionen," *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 34 (1990): 406–15.

[51] Raible, "Arten", here 54.

[52] Immanuel Bekker, *Aristotelis opera* (5 vols.; ed. Academia Regia Borussica; Berlin: Reimer, 1831–70). Cf. Gregor Schoeler, "Text und Kommentar in der klassisch-islamischen Tradition," in *Text und Kommentar* (ed. J. Assmann and B. Gladigow; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; München: Fink, 1995), 279–92, 288; cf. Helmut Gätje, *Das Kapitel über das Begehren aus dem mittleren Kommentar des Averroes zur Schrift über die Seele* (Aristoteles Semitico-latinus 3; Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1985).

[53] Erich Koestermann, *Cornelius Tacitus. Annalen. Erläutert und mit einer Einleitung versehen* (Wissenschaftliche Kommentare zu griechischen und lateinischen Schriftstellern; Heidelberg: Winter, 1963–68).

[54] Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales. C. Cornelii Taciti Opera quae supersunt, tomus prior. Ex recognitione Caroli Halmii* (5th ed.; ed. G. Andresen; Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; Leipzig: Teubner, 1913).

commentary on Ovid's 12th Heroid letter[55] is more than 70 times as many words as the Latin text. The increasing length of academic commentaries of the New Testament reached new dimensions with Wolfgang Schrage's nearly 2,000 page commentary in four volumes on Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Christians,[56] a text that comprises 30 pages in the Nestle-Aland edition of the Greek text,[57] and with Raymond Brown's over 800 page commentary on the three Johannine epistles[58] comprising 13 pages of Greek text.[59]

3. *The Function of Commentaries*

The early Greek commentaries were concerned with the authenticity of the text. In commenting on the words, descriptions, and arguments of an author, they followed the maxim "to explain Homer by Homer, to interpret him by himself" (Aristarchus, Scholion on Homer, *Iliad* 6.201).[60] Asconius Pedianus (A.D. 3–88), a learned and meticulous grammarian who knew how to use archival material, wrote a major commentary on Cicero's speeches with the aim of illuminating the texts in the light of the historical circumstances in which Cicero had given the individual speeches.[61] The function of a philological commentary, beyond the fundamental concern of establishing a reliable text and explaining difficult passages, can be

[55] Theodor Heinze, *P. Ovidius Naso. Der zwölfte Heroidenbrief: Medea an Jason. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Mnemosyne Sup 170; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[56] Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (4 vols.; EKK 7; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verlag, 1991–2001).

[57] Nestle–Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece. 27th Edition.* (ed. B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 441–72.

[58] Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; Garden City: Doubleday, 1982).

[59] Nestle–Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece. 27th Edition.* (ed. B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 615–28.

[60] Cf. Hubert Cancik, "Exegesis III. Greco Roman Antiquity," in *Religion Past and Present: Encylopedia of Theology and Religion* (ed. H. D. Betz, et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 4:730–31, who comments that "only precise knowledge of the language and style of an author, of the time of composition and life circumstances enables the determination of (in-)authenticity and thus the proper exegesis of a text," with reference to Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 4.18.4–5; 6.1; 13.29.

[61] Albrecht Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire: From Augustus to Justinian* (London: Routledge, 1994), 187. On Cicero's own commentaries, see Hubert Cancik, "M. Tullius Cicero als Kommentator," in *Text und Kommentar* (ed. J. Assmann and B. Gladigow; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; München: Fink, 1995), 292–310.

illustrated with Servius' commentary on Virgil, written in the fifth century. Servius begins with a life of the poet and a discussion of the quality and intention of the poem, followed by an explanation of the text line by line, often word by word, elucidating passages whose sense might be obscure, the structure of the text, variant readings, references to Homer and other poets, to rhetorical and historical matters, and to the philosophical and religious teachings of the author. In the period of Humanism, when writing commentaries was particularly popular,[62] Juan Luis Vives draws the following distinctions:[63] the *commentarius simplex* provides notes in the style of Caesar's *Commentarii*, while the *commentarius in aliud* elucidates the meaning of the author and his text; the latter form is further divided into the *commentarius brevis* which analyses a text in a very focused manner, and the *commentarius diffusus*, the long commentary, in which the commentator seeks to make a contribution to the field. An example for the "long commentary" is Filippo Beroaldo, *Commentarii in Asinum aureum Lucii Apuleii* (Venice, 1500), who "combines lexical and contextual elucidation with rather lengthy digressions, only loosely connected to the actual textual analysis, on such themes as magic, mythology, religious history and geography, where he engages in lively dialogue with the ancient author. Moreover, he examines the text against the background of his own experience, juxtaposing modern and ancient *exempla*, and making observations on the social reality of his own time."[64]

Servius' themes became canons of the commentary genre, which was consolidated during the Renaissance. A recent example is Michael Hillgruber's commentary on the tenth speech of Lysias, a teacher of rhetoric and orator in Athens in the fifth century B.C.[65] After an introduction in which he elucidates the prehistory of the trial, he presents a newly reconstructed text of the speech with a critical apparatus that lists variant readings, and a commentary in which he discusses all important text-critical matters, grammar, rhetorical figures, and problems related to *realia* mentioned in the speech. The latter includes explanations of the

[62] Cf. August Buck and Otto Herding, eds., *Der Kommentar in der Renaissance* (Kommission für Humanismusforschung; Mitteilung 1; Boppard: Boldt, 1975).

[63] Juan Luis Vives, *De ratione dicendi* 3.11; this text was written in 1532.

[64] Bodo Guthmüller, "Commentary I. General," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World. Classical Tradition* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Schneider, and M. Landfester; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1:999–1002, quotation ibid. 1001.

[65] Michael Hillgruber, *Die zehnte Rede des Lysias. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar mit einem Anhang über die Gesetzesinterpretationen bei den attischen Rednern* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 29; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988).

location of the meetings of the Areopagus council and its jurisdiction in the fifth century, which are important for the explanation of paragraph eleven. The commentary of Theodor Heinze on Ovid's epistle of Medea to Jason (*Heroides* 12)[66] similarly begins with introductory matters (Ovid's knowledge of the Argonaut and Medea myth, date of Heroides 12, literary form, structure, literary parallels in Greek and Latin texts, manuscripts and text, authenticity of the text), before presenting the text with a critical apparatus of variant readings and a commentary which discuses text-critical matters, grammar, the meaning of terms, motifs, literary parallels, *realia*, train of thought. Other examples are Frank Walbank's historical commentary on Polybius,[67] Christoph Leidl's commentary on Appian's history of the Second Punic War in Spain,[68] Kai Broderson's commentary on Appian's history of the Seleucids,[69] and Simon Hornblower's monumental commentary on Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.[70] Paul Schubert describes the basic purpose of commentary on editions of newly published papyri under the heading "details that matter" as follows: "It should first provide justification for the choices made in the edition of the original text, especially when they rest upon conjecture; it should also explain to readers what is new in the papyrus and then give them information on certain technical matters. One can assume that the broad outline of interpretation has already been dealt with in an introduction."[71]

The most fundamental function of commentary is the explanation of the sense of the text. In the biblical tradition, a classic example is Ezra,

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[66] Theodor Heinze, *P. Ovidius Naso. Der zwölfte Heroidenbrief: Medea an Jason. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Mnemosyne Sup 170; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[67] Frank W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1957–79).

[68] Christoph Leidl, *Appians Darstellung des 2. Punischen Krieges in Spanien (Iberike c.1–38 §1–158a). Text und Kommentar* (Münchener Arbeiten zur alten Geschichte 11; München: Editio Maris, 1996).

[69] Kai Brodersen, *Appians Abriss der Seleukidengeschichte (Syriake 45, 232–70, 369). Text und Kommentar* (Münchener Arbeiten zur alten Geschichte 1; München: Editio Maris, 1989); Kai Brodersen, *Appians Antiochike (Syriake 1, 1–44, 232). Text und Kommentar: nebst einem Anhang, Plethons Syriake-Exzerpt* (Münchener Arbeiten zur alten Geschichte, Bd. 3; München: Editio Maris, 1991).

[70] Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991–2008); the three volumes comprise more than 2,000 pages. Mary Beard, "Which Thucydides Can You Trust?" *The New York Review* 57/14 (2010): 52–54, comments that "the obscurity of Thucydides' Greek amply justifies Hornblower's project, on which he has worked more than twenty years, to produce another detailed historical and literary commentary on the whole of his *History*."

[71] Paul Schubert, "Editing a Papyrus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (ed. R. S. Bagnall; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 197–215, 208–9.

who reads the entire Torah to the Jews who had returned from exile to Jerusalem, and explains it section by section in the square before the Water Gate:

> The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose . . . And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up . . . Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation (מְפֹרָשׁ). They gave the sense (שׂוֹם שֶׂכֶל), so that the people understood the reading (וַיָּבִינוּ בַּמִּקְרָא). (Nehemiah 8:4–5, 7–8)[72]

While the reading of the text already implies a dynamic element which, at least in a rudimentary manner, breaks open the *stasis* of the text, it is the explanation or "commentary" which produces understanding.[73]

As regards the function of modern commentaries, we can distinguish between commentary on the authenticity of the text (textual criticism), commentary on the sources of the text (source criticism), commentary on the analysis of the text (explanations of words and *realia*), and commentary on the reception of the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).[74] Above all, a commentary needs to be useful, a requirement that is explained by Christina Shuttleworth Kraus in terms of three goals: a commentary provides and argues for a readable text; a commentary serves the linguistic and grammatical needs of the readers; a commentary provides "a groundcover of interpretation from which further readings can start."[75] The latter

[72] The LXX translates/explains: καὶ <u>ἐδίδασκεν Εσδρας</u> καὶ <u>διέστελλεν ἐν ἐπιστήμῃ κυρίου</u>, καὶ συνῆκεν <u>ὁ λαὸς</u> ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει ("Esdras was teaching and expanding on the knowledge of the Lord, and the people understood during the reading;" Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 418; the underlined words are the translator's expansion).

[73] Peter Schäfer, "Text, Auslegung, und Kommentar im rabbinischen Judentum," in *Text und Kommentar* (ed. J. Assmann and B. Gladigow; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; München: Fink, 1995), 163–86, 164–65, with reference to Nehemiah 8.

[74] Cf. Wolfgang Frühwald, "Formen und Inhalte des Kommentars wissenschaftlicher Textausgaben," in *Probleme der Kommentierung* (ed. W. Frühwald, H. Kraft, and W. Müller-Seide; Kommission für Germanistische Forschung Mitteilung 1; Boppard: Boldt, 1975), 13–32, here 23–30. On the relationship between edition (constitution of the text through textual and source criticism) and commentary see Ulfert Ricklefs, "Zur Erkenntnisfunktion des literaturwissenschaftlichen Kommentars," in ibid., 33–74.

[75] Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, "Introduction: Reading Commentaries/Commentaries as Reading," in *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (ed. R. K. Gibson and C. Shuttleworth Kraus; Mnemosyne Sup 232; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1–27, here 2 n. 8.

suggestion implies that a commentator surveys, differentiates, and evaluates various interpretations either before he writes his commentary or in the commentary itself.

This process implies two basic functions. On the one hand, a commentary selects from a diversity of explanations and thus limits understanding to what the commentator deems the only possible, or the most plausible, explanation of the text or of a statement in the text. The selective dimension of commentary writing is particularly evident in perspectival commentaries, which read, for example, a New Testament text from a feminist perspective, as well as in popular commentaries, in which there is no space to discuss many of the exegetical questions raised by the text (e.g., the Epworth Commentary, IVP New Testament Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentary series). On the other hand, the elucidation of the context of the text and its relationship to other texts, combined with explanations for understanding the text in the new context of readers contemporaneous with the commentator, leads to an accumulation of potential meanings. A commentary can thus be regarded as rendering assistance to readers or as patronizing readers.[76] Kraus warns that "the louder the commentator's voice, the more it may be judged obtrusive or overbearing, and the more it attracts parody and criticism."[77] To avoid overloading a commentary with information, Manfred Fuhrmann suggests that the commentator must distinguish between "primary darkness" and "secondary darkness," i.e. between difficulties in understanding that were present in the text right from the beginning, and difficulties that are the result of historical distance.[78] In the case of primary darkness (e.g. riddles, oracles), the author presents his first intended readers with the task of interpretation, a task that arguably should not be "solved" for later readers. Secondary darkness results from changes in language and in the material world, changes that make understanding difficult for later readers, who become dependent upon the commentary if they want to approximate the reading experience of the first readers.

The question as to how the task of providing "a ground-cover of interpretation" for further readings is accomplished can be answered in

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[76] Gunter Martens, "Kommentar—Hilfestellung oder Bevormundung des Lesers?" *editio* 7 (1993): 36–50.

[77] Kraus, "Reading Commentaries," 5.

[78] Manfred Fuhrmann, "Kommentierte Klassiker? Über die Erklärungsbedürftigkeit der klassischen deutschen Literatur," in *Warum Klassiker? Ein Almanach zur Eröffnungsedition der Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker* (ed. G. Honnefelder; Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 37–57, 43–44.

different ways. Paul Spilsbury has illustrated the possibilities with regard to recent commentaries on Josephus.[79] Christopher Begg, in his commentary on *Antiquities 5–7*, consistently provides a comparison of the biblical antecendents to Josephus's narrative, only occasionally addressing other exegetical questions.[80] In his commentary on *Ant.* 6.131–133, a passage in which Samuel reminds Saul of the divine command to exterminate the Amalekites, Begg has five short notes which provide information on textual matters, cross-references, and differences between Josephus and the biblical text, but no discussion of the ethical issues is raised by the command, nor references to scholarly opinions about this matter. In his commentary on *Antiquities 1–4*, Louis Feldman provides his readers with full discussions of all the interpretive questions he deems important.[81] Feldmann spends nearly 1,000 words of commentary on the line of text *Ant.* 1.17, providing a long list of scholarly explanations of Josephus's promise neither to add nor to omit anything from his retelling of the biblical history. Paul Spilsbury, in his commentary on the Daniel material in *Ant.* 10 is closer to Feldman than to Begg.[82] John Barclay, in his commentary on *Contra Apionem*,[83] saw it as his main responsibility "to provide a commentary with sufficient comprehensiveness to meet the needs of a wide range of readers" while at the same time focusing on "the observation and analysis of Josephus' rhetorical strategies" as his main contribution.[84]

4. *Challenges of Commentary Writing*

Negative comments about commentaries are easy to find.[85] Sometimes reviewers complain that a commentary is too long, or they criticize that

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[79] Paul Spilsbury, "Reading Josephus Reading the Bible: Commentary Writing and Josephus' Paraphrase of the Bible" (SBL Annual Meeting; San Diego, 2007), from whom the following examples of Begg, Feldman, and Spilsbury are drawn.

[80] Christopher T. Begg, *Flavius Josephus: Judean Antiquities Books 5–7* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 4; Leiden: Brill, 2005); the following example is from ibid. 135 nn. 487–491.

[81] Louis H. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus: Judean Antiquities 1–4. Translation and Commentary* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 3; Leiden: Brill, 2000); the following example refers to ibid. 7–8 n. 22.

[82] Christopher T. Begg and Paul Spilsbury, *Flavius Josephus: Judean Antiquities Books 8–10* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 5; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 265–392.

[83] John M. G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Against Apion* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 10; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[84] John M. G. Barclay, "Josephus' *Against Apion* and the Commentary Genre" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL; San Diego, 2007).

[85] Simon Goldhill, "Wipe Your Glosses," in *Commentaries—Kommentare* (ed. G. W. Most; Aporemata 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 380–425, describes

the author neglects important perspectives (and thus wrote a commentary that is too short). Sometimes reviewers praise the density of the documented secondary literature, while other reviewers find the references to previous scholarship excessive and unhelpful. Charles Murgia who admires commentators and thinks that "they deserve our every encouragement" (with the proviso, "the good ones"), insightfully asserts that "few works are as useful, difficult, and dangerous."[86]

Marita Mathijsen outlines "seven deadly sins" of commentaries in the field of literary studies,[87] not all of which are relevant for modern commentators of New Testament books. The problem of explanations of words taken from readily available dictionaries is rarely an issue in New Testament commentaries, since most serious commentators do not consult general purpose dictionaries with simple, not to say simplistic, explanations of terms, but the more sophisticated *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. W. Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich), and the detailed *Theological Dictionary of New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich), the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown), the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider), and the *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (ed. C. Spicq), and in important cases discussions of Greek terms in the scholarly literature. The problem of an unhistorical procedure which fails to explain terms, events, and social and political institutions in their historical context exists in some popular commentaries or Bible study guides. It is an inherent problem in "perspectival" commentaries that subordinate the author of the text to the modern reader of the text with her (postcolonial) or his (feminist) concerns. This is not an issue in commentaries written by academically trained New Testament scholars who are committed to explaining the text. Five of Mathijsen's "deadly sins" are relevant, albeit in different ways for the various commentary series that pursue different goals.

discussions about the theory of commentary as happening in "a fierce arena, where even recognition of what is at stake in the debate is bitterly contested" (381).

[86] Charles E. Murgia, Review of Francis R. D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus, Books 1–6. Volume 2: Annals 1.55–81 and Annals 2* (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), in *Classical Philology* 79 (1984) 314–26, quotation 314; cited by Kraus, "Reading Commentaries", 2 n. 8.

[87] Marita Mathijsen, "Die 'sieben Todsünden' des Kommentars," in *Text und Edition: Positionen und Perspektiven* (ed. Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, et al.; Berlin: Schmidt, 2000), 245–61, here 257–59.

The problem of completeness confronts every author of a commentary commissioned by editors of an academic series, sometimes rather explicitly. In the "Foreword" of the *Hermeneia* series the editors F. M. Cross, later P. Machinist, and H. Koester promise "to provide the student or scholar with full critical discussion of each problem of interpretation and with the primary data upon which the discussion is based."[88] Similarly, the editors of the *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, described as seeking to cater "particularly to the needs of students of the Greek text" while aiming at "students who want something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary," promise that the commentaries of the series will harvest the results of modern scholarship "in an easily accessible form" as they "attempt to treat all important problems of history, exegesis, and interpretation that arise from the New Testament text."[89] It is a temptation, particularly in a commentary series that allows large books or multiple volumes on a single New Testament book, to amass references to primary sources and to the secondary literature, and facts regarding historical and literary/rhetorical matters. The advantage of "complete" historical-critical commentaries that discuss the text for its own sake is obvious for scholars working in an academic context: they are provided with detailed and comprehensive material for the full range of historical and literary inquiry, at least approximating the goal of objectivity.

Complaints about commentaries that strive to be complete include charges of perfectionism, completeness being a delusion,[90] the tendency to monumental size (see the comments above about the length of some New Testament commentaries), endless discussions of literary parallels and of consenting and dissenting views of other scholars, discussions of obscure details which are relevant only for a small number of specialists, pedantry and prolixity as "the vices of the scholar who can't or won't shut up,"[91] the distancing effect of such treatments in which the text remains foreign and distant in place and time, and the cost of such commentaries which is often prohibitive for academically trained readers such as

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88 P. Machinist and H. Koester, "Foreward," in Pervo, *Acts*, xi.

89 I. H. Marshall and D. A. Hagner, "Foreword," in Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xvii.

90 Erhard Weidl, "Das Elend der Editionstechnik," in *Edition und Wirkung* (Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik 19–20; ed. W. Haubrichs; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 191–99, here 193, speaks of the "editorische Vollständigkeitswahn" of historical-critical editions of texts.

91 Kraus, "Reading Commentaries", 5.

pastors.[92] As helpful as the sections on *Wirkungsgeschichte* in the series Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar are, it is questionable whether such discussions should be in a commentary: they could have been assembled in an independent volume rather than added to the commentary. On the other hand, it can be argued that since a commentator cannot precisely anticipate the needs of the readers of the commentary, he (she) includes all kinds of material that might be relevant for a wide range of prospective readers.[93] The fact that the three volumes of Simon Hornblowers's commentary on Thucydides become progressively longer is not disconcerting for Mary Beard; on the contrary, she thinks that "over his three volumes, Hornblower himself gets better and better at his task—the final part of his trilogy presents a far more sophisticated reading of the text than the scholarly, but more pedestrian, first volume."[94] James Henry unashamedly defended the length of his four volume commentary on the *Aeneis*:

> Let not, then, the reader complain of the length of the work I have laid before him. It is in his own interest and his author's it is long [*sic*]. Whatever any individual reader—for there will be a difference of opinion on the subject among readers—may happen to find too long, he can at pleasure curtail for himself. He would, perhaps, have found it less easy to lengthen anything I had curtailed.[95]

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[92] The four volumes of Schrage, *Korinther*, cost €296 (over $400). Similarly, the four volumes of James C. McKeown, *Ovid*, Amores*: Text, Prolegomena, and Commentary* (4 vols.; ARCA; Liverpool: Cairns, 1987–211), cost over $450. Elaine Fantham, "Commenting on Commentaries: A Pragmatic Postscript," in *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (ed. R. K. Gibson and C. Shuttleworth Kraus; Mnemosyne Sup 232; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 403–21, commenting on commentaries written in classical studies, laments that North-American publishers no longer seem willing to publish commentaries above the elementary level, that American scholars are forced to look outside their own country to publish commentaries (418), and that electronic publication is not really a solution since "the author will have all the burden of input without benefit of copy-editors, and at the moment would have to fight to get his scholarship recognized for career purposes" (419).

[93] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Fill Up Your Margins! About Commentary and *Copia*," in *Commentaries—Kommentare* (ed. G. W. Most; Aporemata 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 443–53.

[94] Beard, "Which Thucydides Can You Trust?," 52. The first volume of Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, covering Books 1–III, has 536 pages of text, the second volume covering Books IV–V.24 has 500 pages, while the third volume covering Books V.25–VIII.109 has 1066 pages of text.

[95] James Henry, *Aeneidea, or critical, exegetial, and aesthetical remarks on the Aeneis, with a personal collation of all first class Mss., upwards of one hundred second class Mss., and all the principal editions* (4 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1873–89, repr by Olms [1969]), 1:vii–viii. Noted by Kraus, "Reading Commentaries", 5 n. 17.

The problem of amplification is par for the course of commentary writing: the commentator raises new historical and literary questions, the answers to which he adds to the already existing body of material. While the new material may be interesting, it may not always contribute to understanding the text, and it may not be directly necessary for understanding the text. The detail-rich commentary on the Book of Revelation by David Aune[96] probably succumbed to the temptation of piling up material, and the inclusion of frequent references to lexicographical material from the papyri in my commentary on 1 Corinthians[97] can be cited as another example. The problem of the "Hydra procedure" is raised by the solution of a particular exegetical question, which in turn provokes a new question that begs for a fresh solution, and so on. "Überdokumentation" is prone to prompt the need for further explanations. The interaction with a particular author in the text of the commentary or in footnotes can easily lead to new questions, for example about the hermeneutical position of that particular scholar and the methodological problems that seem to explain his views of the meaning of the text, matters which could be discussed further, in more or less great detail. The commentary of Anthony Thiselton on 1 Corinthians includes sometimes extensive reviews of research that trigger secondary questions about the position of the cited authors in other areas.[98]

The problem of a "labyrinth of references" is clearly an issue for most academic New Testament commentaries. The first line of the sentence Rev 20:8 ("and [Satan] will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog") is discussed by David Aune with references—in different parts of the explanation of the verse—to Rev 19:11–21; Ezek 38–39; Ezek 38:10; Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2; Ezek 38:8–16; Ezek 38:17–23; 39:1–6; Jer 1:13–15; 3:18; 4:6; 6:1, 22; Ezek 38:2–3; 39:1–16, Gen 10:2; 1 Chron 1:5; *Jub.* 7:19; 1 Chron 5:4; Gen 10:2; 1 Chron 1:5; *Jub.* 8:25; *Sib. Or.* 3.319; Josephus *Ant.* 1.123; Herodotos 1.103, 107; 4.1; *3 Enoch* 45:5; *Sipre Deut.* 343; *b. Aʿbod. Zar.* 3b; *b. Ber.* 7b; *Tg. Neof.* Num 11:26; *Tg. Neof. Num.* 7:4; *Tg. Ps.-J. Num* 11:26; *m. ʿEd.* 2:10; *Sib. Or.* 3.512; *b. Sanh.* 97b; *Tg. Ezek.* 39:16; *Pesiq. R.* 17:8; Isa 5:26; Jer 25:32; 50:41; Zech 14:2–5; *4 Ezra* 13:4; 13:33–34, as

96 David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC A–C 52; Dallas: Word, 1997–98).

97 Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Historisch-Theologische Auslegung; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2006).

98 Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 487–97, 498–500, 521–22, 528–30, 531–33, 534–36, 569–71, 574–75, 580–83, 594–98, on matters related on 1 Cor 7.

well as with references to Str-B, TDNT, and HCNT, requiring the reader to refer to the list of abbreviations (which is mercifully included in all three volumes of Aune's commentary).[99]

The problem of "arid style," caused by the accumulation of references, bibliographical material, and documentation, may indicate that the commentator has forgotten that the commentary should be a dialogue between himself and the reader, or ideally enable the reader to enter into a dialogue with the text. The assembly of parallels and cross-references invites and creates polyphony: "they can, among other things, be deployed to question other commentators' authority, open up new lines of inquiry, suggest a previously ignored way of understanding an ancient author."[100] But it can also close down meaning.[101] Density of accumulated parallels and cross-references certainly makes for difficult reading. An example from a classical commentary are the first two sentences of Bruce Braswell's comments on the first word of Pindar's *Nemean Nine*:

> Κωμάσομεν: not future (Fennell, Bury, Sandys, Bowra), but subjunctive (sch. 1b, cf. below) as is ἀνὰ … ὄρσομεν in 8 below (cf. sch. 18b); on the form v. Schwyzer i, 790f., R. Arena, *Helikon* 6 (1966), 125–73, esp. 131, Wathelet, *Les traits éoliens*, 307–10, and on short-vowel subjunctives in Pindar v. D. E. Gerber, *HSPh* 91 (1987), 83–90, esp. 86f., and further Hummel, *La syntaxe*, §§3300–32. Pindar's request is the equivalent of the normal epic invocation of the Muse (cf. Herbert Meyer, *Hymnische Stilelemente*, 62 n. 58); for his use of the hortatory subjunctive v. Weilbach, *Die Formen der Aufforderung*, 53–55, esp. 54 (adding *Ol.* 6.3 and present example).[102]

A comparable density of information can be found in the Handbuch zum Neuen Testament series, whose format challenges readers to cope with in-text parentheses which constantly interrupt the flow of the text, and with very long paragraphs which can run to over six pages. Hans Conzelmann's commentary on Acts 17:16–32 is an example.[103] The "aridity" of style can be illustrated with his comments on the second line of Acts 17:27 (εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν):

> εἰ ἄρα γε mit dem selten gewordenen Optativ läßt das Finden in der Schwebe; Philo Spec Leg I 36: ἄμεινον γὰρ οὐδὲν τοῦ ζητεῖν τὸν ἀληθῆ θεόν, κἂν

99 Aune, *Revelation*, 1093–95.
100 Kraus, "Reading Commentaries", here 21–22.
101 Cf. Goldhill, "Glosses", 406–11.
102 Bruce Karl Braswell, *A Commentary on Pindar Nemean Nine* (Texte und Kommentare 19; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 45.
103 Hans Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2. Aufl.; HNT 7; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1972 [1963]), 105–11.

> ἡ εὕρεσις αὐτοῦ διαφεύγῃ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην. ψηλαφᾶν: Philo Mut Nom 126; zur Sache Corp Herm V 2; Dio Chrys XII 60: ἐγγύθεν τιμᾶν καὶ θεραπεύειν τὸ θεῖον, προσιόντας καὶ ἁπτομένους … eine Spur des Poseidonios (Theiler, Hommel)? Die Frage stellt sich auch weiterhin.[104]

The translators of the English edition of Conzelmann's commentary include paragraph breaks (the single paragraph of comments on Acts 17:16–32 in the German edition is presented in twenty-two paragraphs); they translate long German sentences as shorter sentences, place references to secondary literature in footnotes (augmenting the references with titles, and adding new references), and provide translations of the Greek phrases:

> εἰ ἄρα γε, 'in the hope that,' with the infrequently used optative, leaves the finding in suspension; Philo *Spec. leg.* 1.36: 'For nothing is better than to search for the true God, even if the discovery of him eludes human capacity' (ἄμεινον γὰρ οὐδὲν τοῦ ζητεῖν τὸν ἀληθῆ θεόν, κἂν ἡ εὕρεσις αὐτοῦ διαφεύγῃ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην). For ψηλαφᾶν, 'to feel after,' compare Philo *Mut. nom.* 126. On the subject, compare Dio Chrystostom 12.60: '[all men have a strong yearning] to honor and worship the deity from close at hand, approaching and laying hold of him …' (ἐγγύθεν τιμᾶν καὶ θεραπεύειν τὸ θεῖον, προσιόντας καὶ ἁπτομένους); also compare *Corp. Herm.* 5.2. Do we detect here a trace of Poseidonius? [Footnote 55: Hommel, 'Areopagrede,' 169; also see Pohlenz, 'Paulus,' 90; Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 183.] The question arises later as well.[105]

Aridity of style is produced not only by frequent cross-references to other sources and authors (with frequent use of "cf." and "e.g."),[106] but also in technical subject matter which is incompletely explained. As entertaining as Richard Pervo strives to be in his commentary on the Book of Acts,[107] it is questionable whether anybody except doctoral students who work on

[104] Conzelmann, *Apostelgeschichte*, 109.

[105] Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. J. Limburg, A. T. Kraabel, and D. H. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 144. The last sentence mistranslates the German, which means "the question continues to arise."

[106] Cf. Roy K. Gibson, " 'Cf. E.g.': A Typology of 'Parallels' and the Function of Commentaries on Latin Poetry," in *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (ed. R. K. Gibson and C. Shuttleworth Kraus; Mnemosyne Sup 232; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 331–57, who warns that while parallels are a useful critical tool, their uncritical use "may result in a text atomized by, or buried under, a mass of miscellaneous information, where the reader is given little indication of how to apply the material provided to the job of interpretation, and the text is reduced to a series of harmless commonplaces" (356).

[107] E.g. Pervo, *Acts*, 129, commenting on Acts 5:1–11 that Ananias and Sapphira were "deposited six feet under," a comical remark that is, however, lacking in knowledge of first century burial practices.

a particular passage will read the notes on his English translation of the text, printed in small font, in which he discusses readings of the Western text that he essentially never prefers over the Alexandrian text. For example, he appends the following note to his translation of Acts 12:13:

> Boismard [*Texte*, 202) reads the simple 'door.' There is D-Text support for 'came outdoors' rather than 'to the gate.' Bezae has been erased. The Latin side d has *foris* ('outside'). See Ropes, *Text*, 112. This would make Mary's home less ostentatious and thus demonstrates the relative luxury of her living arrangements.[108]

Readers may well wonder about the reasons for Boismard's reading, about the precise nature of the D text, about the erasure of Bezae, about Ropes's opinion, and eventually whether any of this matters if the D text is secondary.

Going beyond Mathijsen, we may add two other problems: the segmentation of the text and the quest for novelty. The problem of segmentation implies the atomization of the text. Some New Testament commentaries lemmatize the text in portions of the traditional versification (e.g., Word Biblical Commentary), while most commentaries divide the text into larger sections at the beginning of which the text is printed, dispensing with lemmatization altogether (e.g., International Critical Commentary). Commentary series that do not print the New Testament text (e.g., New International Greek Testament Commentary) leave it to the commentator to decide when to begin a new paragraph in which the next feature of the text is discussed. Selecting from a text what is commentary-worthy, which is in itself an act of interpretation, can easily de-center the text, resulting in a fragmentation that is inimical for seeing the text as a whole.[109]

The problem of the quest for novelty has increased in the second half of the 20th century. The dominance of historical study which focused on text-critical, historical, source critical, and redaction critical questions gave way to a focus on newer approaches which treated the books of the New Testament as literature which can be studied profitably with the help of literary, narrative, rhetorical, and social-scientific methods. Some

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[108] Pervo, *Acts*, 299. The references are to Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille, *Le texte Occidental des Actes des Apôtres. Reconstitution et réhabilitation* (2 vols.; Synthèse 17; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1984); James Hardy Ropes, *The Text of Acts* (The Beginnings of Christianity, Part. I: The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. III; ed. J. F. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake; London: Macmillan, 1926).

[109] Cf. Kraus, "Reading Commentaries", 10–16.

commentators deliberately place their commentary in the context of this shift. Joel Green writes in the preface of his commentary on the Gospel of Luke:

> My own introduction to serious study of Luke coincided with this latter shift [connected with Hans Conzelmann, Robert Tannehill, Luke Johnson, Halvor Moxnes, and Philip Esler], marked by the waning of the hegemony of historical study (historical criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and the rest) and the blooming of the so-called 'newer' approaches (e.g., new literary criticism, narrative criticism, new historicism, and the like).[110]

Historical-critical commentaries in classical historical or in literary studies may break new ground if the commentator writes the first commentary on the text. Commentaries on biblical texts stand in a long line of such works, although the application of new approaches sometimes implies the possibility of breaking new ground and making a new contribution to research. An example for the latter is Hans Dieter Betz's commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, which was hailed by some as "a landmark of modern biblical scholarship" due to his reading of Galatians in the context of Greco-Roman rhetoric as judicial rhetoric in terms of an apologetic letter.[111] When subsequent studies raise serious questions about the plausibility of the "new" contribution of the commentary,[112] the damage is more serious in the case of the commentary genre than in the case of monographs. While new approaches may indeed shed new light on the "old" texts of the New Testament, it is another question whether they warrant an entire commentary series. Specialized commentaries promise new insights: we have Ben Witherington's socio-rhetorical commentaries,[113]

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110 Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), ix; for a fuller explanation of Green's approach, see his comments in ibid. 11–20.

111 Richard B. Hays, "Review of Commentaries on Galatians," *Quarterly Review* 5 (1985): 95–102, here 95. Hays himself is critical of Betz's commentary in many respects, e.g. he states that Betz' approach "is less helpful when it comes to accounting for the progression of thought within the large structural units."

112 Cf. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 144–145, who disagrees with Betz and classifies Galatians as deliberative rhetoric.

113 E.g. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Ben Witherington and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Ben Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

feminist commentaries,[114] post-colonial commentaries,[115] papyrological commentaries,[116] a Rechtsgeschichtlicher Kommentar zum Neuen Testament,[117] and the new popular Resonate series which is billed as “a new wave in commentary.”[118] In some cases the “fresh understanding” that is promised only dresses traditional insights in the garb of new language, in other cases the “freshness” of the commentary is merely idiosyncratic. This is true, particularly, for post-structuralist and deconstruction approaches to New Testament texts. A sample commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Stephen Moore illustrates idiosyncracy of new, postmodern approaches:

> Mark’s theology is commonly said to be a theology of the cross, a theology in which life and death crisscross . . . In Mark, the signature of the disciple can only ever be that of a crisscross or Christcross, which my dictionary defines as ‘the figure or mark of a cross in general; esp. that made in ‘signing’ his name by a person that cannot write’ (*OED*). But a person unable to write is generally unable to read, and in Mark, the disciples, generally at cross-purposes with Jesus, are singularly unable to read. Jesus must speak cross words to his puzzled disciples . . . A cross is also a chiasmus, a crosswise fusion in which the order established in the first instance (‘whoever would save their life will lose it’) is inverted in the second instance . . . Chiasmus comes from the Greek verb *chiazein*, ‘to mark with the letter c’, pronounced *chi*. And *chi* is an anagram of *ich*, which is German for the personal pronoun *I*, and the technical term in Freud (whose appearance here is anything but accidental) that English translators render as *ego*. And Jesus, who identifies himself to his terrified disciples in Mark 6:50 with the words *egō eimi* (‘I am,’ or ‘it is I’), himself possesses a name that is an echo of the French *Je suis* (‘I am’), the

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114 C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe, eds., *The Women’s Bible Commentary* (London/Louisville, KY: SPCK/Westminster, 1992).

115 Fernando F. Segovia and Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

116 Peter Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon* (Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Peter Arzt-Grabner, et al., *1. Korinther* (Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Christina M. Kreinecker, *2. Thessaloniker* (Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

117 See the project description at <http://rknt.uni-muenster.de/index.php>.

118 Cf. Paul L. Metzger and David Sanford, *The Resonate Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), publicity information; the “form of each volume” of the *Resonate* series is “that of an extended essay—each author writing about the biblical book under consideration in an interactive, reflective and culturally engaging manner” (10). A sample from the yet to be published commentary on the Gospel of John includes the following comments on John 7:1–44, taking up Jesus’ statement “eat my flesh” (John 6:53, 54): “Many on his campaign team, including Judas, couldn’t believe it . . . Every time Jesus soars ahead in the polls, he pulls a Dan Quayle and says something that sound so *unpresidential*.”

> single superfluous letter being the *I* (or ego), which is thus marked out for deletion: 'Father not what I [*egō*] want, but what you want' (14.36).[119]

Brook Pearson comments that Moore's explanation demonstrates how counterproductive the deconstructive methodology can be, producing nothing of lasting value to New Testament studies.[120] Mark Edmundson suggests to his fellow professors of literature that they might want to give up for one or two years "readings," which he defines as the application of an analytical vocabulary (of Marx, Freud, Foucault, or Derrida) to describe and judge a work of literature. He explains that

> to enact a reading means to submit one text to the terms of another; to allow one text to interrogate another—and often to try, sentence, and summarily execute it . . . The teacher's initial objective ought to be framing a reading that the author would approve. The teacher, to begin with, represents the author: He analyzes the text sympathetically, he treats the words with care and caution and with due respect. He works hard with the students to develop a vision of what the world is and how to live that rises from the author's work and that, ultimately, the author, were he present in the room, would endorse.[121]

When he suggests that "the desire to turn the art of reading into a science is part of what draws the profession to the application of sterile concepts," this could easily be applied to the introduction of new technical terminology into New Testament commentary (e.g. in narrative-narratological and socio-scientific readings) which increases the difficulty of understanding the text, an effect which contradicts the very goal of writing commentary. The verdict of James Wood, Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard University, concerning the postmodern works of Geoff Dyer, applies *mutatis mutandis* to postmodern commentary on biblical texts as well: "Everything is unfinishable, belated, and philosophically twilit. The Owl of Minerva can barely crank its wings open—no doubt because it has become a fat urban pigeon, toddling between cafés for cultural leftovers."[122]

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[119] Stephen D. Moore, "Deconstructive Criticism: The Gospel of Mark," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (ed. J. C. Anderson and S. D. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 84–102, here 95–96.

[120] Brook W. R. Pearson, "New Testament Literary Criticism," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (ed. S. E. Porter; NTTS 25; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 241–66, here 247.

[121] Mark Edmundson, "Against Readings," *The Chronicle Review*, 24 April 2009, B7–10; here B8–9.

[122] James Wood, "From Venice to Varanasi: Geoff Dyer's Wandering Eye," *The New Yorker*, 20 April 2009, 110–12, here 111.

5. *Canonical Texts and Commentary*

Not all texts receive attention from commentators. The author of the text about which someone writes a commentary is always an authority, either in the poetic, philosophical, scientific, legal, or religious sphere.[123] While there are many exceptions, particularly in our age of increased specialization and of doctoral students' search for dissertation topics, the traditional "object" of commentary writing was cultural texts which connect the past with the present—texts which establish cultural identity by consolidating the commitment to common norms and values, and by confirming the memory of a common past.[124] Examples are the Greek commentaries on Homer who "remained the teacher of his nation, as the most prominent author on the school curriculum."[125]

The tradition of commentaries written on scientific and medical texts in the ancient world shows that "many ancient scientists and physicians believed that the quest for scientific legitimacy required them to be not only overtly innovative scientific pioneers, but also historians of science of engaged in the elucidation, rectification, and transmission of earlier texts, all in the service of science and τέχνη."[126] Heinrich von Staden explains the discontinuity between ancient and 20th century commentaries—the latter written rarely by professionally active mathematicians, astronomers, and physicians, but, rather, by classicists and professional historians of science—with differences in professional identity. If we regard academics with professional biblical-theological training as a group, the same discontinuity can be observed: while ancient theologians such as Origen wrote not only treatises about theological questions but also learned

[123] Glenn W. Most, "Preface," in *Commentaries—Kommentare* (ed. G. W. Most; Aporemata 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), VII–XV, here VIII. He believes that "commentaries tend to be created at the sites of cultural authority within societies" and that one function of a commentary is "to (re-)confirm, (re-)distribute, and (re-)impose within a society an authority whose meaning is no longer entirely self-evident."

[124] For a discussion of the connective structure of cultural identity, see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992), 16–17.

[125] Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature*, 86; cf. Albrecht Dihle, *A History of Greek Literature: From Homer to the Hellenistic Period* (London: Routledge, 1994), 21.

[126] Heinrich von Staden, "'A Woman Does Not Become Ambidextrous': Galen and the Culture of Scientific Commentary," in *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (ed. R. K. Gibson and C. Shuttleworth Kraus; Mnemosyne Sup 232; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 109–41, here 126; for the following comment, see ibid. 126–27.

commentaries, contemporary theologians leave the task of commenting on their authoritative texts to New Testament specialists.[127]

For biblical commentaries especially, the distinction between holy texts and cultural texts is important. Holy texts, which are regarded as canonical, cease to be the exclusive domain of priests: while the subject matter of the holy text remains authoritative, the qualities of authenticity, reliability, and credibility attach themselves also to the words of the canonical text that is read and explained, verbally or in a written commentary.[128] Commentators who are committed to the Christian faith and who thus accept the New Testament book on which they comment as canonical Scripture, subordinate their own interests to the task of explaining the holy text to Christians for whom the meaning of the text is the norm and authority for faith and practice. Luke Johnson expresses this commitment and the consequences for commentary writing as follows:

> The task of interpretation must begin with establishing the text, elucidating the Greek language, and identifying the cultural and historical contexts that make the compositions intelligible. A commentary ought not, however, end with that descriptive task, even though it is constrained by format and convention to provide help most directly in those matters. Occasionally in the commentary, I have tried to recapture the sense, once natural to all readers of 1 and 2 Timothy, not only that they speak for Paul the Apostle, but that through them Paul the Apostle speaks to us for God.[129]

The commentator who is committed to the Christian faith does not place himself in the spotlight. He shares the humility of the copyist who "merely" reproduces a text by writing a copy of the text: he (she) subordinates his (her) particular personal interests to the task of explaining the word of God revealed in Scripture, a responsibility carried out in the service of God *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

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[127] Notable exceptions are Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1919); *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. E. C. Hoskyns; London: Oxford University Press, 1933); Karl Barth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine akademische Vorlesung über I. Kor. 15* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1924); *The Resurrection of the Dead* (trans. H. J. Stenning; New York: Revell, 1933); Gerhard Ebeling; cf. Gerhard Ebeling, *Die Wahrheit des Evangeliums: Eine Lesehilfe zum Galaterbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981); *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (trans. D. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

[128] Cf. Jan Assmann, "Text und Kommentar. Einführung," in *Text und Kommentar* (ed. J. Assmann and B. Gladigow; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; München: Fink, 1995), 9–33, here 22–31.

[129] Luke T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 99.

THE LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Stanley E. Porter

1. *Introduction*

One of the major identifiable features of New Testament commentaries is their linguistic nature. Linguistics in such a context can include at least four possible topics—the use of the language of commentating, in our case English; the use of foreign language commentaries and other secondary sources, such as German and French, as well as a number of other languages; the use of original languages, such as Greek along with Hebrew and others; and, related to the previous, the use of appropriate linguistic methods to study these ancient languages. In an appropriate context, each of these topics could merit discussion. For example, observations could be made on the English style and presentation of numerous commentaries, noting those that provide brief fragmentary and elliptical comments versus those that engage in expansive prose. No doubt being able to write a readable commentary is much to be desired—especially from the reader's standpoint. However, in this chapter, I wish to concentrate on the second to fourth of the enumerated possibilities, especially the last, on how appropriate linguistic methods are used to study the ancient languages. In order to set the stage for such discussion, I will briefly treat the issue of the use of other commentaries, along with other secondary sources, in non-English languages. The reason for this is that, rather than speaking abstractly about commentaries as a whole, I have chosen to examine commentaries that, at least to me, appear to make claims about their being commentaries that engage with the full range of scholarship, which means both commentaries in languages other than English and especially linguistically appropriate means of studying the biblical languages, in particular New Testament Greek. The commentaries that I have chosen are those on books of the New Testament that are given fuller treatment in the rest of this celebratory volume—Matthew, Romans, James, and Revelation—as they are represented in four major language-based series. These series include the International Critical Commentary (ICC), first begun in the late nineteenth century and now in a slow process of revision; the New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC), the Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), and the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT). Where a volume does not exist in these series, I have substituted a volume from the New International Commentary (on Romans). (See the Appendix for the list of commentaries used in this chapter.)

2. *The Language-Related Features of These Commentary Series*

Before examining the commentaries in detail, we need to note what claims they make regarding the use of language. After all, commentary on the New Testament, no matter what else it may be, should at the least be a commentary on language, primarily the language of the Greek New Testament, even if also upon those who have previously commented upon a particular New Testament book.

The New International Greek Testament Commentary series is the most explicit about its linguistic pretensions. The foreword to each volume makes two claims important for this chapter. The first is that it states that the commentaries "are intended to interact with modern scholarship." The second is that, despite many commentaries being published, "very few attempts have been made to cater particularly to the needs of students of the Greek text." As a result, the commentaries in this series are "based on historical-critical-linguistic exegesis." The other series say less about their linguistic orientations. The original ICC series had no series preface. The volumes by Charles Cranfield on Romans, the first of the revised commentaries in the series, had an editors' preface that recognized that "[n]ew linguistic" evidence merited new commentaries, because the series has been distinguished by bringing together "all the relevant aids to exegesis," including "linguistic" material.[1] This statement is not found in the commentary on Matthew (but it is in the one on Acts). The BECNT series preface very encouragingly states that each commentary "must take fully into account the latest scholarly research, regardless of its source." The WBC simply states that the commentators were asked to "prepare their own rendering of the original biblical text and to use those languages as the basis of their own comments and exegesis," and that a series "distinctive" is its being "based on the biblical languages."

[1] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979), 1:vii.

We can see from these comments—where they are to be found—that there are some general statements about the linguistic issues related to commentary writing. Whereas the ICC has the least to offer in this regard, with the WBC not far behind, the BECNT has a very encouraging, though vague, statement regarding the latest scholarship, regardless of source. The NIGTC addresses the issues directly, including both modern scholarship and linguistically based exegesis of the Greek text. With this in mind, I turn now to the commentaries and the fulfillment of this task.

3. *The Use of Non-English Language Commentaries and Other Sources*

The difficulty of discussing the use of non-English language commentaries and secondary sources in English-language New Testament commentaries is exacerbated by the fact that so many foreign works, especially those in German, are now being translated into English. There is the further difficulty of actually judging the use of foreign language sources. Many commentaries have extensive bibliographies, often for each unit of textual analysis, but the listing in a bibliography does not automatically translate into use within the commentary itself, where it is necessary to have a direct impact upon the argument.

If the preface of works is anything to go by,[2] the older ICC commentaries certainly knew their foreign-language sources. Sanday and Headlam refer in subsequent prefaces to German periodicals and books (e.g. by Theodor Zahn and dedicated to Bernhard Weiss, among others).[3] Their discussion of commentaries includes annotated bibliographical notes from the Greeks to the modern period, especially of those used in the commentary.[4] This is no idle claim, as the commentary itself attests throughout, with references to a wide range of secondary scholarly literature in a number of languages. Similar, if not quite apparently to the same extent, is James Hardy Ropes on James,[5] and seemingly slightly less still are Willoughby

[2] I admit that trying to determine this usage is based upon estimates gathered from going through the various works and using their introductions, bibliographies, and indexes, where available, as well as examining the commentary proper. I make no claim to being exact, and in some cases may even have mis-estimated.

[3] William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902 [1895]), v–ix.

[4] Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, xcviii–cix.

[5] James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916), 110–15.

Allen on Matthew[6] and R. H. Charles on Revelation.[7] The modern commentaries are more easily analyzed because of their indexes, which show that Cranfield uses foreign-language sources extensively, including the commentaries on Romans by M.-J. Lagrange (French) and Otto Michel (German), and Davies and Allison do likewise, using a number of German commentaries (e.g. Ulrich Luz, Adolf Schlatter, and Zahn).[8] The WBC commentaries appear to be similar to the later ICC volumes, for the most part. James D. G. Dunn's commentary on Romans, Ralph Martin's on James, and David Aune's on Revelation make widespread and continuous use of foreign language secondary sources, especially but not exclusively commentaries.[9] The one apparent exception is Donald Hagner's commentary on Matthew, which does not seem to use these sources as much as the others do, confining a number of references to non-commentary literature to bibliographies alone.[10] Much the same can be said of the NIGTC series. The volume by Peter Davids on James makes wide use of foreign-language secondary sources, and proportionately perhaps slightly less Greg Beale's on Revelation.[11] However, the commentary by John Nolland on Matthew appears to be much more highly selective of its secondary sources, and much more restricted in their use, including very limited use of foreign-language sources, with concentration on sources since 1980.[12] Douglas Moo's commentary on Romans makes wide use of foreign-language secondary sources, especially the three German-language commentaries of his twelve so-called "constant witnesses" (Otto Kuss, Michel, and Ulrich

[6] Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (ICC; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907).

[7] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), clxxxvii–cxc.

[8] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1996).

[9] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38A-B; 2 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1988); Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988); and David E. Aune, *Revelation* (WBC 52A-C; 3 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1997–1998).

[10] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (WBC 33A–B; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995).

[11] Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Tex*t (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982); G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[12] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). In several ways, Nolland's commentary demonstrates best the tendency to include bibliography that is not specifically used. His volume includes general bibliography from which most of the references are taken, as well as a bibliography of pre-1980 sources at the back of the volume.

Wilckens; none of the twelve is in French, though he lists and uses those by J. Huby, Lagrange, and Pinchas Lapide).[13]

With the BECNT we appear to have entered another approach to the use of foreign-language secondary sources. By contrast to Moo, Thomas Schreiner's commentary on Romans, while referring to most of the same German commentaries, uses most of them considerably less (the possible exception being Wilckens), while French secondary literature is drastically reduced.[14] Grant Osborne on Revelation seems to do better, but not as well as, for example, those in the WBC or NIGTC series, especially on French sources.[15] Dan McCartney uses some foreign-language sources, but none figure large in his commentary apart from Franz Mussner.[16] David Turner on Matthew clearly concentrates on English secondary sources, with no French or German source (not in translation) playing a significant role in the commentary, so far as I can tell.[17] The BECNT may attempt to include the latest scholarship, regardless of source, but these commentaries clearly do not represent German and French commentaries, as well as other scholarship, nearly so much as do other series.

The legitimate and logical question to ask is why it is that, despite their various claims, some commentaries are better than others at making use of foreign-language critical scholarship. There are of course any number of reasons. One of course is the abilities, inclinations, and viewpoints of the individual scholars involved. One common pattern noted in most of the above commentaries is the reliance upon other commentaries as the primary source of foreign-language scholarship. This is perhaps inevitable, although one would think that commentaries are more easily accessible than other secondary literature. The reliance upon previous commentaries is also bound to have a constricting effect on the nature of the questions asked of the text, and to perpetuate the same questions being considered time after time. Another possible reason is the nature of scholarship itself. Commentaries and other work continues to be produced at a huge rate, making it virtually impossible, even for those writing commentaries on smaller New Testament books, to keep up with all of it. A third is the nature of commentaries such as these. Commentaries such as I am

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[13] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). Moo cites a number of other German-language commentaries as well.

[14] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

[15] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

[16] Dan G. McCartney, *James* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

[17] David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

surveying here tend to be commentaries that position themselves in one way or another as comprehensive treatments of the respective biblical book. They attempt to comment upon all of the major textual, critical, interpretive, exegetical, historical, and theological issues involved—taking into account all of the important and latest critical scholarship, regardless of language. As a result, several of these commentaries are in multiple volumes, and the commentaries on smaller books themselves may in fact be proportionately larger than the commentaries on the larger New Testament books. One person observed to me that such commentaries are perhaps a sign of the end of modernism—the attempt to grasp all of human knowledge (at least on one biblical book) in one commentary. I suspect that if we continue to promote such commentaries—and there is no sign that commentary series and their publishers are not so inclined—then I fear that more and more of such commentaries will fail to live up to the standard that has been set for them, just as several of the commentaries above already do not meet that standard.

4. *The Use of Linguistically Appropriate Methods for Study of New Testament Greek*

This is not the place to offer a full history of the study of the Greek New Testament. However, the history of this discussion has a direct bearing upon how we examine commentaries, as these commentaries can only be expected to utilize the best scholarship available to them at the time of composition. The advent of modern linguistics, whether one dates this to Ferdinand de Saussure or not (and the point is debated), means that a so-called modern linguistic approach can be dated no earlier than that—but we must also take into account that such an approach took some time to establish itself as a framework for Greek language studies and hence to be utilized in New Testament commentary writing.

For the sake of convenience, I will divide the history of Greek grammatical study into three rough periods, and mention several major authors and their works within these periods, so that we have a basic framework for assessment of the competence of commentaries in using linguistically appropriate tools. These periods of study do not correlate with the periods of development in linguistics itself, or various sub-discussions within linguistics.[18]

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[18] For example, the history of linguistics might be divided into two periods, with the comparative period of the nineteenth and early twentieth century giving way to the

The first period, up until 1885 or so, we can call the rationalist period. The rationalist period reflects language study dominated by attempts to make logical and rational sense of language phenomena. As a result, grids were developed so that there were a balanced number of forms and, so far as possible, each cell had its element. Georg Winer's grammar, first published in 1822, fits into this category.[19] The second period, from 1885 to 1961, is the comparative-historical period. The period begins with the work of the great comparative philologist Karl Brugmann.[20] Grammars during this period reflect a comparative approach to language, whether it is comparing the Greek of the New Testament with classical Greek (Friedrich Blass, and later Blass and Albert Debrunner, including the translation by Robert Funk),[21] with the recently discovered papyri (James Hope Moulton and Adolf Deissmann),[22] or with its historical origins (A. T. Robertson).[23] Ernest DeWitt Burton's work on moods and tenses also fits in this period, as do C. F. D. Moule's *Idiom Book*, Margaret Thrall's work on particles, and the *Syntax* and *Style* of Nigel Turner.[24] The third period, from 1961

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modern linguistic period of the twentieth century. Similarly, in discussing the study of Greek verbal structure, we can identify the rationalist period up to 1885, the *Aktionsart* period up to around World War II, and the aspect period from World War II to the present. See Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG 1; New York: Lang, 1989), 50–65.

19 This grammar is available in several English translations, as well as German editions. The most widely used is Georg Benedikt Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis* (trans. W. F. Moulton; 3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882). Other editions will be cited below as appropriate.

20 Karl Brugmann, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich: Beck, 1885).

21 Friedrich Blass, *Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), with Debrunner assuming authorial duties with the fourth edition on; Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (17th ed. by Friedrich Rehkopf; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. Robert W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). For a critique of this grammar and its approach, see Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Greek Grammar since BDF: A Retrospective and Prospective Analysis," *FN* 4 (8; 1991): 143–64.

22 James Hope Moulton, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908 [1906]); Moulton and W. F. Howard, *Accidence and Word-Formation*, vol. 2 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1929); Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930); Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. L. R. M. Strachan; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910 [1908]).

23 A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; Nashville: Broadman, 1934 [1914]).

24 Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892); C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959 [1952]); Margaret Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (NTTS 3; Leiden:

to the present, I will call the modern linguistic period.[25] It begins with the publication of James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*,[26] and includes major work done on aspect theory (K. L. McKay, Stanley Porter, Buist Fanning, and Rodney Decker),[27] discourse analysis, and a variety of other areas of study, besides linguistically sensitive grammars (Stanley E. Porter and Richard Young).[28] Lexical study consists of the traditional work of Walter Bauer and his successors and the papyrologically informed work of Adolf Deissmann, both during the comparative period, and the linguistically innovative semantic domain oriented work of J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida.[29]

In this section, therefore, we will consider the linguistic competence of the commentaries in roughly chronological order. Four commentaries were written during the comparative-historical period: Sanday and Headlam, Allen, Ropes, and Charles. Though they do not refer to Winer, Sanday

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Brill, 1962); Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 and *Style*, vol. 4 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963, 1976).

[25] For a summary of recent work and trends, going beyond the scope of this chapter, see Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research," *CBR* 6.2 (2008): 214–55.

[26] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[27] K. L. McKay, "Syntax in Exegesis," *TynBul* 23 (1972): 39–57; McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek* (SBG 5; New York: Lang, 1994); Porter, *Verbal Aspect*; Buist Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Rodney J. Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect* (SBG 10; New York: Lang, 2001). I do not include Constantine Campbell here because his works were too late to be used by any of the authors considered here. That such an idea is not outrageous is (at least to my mind!) confirmed by the following statement by Frederick Danker: "no one ought to undertake the task of preparing [a Greek grammar] without thorough immersion in Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*. . . . Only those who think that laws governing perceptions of Greek grammar were codified on stone in the nineteenth century for eternal observance should ignore this book. The future is definitely on the side of this work, which takes a look at Greek verbs from within the Greek language as used by those who spoke and wrote it, and not from the Procrustean ordinances of much traditional grammar" (*Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* [rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 130–31).

[28] Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (BLG 2; 2nd ed.; London: Continuum, 1994 [1992]); Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994). I do not include Daniel Wallace's work here (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996]), because he essentially takes a traditional historical approach. If anything, his work should be considered as a remnant of the first or possibly second period noted above. However, I will comment upon the use of this work in the commentaries.

[29] J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: UBS, 1988).

and Headlam include meaningful references throughout to Burton, whose work had only appeared three years before their commentary was published; they utilize Deissmann for his work on Greek vocabulary, and they make several references to Edwin Hatch's *Essays on Biblical Greek*.[30] They also include brief references within the commentary to the following entries in their index: accusative case, aorist tense, article (where they refer throughout the commentary to "article," not "definite article," unlike, mistakenly, many later commentators), grammatical attraction, dative case, genitive case, imperfect tense, infinitive, participle, Pauline style, and perfect tense.

Whereas Sanday and Headlam wrote their commentary before Blass published his grammar in 1896, Allen makes full use of the latest linguistic sources. Not only does he cite Winer (in the revised form by Paul Schmiedel),[31] but he cites Blass, Deissmann, and, perhaps most impressively, Moulton's *Prolegomena*, which had just appeared in 1906. Allen also cites a number of other authors on the periphery of such linguistic discussion, including Gustav Dahlman, Wilhelm Dittenberger's inscriptions, and various papyri. His index includes reference to aorist, Aramaic original, the augment, compound verbs, the dative of time, diminutives, the augmented future, genitive absolute, imperfect, infinitive in various constructions, reciprocal middle, negatives, nominative for the vocative, participles, passive voice, plural number, present tense, and vocative. Ropes also avails himself of the latest linguistic tools, including use of grammars by Burton, Blass, Blass and Debrunner, Moulton, Winer, Alexander Buttmann, and Ludwig Radermacher,[32] as well as works by Deissmann and Hatch. He especially draws upon the Greek grammarians in discussion of tense-form usage, for example the "gnomic" use of the aorist in Jas 1:11,[33] but examines prepositions and other phenomena as well. Charles provides a 42-page short grammar of the Greek of Revelation. Charles is well-known for his supposition that the author, "while he wrote in Greek he thought

30 Edwin Hatch, *Essays on Biblical Greek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1889).

31 Georg Benedikt Winer, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms. I. Theil: Einleitung und Formenlehre* (8th ed.; ed. Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1894).

32 Alexander Buttmann, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (trans. J. H. Thayer; Andover: Draper, 1874); Ludwig Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik: Das Griechisch des Neuen Testament im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache* (HNT; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1925 [1911]).

33 Ropes, *James*, 148, citing Burton, Blass, Buttmann, Winer, and Moulton.

in Hebrew and frequently translated Hebrew idioms literally into Greek."[34] His grammatical discussion is a surprisingly comprehensive and even up-to-date sounding treatment of nouns, the article (note comments above), pronouns, the verb, prepositions, conjunctions, case, number, gender, Hebraic style, solecisms, corruptions, and word order. The study is based upon Charles's own examination, but he also makes reference to grammars by Blass, Winer, E. A. Abbott,[35] and especially Moulton. Much of the grammar is concerned with issues of translation, although Charles also notes the problem of tense-form nomenclature.[36] Charles had a particular dispute with Moulton over the nature of the Greek of the New Testament and especially of Revelation, with Charles seeing it heavily Semitized and Moulton as non-standard Greek resembling the documentary Greek papyri. It is not my intention to arbitrate that dispute here, but Charles notes, no doubt with pleasure, that Moulton had, according to W. F. Howard, "changed his mind" to a position more closely resembling that of Charles.[37] That Charles was correct in that estimation is open to serious doubt.[38] Whatever one may think on this issue, it is clear that the commentaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that fit into the comparative-historical period were well-versed in the most important linguistic discussion of the day, and availed themselves of the most important resources available and utilized them in their commentaries.

Commentaries written during the modern linguistic period are many and abundant. Of those treated here, the earliest is Cranfield's, and it begins to indicate a shift in demonstrable linguistic competence among commentators. In many respects, this volume shows little linguistic development from the earlier commentary of Sanday and Headlam. It is arguable, in fact, that the commentary is not as well informed, as it limits its major grammatical observations to the work of Blass and Debrunner in its English translation by Funk, Moule, and Robertson. Such important works as those by Burton, Moulton, Radermacher, and Turner are apparently not utilized, to say nothing of any linguistically informed works written since Barr (though Barr himself is cited twice in respect of his warnings regarding inappropriate lexical study). There are also some papyri and inscriptions cited, along with traditional lexicons. One can only conclude that

34 Charles, *Revelation*, 1:xxi.
35 E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: A. & C. Black, 1906).
36 Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxxiv note 1.
37 Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliii note 1.
38 Moulton and Howard, *Accidence and Word-Formation*, 413–14.

Cranfield relies almost entirely upon the comparative-historical model of the previous period, while recognizing some of the potential difficulties of some earlier types of language study. Davids is somewhat similar, relying upon Blass and Debrunner, Moule, Moulton, Robertson, and Turner, while mostly commenting upon incidental features of usage.

Dunn's commentary on Romans is a significant disappointment in matters linguistic. He cites Barr's work in a bibliography and then in a passage (Rom 3:4) only apparently to commit the very fallacious argument that Barr has identified—while acknowledging Barr's caution regarding such procedure. Dunn contends that there is a connection between ἀλήθεια and πίστις on the basis of their both translating Hebrew *'emet*, the very thing that Barr refutes.[39] The rest of the commentary does nothing to dispel the impression that Dunn, whatever else he may be, is not a modern linguistically informed commentator. It is difficult to determine how much he uses his primary grammar, Blass and Debrunner translated by Funk, as it is not included in the index, but sources such as Bauer's lexicon, Moulton and Milligan, Liddell and Scott in Jones's revision, and even the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* seem to appear more in the pages of the commentary (Deissmann's work is also cited). As for other grammars, Dunn (apart from in bibliographies) apparently cites Moule's *Idiom Book* four times and Moulton's *Prolegomena* once and his *Accidence* once. He does, however, include one reference to Daniel Patte's structuralist commentary on Romans (and other Pauline letters) and Friedrich Rehkopf's endorsement of litotes in Rom 10:16.[40] Such limited use of grammatical scholarship indicates either calmly assured knowledge or thorough neglect. The latter seems to be the case, as Dunn makes such statements such as "[t]he [aorist active indicative] tense is exhortatively emphatic, to remind his readers that something decisive has happened to them,"[41] "the aorist denot[es] . . . the decisive salvation-history event of Christ's death whose effect in ending the rule of sin and death enters the experience of those who are identified and identify themselves with that event in the commitment of baptism and thereafter (the aorist active does not exclude the active imperative [sic])),"[42] "death was a single event (aorist), the life

39 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:128, 133; citing Barr, *Semantics*, 187–94.

40 Daniel Patte, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 232–96; Friedrich Rehkopf, "Grammatisches zum Griechischen des Neuen Tesaments," in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde* (FS Joachim Jeremias; ed. Eduard Lohse; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 213–25.

41 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:307.

42 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:319.

has no end (present continuous),"[43] "the perfect tense emphasiz[es] that a decisive act has already taken place which has proved to be the eschatological turning point in the history of salvation,"[44] "the perfect tense of [Rom 6:5a] indicates a continuing state (still under water!?),"[45] along with reference throughout to the "definite" article.[46] Dunn asks at the end of his preface whether in writing this commentary he has passed.[47] In terms of Greek grammar, there is only one clear answer, no.[48]

In the same year, Martin published his commentary on James. He does slightly, but not much, better than Dunn. Although he seems to integrate grammatical comments into his exegesis, he sometimes is overly focused upon supposed Semitic usage. Martin uses Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation, and besides that most prominently Moule's *Idiom Book* (16x), but Robertson's grammar twice, Moulton's *Prolegomena* once, Moulton and Howard's *Accidence* once, Turner's *Syntax* three times (but Turner's *Christian Words* six times),[49] and Zerwick's grammar twice (but his grammatical analysis with Grosvenor three times).[50] Martin does not refer to any grammatical topics in his index (the closest he comes is anaphora, epiphora, chiasmus, and rhetorical question). Hagner on Matthew is not even as thorough as Martin, but should have been as he wrote after publication of several major linguistic works in 1989 and 1990, and shows his knowledge of them by citing Porter's later *Idioms* (1992) one time and K. L. McKay on another point.[51] Apart from moderate use of Blass and

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43 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:323.

44 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:165.

45 Dunn, *Romans*, 1:317.

46 E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, 1:11, 2:858.

47 Dunn, *Romans*, xix. I find no grammatical or linguistic topics in the subject index, even though there are such discussions in the text. I think this is revelatory regarding what the commentator finds important.

48 One might hope for an improvement in Dunn's 1996 commentary on *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), for which he had more time to recognize the latest in linguistic research. However, there is no significant change. Apart from Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation, Dunn cites Moule's *Idiom Book* three times, Moulton's *Prolegomena* twice, and Turner's *Syntax* three times. Many grammatical questions are solved simply by appeal to commentaries or with no grammatically based insight at all (e.g. pp. 322–23). The "definite" article remains.

49 Nigel Turner, *Christian Words* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980). For a critique of this work, see Stanley E. Porter, "Is *dipsuchos* (James 1:8; 4:8) a 'Christian' Word?" *Bib* 71 (1990): 469–98.

50 Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963); Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1974).

51 Hagner, *Matthew*, 688, 884, referring to K. L. McKay, "The Use of *hoi de* in Matthew 18.17: A Response to K. Grayston," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 71–72.

Debrunner in Funk's translation, Hagner apparently only cites Turner's *Syntax* twice, Moulton's *Prolegomena* once, and Robertson's *Grammar* once. Gone now is even Moule's *Idiom Book* and Zerwick's grammar, as well as all other works (the index refers to no grammatical topics). This neglect is noticeable when Hagner engages in a detailed grammatical discussion and, so far as I can tell, never cites a single grammatical work (Matt 28:17)![52] Disappointingly, even worse are Davies and Allison on Matthew. The authors realize there are "new" things brewing in biblical interpretation by virtue of their addressing the New Criticism, but that appears to be the major extent of their engagement.[53] Only citing Blass and Debrunner translated by Funk with any major significance, they do cite Barr's work one time, but only along with Oscar Cullmann and endorsement of his conclusions.[54] They cite Burton three times, Dana and Mantey once, and Mantey on his own once for three related articles,[55] Moulton's *Prolegomena* once, Moulton and Howard on *Accidence* once, Turner on *Syntax* three times, Turner on *Style* over twenty times (!), and Robertson, along with Bauer and Deissmann. They do cite E. C. Maloney six times.[56] The only linguistically informed works they cite, so far as I can tell, are Patte's commentary on Matthew several times and Gignac once (but not his grammar), McKay once, and Porter once, all in single articles.[57] This commentary clearly relies on a previous generation of work, and shows virtually no knowledge of recent linguistic research.

By contrast, Moo's commentary on Romans attempts to be linguistically informed. Even though he still cites Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation the most of any Greek grammar, he shows familiarity with a wider range and more up-to-date grammatical and linguistic sources than

52 Hagner, *Matthew*, 884–85.

53 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:2–3.

54 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:582, citing James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (SBT 33; rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1969); Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964 [1962]).

55 H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1927); Mantey, "Distorted Translations in John 20.23; Matthew 16.18–19 and 18.18," *RevExp* 78 (1981): 409–16; Mantey, "Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20.23 and Matthew 16.19 is Mistranslated," *JETS* 16 (1973): 129–38; Mantey, "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20.23, Matt 16.19, and Matt 18.18," *JBL* 58 (1939): 243–49.

56 E. C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Markan Syntax* (SBLDS 51; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

57 Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Francis T. Gignac, "Morphological Phenomena in the Greek Papyri Significant for the Text and Language of the New Testament," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 503–504; McKay, "Use of *hoi de*"; Porter, "Vague Verbs, Periphrastics, and Matt. 16.19," *FN* 2 (1988): 155–73.

any previous recent commentary. Thus, of works in the rationalist period he cites Winer, and in the comparative period he cites the work of I. T. Beckwith (once),[58] Blass and Debrunner in Rehkopf's revision, Burton, Moulton, Moulton and Howard, Turner, Moule, Robertson, and Zerwick (also Zerwick and Grosvenor), as well as Deissmann. This is more comprehensive usage of the traditional grammatical resources than any previous grammar, so far as I can determine—and Moo actually engages in discussion of their various views. Even more impressive is his attempt to integrate linguistically informed work of the more recent period. He cites Barr's work on time, and, more importantly, linguistically informed grammatical discussion on multiple occasions by McKay, Porter (*Verbal Aspect* but not *Idioms*),[59] and Fanning, as well as works by Erhardt Güttgemanns, Patte on the Pauline letters, and Richard Wonneberger.[60] An indicative passage is on pages 381–86, where especially in two notes on page 385 Moo discusses three different recent aspectually informed views of the Greek imperative.[61] Appearing two years later, Schreiner also knows at least some of the modern linguistic works, and does engage in discussion in his commentary on Romans, even if he does not always seem to appreciate the issues fully.[62] His use of grammatical works overall is limited, however, with Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation clearly being his major source, along with Moule, Robertson (twice), Turner, and Wallace (twice), as well as Deissmann. Linguistically informed works include

58 I. T. Beckwith, "The Articular Infinitive with εἰς," *JBL* 15 (1896): 155–67.

59 I find it interesting that Moo lists the works by Burton, Moulton, Robertson, Turner, and Zerwick in his frequently cited bibliography, but not Porter, even though he cites Porter more than Burton, Moulton, and Zerwick's grammars. Does this indicate that Moo still relies upon the "standard" works and views linguistically informed works as a perhaps passing fashion? This appears, unfortunately, to be true, when in his later commentary on James he cites only Blass and Debrunner translated by Funk, Moule, Robertson, and Turner, apart from one reference to Porter's *Verbal Aspect*. It is arguably worse in his even later commentary on Colossians and Philemon, when, besides BDF, he cites Burton, Deissmann, Moule, Robertson, Margaret Thrall, Zerwick, and, most abundantly and disappointingly, Daniel Wallace, with one reference to David Allen, two to Porter's *Verbal Aspect* (but not *Idioms*), one to Moisés Silva, and one to Anthony Thiselton. The use of anything linguistically informed is at best ad hoc and unsystematic, besides being infrequent.

60 Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Studia Linguistica Neotestamentica: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur linguistischen Grundlage einer Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1971); Reinhard Wonneberger, *Syntax und Exegese: Eine generative Theorie der griechischen Syntax und ihr Beitrag zur Auslegung des Neuen Testaments, dargestellt an 2. Korinther 5,2f und Römer 3,21–26* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1972) (the only Chomskyan-based monograph cited in any of the commentaries examined).

61 Moo, *Romans*, 381–86. There are no grammatical subjects in the index, apart from indicative/imperative, which is as much a theological construct as it is linguistic.

62 Schreiner, *Romans*, 85, 386.

reference once to Barr's work on time, Porter's *Idioms* three times and *Verbal Aspect* once, Reed once, Frank Stagg once, and Moisés Silva's *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*.[63]

Three commentaries on Revelation appeared in close succession and provide a useful comparison. Though the most recent, Osborne's is linguistically the weakest, devoting only two pages to the language of Revelation.[64] He cites Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation, Turner's *Syntax*, Wallace, and Zerwick, along with Gerhard Mussies's work on morphology once and Steven Thompson on Semitisms.[65] The only modern linguistic grammar cited is Porter's *Idioms*. At times his linguistic comments seem to be in tension with each other.[66] Beale's commentary presents a fairly balanced discussion of language issues, appropriate for a commentary on Revelation, citing Charles, Thompson, and others on matters such as Semitisms. His most widely used grammar is still Blass and Debrunner translated by Funk, but he also uses Moulton, Moulton and Howard, Turner's two volumes, Moule, Robertson, and Zerwick, along with Bauer, Deissmann, and Moulton and Milligan. Beale also makes use of James Brooks and Carlton Winbery's traditional intermediate syntax.[67] Beale's incorporation of modern linguistic research into his commentary is significant, as seen in his discussion of Rev 12:7.[68] Besides citing Barr on semantics (although one time knowingly committing illegitimate totality transfer)[69] and on time, he extensively cites Fanning, Porter's *Verbal Aspect* as well as several articles, and Silva once, along with Louw and Nida's lexicon based upon semantic domains. Finally, Aune's commentary on Revelation is no doubt the most linguistically well-informed commentary examined here.

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63 Jeffrey T. Reed, "Indicative and Imperative in Rom 6,21–22: The Rhetoric of Punctuation," *Bib* 74 (1993): 244–57 (but not his major work on discourse analysis); Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *JBL* 91 (1972): 222–31; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

64 Osborne, *Revelation*, 24–25.

65 Gerhard Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism* (NovTSup 27; Leiden: Brill, 1971); Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (SNTSMS 52; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For a strong rebuttal of Thompson's proposals, see Stanley E. Porter, "The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion," *NTS* 35 (1989): 582–603.

66 E.g., sometimes he seems to endorse aspectual theory and other times endorse competing conceptions. The only major grammatical topic listed in his index is the divine passive.

67 James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1979).

68 Beale, *Revelation*, 653–54. Beale has no subject index.

69 Beale, *Revelation*, 386.

He provides a section dedicated to discussion of syntax in Revelation, where he has a bibliography devoted to the topic, including a number of works by McKay, Porter, and others (about 25 of the several hundred entries can be considered modern linguistic treatments; unfortunately, a number of the entries are only cited in the bibliography). Besides citing Winer from the rationalist period, Aune displays a firmer grasp than other contemporary commentaries of the comparative-historical period when he cites works by W. J. Aerts,[70] Blass and Debrunner in both the Rehkopf and Funk editions, Burton, Conybeare and Stock on the grammar of the Septuagint,[71] J. D. Denniston on particles,[72] J. C. Doudna,[73] Raphael Kühner and Bernhard Gerth on classical grammar,[74] Edwin Mayser on the grammar of the Ptolemaic papyri,[75] Moule, Moulton, Moulton and Howard, Radermacher, Robertson, Lars Rydbeck,[76] Herbert W. Smyth on classical grammar,[77] Thrall, Sophie Trenkner,[78] Turner on *Syntax* and *Style*, Albert Wifstrand,[79] and Zerwick and Zerwick with Grosvenor, as well as Deissmann, Hatch, Liddell and Scott, and Bauer. He also cites Mussies extensively, along with works on Semitisms, such as Matthew Black,[80] Charles, C. C. Torrey,[81] and Thompson. Aune also excels above the other commentators, however, in his citation of modern linguistic works (as well as linguistic topics in his index). These include Barr on semantics

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70 W. J. Aerts, *Periphrastica: An Investigation into the Use of εἶναι and ἔχειν as Auxiliaries or Pseudo-Auxiliaries in Greek from Homer up to the Present Day* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).

71 F. C. Conybeare and St.G. Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Boston: Ginn, 1905).

72 J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1954).

73 J. C. Doudna, *The Greek of the Gospel of Mark* (SBLMS 12; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1961).

74 Raphael Kühner and Bernhard Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache: Satzlehre* (2 vols.; 3rd ed.; Hannover: Hahnsche, 1898–1904).

75 Edwin Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1906–1934).

76 Lars Rydbeck, *Fachprosa, vemeintliche Volkssprache und Neues Testament* (Uppsala: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1967).

77 Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. Gordon M. Messing; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

78 Sophie Trenkner, *Le style KAI dans le recit oral attique* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut d'Études Polonaises en Belgique, 1948).

79 Albert Wifstrand, "Die Stellung der enklitischen Personalpronomina bei der Septuaginta," *Bulletin Societe Royale des Lettres de Lund* (1949–1950): 44–70.

80 Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3rd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

81 C. C. Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958).

and time, Jerker Blomqvist on particles,[82] Simon Dik,[83] Fanning, Gérard Genette,[84] Francis Gignac on Greek papyrology,[85] Greg Horsley,[86] J. A. L. Lee,[87] Louw, McKay, Porter (*Verbal Aspect* but not *Idioms*), and Albert Rijksbaron,[88] as well as T. Muraoka's[89] and Louw and Nida's lexicons. Aune, as opposed to most commentators' tendency simply to cite various grammars, seems to have incorporated a modern linguistic perspective into his exegesis. This is evident when he describes the Greek verb: "Following the application of recent development in linguistics to the Greek verb, it appears that the 'tense' forms in ancient Greek primarily reflect an author's or speaker's conception of a process or aspect, rather than a reference to time. This means that the temporal reference of the various Greek tenses is relative, not absolute, i.e., that the tenses in Greek are semantically nontemporal. In Greek, therefore, aspect is expressed morphologically, while time or tense is expressed through the use of a variety of contextual temporal indicators." He also notes the "pragmatic expression of tenses can be divided into five categories: Past, present, future, omnitemporal … and timeless."[90] Such a straightforward (and I would say accurate) statement is not to be found in any other of the contemporary commentaries examined.

The final three commentaries—the three most recent—provide some interesting, if disappointing, observations. Despite his claim to being "committedly eclectic" in method, Nolland on Matthew apparently does not mean committed to any grammatical method. The subject index refers

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82 Jerker Blomqvist, *Greek Particles in Hellenistic Prose* (Lund: Gleerup, 1969).

83 Simon C. Dik, *Coordination: Its Implications for the Theory of General Linguistics* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1968).

84 Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. J. E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

85 Francis T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (2 vols.; Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1976–1981).

86 G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. V. *Linguistic Essays* (New South Wales: Macquarie University Press, 1989).

87 John A. L. Lee, *Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

88 Albert J. Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Sematics of the Verb in Classical Greek: An Introduction* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1984).

89 T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint (Twelve Prophets)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993).

90 Aune, *Revelation*, 1:clxxxiv. Those familiar with Porter, *Verbal Aspect* and *Idioms*, will recognize this basic foundation, even without direct reference to it. However, this does not mean that Aune is not subject to criticism. Note his reference to the "definite" article (1:clxiii).

twice to the historic present and twice to multilingualism.[91] However, the index of modern authors (unfortunately, not complete) only makes reference to four grammatical works, two articles by Mantey, and modern linguistically informed works by Stephanie Black[92] and Porter. Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation is listed in the abbreviations and cited only occasionally, so far as I can tell. As a result, Nolland makes grammatical statements, such as on the use of the gnomic aorist in Matt 11:19, without reference to any grammatical work.[93] Needless to say, this is both disappointing and more than a little surprising considering the series. Nearly as disappointing is Turner's commentary on Matthew. His use of grammatical works from the traditional period is much more pronounced, making reference to works by Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation, Burton, Dana and Mantey, Moule, Moulton, Moulton and Howard, Smyth, Thrall, Turner, Zerwick, and, most of all, Wallace. His modern linguistic references are confined to Stephanie Black,[94] Eugene Nida and Charles Taber once,[95] and Porter once (an article).[96] His index only refers once to the first class conditional and once to Semitisms. Finally, McCartney on James is no better. He relies mostly upon Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation, while also citing Burton (once), Goodwin (once), Turner's *Syntax* and *Style*, Wallace, and Zerwick and Grosvenor (once). Apart from citing Stagg's article on the abused aorist once and an article by Porter, he seems to know of no other linguistically informed works. Thus, when he discusses the "gnomic aorists" of Jas 1:10–11 or the imperative,[97] he is

91 However, Nolland refers to chiasmus an astonishing 69 times, the most of any item in his subject index. For a refutation of the finding of chiasms in the New Testament, see Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and its Exegetical Significance," *NTS* 44 (1998): 213–31.

92 Stephanie L. Black, "The Historic Present in Matthew: Beyond Speech Margins," in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results* (JSNTSup 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 120–39.

93 Nolland, *Matthew*, 464. Other examples are found on pp. 391, 1075, 1089. This is despite Nolland including a number and variety of bibliographies throughout—mostly unused if the indexes are any indication. No use appears to be made of any of the major recent linguistic works, such as by Fanning, McKay, or Porter.

94 Stephanie L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καί, δέ, τότε, γάρ, οὖν and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse* (JSNTSup 216; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), as well as the article above.

95 Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1982).

96 Although he refers to Porter several times for other purposes. Again, there is no apparent recognition or use of the major recent linguistic works by Fanning, McKay, or Porter.

97 McCartney, *James*, 98–99, 101, and 219.

at a distinct disadvantage without more recent work. The same is true of the grammatical topics that he includes in his index, such as accusative of oath, gnomic aorist, dative, and genitive case.

5. *What Can We Say about the Linguistic Competence of New Testament Commentaries?*

I realize that examining citations alone is not the only way to determine linguistic competence, nor perhaps even the best, but it is, I think, a preliminary indicator of the kinds of works that commentators turn to when they wish to explicate a particular grammatical point. That is why I have also tried to determine the engagement of their exegesis with grammatical works. On the basis of this examination, I think that we can say several things about the linguistic competence of New Testament commentaries.

The first is that the results are mixed, especially among more recent commentaries. Whereas earlier commentators virtually always showed themselves linguistically informed of the latest and most important work in Greek (and other) language study, the same cannot be said of later commentators. There are some commentaries, such as several on the book of Revelation—where language issues are notoriously important—that clearly do make use of some of the latest in linguistic research. However, this is not always the case, even for commentaries on Revelation, and certainly not for commentaries on other books. The inevitable conclusions are several. One is that language issues are generally thought to be less important than other issues in commentating upon New Testament books. One is driven to this conclusion especially in light of the fact that even the commentaries that do not show awareness of the latest research into Greek linguistics still continue to cite older grammatical works, especially that of Blass and Debrunner in Funk's translation. This is particularly disappointing, as this volume, as noted above, originally published in 1896 and written by a nineteenth-century classical philologist and then later revised by an early twentieth-century comparative philologist, was never designed as a grammar of the New Testament so much as a comparative treatment of the language of the New Testament to illustrate its differences from classical Greek. A second suggested possibility is that not only is linguistic knowledge less, but Greek knowledge itself is less than it was before. Some would claim that this is because contemporary biblical commentators do not have the same training in classical Greek as previous generations of commentators did. Another possible explanation—and at least as likely for those treating the Greek of the New Testament, rather than classical Greek—is that this is because contemporary scholars are less aware of the issues in Greek linguistic study, so as to inform themselves of the issues involved.[98]

The continued use of grammatical works from especially the comparative-historical period, even from the rationalist period, and occasionally from the linguistically informed period, suggests that most commentators have an optimistic view of the development of Greek grammatical study. They seem to hold to incrementalism, in which each major approach, and the major works within each approach, build directly upon the works of the previous periods. In this way, the work done in the past continues to have relevance to contemporary study, and contemporary research serves the purpose of enhancing and building upon previous work. Such a comment seems to be at the heart of Osborne's statement about how he approached the issue of tense and aspect in his commentary on Revelation: "I looked at the verbs using both traditional and aspect options and found times when aspect theory provided the best solution, and other times when traditional categories best answered how John was using the verb. My suggestion is to consider aspect theory a valuable supplement to traditional theory and ask all of the questions (from traditional and aspect theories) when studying a context, then see which works best."[99] There are several problems with this view (besides, possibly, the pragmatism involved), as has been shown in some research on aspect. The first is that the so-called traditional view here is the time-based view, which was supplanted by the *Aktionsart* view, followed by the aspectual view. They may well have some conceptual overlap, but they are fundamentally, to use the language of Thomas Kuhn (and others), incommensurable paradigms.[100] That is, there is no clearly apparent way in which they can be reconciled with each other.

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[98] A particularly noteworthy and disappointing instance is the recent commentary on 1 Corinthians by Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner. To their credit they have a section that includes treatment of verbal aspect, but they rely for their major explanations on an elementary introduction to supplement first-year Greek grammars. See Roy A. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 42–46. This is somewhat the equivalent of using J. Gresham Machen's first year grammar to make comments on the complexities of Greek syntax!

[99] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (rev. ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 69.

[100] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 111–35, 144–59, 198–204.

A third observation is that there is an inevitable conclusion: whereas language has been left behind in the writing of commentaries, other elements of the commentary must now be more greatly emphasized. There is no doubt that commentaries are written differently now than they were earlier. Whereas the earliest biblical commentaries of the modern era resemble classical commentaries, with brief notes on selected elements, often those of a linguistic nature, more recent commentaries are much more fulsome in their writing, apparently attempting to comment on virtually everything (apart, apparently, from linguistic matters!). As a result, commentaries are much longer, often running to multiple volumes for works that, when compared with other literary works especially of the ancient world, are relatively short (including three volumes on Revelation!). This means that, with decreased emphasis upon language, there must be greater emphasis upon such things as textual criticism, historical backgrounds, and theology, to name the most obvious. This strikes me as a precarious position for commentary writing—especially for those commentaries like the ones sampled in this article that emphasize commenting upon the Greek language. If informed commenting upon the Greek text is foundational for what it means to be a Greek language commentary, and if this commenting is now lacking, it means that the foundation has been weakened, if not eroded, for its performing this vital task. As a result, the other issues that are built upon such a commentary are inevitably established without the proper linguistic foundation. An alternative explanation is that most commentators, instead of neglecting the Greek text and the latest linguistic thought about it, are asserting, whether implicitly or even explicitly, that such a satisfactory state of knowledge of the Greek language has been reached, either by them individually or collectively, that introducing commentary by others is unnecessary. The absurdity of this position is patently obvious. If such collective knowledge has been reached, then there would need to be reference to this knowledge, including reference to recent works that demonstrate this knowledge. If the knowledge is individually attained, then there is no need for scholarship on grammatical issues to be cited at all—yet it inevitably is, in arguably the least trenchant source for such a purpose, Blass and Debrunner's grammar.

The final point to be made is that, in light of this lack of attention to such a fundamental issue as Greek language and linguistics in recent commentaries, it is perhaps time to re-evaluate the task and purpose of commentaries, and thereby to adjust what is expected of them. As it stands, it appears that most commentators believe that they are called upon to comment upon any and every relevant detail of the text, including text-critical, historical, theological, and even grammatical issues (even if these have fallen by the wayside in some commentaries). They are also expected to reflect and avail themselves of the full range of scholarly literature, including the latest research in all of these fields. No doubt the burden of so much secondary literature is great, with quite a bit of it perhaps not particularly useful or germane (hence its being cited only in bibliographies and perhaps indexes, but not in the commentary itself). The absurdity of such an undertaking is seen in the fact that even in major commentaries on the Greek text there are still numerous issues and resources that are still overlooked, both primary topics and the use of important and relevant secondary sources. It is also clear that, to a large extent—perhaps to too large an extent—commentaries have become less commentaries on the Greek text, or even on the text in translation, and more commentaries on previous commentators—as these commentaries provide the major source of information for current commentators. I believe that it is time to re-assess what it is to write a commentary, and to adjust our sights to something much more manageable and attainable—commentaries that specialize in particular elements of the text, or that reflect particular viewpoints, and that can make a valid attempt to cover the most important secondary literature and actively respond to it in the commentary itself, all the while keeping the text as the center of focus. In other words, we should have commentaries that investigate the linguistic issues of the Greek text (I don't know of a commentary series devoted to such an approach), the historical and literary issues, or the theological issues; as well as commentaries that approach the text from a particular point of advocacy, such as an epistolary commentary, or a historical commentary, or a particular ideological commentary.

In any case, as this study has shown, the days of the New Testament Greek language commentary being counted upon to analyze the Greek text utilizing the latest available linguistic tools are a thing of the past if current commentaries are any indication.

Appendix: Commentaries Used in This Chapter

By New Testament Book

Matthew

Allen, Willoughby C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (ICC; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907).
Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1996).
Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew* (WBC 33A–B; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995).
Nolland, John, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
Turner, David L., *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

Romans

Cranfield, C. E. B., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979).
Dunn, James D. G., *Romans* (WBC 38A–B; 2 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1988).
Moo, Douglas J., *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
Sanday, William, and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902 [1895]).
Schreiner, Thomas R., *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

James

Davids, Peter H., *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Tex*t (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982).
McCartney, Dan G., *James* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).
Martin, Ralph P., *James* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988).
Ropes, James Hardy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916).

Revelation

Aune, David E., *Revelation* (WBC 52A–C; 3 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1997–1998).
Beale, G. K., *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
Charles, R. H., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920).
Osborne, Grant R., *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

By Series

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT)

McCartney, Dan G., *James* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).
Osborne, Grant R., *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).
Schreiner, Thomas R., *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

International Critical Commentary (ICC)

Allen, Willoughby C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (ICC; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907).

Charles, R. H., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920).
Cranfield, C. E. B., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979).
Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1996).
Ropes, James Hardy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916).
Sanday, William, and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902 [1895]).

New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)

Moo, Douglas J., *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)

Beale, G. K., *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
Davids, Peter H., *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Tex*t (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982).
Nolland, John, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)

Aune, David E., *Revelation* (WBC 52A–C; 3 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1997–1998).
Dunn, James D. G., *Romans* (WBC 38A–B; 2 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1988).
Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew* (WBC 33A–B; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995).
Martin, Ralph P., *James* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988).

TRANSLATION IN NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Douglas J. Moo

I consider it a great privilege to be able to contribute an essay to this volume honoring a good friend and, for many years, colleague, Grant Osborne. We served together at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for over twenty years, years that cemented our relationship not only professionally but personally. We lived in the same neighborhood as the Osbornes for many years, and our families grew up together. Seared in my memory especially are times spent with Grant and other Trinity colleagues in an automobile, as we car-pooled together back and forth to Trinity. Students sometimes wondered at the deep theological discussions we profs must have been having during those rides; but I am afraid that our topics of conversation more often focused on the Chicago Bears or Bulls than on millennialism or supra-lapsarianism! Those of us who know and love Grant will especially resonate with the time that he filled his car up with gas only to realize when he went to pay (remember those days before pump card-swiping?) that he had no money. Neither did any of the rest of us poor professors. We offered Grant's watch as collateral but finally convinced the attendant that Grant could be trusted to come back and pay.

Two of the ministries to which Grant has devoted a great deal of time are Bible translation and commentary. These are, coincidentally, the two ministries that have occupied much of my time also. Grant has worked on the top committee responsible for producing and revising the NLT (1996; revised in 2004 and 2007) even as I have worked with the Committee on Bible Translation to produce the TNIV (2005) and the updated NIV (2011). Both of us have written commentaries addressed to audiences ranging from fellow scholars to laypeople. It is, then, especially fitting that I contribute a chapter for this volume on the subject of translation in New Testament commentaries.

Before 1996, when I joined the Committee on Bible Translation, I paid little attention to the role of English translations in the commentaries that I was writing and reading. In the first commentary I wrote, on James for the Tyndale New Testament Commentary series, I decided to use the RSV as my "go-to" translation, but I never indicated this nor did I quote the text before commenting on it. While this is not typical in modern commentaries—most commentators say something in their preface about the English translation they are using and some translation is usually provided—many commentators continue to pay scant attention to the matter. In his commentary on Hebrews in the Paideia series,[1] for instance, James W. Thompson says nothing (as far as I can see) about the English basis for the commentary, even though he quotes English renderings in bold type throughout. These are apparently his own translations. His commentary is by no means unique in this respect. I suspect this general neglect of English translation in commentaries is fairly widespread. As we write commentaries, our focus, naturally, is on the Greek text. If we are writing a commentary based on a particular English version, we will naturally have to pay some attention to that version. But—and here, perhaps, I need to speak more personally—when I supply my own commentary, I usually put little thought into what I am doing. This general neglect of English translation is even more acute when we read the commentaries of others. We read to see what our colleagues think about the meaning of the original text; the English translation on which many of these commentaries is based is something we often simply overlook. Yet for the many people reading our commentaries without benefit of the original languages, the situation is often quite different. Many of them will be reading with their own English version (or versions) in hand and will seek to relate our discussion and conclusions in the commentary to the English they have before them. My years of translation work have given me an appreciation for the way effective use of English translation(s) can enhance the usefulness of our commentaries.

In this essay, then, I want to analyze the role of English translations in NT commentaries and make some suggestions about how commentaries can more effectively utilize those translations in pursuing the goal of accurate and accessible interpretation of the biblical text. I divide my discussion into two parts. The first focuses on the way translations are presented in commentaries. Most commentaries display a text, usually in block setting at the beginning of each paragraph. What choices are various commentaries and series of commentaries making, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of those decisions? In the second part of the essay, I will consider the use of English translations in the argument of the commentary. How are translations being used to discuss the meaning of the text? And how should they be used?

[1] James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

Presenting the Text

Most New Testament commentaries provide some kind of formal English translation as the basis for the commentary (in the case of commentaries on the English text) or as a guide to the English reader (in the case of commentaries on the Greek text). The translation that appears in the commentary will usually be to some extent dictated by the nature of the series for which the commentary is being written. (Very few commentaries are written apart from series in the modern era.) First, the commentator may be writing for a series that is based on a particular English translation. In this case, the question of translation is settled, but some other questions arise, which we will look at below. Second, the commentator may be writing for a series that requires the writer to supply a fresh translation. In this case, the commentator will have to decide what kind of translation to supply. Third, the series may give the commentator the option to use an existing translation or to supply their own. For purposes of our analysis, then, we may break down the presentation of the text in commentaries into three main categories: (1) commentaries that use an existing English translation (whether the author is required to do so or not); (2) commentaries that provide a straight, formal equivalent, translation as a basis for discussion; (3) commentaries that use an expanded paraphrase to capture all the nuances of the Greek.

Grant has written commentaries that fall into the first two of these types. Both the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) and the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (ZECNT) require authors to provide their own translations as the basis for their commentary. And so in his *Revelation* (BECNT) and *Matthew* (ZECNT), Grant has started his work with a fresh, but generally straightforward, translation of each book.[2] In his *Romans* commentary, on the other hand, because it appears in a series that is based on the (1984) NIV (a series that Grant himself edits), Grant naturally works with the NIV.[3] His commentary on John and the Johannine epistles is based on the NLT, the translation chosen as the basis for the Cornerstone Biblical

[2] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

[3] Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004). With the recent release of an updated NIV (2011), it becomes necessary to distinguish between the "original" NIV (latest revision in 1984) and the updated NIV.

Commentary, the series in which this volume appears.[4] The Life Application Bible series (which Grant helps edit and also writes in) follows a different, and unusual, approach, giving its authors the freedom to choose, in every verse, whether they want to comment on the NIV, the NLT, or the NRSV.

Like Grant, I have written commentaries in series that expected me to use a particular translation and in series in which I was given the option to work with an existing translation or to provide my own. So I have some perspective on the issues involved and the strengths and weaknesses of these different scenarios. In this first section, I will survey the existing landscape and offer some comments on each of these approaches. Since it is impractical to survey the vast number of commentaries across the entire New Testament, I will take soundings in commentaries on Romans. I have chosen Romans partly because Grant has himself written a commentary on this letter, partly because most of the more important modern series have Romans volumes in publication—but mainly, I must confess, because it is a book that I have some acquaintance with. In cases where an important series does not yet have a volume on Romans, I will bring into our conversation commentaries on other books of the New Testament. Finally, as a way providing illustrative specifics, I will further focus on one paragraph, 8:1–4.

I provide here the Greek text of this passage as a basis to analyze some of the translations we will consider below.

> Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [2] ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. [3] Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, [4] ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.

Before, however, I categorize commentaries according to the translation on which they are based, I should note that several commentaries on Romans (as well as some series that do not yet have volumes on Romans) use no English translation as the basis for the commentary. The commentator jumps right into the text, and English translation occurs only along the way to express the author's exegetical decisions. Volumes that comment on the English text, but without including a formal translation,

[4] Grant R. Osborne, *The Gospel of John, 1–3 John* (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary; Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House, 2007), with Wendell C. Hawley and Philip W. Comfort.

are, on Romans, Leander Keck (Abingdon New Testament Commentary, 2005), Craig S. Keener (New Covenant Commentary, 2009), and Frank J. Matera (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament, 2010).[5]

Commentaries Based on an English Translation

Several commentary series, often those aimed at an audience of laypeople or students, are based on a single English translation of the Bible. Grant's commentary on Romans (as we noted above) is a good example of this type: he writes in the IVP New Testament Commentary series, which requires its authors to use the NIV as their basis for commentary. Other commentaries on Romans that follow this model, listed according to the version used, are:

AV/KJV

Charles Hodge (1886)[6]

Hodge's classic commentary is difficult to classify. He often refers to the Greek but usually provides an English equivalent as the basis for comment. He will often, but by no means always, cite the AV/KJV at each verse before engaging in commentary; and even then the quotation is sometimes a partial one.

ASV

John Murray—New International Commentary on the New Testament (o.s.) (1959, 1965)[7]

Murray notes that he changes the ASV when he thinks necessary. I cannot, however, find any place where he explicitly alerts the reader to this fact.

RSV

F. F. Bruce—Tyndale New Testament Commentary (2d ed., 1985)[8]

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5 Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005); Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR.: Cascade, 2009); Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (Paideia Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

6 Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950 [1886]).

7 John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols. in 1; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965).

8 F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (rev. ed.; TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

In his Preface, Bruce comments on his choice of the RSV over the AV, which was the translation previously used in the Tyndale series. The series gives commentators the choice to use whatever modern version they want.

Roy A. Harrisville—Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (1980)[9]

The editors of the series "recommend" that the RSV be used.

Paul Achtemeier—Interpretation (1985)[10]

Matthew Black—New Century Bible Commentary (2d ed., 1989)[11]

NRSV and NIV

N. T. Wright—New Interpreter's Bible (2002)[12]

NIV

Leon Morris—Pillar New Testament Commentary (1988)[13]

The Pillar New Testament Commentary series makes no requirements about translation. Most contributors have chosen the NIV or the TNIV.

John Stott—The Bible Speaks Today (1994)[14]

Robert Mounce—New American Commentary (1995)[15]

James Edwards—New International Biblical Commentary (2d. ed., 1995)[16]

Douglas Moo—The NIV Application Commentary (2000)

Grant Osborne—IVP New Testament Commentary (2004)

Most of the volumes listed above provide formal paragraph quotations of the respective version as a basis for comment. But several (Osborne, Bruce, Harrisville, and Edwards), following the format of the series in which they write, simply weave the translation (usually marked in bold or italic type and sometimes incomplete) into their comments. Achtemeier makes little reference to any translation in the course of his commentary. One series that fits this category but does not yet have a volume on Romans is the

[9] Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980).

[10] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985).

[11] Matthew Black, *Romans* (2nd ed.; NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973).

[12] N.T. Wright, "Romans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (ed. Leander E. Keck, et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

[13] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

[14] John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994).

[15] Robert Mounce, *Romans* (NAC 27; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995).

[16] James R. Edwards, *Romans* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992).

New Cambridge Bible Commentary (based on NRSV). Several series and commentaries use more than one commentary. The New Interpreter's Bible prints the NRSV and NIV side-by-side, and commentators regularly refer to both. The Life Application Bible Series, as we noted above, cites NRSV, NIV, and NLT at different verses. And in his recent NICNT volume on James, Scot McKnight prints the NRSV and then notes in footnotes those places where the TNIV deviates from it.[17]

Writing a commentary based on an existing translation has the obvious advantage of saving the commentator some time and effort. The English translation can simply be "cut and pasted" into the commentary. But the requirement to use a particular translation also has an obvious drawback: the commentator is forced to deal with whatever might be in that text. At the minimum, commentators should not decide to write in a series based on a translation unless they are generally supportive of the philosophy of the translation. Editors (and publishers!) will usually not be happy with a commentator who spends too much of his or her time "correcting" the translation the commentary is to be based on.[18] Constant criticism of a translation's decisions is especially problematic because these series are often directed to a non-scholarly audience. Confidence in the English translation that such non-scholars must rely on as their Word of God is eroded if the commentator is overly critical of the version.

Even when a commentator is generally supportive of the translation that forms the basis for their comments, there will, of course, be times when the commentator does disagree with the exegetical decision reflected in the translation. If the disagreement is minor, the difference can simply be passed over. In other cases, however, the commentator may think it necessary to suggest that the translation may not have it quite right. One of the surprising decisions in the NIV (1984) of Romans 8:1–4 is the translation of the singular τὸ δικαίωμα in v. 4 with the plural "righteous requirements." Stott, writing in the BST series (based on the NIV) simply notes in the course of his commentary on the verse, " 'just requirement' (singular, not plural 'requirements' as in NIV)."[19]

[17] Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

[18] Speaking as a translator, I was encouraged to note Morna Hooker's comment in the Preface to her Mark commentary: "The requirement to produce my own translation for this series demonstrated how much easier it is to point out the errors in the work of others than to produce an adequate translation of one's own!" (*The Gospel According to Mark* [BNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991]).

[19] Stott, *Romans*, 221.

At the same time, commentators need carefully to weigh just how they will express their disagreement with the decisions found in English translations. In his commentary on Romans, for instance, Grant Osborne reproduces the NIV of Rom 8:3b with a brief editorial comment: "*in that it was weakened by the sinful nature* (literally, "the flesh").[20] As a translator Grant knows well how fraught that little comment "literally" really is. For the Greek word σάρξ does not "literally" mean "flesh." Rather, the Greek word and the English word share a significant degree of space in their respective semantic domains. But those semantic domains do not precisely overlap; as we know, they very rarely do when we compare languages. Part of the problem here is the "gloss" method of doing lexicography, by which we learn to think of word meanings in terms of substitute words.[21] The problem is that the gloss method, and the baggage that comes with it, suggests to people that Greek words possess a "literal" English equivalent, and that departure from this rendering is, therefore, to be "paraphrastic" (horrors!) or even inaccurate. Again, Grant knows this; and I also grant that it is difficult to make the point Grant wants to make in the reference I noted above succinctly without using the word "literally." He would not intend the baggage that I am reading into it. And perhaps I am being a bit overly defensive as a result of some scars from the translation wars over the TNIV. But commentators could render a service to translators by at least on occasion taking time to point out the issues involved in moving from the Greek they are commenting on to the English.

Commentaries That Display a Straightforward Rendering

As we noted above, many of the contemporary commentary series that are directed to a more scholarly audience require their contributors to supply their own English rendering. Given the choice, most commentators prefer to provide a relatively straightforward rendering as a guide to the English reader. Romans commentaries that fall into this category are:

C. E. B. Cranfield—International Critical Commentary (n.s.) (1975, 1979)[22]
Joseph Fitzmyer—Anchor Bible (1993)[23]

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[20] Osborne, *Romans*, 195.

[21] See on this issue esp. John A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (Studies in Biblical Greek 8; New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

[22] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979).

[23] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993).

Fitzmyer's translation is more paraphrastic than most in this category, but still probably fits here. The Anchor Bible highlights the matter of translation more than any other series, being subtitled: "A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary."

Douglas J. Moo—New International Commentary on the New Testament (1996)[24]

Brendan Byrne—Sacra Pagina (1996)[25]

James D. G. Dunn—Word Biblical Commentary (1988)[26]

Thomas Schreiner—Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (1998)[27]

In addition to a straightforward initial translation, Schreiner also gives a more paraphrastic rendering in outline form.

Robert Jewett—Hermeneia (2007)[28]

Jewett claims in his Preface that his translations reflect exegetical decisions; but his rendering of 8:1–4, at least, is quite straightforward.

Ben Witherington (2004)[29]

It is difficult to know whether to classify Witherington's Romans as part of a series or not. Though not clearly branded as a series, Witherington has also written "Socio-Rhetorical Commentaries" on Mark, Acts, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philemon-Colossians-Ephesians, and 1–2 Thessalonians, while Craig Keener has written one on Matthew and David DeSilva on Hebrews.[30]

The Romans volume in the New International Greek Testament Commentary has not yet appeared. Many of the volumes in this series provide no translation at all, while a few provide a translation from the author.

The case for producing a translation that follows the Greek as closely as possible is made well by Cranfield in his Preface. Reflecting the tendency of commentaries written before the most recent period, and perhaps with a glance at his predecessor in the ICC series, Sanday-Headlam (see below), he notes:

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24 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

25 Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1996).

26 James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8, Romans 9–16* (WBC 38A–B; Dallas: Word, 1988).

27 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

28 Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

29 Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

30 Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

> Commentators' translations are commonly intended to bring out as clearly and forcefully as possible the commentator's own conclusions concerning his author's meaning. When this is so, the translation, though it may be placed before the exegetical notes on each section, is really a summing up of the conclusions reached in those notes. My translation is designed rather to be a help to the reader at the earliest stage of his exegetical work. I have therefore refrained as much I could from presupposing in it my own conclusions on controversial points, and have tried simply to represent as nearly as possible in English the Greek which has to be interpreted.

We may note a similar comment from Craig Evans in his Word Biblical Commentary volume on Mark 8:27–16:20: "I have attempted to render the Greek as literally as possible"[31]—even to the point of maintaining English present-tense translations for every Greek present-tense verb (many of which have traditionally been labeled "historical" presents and so translated as English past tense in even "formal equivalent" versions [e.g., NASB; RSV; NRSV; ESV]). R. C. H. Lenski decides to reflect the presence and absence of Greek articles in his English rendering, which means either (1) he has a very questionable view about the semantic overlap of the Greek article and English definite article; or (2) he is supplying an interlinear, not a translation. Here is his rendering of Rom. 8:1–4:

> Accordingly, now, not one condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus liberated me from the law of the sin and of the death. For the thing impossible for the law, in that it was weak by means of the flesh, God, by sending his own Son in likeness of sin's flesh and in regard to sin, condemned the sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us as those walking not according to flesh but according to spirit.[32]

Cranfield's remarks reveal clearly enough why many commentators prefer to supply a literal or even wooden translation. The days are gone when a commentator, even in a series based on the Greek text, can presume that all his or her readers will have the ability to work from the Greek text alone. Many commentators therefore prefer to put before their readers a translation that mirrors as closely as possible the underlying Greek. This enables the writer to begin, as it were, from neutral ground, comparing and contrasting various options and providing their own interpretation, usually with an accompanying English translation, at the conclusion of

31 Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), xii.
32 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1936), 493.

their discussion. In Rom 8:2, for instance, most commentators who supply their own rather literal translations choose to use the traditional English "of" to keep options open: "the law of the Spirit of life." The commentary proper can then discuss just what this "of" construction might mean with reference to the Greek genitive, perhaps concluding with respect, for instance, to the second genitive (ζωῆς), that it is "objective" and can be rendered "[the Spirit] that gives life."

Of course, this method has its obvious limits. No English translation, however "literal" it might be, can reproduce what is going on in the Greek. Beginning Greek students are sometimes taught that the equivalent to the Greek genitive is the English "of" construction, but this, of course, is not the case. There is considerable semantic overlap between the two, but the overlap is not perfect. Further, there are places in the Greek that simply cannot be rendered into English without making an exegetical decision. Cranfield, for instance, in his translation—which, as we noted above, tries "to represent as nearly as possible in English the Greek"—inevitably makes a series of decisions that tips the scales toward one interpretation. He renders the controverted νόμος in v. 2a as "law"; he attaches ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in v. 2 to the verb ("has in Christ Jesus set thee[33] free"); and he translates περὶ ἁμαρτίας in v. 3 as "to deal with sin" (instead, e.g., of "as a sin offering").

Commentaries That Display an "Expanded Paraphrase"

Only two Romans commentaries that I checked provide an expanded, "dynamic equivalent," translation as the starting point for commentary. It is worth providing their translations of Rom 8:1–4 in order to capture the flavor of what they are doing.

Sanday-Headlam—International Critical Commentary (o.s.) (1902)

> This being so, no verdict of "Guilty" goes forth any longer against the Christian. He lives in closest union with Christ. The Spirit of Christ, the medium of that union, with all its life-giving energies, enters and issues its laws from his heart, dispossessing that old usurper Sin, putting an end to its authority and to the fatal results which it brought with it. For where the old system failed, the new system has succeeded. The Law of Moses could not get rid of Sin. The weak place in its action was that

[33] Cranfield also decides to use the old English second-person singular pronouns to distinguish Greek singular from plural second-person pronouns.

our poor human nature was constantly tempted and fell. But now God Himself has interposed by sending the Son of His love to take upon Him that same human nature with all its attributes except sin: in that nature He died to free us from sin: and this Death of His carried with a verdict of condemnation against Sin and of acquittal for its victims; so that from henceforth what the Law lays down as right might be fulfilled by us who regulate our lives not according to the appetites and passions of sense, but at the dictates of the Spirit.[34]

Barrett—Harper's New Testament Commentaries (later changed to Black's New Testament Commentaries) (1957)

It follows therefore that those who are in Christ Jesus fall now under no condemnation whatever. For the religion which is made possible in Christ Jesus, namely that of the life-giving Spirit, liberates from the old religion which is abused by sin and leads to death. For this liberation, which the law could never effect because it was weak through the flesh, God brought about when, by sending his own Son in the form of flesh which had passed under sin's rule, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the law's requirement (that we should be righteous) might be fulfilled in us, whose lives are determined not by the flesh but by the Spirit.[35]

Barrett comments in his Preface, "The translation upon which this commentary is based is my own, and is intended to serve as part of the commentary; that is, I have used it in order to make clear what I think Paul meant."

At the risk of generalizing from insufficient data, it may be no accident that the two commentaries that follow this approach are (relatively) older. While the English-based commentary of Barrett is an obvious exception, older commentaries appear often to assume a very good knowledge of Greek on the part of their readers, making it unnecessary to provide a relatively literal rendering as a basis for comment. The classic commentaries of Lightfoot, for instance, follow this model, with the Greek text printed at the top of the page and a running expanded paraphrase beginning each paragraph of comment.[36]

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[34] William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (5th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 189–90.

[35] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 153. Barrett's reference to the "old religion" helps explain why the so-called "New Perspective" was launched in the first place.

[36] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (10th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1890); *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians*

Nevertheless, when one looks beyond Romans, one finds exceptions to this rule. The translation that Thiselton provides as a basis for his commentary in his NIGTC 1 Corinthians commentary is difficult to locate neatly on the "format equivalent"—"dynamic equivalent" scale, but tends toward the latter. And his explanation would tend to support this conclusion. He says that he has constantly revised his translation as he has worked with the text and interacted with the literature and with standard translations. As a consequence, he claims that he has "consistently explained and defended all differences from these standard versions, with a view to bringing out exegetical conclusions in the translation while retaining the translation as a translation and not as an exegetical paraphrase."[37] And, to continue our focus on NIGTC volumes on the Corinthian correspondence, Murray Harris's *2 Corinthians* gets the best of both worlds: he provides an expanded paraphrase at the end of his commentary while giving in the commentary proper a relatively straightforward but on the whole idiomatic rendering.[38]

The obvious virtue of giving readers what F. F. Bruce calls an "expanded paraphrase" is that it provides an effective means to communicate succinctly and in context many of the exegetical conclusions that the interpreter has reached. Still, as Harris's procedure suggests, such an expanded paraphrase works more effectively as a conclusion than as a starting point.

Commenting on the Text

Commentators almost always refer regularly to other commentaries in their exegetical argument, the number and frequency of such references varying significantly depending on the level and intended audience of the commentary. But appeal to English translations is much more sporadic. Most commentators will refer at least occasionally to renderings in English versions, especially when they are outliers. Some commentators, like Grant Osborne in his three major commentaries (*Matthew, Romans*, and *Revelation*), rarely refer to translations. Others weave them into their comments more extensively. Perhaps the series that most often utilizes

(6th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1881); *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1897).

[37] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), xvi.

[38] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*: *A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), see xiv–xv.

translations in this way is the special Greek-oriented commentaries in the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament, edited by Murray J. Harris (Harris's *Colossians and Philemon* is the only volume published in this series to date, but others are in preparation).[39] But most commentaries do not utilize English translations as much as they could. Three reasons for integrating translations in commentaries more often may be cited.

First, few people outside the professional or scholarly community have access to very many commentaries (if any). But most people reading a commentary at any level will have ready access to a number of English translations, and this access is growing exponentially with the availability of translations in electronic form. Readers of our commentaries will have the ability (perhaps, to be sure, more than the motivation) to check our translation sources even if they cannot check our commentaries.

Second, the major translations are the product of years of collaborative work. To be sure, this process has its disadvantages. The exegesis reflected in a given translation may be ten or more years out of date (depending on when the version was last revised), and the committee process by which translations are produced can sometimes stifle innovation.[40] But the process by which translations are produced also has a distinct advantage: idiosyncratic and faddish views usually don't make it into the translation. By citing a translation, then, the commentator is, in effect, citing support for a particular exegetical option that a number of scholars, often after long discussion, have agreed on. As an example, consider the meaning of the much debated genitive phrase in Gal 3:2, 5, [ἐξ] ἀκοῆς πίστεως. A few scholars think πίστεως could be an objective genitive, with the sense "the

[39] Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon* (rev. ed.; Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament; Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010).

[40] An example I ran across just recently is the textual-critical decision in Mark 1:41. Most of the English versions continue to assume the reading σπλαχνισθείς, hence, e.g., "moved with pity" (ESV)—which, to be sure, is the text printed in UBSGNT^4 and NA^{27}. But eight of the most recent commentators I checked in a totally unscientific sample all supported the variant ὀργισθείς (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 86; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* [CGTC; Cambridge: University Press, 1966], 92; Hooker, *Mark*, 79–80; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* [WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989], 72; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 70; Robert H. Stein, *Mark* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 105–6; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 206; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* ([NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 115). Yet only NIV (2011) and CEB (2010) use this reading in their texts.

message that evokes faith."[41] But the sparse support among scholars for this view is matched by the lack of support from any major translation. Most scholars take the genitive in some kind of loose attributive sense, dividing over whether ἀκοή means "the thing heard" or "hearing." Each of these options has good support from English translations, the former in NIV ("believing what you heard"), NRSV, NLT, NET, NJB, CEB, and the latter in RSV ("hearing with faith"), ESV, NASB, HCSB. Citing translations provides the reader with a good sense of the options.

Third, the translations found in English translations can often be an effective way of communicating the exegetical decision reached by a commentator and comes with a bit more authority than if the commentator simply used his or her own rendering. In my commentary on Colossians, for instance, I note the compact nature of the Greek Paul uses in Col 2:20—Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου—and suggest that the NLT (the version Grant has had significant involvement with) captures Paul's intention very accurately: "You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the evil powers of this world."[42]

The use of translations to track exegetical issues has its limitations. Certain exegetical issues are not capable of being expressed in English translation. Even more difficult are those places where one might think a translation embodies an exegetical decision when, in fact, it does not. The debated ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Col 2:11 is a case in point. Many English versions (RSV; NRSV; ESV; NAB; NASB; HCSB) render "circumcision of Christ" ("the Messiah" in HCSB), and I would argue that this English phrase would most naturally be read as suggesting an objective genitive interpretation ("the circumcision performed on Christ"). Yet most of the translation committees responsible for these renderings, I would guess, translated this way because they thought (mistakenly in my view) that this allegedly "literal" rendering simply captured in English the ambiguity of the Greek.

Despite the limitations, however, I think that commentators working at all levels would be well advised to integrate translations more often into their exegetical argument.

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41 See, e.g, Andrew A. Das, "Oneness in Christ: The *Nexus Indivulsus* between Justification and Sanctification in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Concordia Journal* 21 (1995) 173–86.

42 Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 233.

GENRE IN RECENT NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Craig L. Blomberg[1]

1. *Gospels*

Already in the late 1970s, when he was a new, young lecturer at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, my wife and I both benefited as students in Grant Osborne's classes from his unusual emphasis (for that era) on genre in the study of hermeneutics. Grant would later author numerous important publications on this topic.[2] It is fitting, thus, to dedicate an essay in this *Festschrift* to the topic of genre criticism in recent commentary introductions.

The Synoptic Gospels

Mark

Virtually all recent commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels adopt Markan priority,[3] so it is appropriate to begin our survey here. Writers who address genre in any detail still typically note that Mark is the first person known to have taken εὐαγγέλιον ("good news") and turned it into a description of a written narrative.[4] For some that is adequate generic classification or reason to view Mark as *sui generis*. Often this means that kerygma overshadows historical report.[5] But the trend today is decisively in the direction of finding Mark significantly akin to some form of Greco-Roman biography.[6] This identification still leaves considerable room,

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[1] I profusely thank my research assistants, Tim Gabrielson and Erin Swanstrom, for summarizing the main points on genre in the introductions to almost ¾ and almost ¼ of the English-language commentaries surveyed, respectively.

[2] Beginning with the too little known article, "Genre Criticism: Sensus Literalis," *TrinJ* 4 (1983): 1–27.

[3] An exception is C. S. Mann, *Mark* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 5–7, adopting the Griesbach hypothesis, who sees the genre as mostly unique.

[4] E.g. Rupert Feneberg, *Der Jude Jesus und die Heide: Biographie und Theologie Jesu im Markusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 13–17.

[5] See the survey in Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (EKK; Zurich: Benziger, 1978), 1:22–24.

[6] E.g., Simon Légasse, *L'Évangile de Marc* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 29–34, who nevertheless finds four key distinctives: the effect of the personality of Jesus as Son of God, the goal of

however, for divergent opinions as to how much reliable history actually appears in the earliest Gospel. Attempts to be more precise may point to historical monographs, focusing on single individuals, which legitimated and defined the succession of Jewish prophets like Jeremiah or lives of the emperors or eminent philosophers,[7] particularly because they account for Mark's frequent thematic arrangement of material and for his disproportionate focus on certain parts of Jesus' life, especially the road to the cross. Others focus on Mark's constituent literary forms to draw parallels with popular biographies, such as his use of *chreia*, as in Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia*.[8]

Recent Markan commentaries surveying genre in any detail will typically canvass approaches that have seen this Gospel as akin to a drama, particularly a tragedy (assuming its original end to have been 16:8), a novel, a parable, an apocalypse (especially in view of chapter 13), or a liturgy of some kind.[9] Oral features and forms of narrative have again become of interest,[10] as strictly redactional and literary approaches that supplemented older form criticism now seem to have peaked. The occasional commentator will make a very specific proposal, such as "narrative Christology" (rejecting the trend toward biography) or "historical biography" (restricting the fictional liberty given to some biographers).[11]

Matthew

Not surprisingly, once Mark used "gospel" in his opening sentence, and other early Christians composed documents generically similar to Mark's, it was natural that they should all be called Gospels. Some commentators

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instilling faith in him, the greater resemblance to *Kleinliteratur* than to *Hochliteratur*, and the mode of composition that highlights theological lessons. Cf. Mary Healy, *The Gospel of Mark* (CCSS; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 25–26, who offers the caveats that the Gospels are unique in that the subject of the biography is believed to still be alive and active for the readers; they were written in conscious continuity with the Old Testament, and written not for general interest but specifically for Christian communities.

[7] E.g., Wilfrid Eckey, *Das Markusevangelium: Orientierung am Weg Jesu* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1998), 24–27. Adela Y. Collins' distinctively thorough survey (*Mark* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 15–44) concludes that Mark is an eschatological historical monograph.

[8] John Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict* (NT Readings KY; London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 10–11.

[9] E.g., Joel B. Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB: New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1:64–69.

[10] E.g., Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark* (RNT; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 2.

[11] See, respectively, M. Eugene Boring, *Mark* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 6–9; and Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 19–21.

are reasonably content to leave it at that,[12] but most pursue one of the further options discussed above in conjunction with Mark. Because of Matthew's extensive didactic material, the ideologically purposive nature of ancient biographies, and the large amounts of teaching ascribed to Jesus, Greco-Roman biographical writing comes even more quickly to mind.[13] Assuming Matthew both utilized and modified Mark, it is equally natural for proposals of mixes or combinations of genres to appear, even more commonly than with Mark. Davies and Allison speak of "an omnibus of genres,"[14] while Hagner views Matthew as primarily a gospel, then akin to Hellenistic βίοι ("lives") but subordinately encompassing midrash, lectionary, catechesis, church correctives, missionary propaganda, and polemic against the rabbis.[15]

Because of Matthew's retelling of Mark's narrative—steeped in considerably more quotations and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, akin to Second Temple Jewish rewriting of Torah in, for example, the *Genesis Apocryphon* or *Jubilees*—midrash has proved particularly popular as either Matthew's full-fledged genre or at least a governing set of techniques. Robert Gundry clarified in the second edition of his controversial commentary that he was not using the expression in the former sense, only in the latter,[16] but even then it is difficult to see the process in Matthew as pervasively as he does, as playing as loose with historical accuracy as he suggests, or as central to first-century Judaism (as compared with later rabbinic Judaism) as he implies.[17] A second influential, very specific proposal has been that of encomium or encomiastic biography, written to praise a hero, and focusing "on an individual's life with the aim

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[12] E.g., Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1:13–18, but only after significant discussion of the alternatives.

[13] E.g., Michael Mullins, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Dublin: Columba, 2007), 13–19.

[14] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (ICC 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 1:3.

[15] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993), lvii–lix. John Nolland (*The Gospel of Matthew* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 19–22) reviews proposals involving biography, Old Testament lives, Christian proclamation, a manual for discipleship, midrash, Christian self-definition and liturgy, finding elements of most of these but concluding that "Matthew seems to have understood himself to be creating a foundational text to which people would feel the need to return again and again" (p. 22).

[16] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 599; cf. ibid., 623–40.

[17] Cf. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised* (eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 63–66.

of exposing what was essential to that person's being."[18] Featured in this endeavor was an emphasis on what a person said as best revealing his or her character, especially by way of virtues or vices.[19]

Even more so with Mark, the debate between Greco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds, with their respective array of genres, comes to the fore, because Matthew's clear resemblance to biographical forms is most readily illustrated from the Hellenistic world but he is also the most Jewish of all four Gospels, stylistically, and in his use of the Old Testament. Predictably, some commentators thus opt for a "both-and" approach rather than pitting one versus the other.[20] Howard Clarke offers an extensive but excellent definition, complete with its significance, in his commentary on Matthew, which actually applies well to the genre of all four Gospels. It consists of:

> history and biography as interpretive narrative, as apology, as faith-confession, even propaganda (in a positive sense) ... The story it tells, though generally chronological, is often fragmented, discontinuous, and episodic, reflecting the various incidents of Jesus' life and preaching as they were recalled by those who had known him during his ministry, passed along orally or preserved in various literary formats ... and finally recorded by the four evangelists in full conviction of the reality of the resurrection and the divinity of Jesus ... But however inconsistent, implausible, or tendentious the narratives may seem, no one has ever produced any factual evidence to prove that what the evangelists report of Jesus' public life did not happen, and that creation of modern scholarship, the elusive "Jesus of history," though often advertised as the "real" Jesus, stepping out from behind the ecclesiastical façade of myth and dogma, too often turns out to be the Jesus of whatever revisionist feels tempted to reinterpret the gospels.[21]

Gnilka, finally, incorporates Mark's sense of gospel, the purpose of interaction with the synagogue, a kind of catechism and liturgy, a churchbook, ancient biography, but also Old Testament-like (esp., Deuteronomistic) history, in a synthesis of Hebrew Scripture and Christian tradition so that "Mt schreibt die Geschichte Jesu Christi als Geschichte des Gottesvolkes."[22]

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[18] Esp. C. H. Talbert, *Matthew* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 6, building on his earlier monographs.

[19] Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (SHBC; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 11–12.

[20] E.g., Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 30–31.

[21] Howard Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), xvii.

[22] Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 2:526–30, with quotation on p. 530.

Luke

As with Matthew, it is clear that Luke first of all follows Mark in his newly created hybrid form of "Gospel."[23] But his penning Acts as a sequel, in keeping with Conzelmann's famous thesis, makes Luke also the first true Christian historian, and his use of so many *chreiai*, apophthegms, *gnomoi*, and other discrete episodes from the life of Jesus creates a particularly close parallel to Hellenistic philosophical biography.[24] As with the more specific subgenres proposed for Mark and Matthew, this identification still leaves room for a wide spectrum of opinion as to Luke's historical reliability.[25] Again, as with Matthew, many commentators settle for some mix of pure genres, including those which reflect both Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds.[26]

C. H. Talbert's thesis that Luke and Acts together create a Greco-Roman biography, replete with the protagonist's teachings often thematically arranged, followed by a succession narrative that legitimates the apostolic communities, has proved particularly influential.[27] More idiosyncratic are views that see a significant element of aretalogy present or that question whether Luke's readership would have thought of any established genre at all.[28] Occasionally, Loveday Alexander's thesis concerning Luke's prologue is endorsed to support Luke's having penned "scientific literature" or "technical prose" rather than historiography *per se*.[29] Luke Johnson, on the other hand, argues that despite superficial parallels to Greco-Roman biography, Luke's emphasis on the Gospel as the fulfillment of the story of Israel shows that it must be apologetic history, comparing it to such contemporary Jewish literature as the *Letter of Aristeas*,

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[23] Curiously denied by Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium* (KEKNT, rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 43–44, who suggests instead a repository for catechesis.

[24] Walter Radl, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 1,1–9,50* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 17–19.

[25] Jacob Kremer, *Lukasevangelium* (NEB; Würzburg: Echter, 1988), 9–10, thinks Luke took great latitudes to include fictional embellishments or free representation akin to Josephus in his work. John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas: Word, 1989), xxxi, recognizes this spectrum but comes to much more conservative conclusions, passage-by-passage throughout his three-volume work.

[26] E.g., François Bovon, *Luke 1* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 5: "more than a historical monograph and . . . reminiscent of Jewish historiography."

[27] C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke, rev. ed.* (RNT; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 2–4.

[28] See, respectively, Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, rev. 1988), 4; and Walter L. Liefeld and David Pao, "Luke," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10 (2007), 21, although they go on briefly to list several of the common suggestions.

[29] E.g., Herman Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 1:3.

Philo's *Hypothetica, Against Flaccus* and *Embassy to Gaius*, Josephus's *Against Apion, Jewish War* and *Antiquities* and fragments of Artapanus and Eupolemus.[30]

John

Readers merely comparing John and the Synoptics naturally wonder if the Fourth Gospel can be grouped with the other three in the same genre. But a comparison with the apocryphal and Gnostic Gospels of the second through fifth centuries, not to mention any other literature of the ancient Mediterranean world, makes it clear that John is more like Matthew, Mark and Luke than any other extant document. It, too, is a historical narrative of real people, centering on Jesus, who lived in Israel in the first third of the first century.[31] Thus the same debates about the varying quantities of kerygma and history recur with John as with the Synoptics, although conclusions here generally favor kerygma outweighing history much more than with the first three Gospels.[32] The most recent round of commentaries, however, is following the trend to see all four Gospels as a kind of βίος, one subgenre of Hellenistic biography.

Perhaps to account for John's significantly different structure and contents, some commentaries resort to improbable proposals. Thomas Brodie finds multiple layers of allusions to discrete, consecutive segments of Old Testament texts creating a midrashic form akin to proposals that have been made for Matthew and Luke, but not adopted by their commentators.[33] Peter Ellis believes he can discern one giant chiasm with multiple sub-chiasms.[34] More plausible are theories that view John as writing something along the lines of a Greek drama, while still using historical subjects in his composition.[35]

The fullest treatment of the various possible genres of John, with a robust defense of his overall trustworthiness by the historical and biographical

[30] Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 9–10.

[31] E.g., Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium* (TKNT: Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 31–32.

[32] E.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (3 vols.; New York; Herder & Herder, 1968), 1:1–24.

[33] Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[34] Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984), 16–18.

[35] E.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Glasgow: Basingstoke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 50, likens John's relation to the Synoptics to that of Shakespeare's treatment of Marc Antony's eulogy compared with Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*.

standards of his day, appears in the commentary by Craig Keener, who uses those very terms to label John a "historical biography."[36] Where John can be tested, he can consistently be corroborated or at least shows a high degree of historical verisimilitude. Where he cannot be tested, the surprisingly strong case for eyewitness authorship by the son of Zebedee, if not of the final draft of the Gospel at least represented behind large parts of it, speaks strongly for historical accuracy. John's narrative freedom and distinctive style come to a large degree from his sense of being inspired by the Spirit, the Paraclete, which at the same time supports historical and theological trustworthiness.[37]

2. *Acts*

As the sequel to Luke, Acts receives many of the same kinds of comments as the Third Gospel does and as the Synoptics in general do. But because there is no single human character who dominates as protagonist in Acts in the way Jesus does in the Gospels, a much larger percentage of commentators opt for a historical monograph, apologetic historiography or the like, rather than biography, for the genre of Acts.[38] Proposals of mixed genres again abound.[39] The formal Greek genre of πράξεις comes from a later date, so this word by itself should not overly restrict how one understands the Acts of the Apostles, as it came to be entitled at an earlier time.[40] Viewing Acts as some form of history, however, again discloses little about how much of the narrative a given commentator deems reliable. Virtually all quickly add that Acts is theological as well as historical, usually stressing that the theological purposes outweigh the historical intentions.[41] Others, including Ben Witherington, whose analysis is the

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[36] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:3–52.

[37] Ibid., 1:81–122. On the latter point, see also throughout Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

[38] E.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 48.

[39] F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 13–14, sees partial parallels in Sallust's *Roman History*, the Deuteronomistic history in the Old Testament, Josephus's apologetics in *Antiquities*, and novelistic elements in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia: Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 15, believes the mixed genre thesis is becoming the consensus position.

[40] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1–3.

[41] E.g., Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1986), 1:23.

most in-depth, focus on how the closest parallels are those Greco-Roman histories usually assessed as most factually trustworthy.[42]

Particularly idiosyncratic is Richard Pervo's major, recent Hermeneia volume, which develops his career-long interest in Acts as a largely fictional novel. But, unlike Witherington, and other important evangelical scholarship on the topic, Pervo rarely engages in comparative analysis with the full range of possible parallels, but just stresses ways in which Acts *could* be perceived as akin to more romantic Greco-Roman genres. More plausibly, but still distinctively, Franz Mussner sees Acts as a salvation-historically oriented "missions chronicle" (*Missionschronik*) that documents the gradual process of the early church's separation from Israel.[43]

Again, as with the Synoptics, studies also need to balance these emphases by including Jewish literature in their comparisons, especially Jewish historiography. Although Jacob Jervell consistently overestimates how Jewish and non-Hellenistic Acts and its author are, he does adequately defend his overall thesis concerning genre, which insists that whatever other elements one might want to stress (and in his survey he lists historiography, historical monograph, biography, historical novel, apocryphal apostolic history, praxeis-literature or aretalogy, travel narrative and apologetics), what must remain decisive is that Luke is writing the continuation of the story of Israel—of *biblical* history. More specifically, Acts reflects tragic history writing, in the literary sense of the term, focusing on fruitful and lively characters who end up suffering.[44] David Peterson may well capture the best balance, with his healthy confidence in Acts's historical reliability despite its theological purposiveness when he encourages us to see the closest parallels to Acts in the best of both Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish historiography.[45]

3. *Paul's Letters*

Unlike the Gospels and Acts, the Pauline epistles have not received nearly as much detailed attention by recent commentators with respect

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[42] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4–20.

[43] Franz Mussner, *Apostelgeschichte* (NEB; 2nd ed.; Würzburg: Echter, 1988), 9.

[44] Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEKNT; rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 76–79.

[45] David G. Peterson *The Acts of the Apostles* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 8–15.

to specific genres. This is surprising, given the flurry of discussion in other secondary literature in the last couple of decades. Most commentaries still seem content to talk about the basic difference between a formal literary epistle and more informal letters noting that Paul's writing usually fits somewhere in between.[46] Only a minority take a stab at identifying a given Pauline epistle with one of the many subgenres of letters defined in the various ancient handbooks.

Romans

A few recent commentaries have tried to preserve an older equation of Romans with diatribe,[47] but most today recognize that this is better seen as a style or figure of speech comprising certain parts of the letter, not a full subgenre encompassing the entire document.[48] A few also continue to employ a label that suggests something about the unusual length, theological detail or systematic structure, such as treatise, letter-essay or literary dialogue.[49] Those who think all the chronologically subsequent letters attributed to Paul are most likely pseudonymous (and who date Philippians early) can imagine the document as Paul's final "testament," full of themes from his previous letters, creating a "concluding recapitulation" (*zusammenfassende Wiederholung*).[50] Most profitable and plausible of all is Robert Jewett's thesis, adopted by a handful of others, that Romans is an ambassadorial letter, a kind of letter of introduction, in this case to Paul's understanding of the gospel, paving the way for his hoped-for arrival to Rome to minister in and with the church there.[51]

1 and 2 Corinthians

Even more so than with Romans, most commentators are content to conclude that the Corinthian epistles defy the standard subclassifications of

46 Slightly differently, Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, "Romans," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* vol. 11 (2007): 26–27, argue against a supposed distinction between "epistle" and "letter" with respect to Paul's writings and believe that all of his documents mix aspects of private letters and public epistles.

47 E.g., Luke T. Johnson, *Reading Romans* (RNT; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 12–13.

48 E.g., John P. Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 9–10.

49 For all three suggestions, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), lix.

50 Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK; Zurich: Benziger, 1978), 1:47–48.

51 Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 42–46.

letters or that they are a "smorgasbord of genres."[52] Other proposals create labels that state the obvious and in no way advance the interpretive process.[53] Once in a great while a commentary will actually make a helpful proposal. Joseph Fitzmyer, for example, surveys and rejects attempts to identify 1 Corinthians as a friendship letter or a deliberative letter, opting instead to follow the cue from Paul's use of νουθετέω in 4:14 and assigning the Epistle to the category of "*typos nouthetikos*, an admonition intended to instill proper action in the person(s) so counseled."[54] Murray Harris observes that "a wide range of interpreters recognize that 2 Corinthians as a whole is essentially an *apologia*, a defense of the apostolic and pastoral ministry in general and of Paul's apostolic authority in particular." But he breaks down the letter into its three major segments, observing that apology dominates in chapters 1–7, whereas chapters 8–9 are hortatory and 10–13 polemical.[55] Implications emerge both for the overall unity of the letter and for the likelihood of Paul having dictated it in stages, interrupted en route by fresh information from Corinth.

Galatians

Unlike the letters just surveyed, Galatians scholarship has been dominated by one central proposal and responses to it: Hans Dieter Betz's assessment of this epistle as an apologetic letter.[56] Already by 1990, the direction of reaction was clear—cautious acceptance of the subgenre.[57] Recent evangelical commentators have seemed unnecessarily suspicious of Betz's identification, given the striking number of details Betz musters

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[52] E.g., respectively, Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 7; and Jerry W. McCant, *2 Corinthians* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 16.

[53] E.g., 1 Corinthians is an "apostolic letter" (Helmut Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* [ÖTKNT; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus; Würzburg: Echter, 1992], 43–46); 2 Corinthians is "an appeal for concord, which seeks to calm the outbreak of faction by dissuading from strife and exhorting to harmony" (James M. Scott, *2 Corinthians* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998], 4).

[54] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians* (AB; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 55–56.

[55] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 46.

[56] Hans D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 14–25.

[57] Cf. the survey of responses in Bruno Corsani, *Lettera ai Galati* (Genova: Marietti, 1990), 32–38; and the affirmation of this perspective by Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC: Dallas: Word, 1990), ci–civ.

that fit the requisite pattern of an apologetic letter.[58] Witherington follows Hansen in preferring to view Galatians as a "rebuke-request letter,"[59] but the accompanying outline avoids the major break generally seen between chapters four and five, so it is not clear that this label is preferable.

Prison Epistles

Few commentaries on Ephesians even broach the topic of any subgenre of epistle for it, while perhaps arguing for or against it being a true letter.[60] Gnilka surveys the major proposals in German scholarship, including a *Mysterienrede*, disclosing the kind of special wisdom Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 that he taught the mature, baptismal instruction, and a theoretical, theological treatise (*theoretische theologische Abhandlung*). Gnilka himself opts for a liturgical homily sent in the form of a letter, not just for baptizands but for the whole church as members are encouraged to think back to their baptisms in order to reflect on their ecclesiology.[61] More recent and perhaps more promising is the suggestion that Ephesians functions more like an encomium, declaring the praises of a benefactor (in this case God in Christ) and then outlining the resulting responsibilities of the recipients of his blessings.[62]

Philippians receives a little more treatment than Ephesians. Those who have proposed a subcategory of epistle have typically found it to be a friendship letter.[63] Closely related are the categories of a family letter and a letter of consolation.[64] Charles Cousar actually argues against considering it a friendship letter and prefers to view it as a letter of encouragement and a thank-you note.[65] Dean Flemming rejects the form of friendship

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58 E.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 52–58; Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians* [PCS; Blandford: Deo, 2007), 6–7.

59 Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 36–41.

60 E.g., Felice Montagnini, *Lettera agli Efesini* (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1994), 6–8, arguing that it is a true letter even if it presents itself in the forms of dialogue, discourse, and drama.

61 Joachim Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief* (HTKNT, rev.; Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 32–33.

62 E.g., Gerhard Sellin, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 52–53; Bonnie B. Thurston, *Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians* (RNT; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 90 (preferring the term "panegyric," i.e., a "festal address praising someone, in this case, God").

63 E.g., G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 6–12.

64 For a survey of all three options, see Bonnie B. Thurston, *Philippians and Philemon* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2005), 34–35.

65 Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon* (NTL; Louisville, KY: WJK, 2009), 11–12.

letter as well, given the complete absence of actual friendship language. In so doing he also dismisses the categories of family letters and letters of consolation, but without giving any reasons, opting instead for a more general letter of exhortation with other forms mixed in.[66] Given the close correspondence in form between Philippians and a family letter, perhaps this subgenre should remain as the preferred classification, even if no major commentary has fully endorsed Loveday Alexander's seemingly persuasive identification.[67]

Colossians and Philemon, usually treated together in commentary series, receive almost no analysis with respect to subgenres. Barth and Blanke do observe that Colossians has been viewed as "a refutation, an apology, a dialogue, and a pastoral essay." Rejecting all of these, they conclude: "The letter should be taken at face value: it is a pastoral confession and exhortation designed to meet the need of a congregation in acute danger."[68] Ingrid Maisch, on the other hand, calls Colossians a "warning writing" (*Mahnschreiben*),[69] but it is not obvious that this applies equally well to all parts of the letter. Many writers note that Philemon is the one truly personal letter in the Pauline correspondence,[70] but with the likelihood of it being designed to be read aloud in a house church, it still isn't quite just that. There are striking similarities in contents to a letter from Pliny to Sabinianus (*Letters* 9. 21),[71] but the form there is one of *deprecatio*, which does not apply to Philemon.[72] Given both the contents and tone, It is best to view Philemon as a letter of recommendation or even as an official petition within the form of a request letter.[73]

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[66] Dean Flemming, *Philippians* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2009), 30–33.

[67] Loveday Alexander, "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians," *JSNT* 37 (1989): 87–101.

[68] Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 42, 44.

[69] Ingrid Maisch, *Der Brief an die Gemeinde in Kolossä* (TKNT; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 26.

[70] E.g., Ernest D. Martin, *Colossians, Philemon* (BCBC; Scottdale: Herald, 1993), 241; Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville; Abingdon, 2000), 125, though she assumes 2 Timothy is pseudepigraphal in order to make this claim.

[71] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an Philemon* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1975), 25.

[72] Joachim Gnilka, *Der Philemonbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 10–12.

[73] E.g., respectively, Peter Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon* (PKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 59–64, who gives numerous parallels from the papyri; and Hans Hübner, *An Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser* (HNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 22.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Almost no genre analysis appeared in Thessalonians commentaries until Charles Wanamaker's ground-breaking NIGTC volume in 1990. Wanamaker identifies 1 Thessalonians as primarily a parenetic (exhortational) letter, mixed with elements of encomium or praise. Second Thessalonians, in light of the changed circumstances behind it, falls more into the category of a letter of advice.[74] Unfortunately, not much has been done since Wanamaker either. Malherbe agrees that the two epistles have parenetic or hortatory functions combined with more pastoral elements, as does Gaventa.[75] Michael Martin focuses more on the elements of affirmation and encouragement, while Gene Green speaks of mixed genres.[76] Those who believe in the pseudonymity of 2 Thessalonians often highlight its apocalyptic elements, because apocalypses were typically pseudonymous.[77]

Pastoral Epistles

Although little was done with the genre of the Pastorals until even more recently, Luke Johnson demonstrated how the recognition of a specific form of letter could produce major interpretive consequences. By identifying 1 Timothy and Titus as mandate letters, akin to instructions from civic rulers to their subordinate officials, and 2 Timothy as a personal parenetic letter, Johnson provided credible explanations for the differences in style and content between the Pastorals and the rest of the Pauline corpus, and within the Pastorals between 1 Timothy/Titus and 2 Timothy.[78] In so doing, a major plank in the platform for the pseudonymity of these epistles was removed. Jeremias had already adopted somewhat similar

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[74] Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 46–48.

[75] Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 85, 361; Beverly R. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 5.

[76] D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 47; Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 72–73.

[77] Esp. Linda M. Bridges, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (SHBC; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 194–201.

[78] See throughout Luke T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NT in Context; Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996); cf. idem, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB; New York and London: Doubleday, 2001), 46–47; and I. Howard Marshall with Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 12. More cautiously, see also Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 33–36.

logic when he branded 1 Timothy and Titus as "official writings" (*amtliche Schreiben*).[79] On the other hand, those who insist on viewing the Pastorals as pseudepigraphal will bolster their case by alleging that the Pastorals more resemble the Apostolic Fathers, especially the letters of Ignatius, than the undisputed Paulines.[80] Whatever one thinks of Marshall's reconfiguration of pseudonymity into the more benign "allonymity," Philip Towner and he have shown that the Pastorals' contents and theology better fit an early second half of the first century milieu than an early second century one.[81] On any view of authorship, 2 Timothy also clearly shares elements of Paul's final "testament" or farewell address.[82]

4. *The Non-Pauline Letters*

Hebrews and the General Epistles have often had a little more attention paid to their genre, simply because most of them do not quite as clearly demonstrate the complete outline or structure of a standard Hellenistic letter.

Hebrews

Hebrews "begins like a treatise, proceeds like a sermon, and closes like an epistle."[83] Most commentators focus on the λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως in 13:22, identical to the description of a sermon in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:15, and take Hebrews to be a sermon or homily sent to the recipients as a letter.[84] Nuancing this slightly, it may be better to speak of a letter with homiletic elements or composed of a series of smaller homiletic components.[85] Given the pervasive use and interpretation of

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79 Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 3.

80 E.g., Lorenz Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 1:xxiv.

81 Marshall with Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 52–108.

82 E.g., Alfons Weiser, *Der Zweite Brief an Timotheus* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Dusseldorf: Benziger, 2003), 34–39. Weiser also finds elements of a friendship letter present in 2 Timothy.

83 Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 20, citing H. E. Dana.

84 Classically, William L. Lane, *Call to Commitment: Responding to the Message of Hebrews* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 15–20; later incorporated throughout idem, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC; Dallas: Word, 1991).

85 E.g., R. T. France, "Hebrews," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 13 (2006), 20, 25–27.

the Old Testament, a few speak of the genre as homiletic midrash.[86] Given the five main warning passages, several writers label Hebrews a "warning speech" (*Mahnrede*).[87] In light of the diversity of older proposals—essay, treatise, oration, biblical exposition and exhortation—David Allen stresses the document's mixed genre.[88]

James

Opposite to Hebrews, James begins like a letter but does not end like one. In between, there are again homiletic and midrashic elements.[89] Kurt Richardson's overview itemizes the major proposals that have characterized studies of James' genre and opts for a mixture of all of them: a circular letter, a diatribe, a parenetic letter and a document of Jewish wisdom.[90] Recent attempts to be more specific have tended to liken James to an "apostolic letter to the diaspora," akin to Jewish leaders' pre-Christian letters meant to reach Jews outside of Israel throughout the ancient Mediterranean world.[91] Unfortunately, the only examples from this period that we have of this "genre" are as literary forms within larger documents, and the actual evidence from this early a date points to specific Jewish-Christian audiences much more than "diaspora-wide" influence. More helpful are proposals that focus on James as "proptreptic" discourse (a subcategory of the parenetic letter that focuses on exhortation developed by means of extended argumentation, often with vivid illustrations).[92]

1 and 2 Peter, Jude

First Peter both begins and ends like a letter, and 1:1 makes it clearly an encyclical. Older theories of its origin in baptismal catechesis or liturgy[93] have largely been abandoned. Proposals involving an apostolic letter to

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86 E.g., George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (AB; 2nd ed.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), xix.

87 E.g., Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1990), 1:15.

88 David L. Allen, *Hebrews* (NAC; Nashville: B & H, 2010), 23–25.

89 See esp. Pablo A. Deiros, *Santiago, Judas* (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 1992), 26–29.

90 Kurt A. Richardson, *James* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 27–29.

91 E.g., Dan McCartney, *James* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 39–40.

92 Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 29, 32.

93 Associated particularly with E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, rev. 1947).

the diaspora[94] face the same problems that such theories for James did. But other than general parenesis, no other specific subgenres have commanded any recurring support. Witherington thinks of it just as an "ad hoc pastoral document."[95] Second Peter is almost certainly a final testament or farewell speech in the form of a letter, as Richard Bauckham has demonstrated in detail,[96] though that does not necessarily entail the pseudonymity for which he argues.[97] Jude is primarily a midrashic letter, reminiscent of some of the *pesharim* at Qumran,[98] with elements of apocalyptic.[99]

1, 2 and 3 John

The First Epistle of John baffles commentators as much as any New Testament document. Neither beginning nor ending like a letter, its structure is equally difficult to discern. Smalley likens it to a "paper or brochure,"[100] while Strecker calls it a homily.[101] Other suggestions have included an enchiridion ("an instruction booklet for applying the tradition in disturbing circumstances"),[102] a treatise or essay,[103] or an informal commentary on the Gospel of John.[104] On the other hand, 2 and 3 John fall into the classic, short personal or private letter form, although 2 John is usually understood as addressing a house church with that form.[105] Third John by contrast really *is* written to a single individual, Gaius. Elements of a parenetic letter are intermingled in 2 John as well, and elements of letters of recommendation and blame in 3 John.[106]

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[94] E.g., Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2008), 30–32.

[95] Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 2: *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1–2 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23.

[96] Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 131 et passim.

[97] See esp. Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 143–49.

[98] Anton Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief, der zweite Petrusbrief* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Düsseldorf: Benziger, 1994), 3–4.

[99] E.g., Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter and Jude* (NTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 148–49.

[100] Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (WBC: Waco, TX: Word, 1984), xxx.

[101] Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 3.

[102] Kenneth Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 4.

[103] Donald W. Burdick, *The Letters of John the Apostle* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 68–70.

[104] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Der erste Johannesbrief* (EKK; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1991), 31.

[105] E.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 267.

[106] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Der zweite und dritte Johannesbrief* (EKK; Zurich: Benziger, 1992), 16.

5. *Revelation*

Given the widely varying interpretations of the last book of the Bible, one might be surprised to learn that there is virtual unanimity on its tripartite genre (apocalypse, prophecy, and letter, including the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 as subforms),[107] on the definition of apocalypse (the definition of the Apocalypse Group of the SBL Genres Project having almost become canonical),[108] and on key distinctives of Revelation from most other apocalypses. Eduard Lohse nicely summarizes the major similarities and differences: like other ancient Mediterranean apocalypses, Revelation builds on shorter prophetic words to create a full-fledged survey of history with a crisis at the end and hostility, or perceived hostility, against believers that only God's supernatural intervention can rectify, ushering in paradisiacal conditions. The angelic and demonic realms do battle. Truth is disclosed in visions and dreams, with heavenly secrets revealed to a seer and warnings and encouragements to God's people to persevere. Unlike other apocalypses, Revelation is not pseudonymous or pessimistic, it is addressed to specific and identifiable audiences, it is explicitly messianic, not sealed up only for future generations, not surveying all of past history (or *ex eventu*) and given in the age of the arrival of the fullness of the eschaton.[109]

Beasley-Murray's comparison of the apocalyptic dimension to political cartoons has also proved influential,[110] as has Roloff's emphasis on metaphorical language, numerical speculation, and the interrelation of vision and interpretive meanings.[111] More speculative, though still plausible, is James Blevins' suggestion that Revelation is a drama in seven acts.[112] Intriguingly, the classic dispensationalist and the staunchly covenantal

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[107] For a particularly full and helpful treatment, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word, 1997), lxxi–xc.

[108] "'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."—J. J. Collins, "Introduction: Toward the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9. Cf. also Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT: Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 14.

[109] Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (NTD; rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 3–4.

[110] George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1974), 14–19.

[111] Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 3–5.

[112] James L. Blevins, *Revelation as Drama* (Nashville: Broadman, 1984).

theologians join hands in altogether rejecting an apocalyptic dimension of Revelation in favor of pure prophecy.[113] Merely idiosyncratic is Bruce Malina's proposal that the document forms "astral prophecy."[114]

6. *Conclusion*

Because of Revelation's unique blend of forms and interpretive difficulties, its commentaries will most consistently deal with matters of genre. Next most common will be commentaries on the Gospels, particularly due to the history vs. theology debate. Acts gets slightly less treatment, perhaps because some authors leave that to studies of Luke. The non-Pauline letters typically get inadequate treatment, but still more than the Pauline epistles do. In part due to debates on the influences of oral rhetoric rather than written epistolography and in part because many of them defy easy classification, the majority of commentaries on the New Testament letters still give genre short shrift in their introductions. But they have made significant strides in recent years, so perhaps we can look forward to better things still to come.

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113 See, respectively, Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 1:23–29; and David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; Horn Lake, MS: Dominion Press, 2006), 10–20.

114 Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 2–4.

HISTORICAL COMPETENCE OF NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Douglas S. Huffman[1]

1. *Introduction: Historical Competence in New Testament Commentaries*

"The writing of biblical commentaries has always been, and will always be, an important datum of Christian experience, arising as it does from the interaction of heart and mind, of piety and inquiry." Richard Longenecker goes on to describe how commentaries have historically been a tool of the Christian church to face times of change and growth—whether from prosperity and advancement or from difficulty and challenge. "At such times the writing of commentaries has been undertaken not only with the hope of achieving a better explication of what the biblical writers originally said and meant, but also of effecting within the contemporary Christian community something of a consensus regarding the import of their message and how that message should impact the thought and actions of Christians in our day."[2] Ernest Best describes commentaries as

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[1] Douglas S. Huffman was a student of Grant R. Osborne in the late 1980's and early 1990's at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he completed an M.A. in Christian Thought (1989) and a Ph.D. in New Testament Exegesis and Theology (1994). After teaching for nearly two decades at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minnesota, Huffman now serves at Talbot School of Theology as associate dean of the undergraduate division of biblical and theological studies for Biola University in La Mirada, California. This essay is offered with gratitude for the scholarship and instruction of Osborne and for the helpfulness of Northwestern College student David Danielson II for his gathering of resources for this project.

[2] Richard N. Longenecker, "On the Writing of Biblical Commentaries, with Particular Reference to Commentaries on Romans," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald* (ed. William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 74–92, quotation, 74. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, "The Genre of the Biblical Commentary as Problem and Challenge," in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 185–92, esp. 185–86. For a brief history of commentary writing, noting both Jewish and Graeco-Roman antecedents to patristic commentaries on the Gospels (and the ability of patristic commentaries to be both academic and pastoral), see Markus Bockmuehl, "The Making of Gospel Commentaries," in *The Written Gospel* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 274–95.

"the backbone of all serious study of scripture."[3] So then, with a tendency to lean on commentaries, the Church should certainly demand competence of these important tools for understanding the Scriptures.

1.1 *The Importance of Historical Competence in New Testament Commentaries*

An important area for competence in commentaries is the area of historical background. To speak of historical competence in the writing of commentaries is to address the matter of how well a commentator investigates the historical setting of the document(s) being commented on, how well that commentator uses knowledge of the document's historical context to understand the biblical text, and how well that commentator communicates these matters about the biblical text in the commentary. While certainly a concern for commentaries on any and all of the Bible, we address historical competence with particular attention to New Testament commentaries.

The Bible is the Scripture of the Christian faith—that is, its authoritative expression as well as its authoritative guide to faithful living. Understanding the Bible correctly is a historic Christian concern and the primary goal of commentaries. "The purpose of a commentary is to examine what was said/done in order to apprehend the author's communicative intent."[4] And historical competence helps reach that goal. "Since Christianity is a historical religion, the interpreter must recognize that an understanding of the history and culture within which the passage was produced is an indispensable tool for uncovering the meaning of that passage."[5]

Richard Longenecker suggests that Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) made an important contribution to the scholarly discipline of commentary writing by pointing out the importance of historical competence. Writes Longenecker:

[3] Ernest Best, "The Reading and Writing of Commentaries," *ExpTim* 107 (1996): 358. He continues dryly, "It is perhaps only to those who write them that commentaries seem exciting."

[4] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 285. Earlier Vanhoozer asks rhetorically, "What are commentaries doing if they are not trying to grasp the author's intended message?" (89).

[5] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 158.

> F. C. Baur must be credited for at least two emphases of great importance for the scholarly study of the New Testament generally and the writing of biblical commentaries in particular. The first is that the study of any biblical portion cannot be confined only to words and their relevance for the formulation of theology and the advancement of piety, but that exegesis must be informed by a historical understanding of the situation and conditions as they existed at the time of each individual composition. The second is that in a scholarly study of any biblical portion a critical analysis of the writing in question is absolutely necessary, both as to the literary issues that appear within it and as to how that particular writing relates to other cognate materials of the day. And it is with those two emphases that the modern historical-critical-exegetical period of scholarly New Testament study began.[6]

Commentators, then, are seeking the original meaning of the text in its own particular historical context, a historical context different than their own. "Modern western commentators live in cultures very different from those of the biblical writers.... Whether commentators understand it or not, many of their readers certainly do not. If they are to convey the meaning of the text, they need then to make some attempt to cross the division between the cultures."[7] As John Riches argues, "Their task is to discover what the author of, for example, Galatians meant at that time and in that place, or, to put it in another way, how that text was understood by those to whom it was addressed in its original context of utterance."[8] So also D. A. Carson observes, "the fact is that so much of God's gracious self-disclosure in the Scripture lies in actions and words that are powerfully embedded *in history*, so that the historical dimension must not be marginalized too hastily."[9]

As Grant R. Osborne puts it, "Biblical literature has two dimensions: historical intentionality, in which the author assumes certain shared information with the original readers; and literary intentionality, in which

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6 Longenecker, "On the Writing of Biblical Commentaries," 90. Baur's dependence upon Hegelian philosophy is rightly discredited, but this does not disqualify his contribution regarding the importance of historical competence for exegesis.

7 Best, "The Reading and Writing of Commentaries," 361.

8 John Riches, "Why Write a Reception-Historical Commentary?" *JSNT* 29 (2007): 329. This particular issue of *JSNT* contains a collection of invited essays about the task of New Testament commentary writing. They were called together on the occasion of Andrew T. Lincoln's *The Gospel According to Saint John* (BNTC; London: T & T Clark; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005) by David G. Horrell ("What Should a Commentator Aim to Do, for Whom, and Why? Introduction to a Discussion Focused on Andrew Lincoln's Commentary on the Gospel of John," ibid. 303–4).

9 D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 22, emphasis original.

he encodes a message in his text. Authors either address (prophetic and epistolary literature with a present historical thrust) or describe (historical narrative with a past historical thrust) background situations. In both of these cases there are 'shared assumptions' between the author and the original readers, information not found in the text, data that they knew but we do not."[10] Osborne says further that "these are often open to the interpreter. In fact, background, along with the author, provides a major access point to the historical dimension of the text. The interpreter needs to discover these underlying 'givens' for properly understanding the text."[11] This is why historical competence is important for understanding the New Testament.

But historical competence is important not merely for understanding but also for applying the New Testament. "The cultural background not only deepens our understanding of the original text but also provides a bridge to the current significance of the text. . . . A delineation of the customs presupposed or addressed in the text enable us to separate the underlying principles (the doctrines used to address the original context) from the surface commands (the contextualization of the deeper principles from the original situation). Next, we can identify similar situations today and allow those deep principles to address us anew."[12]

Thus, the commentator on New Testament Scripture must pay attention to the greater historical context for the biblical document under consideration as well as to the literary features present in the text. This means that some level of historical competence is necessary both for properly understanding and for properly applying the New Testament. Since "the key task of any interpreter is to establish the original meaning of a text,"[13] historical competence is necessary for commentators as they work to provide "an illuminating and profound exegesis of the passage, which is the essence of a good commentary."[14] Since a text cannot mean what it never meant, and since a text always means something in the historical context of its author, then understanding a text's historical context aids in understanding the text itself and in making a proper application of its meaning to new contexts.[15]

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[10] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 158–59.

[11] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 519.

[12] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 167.

[13] Riches, "Why Write a Reception-Historical Commentary?" 329.

[14] Childs, "The Genre of the Biblical Commentary as Problem and Challenge," 191.

[15] See the essays in Part 2 for more detail on the hermeneutical task in the writing of commentaries.

1.2 *Historical Concerns Apart from Historical Competence*

Thus, if we want to understand a text in order to apply it properly to life in our own contexts, we must understand what that text meant in its original historical context. This requires a certain level of competence in the task of historical investigation. There are, however, two other history related matters worthy of mention here, even though we don't intend to investigate them in this essay. First, we recognize that there is a place for reception history commentaries, i.e., commentaries that discuss the history of how a particular book of the New Testament has been interpreted and applied through the years.[16] While it may be helpful to work through the reception history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of a New Testament text, John Nolland offers this warning from his experience, "As I have made use of various commentaries which have made a significant investment in reporting the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, I have concluded that it is a very blunt instrument that most of the time illuminates the vicissitudes of the history of the church more than it illuminates the biblical text itself."[17]

Second, there may well be a place for commentaries that trace the "prehistory" of a given New Testament document. This is common enough in source critical studies, especially of the Gospels. But our discussion of historical competence is not concerned with the history of a text's construction. When we speak here of historical competence in New Testament commentaries, we are concerned with source and tradition criticism only as those might illuminate *what the text means as it stands*. We are not concerned with understanding the history *of* a text; rather, we want to understand *the text* (which might entail a history *in* the text). Where, for example, Matthew got a particular story about Jesus is not as important as understanding what Matthew intends to convey by reporting that story. As R. T. France puts it, "My overriding concern with exegesis means that I devote less space than many commentators to issues of source and tradition criticism. I am more interested in what the text says than in how it

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16 See the volumes of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series (ACCS). For an example of a narrower reception history commentary—specifically on Acts amongst Baptist commentators—see Beth Allison Barr et al., eds., *The Acts of Apostles* (The Baptists' Bible; Waco, TX: Baylor, 2009).

17 John Nolland, in R. T. France and John Nolland, "Reflections on the Writing of a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 277. For a defense of writing reception history commentaries, see Riches, "Why Write a Reception-Historical Commentary?" 323–32, and more briefly, Childs, "The Genre of the Biblical Commentary as Problem and Challenge," 191–92.

came to exist in its present form. Synoptic comparisons often throw helpful light on Matthew's distinctive 'take' on a given saying or incident, but I have not felt obliged to comment on them where there is not obvious exegetical payoff."[18]

2. *Factors Affecting Historical Competence in New Testament Commentaries*

Commentaries are not all equal in the area of historical competence. This is simple enough to acknowledge. But we should also note that, by design, commentaries are not all intended to have the same historical emphases. "A survey of commentaries soon makes it clear that there is no uniform answer to the question of what one is doing in writing a commentary."[19] Some commentaries intend to have more (or less) concern for historical matters than others.

There are several factors that influence historical investigations in commentary writing. Some of these factors are under the control of the commentator and some of them are not. Some of the factors have more variation than others. Some of these factors have a certain amount of influence upon other factors (e.g., commentaries written specifically for clergy members are naturally more concerned to address matters of preaching). Differences in each of these factors result in differing levels of concern for history and differing levels of historical competence.

2.1 *Different Purposes*

It seems that no single commentary can do everything. "People will look in it for everything they ever wanted to know about the text under discussion; and people will inevitably be disappointed in one respect or another. Inevitably a priority of importance must be established, otherwise what are already large books would become ridiculous and quite unusable."[20]

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[18] R. T. France, in France and Nolland, "Reflections," 284. On critiquing historical-critical investigations of a text's construction as something less than full-fledged commentary ("thin description" of a text vs. "thick description" of a text), see Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 284–87.

[19] John Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 305.

[20] Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 310. Borrowing the words of the Apostle Paul, Margaret Y. MacDonald writes, "In today's current climate of biblical scholarship, one simply cannot be all things to all people"; "The Art of Commentary Writing: Reflections from Experience," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 314.

This means that particular commentaries and commentary series should aim at serving particular purposes and should clearly declare such.

D. A. Carson outlines three broad categories of commentaries.[21] First, those primarily concerned with understanding meanings accurately may focus on one or more of three sub-categories: text-critical and translation issues, grammatical and linguistic issues, and/or theological issues. Second, commentaries primarily concerned with historical reconstruction of events may work with "information of a geographical, historical, cultic, and socio-cultural nature" and must be properly imaginative without undue speculation or high-handed theoretical systems that force themselves on the text despite contrary evidence. Third, commentaries primarily concerned with applying the text must be concerned with a legitimate range of applications without letting the applications overshadow the Word of God itself or degenerate into "the trite and trivial." Commentaries in Carson's second category—those concerned with historical reconstruction of events and other background data—naturally focus more on historical competence.

John Glynn also categorizes specific New Testament commentaries into three broad groups: technical/semitechnical, exposition, and preaching/application. He suggests the following series as belonging to these categories:[22]

a) Technical and Semitechnical: AB, ANTC, Apollos, BECNT, BNTC/HNTC, ECC, Hermeneia, ICC, NCBC, NICNT, NIGTC, NTL, PNTC, SP, and WBC.
b) Exposition:[23] BCBC, CBC, DSB, EBC, NAC, NIB, NIBCNT, and TNTC.
c) Preaching and Application: BST, IBC, IVPNTC, NIVAC, and TPC.

But Glynn admits that these categories can overlap: "Some of the series that I include are semitechnical as well as expositional, namely, Broadman & Holman's whole-Bible New American Commentary (NAC) and

[21] The following paragraph is heavily dependent upon Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 15–17.
[22] John Glynn, *Commentary & Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources* (10th ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 41–42.
[23] Glynn defines: "Expositional as opposed to technical, exegetically based commentaries often succeed better at providing the general theological and applicational thrust of a given passage or biblical book" (*Commentary & Reference Survey*, 36, n. 17).

the Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC) series, which are designed specifically for the serious student and the general reader alike."[24]

With regard to purpose, much can be learned from examining the preface to a given commentary series. Note, for example, the far-reaching and overlapping intentions expressed in the preface to the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series (BECNT), which states that the series has as its chief concern "to provide, within the framework of informed evangelical thought, commentaries that blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, attention to critical problems with theological awareness."[25]

Is it possible for a series or single commentary to span the breadth of these categories and their diverse concerns? Childs observes, "The commentaries that have emerged through continual usage as enduring classics are characterized by the authors' ability to work successfully on many different levels and to address several audiences."[26] On this matter Andrew T. Lincoln remarks, "The expectation of such series is that their contributors will produce mainstream works that interact judiciously with the most recent scholarship and the range of contemporary interpretive approaches, while containing detailed exegesis based on the best linguistic, historical and literary data, and providing both reliable and distinctive insights into the content of a text. But is this expectation any longer one that can or should be met?"[27]

That is, while we admit that it is impossible for one commentary to do everything in a most thorough manner and at the highest levels, it seems that there should be room for a commentary to cover the most significant aspects of scholarship in at least a satisfactory manner. Lincoln dubs such comprehensive works as "mainstream" commentaries and "so-called standard" commentaries. "From one perspective, this sort of commentary writing might be seen as the culmination of the work we do on say, hermeneutics, Greek philology, historical investigations, literary analysis, first-century Judaism and Graeco-Roman society and literature."[28]

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[24] Glynn, *Commentary & Reference Survey*, 40.

[25] Moisés Silva "Series Preface," in Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), ix. Silva continues, "We hope thereby to attract the interest of a fairly wide audience, from the scholar who is looking for a thoughtful and independent examination of the text to the motivated lay Christian who craves a solid but accessible exposition."

[26] Childs, "The Genre of the Biblical Commentary as Problem and Challenge," 190.

[27] Andrew T. Lincoln, "From Writing to Reception: Reflections on Commentating on the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 355.

[28] Lincoln, "From Writing to Reception," 356.

With regard to historical investigation, then, a commentary or commentary series should be at least "competent" (if it cannot be "top notch"), especially where the intended meaning of the text is most clarified by the historical background information.

2.2 *Different Audiences*

Tremper Longman agrees that "no single commentary, no matter how exhaustive, can provide all the information the reader might want and need," and then notes that "commentaries are addressed to specialized audiences. A commentary written with the needs of the layperson in mind will often not be of real interest to the scholar, while one written for a scholarly audience is often of no use to the layperson."[29] R. T. France observes that "the commentator is always confronted by the need to make choices over what should and should not be included in the space available, and these choices must be made in the light of what are expected to be the primary interests of one's readers."[30] Thus, the particular audience in mind for a commentary will affect the level of historical competence expressed within it. Nolland comments on this with the following questions: "Is one addressing people for whom the world of biblical scholarship or even the world of the Bible is quite unknown, or can one assume a broad general acquaintance with the world of the scholarly study of the Bible? Can one assume that the readers will view the Bible text as a privileged text, or are they as likely to come from outside the world of Christian faith? Will Christian readers expect explicit connections to be made from the biblical text to their own context of Christian discipleship, or will they be content to see the commentary's contribution as providing them with the raw material for such exploration?"[31]

It is such reflection on the intended audience for a commentary that will affect, in part, how much historical background material is included in the work. Best observes, "Quite often in explaining some of the moral teaching of a Pauline letter it is helpful to refer to a saying of Epictetus. Should the saying be quoted in full or only a reference given? If the constituency is the academy it can be assumed that readers have access to

[29] Tremper Longman III, *Old Testament Commentary Survey* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 15.

[30] France, in France and Nolland, "Reflections," 287.

[31] Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 310. See also Nolland's remarks in France and Nolland, "Reflections," 276–77.

a copy of Epictetus and a reference is sufficient. But if for a lay audience the quotation may need to be given in full. For similar reasons it may be necessary to supply more background detail in such commentaries."[32]

Regardless of the audience reading commentaries in their final form, however, commentators are expected to achieve a proper level of historical competence so as to understand properly the text themselves. Rather than express all of the historical background material that impacts the meaning of the text, the final form of a commentary may have space enough to only highlight the most intriguing (or illustrative or "preachable") pieces of background material. Nevertheless, regardless of audience, some level of excellence is the appropriate goal of a commentary. Remarks Childs, "Obviously, the choice of the reader determines in large measure the level on which the interpretation is pitched. It should be stated at the outset that a quality of excellence can be achieved on almost every level, whether highly technical or very popular."[33]

2.3 *Different Data Available*

Some commentaries display a higher level of excellence in historical competence than others because their authors have been able to avail themselves of more background materials. Availability of background data is the first of two factors mentioned by Richard Longenecker that have improved the writing of commentaries. "Advances in the writing of New Testament commentaries have come about because of (1) new data that has become known or been discovered (principally, the uncial codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the nonliterary Greek biblical papyri, and the quasi-Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts) and (2) new methods that have been developed (principally 'Form Criticism' and 'Redaction Criticism' in the study of the Gospels; 'Epistolary Analysis' and 'Rhetorical Analysis' in

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32 Best, "The Reading and Writing of Commentaries," 358–59. Of course, the commentator is not always the one to decide on the target audience. Lincoln ("From Writing to Reception," 355) comments, "The publication of stand-alone commentaries is a rare phenomenon. How and for whom commentaries are written are largely in the hand of publishers and editors of series. I have not yet had the experience of writing a commentary whose deadline, word length and format were not established by publishers and editors in advance." But, by virtue of accepting a contract to produce a commentary in a particular series, the commentator accepts the mission of communicating with the intended audience of that series.

33 Childs, "The Genre of the Biblical Commentary as Problem and Challenge," 189. Childs continues, "Conversely there are many examples of exceedingly poor commentaries, regardless of the level of technicality."

the study of the letters; and 'Comparative Religion' parallels and 'Narrative Theology' understandings in studies of all of these New Testament portions)."[34] We address here the data factor briefly (see section 2.5 below for comments on the second factor: methods).

Grant R. Osborne observes, "We are part of the greatest explosion of biblical knowledge in history. Never before has so much been discovered and published in the same generation. For virtually every book of the Bible major projects are coming to light, and commentaries benefiting from them are being written."[35] Because so much new background data has come to light in the last century, modern commentators have much more to draw upon than their predecessors.[36] Whether or not they actually do draw upon the background material is affected by some of the other factors we are exploring here. In his magisterial work on hermeneutics, Osborne commends the gathering of historical background information to help with the understanding of the biblical text in its historical context. "Information on the historical background of a book is available from several sources. Perhaps the best single source is the introduction to the better commentaries."[37] This, of course, begs the question of how commentators can obtain knowledge of the historical background material.

2.4 *Different Genres of Scripture*

New Testament commentators recognize axiomatically that "we must study and proclaim each biblical genre differently, according to its own purposes and rules, lest we proclaim a message alien to the divine intention in the text."[38] With this recognition it seems that some genres of Scripture are more given to and affected by historical inquiry. For example, it is easy to think that the Gospels and Acts require more historical competence because they contain more historical narrative, while the didactic

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[34] Longenecker, "On the Writing of Biblical Commentaries," 91.

[35] Grant R. Osborne, "Recent Trends in the Study of the Apocalypse," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 473.

[36] This is, of course, a comparative statement. Osborne reports that biblical archaeologist Edwin Yamauchi calculates that only 0.006 per cent of biblical background evidence has survived and been surveyed, uncovered, examined, and published. But this mathematically minute amount is more impressive than the number portrays (*The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 160).

[37] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 37.

[38] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 452.

material of the epistles may be more straightforward in their instruction and require less historical inquiry.[39]

While there might be some truth to this general assumption, a moment's reflection reveals it to be an overstatement. Some epistles provide a significant amount of historical narrative background (e.g., Galatians 1–2), and sometimes historical narratives don't provide as much historical background as we would like (e.g., Acts 9), and sometimes we are confused as to how the epistles we have fit with the narrative we have (e.g., how do Paul's letters fit in the narrative of Acts?). Sometimes commentaries on the epistles benefit immensely from greater historical competence. Nolland notes this, saying, "With a letter I would need to become more acutely conscious that the writer has been free to make quite specific assumptions about shared knowledge between writer and readers, a shared knowledge which is not immediately and often not even remotely available to me."[40] Thus, commentaries on epistles may need more external historical research and more historical imagination than commentaries on historical narratives that provide much of the required historical context already.

But further still, genres have their own histories and need to be properly understood. Vanhoozer observes that "literary genres have, as communicative practices, a social and historical location. That is, literary genres themselves have determinate historical contexts."[41] This means, in part, that historical background studies can be helpful in understanding how to approach a given biblical genre. The more history-bound a particular genre is (e.g., apocalyptic), the more historical competence may be needed for a commentary to adequately access its intended meaning.[42] This question of how to approach a given genre brings us to our next factor that affects historical competence in New Testament commentaries: the matter of method.

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39 See the explanation offered by Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 307.

40 Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 307.

41 Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* 339.

42 Grant R. Osborne (*The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 510) gives a nod in this direction, even while momentarily looking in another direction. "Genre determines the extent to which we are to seek the author's intention." That is, if the author's intention is to be broad and vague—even mysterious—then he will write that way and the reader will be correct to read the text that way. "In many types of poetry and narrative the text itself is multilayered in terms of meaning, but that in itself is the author's intended message."

2.5 *Different Methods of Examination*

Even as some commentary series have particular purposes (see section 2.1) and particular audiences (see section 2.2), some have particularly defined methods for the commentators to use in approaching the text. "So there are commentary series devoted to literary readings, to sociological criticism, to a socio-rhetorical approach, to feminist readings, to reception history and now also to specifically theological readings."[43] This may result in more or less attention being paid to the historical concerns related to the particular New Testament document under consideration. For example, the Eerdmans Socio-Rhetorical Series of Commentaries on the New Testament utilizes insights from the social sciences and from study of Graeco-Roman rhetoric in understanding texts from the New Testament. To be sure, the commentators in this series are too conscientious to neglect historical concerns, but one expects the socio-rhetorical commentaries to excel in their declared areas of expertise.

The last quarter of the twentieth century saw a surge of literary approaches to the text of Scripture. The emphasis of these literary approaches allowed commentators to discuss the meaning of the text without the need to defend the historicity of the events described. Thus, there was an appreciable dichotomy of noting that scholars could helpfully exegete the intended meaning of Scripture even though those same scholars might not believe in what the text was saying about historical events. But sometimes—particularly under the influence of postmodern sensibilities that remove the locus of meaning from the author of the text and place it instead wholly in the mind (and imagination) of the reader of the text—these methodologies appear to distance us from understanding the text as it really is.[44]

At the end of the day, however, one of the most important goals of commenting is related to one of the most important reasons for reading

[43] Lincoln, "From Writing to Reception," 356.

[44] On the matter of postmodern distraction from the meaning of a text, see Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* and "Part One: Hermeneutics" in the more general treatment by D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). Neither of these scholars completely anathematizes the potential insightful and nuanced use of recent methodologies as long as the possibility of objective truth is not destroyed. For explanations of Scripture-respecting nuanced use of such methodologies, see the helpful collections of articles in David Alan Black and David S. Dockery, eds., *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) and idem, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001).

commentaries, and that is to understand the text. To the extent that a method gets at what the author meant by his text is the extent to which a particular method is valued. This is why competence in historical studies matters as much as it does. As Nolland expresses of his eclectic methodological approach in the writing of his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, "My central concern in the commentary is with how Matthew tells his story and with the story he has to tell. The work is oriented to the nexus of communication between author and reader through the mediation of a rhetorically and structurally sophisticated text. Though it will be evident to any reader that some scholarly methods have influenced me more than others, my work is committedly eclectic. I am indebted to quite a range of methods for their capacity to illuminate.... Nonetheless, there continues to be a major investment in historical background."[45]

2.6 *Different Worldviews of Commentators*

Related to the issue of methodologies (consciously in use by the commentator) is the issue of worldview (often subconsciously in use by the commentator). "The commentator remains an interpreter, and that interpretation will result from the commentator's own interaction, within the bounds of his or her cultural framework, with the text." So writes R. T. France in reflecting on his own writing of commentaries.[46] Andrew T. Lincoln observes more specifically that "the writing of commentaries on biblical texts is inextricably linked not only to their writers' assumptions about language, meaning and historical reference, but also to their convictions about God, revelation, scripture and the church. How far such concerns are made explicit will depend on the audience for whom they think they are writing but, though those hermeneutical presuppositions may differ considerably and those theological convictions and how they are combined may vary from writer to writer, both are inevitably at work and need to be acknowledged."[47] So, with regard to historical competence in the writing of New Testament commentaries, commentators' rigor about the historical enterprise in biblical scholarship will be affected by their own worldviews. A commentator with a naturalist worldview may demonstrate a bias against the historicity of supernatural events in the biblical

[45] Nolland, in France and Nolland, "Reflections," 273. See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
[46] France, in France and Nolland, "Reflections," 285.
[47] Lincoln, "From Writing to Reception," 355.

text, and write with a tendency toward naturalistic explanations of otherwise implausible phenomena to the point of dismissing historical evidence and arguments. A commentator with a supernaturalist worldview may demonstrate a bias in favor of the historicity of supernatural events in the biblical text, and write with a tendency to ignore problematic features of the text and coordination with extra-biblical sources. Thus, a low view of Scripture is often correlated with a high view of biblical criticism and a low view of biblical criticism is often correlated with a high view of Scripture.

A case in point is William Barclay's eighteen-volume New Testament commentary, which is famed for its engaging readability.[48] But Barclay's naturalistic worldview betrays itself in his treatment of the miraculous events portrayed in Scripture. "Barclay often maximizes 'spiritual' application from the text after minimizing the historical foundation (e.g., miracles tend to be lessons *rather than* events)."[49] The worldview of the commentator can be such that questions of a historical nature are not even considered. Thus we see that the factors of methodology and worldview overlap.

In this regard, D. A. Carson mourns the widespread loss of historical respect for the Gospel of John. "Without wanting to disparage in the slightest the many literary-critical, narrative-critical, biblical-theological, and social-science approaches to the Fourth Gospel around today, one does get the impression that, by and large, the driving forces behind much contemporary Johannine scholarship ignore historical questions."[50] After defending, from several angles, the presence of true and recoverable history in the Gospel of John, and in defense of his own approach, Carson queries rhetorically, "Should not at least some Johannine interpreters echo John's testimony, 'I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life' (1 John 5:13)? This, I suggest, is not a weaker position or a merely traditional position." He concludes, "In short, the confessional approach I bring to the interpretation of the Johannine corpus, whatever its limitations, sanctions a certain independence from strong currents within the guild of

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[48] Daily Study Bible series (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: St. Andrews; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

[49] Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 34; emphasis original.

[50] D. A. Carson, "Reflections upon a Johannine Pilgrimage," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 92.

New Testament scholars, and I do not find that to be a disadvantage. In fact, a confessional approach may even claim that it is more likely to listen sympathetically to the text than some others. Isn't that a good thing?"[51]

Alvin Plantinga, reflecting on the work of such commentators as Chrysostom, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, remarks, "Their aim was to try to determine as accurately as possible just what the Lord proposes to teach us in the Bible."[52] Plantinga call this enterprise "traditional biblical commentary" and brushes aside the postmodern worldview that tries to remove meaning from authorial intent.

> Of course, various post-modern hermeneuticists aim to amuse by telling us that in this case, as in all others, the author's intentions have nothing whatever to do with the meaning of a passage, that the reader herself confers upon it whatever meaning the passage has, or perhaps that even entertaining the idea of a text having meaning is to fall into 'hermeneutical innocence'—innocence, oddly enough, which (as they insist) is ineradicably sullied by its inevitable association with oppressive, racist, sexist, homophobic and other offensive modes of thought. This is indeed amusing. Returning to serious business, however, it is obvious (given that the principal author of the Bible is God) that the meaning of a biblical passage will be given by what it is that the Lord intends to teach in that passage, and it is precisely this that biblical commentary tries to discern.[53]

Furthermore, we can note that having a high view of Scripture sometimes requires a more strenuous effort at historical competence. That is, the person with a high view of Scripture's own historical accuracy cannot cease investigation prematurely by simply saying the Scripture must be wrong on some point and then moving on to the next passage. Rather, the person with a high view of Scripture must work through such difficult passages longer and with greater patience.

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[51] Carson, "Reflections upon a Johannine Pilgrimage," 103, 104. For an example of someone who, over the course of his career in biblical studies, has come to embrace a thoroughgoing postmodern abandonment of searching for the author's intended meaning of the biblical text, see Robert Kysar's contribution to this same volume: Robert Kysar, "What's the Meaning of This? Reflections upon a Life and Career," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 163–77. In the same volume is also a response to Kysar by David Rensberger, "Is History History?" (179–82).

[52] Alvin Plantinga, "Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship," in *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutics 4; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 25.

[53] Plantinga, "Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship," 26.

3. *Balance in, Method for, and Benefits of, Historical Competence in New Testament Commentaries*

If historical competence is an important and manifold concern for the writing of New Testament commentaries, and if so much background material is available now to commentators, what prevents commentaries from becoming mere historical studies—studies that simply examine first-century beliefs and behaviors as if they were something of a curiosity, but nothing more? We have already distinguished historical competence from mere historical critical examinations of a text (see section 1.2), but here we wish to address more positively the matters of balance in, method for, and beneficial results of historical competence in New Testament commentaries.

3.1 *Balance in Historical Competence*

What is the correct balance of historical competence in a New Testament commentary? The answer to this question is one of faithfulness both to the message in the text and to the mission of the text. This brings us back to one of the central concerns of biblical studies: hermeneutics, and to one of the central concerns of the Christian faith: application of Scripture to daily living. Nolland addresses this question of commentary balance:

> But one can ... recognize that a commentary does and should involve a coming-to-terms-with and not simply the offering of a compendium of information about. Commenting inevitably involves, whether consciously or not, the bringing together of the horizons that belong to the text and the horizons that belong to the interpreter. If the horizons of the interpreter are dominant, then the text is unlikely to have been heard in more than a superficial manner: it will have been stretched upon a procrustean bed. If the horizons of the text are given exclusive dominance, then the danger is of a product that is technical and sterile, and distances readers from the text. A good commentary will be sensitive to the tension involved here, and seek to work with it creatively.[54]

The danger is not in over-emphasizing the more distant discipline of historical understanding. Rather, the danger comes in under-emphasizing the

[54] Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 306. See also Nolland's remarks in France and Nolland, "Reflections on the Writing of a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," 272.

more near discipline of application. And, despite Nolland's description of the "tension" between these two features—proper historical understanding and proper current application—they need not be set up as polarized goals. We need commentaries with historical competence so as to identify the proper meaning and application of the New Testament texts. As Nolland puts it, "since these are texts that engage with God and with profound dimensions of what it is to be human, those readings which have been most sensitive to what I am still prepared to think of as the timeless within the timely will continue to have a capacity to address people at other times and in other places." He continues, "Methodologically I am nervous about the kind of up-to-dateness that is in danger of soon becoming an out-of-dateness, as scholarly fashions move on."[55] The balance comes not by subtracting historical competence from the commentary process and adding trendy applications, but by adding both historical competence and meaningful application. This is the beneficial mix of historical competence in New Testament commentaries.

3.2 *The Investigative Method for Historical Competence*

How should such evidence of historical background studies be handled? What parallels should be sought in literature outside the New Testament? How are explanatory theories to be developed? Twenty years ago Grant Osborne laid out for us a list of seven hermeneutical guidelines for historical background studies in the process of understanding the New Testament. Osborne's principles are worthy of summarizing here.[56]

1) First, study the New Testament passage thoroughly along grammatical-semantic-syntactical lines. This primary level exegesis will form a control for determining which background information and parallels might be drawn upon for deepening one's understanding of the text.
2) Be as comprehensive as necessary in the collection of data. At times the passage itself will indicate the background material, such as in the use of Old Testament quotes and allusions, and wider searches will not be necessary. Many passages, however, are ambiguous and the inter-

[55] Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 307.

[56] A summary of Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 179–80. Earlier Osborne gives a list of five specific criteria (172–73), which seem to be engulfed in the later seven guidelines summarized here.

preter must discover all background possibilities in order to study the passage properly.

3) Study the contexts of both the biblical passage and the purported background passages to see which converge most closely. Those parallels that overlap the biblical passage to the greatest extent are more likely to be helpful.
4) Do not force the purported background data onto the text. Do not exaggerate the importance of the background material. Remember that the biblical text is more significant than the background data. Rework only those aspects of the exegesis that are truly clarified by the relevant background material.
5) Do not artificially force a paradigm or theory onto the text, and do not insist upon a dichotomy between background explanations that may well both be operative in the complex first-century world of the New Testament. Go to the biblical passage with a large volume of potential theories and allow the text to select the explanation(s) that best fits.
6) The text is primary and not the background material. We must remember that historical-cultural exegesis is a supplement to the text and not an end in itself. Therefore, we must apply the "event" behind the text only to the extent to which it will aid in understanding the message in the text. Too many background studies end up replacing the text rather than supplementing it and deepening our understanding of it.
7) When we move from the text to the sermon, background information has a further value. By immersing the audience in the original situation behind the text, we help them to place themselves into the world of the text and see how it was speaking to the original audience. At that time we can then help the hearers to discover situations parallel to the text in their own lives and to contextualize the principle behind the text for their current situations.

3.3 *The Benefits of Historical Competence*

We have already commented on the primary benefit of historical competence in commentary writing in our discussion of its importance (see section 1.1). By way of conclusion, we outline here more specifically how higher levels of historical competence will benefit New Testament commentaries and their readers in at least three ways.

First, proper understanding of the text of the New Testament will be advanced by a higher level of historical competence in New Testament commentaries. "Commentaries exist to enable their readers to engage more successfully with biblical texts. They should be helpful companions for the journey of engagement with the text, and they should provide stimulation and assistance in the task of coming to terms with the challenges of the text."[57] But as Ernest Best observes, commentaries can sidetrack their readers away from the text of Scripture: "Some modern commentaries, indeed, appear to be commentaries on the commentaries, monographs and articles written in the last few years rather than commentaries on the text!"[58] It is the text of Scripture—not the text of commentaries—that should remain the focus or our attention, because the text of Scripture is the inspired account of God's saving works in history.[59]

Second, proper focus on biblical salvation history will be advanced by a higher level of historical competence in New Testament commentaries. Christianity is not a faith system of mere moralistic sentiment; the Christian faith is intricately bound up in God's saving acts in history (also known as salvation history or redemptive history). Continuous historical reflection in commentaries will aid their readers in staying mindful of those events recorded and reflected upon in Scripture.

Finally, proper application of the historic Christian faith will be advanced by a higher level of historical competence in New Testament commentaries. The writing and reading of commentaries aids Christians in applying the text of the New Testament in new cultural contexts. To be sure, we are aided by other theological studies and writings. But commentaries remain an important tool for clarifying the application of Scripture (in the form in which it has been inspired) to daily living in new generations in ways that are still in line with the historic Christian faith. In this regard, Margaret MacDonald remarks, "With the aid of one volume, one can alternate between a microscopic view, examining the meaning of words and concepts, and a wide view, appreciating the shape of the text

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[57] Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 311. It is this central function and importance of commentaries that makes them an important tool for biblical education. Writes Margaret MacDonald ("The Art of Commentary Writing," 315), "It should be acknowledged that commentaries offer perhaps the most obvious mediums for biblical scholars to disseminate the results of their research to the broader public, from students in the classroom to members of Bible study groups."

[58] Best, "The Reading and Writing of Commentaries," 358. He writes further, "For what purpose do commentaries exist? A simple answer is: To explain the text."

[59] Nolland remarks that "for me an over-riding priority is for a commentator so to write as to aid his or her readers in engaging with the text rather than offering the readers an alternative to engagement with the text. We cannot stop readers using our commentaries as replacement text, but we can make it difficult for them" ("The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 310).

as a whole and the breadth of the interpretative landscape. In fact, arguably, of all types of biblical scholarship, commentaries offer the greatest opportunity to look through both lenses simultaneously."[60] This is why new generations of Christian scholars produce new commentaries on the old texts of Scripture. "While we are grateful for monographs, journal articles and other specialist studies, there persists an instinct that there is a need for coming to terms with a work in its entirety and not just in this or that respect. And as valuable as may be the contribution of commentators present and past, this coming to terms with is never something that can be done once and for all, but is in need of constant renewal, influenced as it is and should be by context and time. So we keep on producing commentaries; and there continues to be a market for them."[61]

60 MacDonald, "The Art of Commentary Writing," 314.
61 Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," 305.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Craig A. Evans

One will notice that some commentaries on the New Testament Gospels emphasize the literary and theological purposes and strategies of the evangelists to the neglect of questions pertaining to the historical Jesus, while other commentaries focus on the historical Jesus (and what is deemed authentic and inauthentic) to the neglect of questions pertaining to the evangelists' theology and reasons for writing. This is not surprising, given how much work is involved in writing a commentary that gives proper attention to the Gospel itself or the immense work involved in tackling the historical Jesus and all the historical-critical methods that task entails. It is not easy to gain control of the literature and issues in both fields of study. It is no surprise, then, that some commentators choose to treat one of these dimensions in depth and the other superficially.[1]

However, some commentators seem to find a reasonable balance between these two dimensions. I will discuss a few examples below. But before doing so I would like to say some things about the task of writing a commentary. I have written a few myself and have learned a number of things along the way.

Writing a commentary is one of the best things a biblical scholar can do; and my assertion includes scholars whose primary focus is on historical Jesus research. There are several benefits to be derived from writing commentaries on the Gospels: (1) A commentator is forced to work through the *entire* biblical document. He or she cannot simply pick and choose among passages. Every passage and every problem must be confronted. The scholarly literature must be canvassed and taken into account. Commentary writing is not for the faint of heart. (2) A commentator is forced to take into account the full literary (and theological) context of the evangelist. The commentator cannot seize upon a single theme, to the neglect of others. (3) A commentator must take into account the social and historical context of the evangelist and the intended readers and hearers. This

[1] I recognize that dominical tradition appears in some of Paul's letters and perhaps also in the letter attributed to James and that this tradition sometimes comes into play in study of the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, I shall limit my discussion to commentaries on the Gospels.

context cannot be ignored by pleading that we cannot know it perfectly and therefore there is no point in pursuing it.

There are also a number of challenges in writing commentaries on the Gospels: (1) The commentator must grapple with at least two ancient languages: the Greek, in which the Gospel is written, and the Aramaic, the language which Jesus originally spoke. Other languages, such as Latin and Hebrew, will come into play as well. I will say more on the linguistic challenge shortly. (2) The commentator must take into account the geography and topography of the land of Israel, the regions in which Jesus and his followers lived and walked. A commentator must visit these places and get a sense of the lay of the land, its topography, distances, and relationships. It is not enough simply to read about it and look at pictures. (3) The commentator must take into account the archaeology of the land of Israel, to get a sense of the layout of a village, the construction of private houses and public meeting places, the roads, the water sources, the evidences of economic activity, and the remains of material culture. Talking about Jesus and his public activities cannot be done competently apart from personally visiting and taking into account these important physical traces from his time. (4) Finally, the commentator must take into account the Jewish literature of Palestine, including and especially the Dead Sea Scrolls and related writings. These are the writings that reflect the beliefs and hopes of the people of the time of Jesus, how Scripture was understood, how the Law of Moses was understood, and how the prophecies were thought to be fulfilled. Study of the Scrolls and related literature, such as early rabbinic writings and the paraphrases of Scripture known as Targums, requires competence in Hebrew and Aramaic. Accordingly, scholarly study of Jesus and the Gospels involves no fewer than three ancient languages: Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. Control of the scholarly literature entails reading competence, at the very least, in English, French, and German. In light of these diverse and demanding disciplines it is not hard to appreciate how complicated and challenging it is to produce competent commentaries on the New Testament Gospels and the historical figure of Jesus.

There are also philosophical matters to consider. How does one view the literary sources and archaeological traces? What kind of "historical information" do these things provide the researcher? What can the researcher do with these materials? In what sense can one—no matter the quality and the quantity of the material—write a history of the life and activities of someone who lived two thousand years ago? And of course, there is the troublesome matter of the evangelists' biases and theological perspectives.

Must one assume that the presence of theological emphases, purposes for writing, biases, and even apologetic interests vitiates the possibility of "extracting" from a Gospel what is needed for a historical portrait of Jesus? It is a serious matter, after all, for the four portraits of Jesus that the New Testament Gospels provide resist simple harmonization.[2] There are many discrepancies, some of which are glaring. Scholars address these questions in various and sometimes conflicting ways.

The Historical Jesus and Commentaries on Mark

Because most scholars believe Mark was the first Gospel written and circulated, it is not surprising that Jesus researchers appeal to it more than they appeal to Matthew, Luke, and John. I too shall appeal to passages from Mark. My purpose is to illustrate how several recent and major commentators engage some of the difficulties that I have described above, as they probe the meaning of the Markan narrative, on the one hand, and the Jesus story that lies behind it.

Mark 2:1–12. In Mark 2:1–12 Jesus demonstrates his authority to forgive sins by healing the paralyzed man. The story is especially important for historical Jesus research because of what Jesus says: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins…" (v. 10a). The somewhat odd qualification, "on earth," encourages us to see in the epithet, "Son of man," a reference to the "one like a son of man," who in Dan 7:13–14 approaches God in heaven and receives royal authority. That is, as Son of man Jesus exercises *on earth* the authority he received *in heaven*. If the words of Jesus are accepted as authentic, then we have important evidence that Jesus' ubiquitous self-reference "Son of man" was probably rooted in the vision of Daniel 7. This in turn potentially points to a rather exalted Christology. Did the evangelist add the words "on earth"? If he did so, why? Was it a subtle move to call to the minds of his readers the figure described in Daniel 7?

William Lane accepts the unity and historicity of the story as a whole, but regards the first half of v. 10 ("But that you may know…") as the

2 For an effort to do just this, see G. R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984). Osborne tackles the discrepancies and distinctive editorial emphases with refreshing candor and insight. For a recent statement, see Osborne's essay, "Jesus' Empty Tomb and His Appearance in Jerusalem," in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus* (ed. D. L. Bock and R. L. Webb; WUNT 247; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 775–823.

creation of the evangelist Mark. It is a "statement addressed by the evangelist to the *Christian* readers of the Gospel." It is not something Jesus said to the questioning scribes who witnessed the healing.[3] One might say that it is a problem of punctuation and quotation marks. Robert Guelich also contends for the unity and authenticity of the story, but limits the evangelist's redactional activity to vv. 1–2. In contrast to Lane, Guelich thinks the Son of man statement is traditional, deriving from Jesus himself. He is making known to the scribes that he, the "Son of man," does indeed have authority to forgive sins. But Guelich is not certain that Jesus has alluded to the son of man figure in Daniel 7.[4]

Robert Gundry also argues for the authenticity and unity of the passage, but he underscores the contrast between "heaven" where God dwells and "earth" where Jesus, the Son of man, conducts his ministry, a ministry that includes healing and forgiving sins. The epithet, Gundry believes, is best explained as an allusion to the figure described in Daniel 7.[5] Joel Marcus believes Daniel 7 plays an important role in the story under consideration, though precisely how Jesus understood "Son of man" may never be known. Marcus also suggests that the opening words of v. 10, "that you may know," may well allude to the narratives in which Moses confronts the disbelieving Pharaoh: "That you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth" (Exod 9:14). If so, Jesus' language may have implied that the religious leaders, in criticizing the work of God being done through Jesus, are playing the role of Gentiles who in biblical times opposed the God of Israel and his servants.[6] R. T. France believes the saying in v. 10 derives from Jesus, that he called himself "Son of man" in reference to the figure in Daniel 7, and that this epithet did not possess technical or messianic importance in the time of Jesus, as it would later in Jewish and Christian circles. France also sees in the "on earth" qualification a deliberate contrast with the heavenly source of the authority, which Jesus exercises in his ministry.[7]

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[3] W. L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 91–99, with quotation from p. 98. This had been suggested earlier by G. H. Boobyer, "Mark II. 10a and the Interpretation of the Healing of the Paralytic," *HTR* 47 (1954): 115–20. More recently it has been defended by R. M. Fowler, "The Rhetoric of Direction and Indirection in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. W. R. Telford; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 207–28, here 213.

[4] R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989), 81–94, esp. 88–93.

[5] R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 114–14, 119.

[6] J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 218, 222–23, 530–31.

[7] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 127–29.

M. E. Boring believes a miracle story was expanded by adding a controversy dialogue (which may reflect genuine tradition). Boring doubts the unity of the story because he finds it hard to imagine the presence of hostile scribes and how Jesus would not have been disturbed by the dismantling of the roof above his head.[8] Of course, we do not in fact know that Jesus was not disturbed by the dismantling of the roof. Such an event would have been extraordinary and its extraordinary character could well explain its retention in the Jesus tradition. In any case, Boring allows that Daniel 7 has influenced the New Testament understanding of Jesus, but it is not clear how influential this Old Testament passage was upon Jesus himself.[9] Adela Collins accepts the unity of the story, stating that "one may not reconstruct two originally separate accounts, one of a miracle and the other a dispute."[10] She also sees an allusion to Dan 7:13 in the use of the epithet "Son of man," but "in a very indirect and cryptic way." She is not, however, sure that the saying goes back to Jesus.[11]

Mark 3:20–35. The present passage is made up of three, perhaps four principal units: 3:20–22, where Jesus is accused of being influenced by Beelzebul; 3:23–30 (or 3:23–27 and 3:28–30), where Jesus rebuts his accusers; and 3:31–35, where Jesus identifies his true "family." Some of this material appears in Matthew and Luke, though sometimes in different locations,[12] along with parallel material drawn from Q.[13] These discrepancies complicate matters, especially our attempts to make historical judgments. However, the overlapping independent Markan and Q materials support the authenticity of the tradition that Jesus was accused of being in league with Beelzebul and that there was tension with his family. The widespread tradition of Jesus as healer and exorcist, whose name was invoked during his public ministry (Mark 9:38–40) confirms its authenticity,

[8] M. E. Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 77–78.

[9] Boring, *Mark*, 251–52.

[10] A. Y. Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 184. Collins agrees with the analysis offered by J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1–3:6* (SBLDS 48; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 28–29. Dewey and Collins disagree with form critics Bultmann and Dibelius, among others, who see in Mark 2:1–12 disparate materials joined together. Collins does not engage Boring's commentary, which appeared while Collins's commentary was at press.

[11] Collins, *Mark*, 186–89.

[12] For Markan material taken over by Matthew and Luke, see Matt 12:24, 25–26, 29, 31–32, 46–50; and Luke 11:15, 17–18, 21; 12:10; and 8:19–21. For possible Q material, see Matt 12:27–28, 30; Luke 11:19–20, 23. There is probably more Q material, which overlaps with Mark. Cf. Boring, *Mark*, 103: "a very complex set of traditions."

[13] See the succinct assessment of the material in Guelich, *Mark*, 168–69; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 277–79.

even if it is admitted that the materials assembled in Mark 3 did not necessarily originate from a single episode in the life of Jesus.[14]

Although most commentators agree that much, if not all, of the materials that make up Mark 3:20–35 reaches back in one form or another to the historical Jesus,[15] the meaning these materials have in Mark's narrative is another matter. Marcus raises the possibility that in Mark's narrative world the family of Jesus represents "the Torah-observant Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem against which Mark as exponent of a Torah-free Gentile Christianity was battling."[16] Marcus admits there is little evidence for this interpretation, but it does at least cohere with other factors. Frankly, I find it bordering on allegory. It is also suggested that Mark 3:20–35 mirrors "the alienation of some Markan Christians from their own family members."[17] Much more cautiously, Boring comments that Jesus' words "whoever does the will of the Father" imply that "the circle of those around Jesus" can be expanded.[18] Similarly Collins suggests that "the narrative of Mark to this point hints at a new social world in the making that began with Jesus calling disciples."[19]

These differing points of view raise the difficult question of how the evangelists intended their narratives to be interpreted and applied in the lives of their readers. One immediately recalls the widespread practice of the 1960s and 1970s of reading Mark especially as though his narrative mirrored circumstances and specific, identifiable groups related to the evangelist's "community." It was suggested that the disciples represented Christians who held to a false Christology and dubious worldview.[20]

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[14] Lane (*Mark*, 137–39) is in essential agreement with the analysis offered here. For a learned review of the relevant cultural and religious background of Mark 3:20–35, see Collins, *Mark*, 226–37.

[15] As Marcus (*Mark 1–8*, 279) rightly judges: Mark 3:20–35 is "not the sort of depiction that the church would have created out of thin air." Marcus wonders if part of the tension between Jesus and his family was due to the latter's stricter adherence to the Torah. Classic form critics allowed for an authentic core underlying much of this material. See, e.g., R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 29–30. Cf. France, *Mark*, 164: "Mark's historical restraint is remarkable."

[16] Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 280.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Boring, *Mark*, 111.

[19] Collins, *Mark*, 237.

[20] Here one thinks of T. J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). See also Weeden's "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 145–58. Weeden's reasoning was profoundly circular, inferring a heretical emphasis on triumphal Christology (miracles, power, and the like) from the stories in the first half of the Gospel of Mark, then interpreting the second half of Mark, which focuses on suffering and passion, as a "correction" of the misguided triumphal Christology. The logic goes

Accordingly, they were presented as ignorant, willfully blind, and failures. In short, Mark was written to counter a "heresy" in the Markan community, to show that true Christology was centered on suffering and the cross. The utter subjectivity of the whole enterprise was not sufficiently recognized at the time. Today scholars speak more cautiously and some commentators have expressed severe criticism of mirror-reading interpretive strategies.[21]

Most now agree that Mark 3:20–35 provides Jesus researchers with important data relating to Jesus' reputation as exorcist and the tension his public activities and notoriety generated within his own family. How much this material tells us about the evangelist and his purpose for writing is less clear.

Mark 5:1–20. The encounter with the Gerasene (or Gergasene) demoniac surely ranks as the eeriest episode in the life of Jesus. The description of this possessed and tormented man is shocking and disgusting. He lives in a cemetery. He possesses superhuman strength, as seen in the fact that no one can bind him and when fettered he breaks the chains. He howls in the night and bruises himself with stones. The man is insane; he is possessed. But when he sees Jesus "from afar," he runs up to him, bows before him, and says: "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me" (vv. 6–7). Jesus demands to know the possessed man's name. "My name is Legion; for we are many" (v. 9). The demons, though many, cannot escape exorcism. Jesus then casts the demons into the swine, which then plunge into the Sea of Galilee and perish (and the demons, readers will assume, perish with the pigs). Terrified, the herdsmen flee into the city and report the whole incident. People from the city and surrounding countryside come to see for themselves. They find Jesus and the man who had been possessed now clothed and in his right man. In the presence of one so powerful as Jesus they are fearful and beg him to depart from their country. The delivered man wants to be with Jesus, so complete is his cure. But Jesus wants him to stay behind as his witness.

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something like this: Where do the heretics come from? From inference based on Mark's narrative. What guides our interpretation of Mark? The problem of the heretics in the Markan community. This eisegetical approach is both circular and allegorical.

[21] For example, see Gundry, *Mark*, 1: "The Gospel of Mark contains no ciphers, no hidden meanings, no sleight of hand." Gundry catalogues and rejects all of these approaches, concluding: "Mark's meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward apology for the Cross, for the shameful way in which the object of Christian faith and subject of Christian proclamation died, and hence for Jesus as the Crucified One."

Although recognizing the complexity of the narrative, form critics have generally allowed that the evangelist Mark inherited the story largely as presented.[22] Long ago a few scholars wondered if the story originally had nothing to do with Jesus.[23] That idea seems to have fallen by the wayside. But what of the authenticity of the story? Lane remarks, "The vivid details appear to reflect in part eyewitness report and in part the explanation supplied by townspeople long familiar with the history of the violent man of the tombs."[24] But not all agree with this assessment. Some wonder if the "vivid details" are more literary and interpretive than historical. For example Harald Sahlin argues that the story originated as a midrash on Isa 65:1–5 (esp. v. 4: "…who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh…").[25] John Craghan agrees that Isaiah 65 plays an important role but thinks the story may also be dependent on an exorcistic charm.[26] Recently, Marcus believes the story is historical but its details have been colored by words and themes drawn from Exodus 14–15.[27] Roger Aus hears these echoes too but believes the primary backdrop is the story of Samson and Jewish interpretation of it. Like Samson, whom no one could bind, the Gerasene demoniac broke the chains and

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22 For example, see Bultmann, *History*, 210: "Clearly the story is essentially intact in its original form." See also V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1935), 122–23.

23 For example, see C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels: Edited with an Introduction and a Commentary* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1927), 1:111; M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribner, 1934; repr. Cambridge and London: James Clarke, 1971), 88: "We ought, however, to ask whether the story cannot be understood from its own self, and so not as a story about Jesus." Collins (*Mark*, 266) rightly disagrees, stating: "There is no reason to think the story was not originally about Jesus.

24 Lane, *Mark*, 180; likewise Gundry, *Mark*, 255: "The many vivid details…may derive from eyewitness reporting." So also V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 277–78. See also the interesting and related comments in G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 99–100.

25 H. Sahlin, "Die Perikope vom gerasenischen Besessenen und der Plan des Markusevangelium," *ST* 18 (1964): 159–74, here 160–62.

26 J. F. Craghan, "The Gerasene Demoniac," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 522–36, esp. 531. Appeal to an incantation text is not in itself misguided; after all, such texts provide helpful background data enabling interpreters to understand better the practice of exorcism in the time and place of Jesus. But Craghan's suggestion that a Babylonian incantation text, dating to the sixth century BC, may have given rise to the Synoptic story of the Gerasene demoniac ("a far closer parallel") strikes me as quite far-fetched and wholly unnecessary. The incantation referenced by Craghan is found in R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, vol. 2 (London: Luzac, 1904) tablet N, col. 3, 10–15. Craghan does allow for an authentic event behind the Gospel story.

27 Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 348–49.

fetters with which he was bound.[28] Until he came into contact with Jesus no one could bind him and, more importantly, no one could release him. Unlike Marcus and most other commentators, Aus concludes categorically that the story of the demoniac is so indebted to the Old Testament Scriptures and interpretive traditions "even a small historical core cannot be retained in 5:1–20."[29] The story is a literary invention, says Aus, designed to "'legitimate' a later Jewish Christian missionizing of the (primarily Gentile) Decapolis after the death and resurrection of Jesus."[30]

Most of the scriptural and interpretive backdrop proposed by Aus seems valid, but I cannot see how that negates the historical element of the story. The people of Gerasa are frightened of Jesus, they wish him to quit their country, and Jesus refuses the Gerasene man's request to follow him. It is not clear how these elements—and they are important elements of the story—would have been invented by Jewish Christians, however much they drew upon Scripture and Jewish interpretation of it and however much the story may have been understood as foundational to Christian mission in the Decapolis. Gundry readily acknowledges that the story as told in Mark 5 may have been colored by details from Isaiah 65 (and mostly the LXX). Nevertheless, there remain good reasons for viewing it as an authentic episode from the ministry of Jesus.[31] As for the roughness of the narrative, commentators sensibly suggest that the frequent telling and retelling of the story probably accounts for the inconcinnities.[32]

Mark 7:1–13. Mark states that Pharisees had observed that Jesus' disciples ate with "unwashed hands" (v. 2) and then explains to his readers who are unfamiliar with this Jewish sect its great concern in matters of purity (vv. 3–5). Earlier in Mark's narrative some Pharisees had objected to Jesus' free association with "sinners and tax collectors" (2:16). This time they ask Jesus why his disciples do not eat with washed hands (v. 5). Both of these concerns have to do with the Pharisees' understanding of purity. Jesus does not answer the question directly; he does not say that eating with unwashed hands is permissible or that concerns with purity are unnecessary. Rather, Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter: Pharisaic teachings often go beyond the requirements of Scripture; indeed, these teachings

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[28] R. D. Aus, *My Name is "Legion": Palestinian Judaic Traditions in Mark 5:1–20 and Other Gospel Texts* (Studies in Judaism; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 1–208.

[29] Aus, *My Name is "Legion"*, 91.

[30] Aus, *My Name is "Legion"*, 96. See also R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 2.1–2; Freiburg: Herder, 1977, 1991), 1:292–93.

[31] Gundry, *Mark*, 258–59.

[32] As in Boring, *Mark*, 149–50; Collins, *Mark*, 266.

sometimes nullify Scripture itself. Jesus appeals to Isa 29:13 where the prophet of old leveled a similar complaint against the religious authorities of his day. With biting irony Jesus chides his critics: "You reject the commandment of God beautifully, in order to keep your tradition" (v. 9). By way of illustration, Jesus alludes to Exod 20:12 (= Deut 5:16) and Lev 20:9 (cf. Exod 21:17), Scriptures that enjoin grown children to care for their parents. But the tradition of "qorban," whereby something is dedicated to God and so is no longer available for secular use, was sometimes invoked with the result that substance needed by elderly parents was denied them (v. 12).

For readers unfamiliar with Jewish religious customs, the evangelist Mark explains that qorban means "given to God" (v. 11). Josephus understands it similarly: "'Qorban' to God—meaning what Greeks would call a 'gift'" (*Ant.* 4.73); "Now this oath (i.e. Qorban) will be found in no other nationa except the Jews, and, translated from the Hebrew, one may interpret it as meaning "God's gift" (*Against Apion* 1.167). A first-century ossuary inscription reads: "All that a man may find to his profit in this ossuary is an offering [*qrbn*] to God from him who is within it." With reference to Jesus' use of the word in Mark 7 the ossuary inscription "provides a perfect contemporary parallel."[33]

What makes this Markan passage especially interesting is the parenthetic remark in Jesus' later explanation of the meaning of his words (Mark 7:14–23). I refer to the words found in v. 19: "Thus he declared all foods clean."[34] Here we have either the evangelist Mark or a Christian teacher before him who passed along the story who applies Jesus' teaching on what really defiles someone (v. 15: "there is nothing outside a person which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a person are what defile him") to the post-Easter Christian community. That is, because defilement comes from the heart and not from what goes into the mouth, all food may be eaten.[35] This interpretation clearly lies behind Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 8, where eating meat

33 As rightly argued by J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorban Inscription from Jebel Hallet Et-Turi and Mk 7:11/Mt 15:5," *JBL* 78 (1959): 60–65. The quotation is from the last page of Fitzmyer's study. For a slightly updated reprint of this study, see Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971; repr. SBLSBS 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 93–100.

34 The Greek words are καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα. The masc. sing. participle modifies λέγει ("he says") in v. 18. Adding the adverb "thus," along with the implied "declared," rightly clarifies the meaning of the participle. Lit. "He (Jesus) says, 'Then are you also.... Do you not see... and so passes on?', (thus) cleansing all foods."

35 Lane, *Mark*, 255: "The elliptical expression in verse 19b ('cleansing all meats') is almost certainly an interpretive comment of the evangelist which drew out the implications of Jesus' statement."

sacrificed to idols is allowed (e.g., v. 8: "We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do").[36] But not all Christian communities necessarily agreed with such a broad generalization. For example, the parallel to Mark 7 in Matthew 15 omits the declaration that all foods are clean. The Matthean evangelist has no problem with Jesus' teaching per se,[37] but he apparently is unwilling to conclude that Jesus' words lead to the proposition that "all foods are clean."[38]

Lane is confident that Mark 7 represents an episode in the life of Jesus, though its placement between Mark 6 and 8 is artificial and probably is intended to develop the theme of Jesus extending messianic grace to the Gentiles.[39] Gundry rebuts a whole series of objections centered on either Jewish customs or what is imagined Gentiles may or may not have known.[40] Guelich and Marcus accept the authenticity of the core story but perceive a number of edits and glosses that reflect the early Christian community's attempts to interpret and apply the dominical teaching.[41] Boring says essentially the same, remarking that the evangelist "takes up traditional materials from and about Jesus and retells them with his situation in

[36] We may have an echo of Mark 7:19b in Rom 14:20, where in reference to food Paul states: "Everything is indeed clean" (πάντα μὲν καθαρά). It is interesting that here in Romans 14, as well as in 1 Corinthians, the "all foods are clean" interpretation is qualified by emphasizing the importance of conscience and of taking care not to cause someone to stumble. From this observation I infer that Jesus' teaching regarding what really defiles was understood very early as implying that all food could be eaten and that the qualifications we see in Paul's letters and in Matthew (through omission of Mark 7:19b) were a later response. For a similar analysis, see France, *Mark*, 277–79.

[37] And that is because it challenges Pharisaic halakah, not the purity laws of Moses.

[38] See W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew.* Vol. II: *Commentary on Matthew VIII–XVIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 535: Matthew the evangelist omitted Mark 7:19 because he "could not abide such a sweeping dismissal of OT law." See also A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 73, 83; D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 134–35.

[39] Lane, *Mark*, 244.

[40] Gundry, *Mark*, 357–71. In this connection, one should see J. G. Crossley, "Halakah and Mark 7.3: 'with the hand in the shape of a fist'," *NTS* 58 (2012): 57–68. Against scholars who contend that Mark's πυγμῇ ("with the fist") makes no sense or is perhaps an error, Crossley shows that it reflects authentic hand-washing tradition.

[41] Guelich, *Mark*, 360–62; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 447–48. Guelich offers readers a succinct evaluation of form-critical analysis. Marcus offers a very plausible assessment of what goes back to the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* and what elements the Markan evangelist added. For further discussion, see J. Marcus, "Scripture and Tradition in Mark 7," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; BETL 131; Leuven: Peeters / Leuven University Press, 1997): 177–95.

view."[42] The doctrine that all food could be eaten, which then has to be carefully qualified, in my view supports the authenticity of the tradition. One wonders how controversial inauthentic tradition could have made such headway during the lifetime of the apostles themselves. Accordingly, it is probable that Jesus' remarkable utterance, originally intended as a critique of Pharisaic halakah, quickly came to be understood as a general declaration that all food could be eaten (which would have been well received by early Gentile converts) and almost as quickly required qualifications lest Jewish members of the Church were offended and became disaffected.

Mark 8:27–30. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus asks his disciples who people say he is (v. 27). The disciples' report, "John the Baptist; others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets" (v. 28), recalls the evangelist's earlier summary of opinion regarding the identity of Jesus. According to Mark 6:14 people were saying of Jesus "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead." But others were saying, "It is Elijah"; and others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old" (6:15). Even Herod Antipas speculates that "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised" (6:16). Public speculation that Jesus might in some sense be "John the Baptist," whether in spirit or in some sense *redivivus* (as in Mark 6:16), pays a significant compliment to Jesus. The popular wilderness prophet had been put to death by Herod Antipas, as much for political reasons as for personal reasons. Jesus' ministry draws so much attention, and is accompanied by such astonishing deeds of power, that people wonder if God has raised up John to continue the work of preparation for the kingdom. It is not surprising in light of Mal 4:5–6 ("Behold, I will send you Elijah …") that some thought Jesus to be Elijah. The promise that someday God would raise up a "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18:15–18) would feed speculation that Jesus could be such.

Jesus then asks his disciples for their opinion and Peter answers, "You are the Messiah" (v. 29). The Greek is "Christ" (*christos*), but this is a translation of the Hebrew *meshiah*, from which the word "Messiah" is derived. The word means "anointed." But because the word is used in reference to anointed kings (1 Sam 15:1; 16:13; Ps 2:2), anointed prophets (1 Kgs 19:15–16; 1 Chr 16:22 = Ps 105:15; Isa 61:1), and anointed priests (Exod 29:6–7; Lev 16:32; 1 Chr 29:22), it is not certain what Peter means by it. Jesus' crucifixion as "king of the Jews" (Mark 15:26, 32) provides strong

[42] Boring, *Mark*, 196.

support for the traditional view that Peter confessed Jesus to be Israel's messianic King.

In Mark 8:27–30 the evangelist Mark takes up the most important emphasis of his narrative: the messiahship of Jesus. After some eight chapters of public ministry, highlighted by a series of astounding miracles, Jesus is now recognized by the spokesman of his followers as Israel's Messiah. With this recognition Jesus begins to speak of his suffering and death. Mark 8:27–30 in a certain sense is both the conclusion of the first half of the Gospel and the introduction to the second. Jesus' authoritative teaching and person have led to a confession of his messiahship. In the second half of the narrative readers of the Gospel of Mark will discover what the messiahship of Jesus entails.

Given the importance of this passage in the Markan narrative it is not surprising that it has drawn considerable attention from commentators. Lane expresses appreciation for the way the evangelist constructed the first half of his narrative so that readers begin to anticipate an open acknowledgement of Jesus' identity. "The recognition that Jesus is the Messiah," says Lane, "is thus the point of intersection toward which all of the theological currents of the first half of the Gospel converge and from which the dynamic of the second half of the Gospel derives."[43] Gundry rebuts the claim that Mark 8:27–30 is likely an inauthentic story because Jesus would not have solicited opinions about himself or would not ask his disciples for information that he himself would already know. Jesus is not seeking his own education; he is prodding his disciples.[44] Marcus admits no more than that "Peter's confession may very well echo a primitive Christian confession that was known to Mark's readers from their own worship services."[45] Boring adds that the "passage contains traditional elements, but Mark is the composer of the whole, which bears a Markan stamp and expresses Markan theology."[46] All of the commentators that I have surveyed provide very helpful exegetical insights, but I am surprised by their reluctance to see in Mark 8:27–30 scarcely more than a whisper of historical material. I should think that the crucifixion of Jesus

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43 Lane, *Mark*, 288–89, with quotation from p. 289.

44 Gundry, *Mark*, 442–43. Gundry is responding chiefly to D. Catchpole, "The 'Triumphal' Entry," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 319–34, here 327–28; and Bultman, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 257.

45 J. Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (AB 27A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 612.

46 Boring, *Mark*, 234.

as "king of the Jews" (Mark 15:26, 32) and the universal proclamation of him by his followers, foremost among them Simon Peter, as Israel's Messiah strongly recommends the historicity of Mark 8:27–30. And one must not forget the rebuke of Peter that follows in v. 33: "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men." This is hardly the stuff of pious imagination or theological construction. I am inclined to agree with one of the old form critics, who asserted that the "historical Confession is guaranteed" by the words of rebuke.[47]

There is little doubt that Mark has placed the passage at the center of his narrative—as a climax of all that precedes and as an introduction to all that will follow—and it is likely that the evangelist has edited the passage. But given what unfolds at the end of the story, it is most likely that Jesus' messianic identity was recognized, at the very least by his closest disciples, at some point before the journey to Jerusalem.

Concluding Comments

As anyone who has written a commentary on one of the Gospels has observed, commentators have their respective agenda and set of values. Some commentators are more interested in the historical background, even if their judgment as to the possibility of success in addressing this question varies widely. They focus on what Jesus said and did and what these things would have meant in the early first century. Other commentators are more interested in the given Gospel as literature, sometimes pressing the text, even "reading between the lines," to squeeze out meanings that the author may well have never intended.

Of course, most will readily agree that a commentary on a Gospel, even the Fourth Gospel, should have in mind both historical as well as literary concerns. Neglect of either will weaken the commentary. Careful exploration of the historical setting in the life of Jesus and in the life of the evangelist, as vague and uncertain as that may be, will better position the interpreter to appreciate the literary character of the Gospel. And of course, careful assessment of the literary character of the Gospel facilitates the historical evaluation of a given Gospel. Attentive work in both areas makes it easier to differentiate and thus appreciate the historical

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[47] Taylor, *Formation*, 149–50.

and the literary. The research involved in writing a commentary on one of the New Testament Gospels may be demanding, but it certainly is rewarding. Because of the very nature of the Gospels, many questions pertaining to history and purpose for writing will go unanswered. Commentators are duty-bound to raise them and then pursue them with industry.

PART TWO

COMMENTARIES AND THE HERMENEUTICAL TASK

THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

Richard S. Hess

It is a pleasure to dedicate this study to Grant Osborne who has provided so much insight to so many in the interpretation of the New Testament. Many years ago I had the privilege of learning about much of the New Testament epistolary literature from Grant. Although there were things I disagreed with at the time, to paraphrase Mark Twain, I have been amazed how much wiser Grant's observations became as I grew older!

It is enough to study one testament with any measure of effectiveness. One treads on dangerous ground when attempting to connect the two and especially when evaluating the "hermeneutical competence of New Testament commentaries" (for such was the original title on the proposal sent to me) without ever having written one myself. Rather, I suspect that a project such as the one to which this forms one minor chapter will be better served by some observations regarding what this reader has observed as important areas of Old Testament study that deserve more attention in the study of the New Testament and in the writing of New Testament commentaries.

As a preacher and teacher on several continents for the past few decades, I have regularly had recourse to exegetical commentaries on the New Testament. Perhaps I have not used them as often as I should, but they have provided many valuable insights and directions for my own study of the Scriptures. I would be remiss were I not to express gratitude to the many commentators who have informed the understanding of the New Testament that I have been privileged to share in churches, classrooms, and elsewhere. This includes, but is by no means limited to, the commentaries to which I refer here.

There are many commentaries available to the reader today, some (perhaps most) would say too many. For my reflection on New Testament commentaries I have chosen to limit myself largely (though not entirely) to those evaluated in the excellent "New Testament Exegesis Bibliography" by my colleagues William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and David Mathewson, that can be accessed at the Denver Seminary website, where it is regularly updated.[1] From these, I have especially chosen one that emphasizes the Greek text. There are many other fine resources.[2] However, with the exception of those making obvious connections, I have found it necessary to limit myself to a relatively few commentaries that may represent the larger genre.

It is not my purpose to teach New Testament scholars how to interpret the New Testament. There are many fine works already published that do this in much more detail than is possible here.[3] Rather, I propose to consider a half dozen sample texts from the New Testament and to examine something of their background in the Old Testament. In doing so, I will argue for some important points of interpretation and understanding that are either overlooked or underdeveloped by the New Testament commentaries that I have consulted. My point will be to illustrate areas in which New Testament commentaries and commentators may profit from further research.

This process will include a consideration of the following matters affecting interpretation. First, there is the question of the meanings of words. Semantics for New Testament readers relates not only to the Greek language, but also the Hebrew, as I will attempt to show in the famous case of Hab 2:4 and Rom 1:17. Another well-known text, that of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, provides a second example of the importance of understanding the Old Testament background. A more complete survey of the Old Testament contexts and background to some phrases and expressions point not so much to new meanings as to a richer context for the connections that the Gospel writer makes in the teaching leading up to this famous prayer and the prayer itself. The third example, that of the sheep and the goats from Matthew 25, considers background texts in the prophets and wisdom literature of the Old Testament to affirm the connection of the judgment with how one treats those who bring the good news, but then also extends this language to the larger world and to the sacrifice of God's people in obedient ministry and evangelization.

[1] http://www.denverseminary.edu/article/new-testament-exegesis-bibliography-2012/ accessed June 19, 2012. The discerning reader will find reviews and an "Annotated Old Testament Bibliography" at this site as well. These bibliographies are regularly updated and available via free access.

[2] Of these I must mention at least G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). I have consulted it for this study.

[3] The reader is invited to consult the above mentioned bibliography and look under the section, "Hermeneutics," for eleven works on this subject, including the second edition of Grant Osborne's *The Hermeneutical Spiral.*

A fourth example moves back into the epistles to look at the old crux of Eph 4:8 and its relationship to the text it appears to quote from Psalm 68. The suggested direction for a resolution to the textual difference here identifies the ancient Israelite custom of giving and receiving gifts and what was expected in the process. A fifth example considers the disappearance of the sea at the end of the book of Revelation. It surveys some of the suggestions made by commentators on this book and seeks to use the resources of ancient West Semitic mythologies and of more recent studies in anthropology to identify the significance of this imagery. The last consideration is not limited to a specific New Testament text. Instead, it briefly examines the broader claims of New Testament discipleship that are assumed to originate with the apostles. These are then broadened and projected back onto the Old Testament sacrificial system to suggest the origin of this key theological foundation for Christian living.

The common theme in this diverse survey is the need to make good use of the resources of the Old Testament and the tools that are present in both the commentaries and more general studies from this field. Behind a proper appreciation of divine inspiration must lie the view that each of these testaments can speak with integrity on its own and, when properly understood, can add important insights to the message of the other testament and ultimately to our appreciation and understanding of the good news of the whole gospel.

1. *Faith and Faithfulness*

Romans 1:17 provides a quotation of Hab 2:4 where we read (or we assume the text intends) that the righteous one shall live by *his* faithfulness. In the Romans context the translation suggests that the righteous will live from faith. The concept of faith as found in the Romans text is thought to include potentially both adherence to the covenant (as is thought to be present in the Judaism of Paul's day) and trust. It is the latter that Paul will particularly argue in Romans, although faithfulness may grow out of that trust.[4] So it has been suggested that here is a deliberate ambiguity in terms of faith and faithfulness, and that this is the reason for dropping the pronoun "his" from the Habakkuk quote.[5] On the other hand, there is

[4] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 45–46.

[5] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 48. Note that the Greek fragment of Habakkuk from Naḥal Ḥever also reads "his" (8ḤevXIIgr), while the LXX witnesses are divided between "his," "my," and no pronoun.

a line of argument that sees the omission of the pronoun as a means of eliminating the understanding of the Greek in Romans (and Gal 3:6–14) as having to do with faithfulness. In this manner the faith is connected to the verb "shall live," where the latter does not refer to eternal life but (according to Dunn) to living in the community of faith in the present life. Therefore, the purpose of the gospel is to establish such communities of faith in which righteousness is lived.[6] Alternatively, the connection with the verb refers to sharing in the life of Christ, that is, salvation to eternal life.[7]

Some argue against this, despite the connection of "live" and "faith/faithfulness" in Habakkuk. So Rom 1:18–4:25 explains how righteousness comes from faith and presumes their connection.[8] Romans 5:1–8:39 then goes on to identify what it means to live in this righteousness. In the first four chapters (after 1:17) the root of "faith" (*pistis*) occurs 37 times as a noun and a verb, whereas in chapters 5–8 it occurs only twice.

Habakkuk 2:4 reflects the Old Testament understanding of righteousness (*ṣadîq* regularly rendered in the LXX as *dikaios*) as proper custom and fulfillment of one's duty according to the ancient covenant between Israel and God. This sense remains similar to that found in the text of Romans and may reflect Paul's own awareness of a tradition that found its way into the later Talmud where the Habakkuk verse summarizes the fulfillment of all of God's commands (*b. Mak.* 24a).[9] More to the point for modern interpreters is the question of *be'ĕmûnātô*, often translated, "his faithfulness." The context in Habakkuk is the vision of v. 2 that comes and affirms God's ultimate sovereignty over the world and over the most powerful might of the cruel Babylonian army. This is also the vision or revelation of v. 3, a future hope contained in the covenant and God's promise to act on behalf of his people. The nature of the covenant requires that any faith in it be actualized by the believer's faithfulness to that covenant in all its stipulations. Faithfulness to the covenant was the primary meaning of the text for the prophet's contemporaries. Secondarily, but nevertheless legitimately bound together with faithfulness to the covenant, Habakkuk's audience would perceive a call for faith in God as the author of the

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[6] Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 145–47.

[7] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, (AB 33; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 265; Douglas J. Moo, *Romans* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 52.

[8] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (6th ed.; 2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:101–2.

[9] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:93–94.

covenant and as the personal object of the relationship established by it. As has long been noted, faith in God and his promises may be implied so along as the premiere emphasis upon faithfulness to God's covenant is given to the prophet's oracle.[10]

This understanding of *pistis* and of *'emûnâ* as containing elements of both faith and faithfulness, although with distinct emphases, is not shared by all. Not only do several of the interpretations suggested above disagree with this understanding but there are those commentators who explicitly disagree with the view that the Old Testament *'emûnâ* can carry the sense of "faith" as well as "faithfulness,"[11] despite the evidence and understanding of scholars of Classical Hebrew and Habakkuk. Much better are those interpretations that regard faith and faithfulness as present in both the Hebrew and Greek terms.[12]

2. *The Lord's Prayer*

One of the best known passages in the New Testament is the Lord's Prayer, often recited as it is recorded in Matt 6:9–13. It is introduced as a caution against boastful prayer in public and against babbling on with many words.[13] While some might see this apparently contradicted by Daniel's

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10 Alfred Jepsen, "אָמַן," *TDOT* 1:292–323, especially 319–20, emphasizes faithfulness to *'emet* rather than the covenant itself. For the faith element, see already Edward B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets, Volume II* (Oxford: Parker, 1850), 192, and Theodore Laetsch, *The Minor Prophets* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956). More recently, see Carl Armerding, "Habakkuk," in *Daniel—Malachi* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised 8; eds. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 626. Nevertheless, there are those who retain "faithfulness" without a connection to "faith." See Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 107–8.

11 Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 608. This follows the understanding of 1QpHab 8.1–3, where the faithfulness is directed by the pious toward "their struggle" and explicitly toward the Teacher of Righteousness.

12 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 73–76. Schreiner would see the major emphasis (and therefore the preferred translation) on "faith."

13 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7* (trans. James E. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 305–6, emphasizes the sense of repeating meaningless syllables. However, the context of v. 8 would suggest that there is an intent to the words being uttered and thus any sort of lengthy, repetitive prayer may be involved. This broader understanding is suggested by Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 240; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33A; Waco, TX: Word, 1993), 147; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 284–85; Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 274. David L. Turner, *Matthew* (Baker Exegetical

rather public demonstration of prayer (Dan 6:10), that is a special case in which he was called to demonstrate his faith in the midst of persecution. Far closer to the concerns of the Old Testament is the focus on waiting for the LORD, in contradistinction to speaking many words or making a public demonstration of one's piety. This is advocated in numerous passages such as Pss 27:14; 37:34; 130:5; and Prov 20:22, where the Hebrew root is *qwh.* The term "our father," begins Jesus' example of how to pray. Arguably, it is of such importance that every phrase in the rest of the prayer can be directly related to this initial noun of address. While the Aramaic *Abba* and the connection of v. 9 with the early Jewish *Kaddish* are valid points made by the commentators, none recognizes the unique use of this expression, *our father,* in the Hebrew Bible.[14] The term "our father" occurs about twenty-five times in the Old Testament (half in Genesis 12–50), but almost always with reference to human fathers. In fact, it occurs with reference to God only in Isaiah 63:16 and 64:8 (MT v. 9). While 1 Chron 29:10 provides a precedent for the use of "our father" at the beginning of a prayer (although there not as an address to God), the context of Isaiah describes the past sins of Israel and the nation's plea to God to turn back, to forgive them, and to bring them out of their misery, perhaps their deportation from Jerusalem and Judah. It is a cry for forgiveness and an expression of vulnerability, as seen especially in the 64:8 (MT v. 9) occurrence, where the verse goes on to say, "We are the clay and you are the potter. We are all the work of your hand." Well versed in the Old Testament, and especially in a book such as Isaiah, which Jesus (and others; cf. the Dead Sea Scroll texts of Isaiah) often read from and quoted, is it not likely that the initial words of this prayer intentionally recalled Israel crying to God as a child in penance and vulnerability before its father? Is this not the attitude that Jesus would teach his disciples to begin their prayers? Rather than boasting with many words, it describes a humility and penitence before God that seeks forgiveness of sins, a key theme in the latter part of the text. Finally, we may consider how Jesus ties the request for forgiveness of sins with the attitude of forgiving others. Ancient Israel knew that the chief requirement of God's relationship with Israel was to act justly

Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 185, refers to Isa 26:20 as background for the prohibition against praying in public; but this is a reference to Israel hiding from God's anger against the world. This seems unrelated to the context of Matthew 6.

[14] France, *Matthew*, 245; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 147; Nolland, *Matthew*, 286; Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 309–18; Turner, *Matthew*, 186; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 275. These Old Testament references also preclude the theory that addressing God as Father had no precedent in Judaism.

and with mercy toward others (e.g., Mic 6:6–8). Nor was this some sort of "works salvation." As Old Testament Israel received the capacity to accept God's salvation in the exodus, its actualization of that capacity was demonstrated by its faithfulness to the covenant in its love for God and for its neighbors.[15] Similarly, Jesus teaches that the capacity to receive God's forgiveness is the same capacity in our lives that enables us to forgive others. Forgiving others is not the means by which we earn God's forgiveness, it is the evidence of that forgiveness, earned through Jesus' own death on the cross. It is there that he voiced forgiveness of those who crucified him (Luke 23:34, using similar language as in the Lord's Prayer), thus paving the way for us to find that forgiveness for our sins that led Jesus to sacrifice himself in the first place.

3. *Sheep and Goats in the Church and the World*

Matthew 25:31–46 records the great scene of God's judgment and the division between the sheep and the goats. The divine judge relates this division and the destiny of each group to their actions among the vulnerable and needy brothers and sisters of the earth. It is widely accepted, especially among recent evangelical commentaries, that at least in the first instance Christ's brothers and sisters are those who proclaim the gospel message. Ministering to them is therefore reception of the gospel, whereas rejecting their message also entails not ministering to them.[16]

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15 Such a broad, biblical, theological context is not found in Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 150–52; Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 322–29; Turner, *Matthew,* 188–90; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 278–80. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 249–54, provides perhaps the most comprehensive discussion but does not mention the Old Testament background. Nolland, *Matthew*, 290–91, appeals to Psalm 103 to establish the importance of divine forgiveness. However, he cites nothing prior to Sirach 28 concerning the connection of human forgiveness with divine forgiveness.

16 So Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 375–80; Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Waco, TX: Word, 1995), 740–47; Craig L. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 602–6; Turner, *Matthew*, 603–11. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 633–41 also embraces this interpretation but clearly allows for the alternative view that this text evaluates how Christians treated all the poor, not just the messengers of the gospel. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 3:416–35, choose to understand here a judgment according to the deeds of the sheep and goats for all the poor and needy of the world. They explicitly reject that it only refers to Christian missionaries and support their case with citation of Jewish and Christian tradition as well as contemporary Jewish literature and Prov 19:17 (ibid., 429–30).

There is much in the way of Old Testament sources from the beginning of this section and one who studies the Old Testament background will better understand a text that is the subject of no small controversy. Matthew 25:31 begins the passage with a description of the Son of Man appearing in glory and surrounded by his angels as he takes his seat in preparation for judgment. Divine theophanies are well known in Old Testament poetry, especially as they introduce an ancient poem with the appearance of God in his glory. For example, this occurs in Exodus 15, Judges 5, and Habakkuk 3.[17] However, the wording here is especially close to Deut 33:2 where the text describes God's shining forth in glory with his heavenly host in order to bring law to his people and to pronounce the judgment of the tribes and their destinies. So enthroned, God sits as king over heavenly and earthly hosts.[18] For this reason, Zech 14:5 is at best an intermediate borrowing but does not reach to the heart of the background of this picture in Matt 25:31.[19] The explicit connection of the "Son of Man" title with a divine ruler of heaven and earth is found in Daniel 7.

Matthew 25:32–33 recalls the divine division of rams and goats in Ezek 34:17, and referred to in vv. 16 and 20 as fat sheep. This describes the most powerful of the animals of the flock and represents the leadership of Israel. Their self-interest and lack of concern for the needs of the poor among those they lead forms an indictment.[20] They take the pasture and water for themselves, leaving little for the sheep of the flock (vv. 18–19). God, however, will take care of his flock and will appoint a new shepherd to look over them (vv. 20–31). The judgment against the more powerful animals, that is the leadership, is implied but not detailed as in the New Testament passage. However, the listeners of Jesus' message might well have remembered the passage and been disposed to regard the negative judgment as falling naturally upon the rich and the leadership. They had the resources to address the needs of the poor and suffering and were held responsible for distributing those resources to the ones in need of them.

The list of those in need is a long one: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the unclothed, the sick, and those in prison. No list precisely

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[17] See also Psalm 68 below. Note R. S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 101, 158.

[18] J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5; Leicester: Apollos; Downvers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 468–69. Hagner sees here a reference to Deuteronomy 33:2 (as well): Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 742.

[19] In this I disagree with Keener, *Matthew*, 603, and Turner, *Matthew*, 608.

[20] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 292–93.

matches this one. However, a similar list in the context of bringing relief from these maladies does occur in Isa 58:6–7, especially v. 7. This list—the hungry, the stranger without a home, and the unclothed—represents the true fast that God would encourage Israel to join. Then they will know God's presence, salvation, and blessing. The connection is even stronger with the last phrase of Isa 58:7 that refers to those in need as of one's own flesh or family. It explicitly relates to Jesus's own reference to the acts of mercy for those whom Jesus calls, "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine."

It is also of value to consider a key word that runs through this section of Isaiah 58, the root *'nh*. In the Piel stem one form of this root means "afflict," while in the Qal stem a homonym carries the sense of "answer." In Lev 16:29 and 31, the Piel form, "to afflict," occurs as the sole responsibility of the Israelites on the Day of Atonement. If they expect God's forgiveness to reach to them, they are to afflict themselves. This was understood throughout history as fasting and foregoing the legitimate pleasures of this world. The term is used in Isa 58:3 and 5 as part of descriptions of Israel's attempt to receive God's blessing through afflicting themselves by fasting. In v. 9, however, the homonym occurs to describe how God will now answer. What has changed to bring this answer about? It is the concern for the poor and oppressed in v. 7. This is the true fast. As if to make this clear, the wordplay occurs one more time, in verse 10. Here the root that carries the sense "to oppress, afflict," appears as a (Niphal) participle in the phrase, "you satisfy the spirit of the oppressed." Thus the wordplay makes clear that what is important and will most certainly bring about God's response in forgiving sins and bringing blessing is not merely to afflict oneself but also to reach out to the afflicted. We humble ourselves before God in part by reaching out to those who are already humbled in their circumstances. Is this then the message of Matt 25:35–46?[21]

Matthew 25:40 also provides the connection between king Jesus and the poor. When the king says, "What you did for the least of these, you did for me," he recalls a principle stated nowhere so clearly as in Proverbs 19:17: he lends to Yahweh who shows mercy to the poor; and he (Yahweh) will see that he receives his reward. God's honor is connected with the poor, created in the divine image and loved by God (Prov 14:31; 17:5; 22:2).

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[21] See Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 478–79. He exemplifies the perceptive commentator who sees Israel's desire for God to answer and the answer that God does give; although he does not mention the key role of this wordplay on the root meaning (in part), "answer."

As God takes on the debt of the poor and so identifies with them, the wealthy will find God and his blessing by associating with and supporting the poor.[22] God's connection (and so that of Jesus) with the poor in repaying any loan or assistance given to them explains the blessing reserved for those who so assist them. In a similar manner, does the judgment of those who do not assist those who cry out to them suggest that they have never met Jesus Christ?

In the end, "the least of these my brothers and sisters" is a phrase that most likely refers to Christians in the context of the gospel and Jesus' teachings. However, the Old Testament provides a larger context in which the words and phrases that Jesus draws upon reach beyond the reception of Christian missionaries. Texts such as Prov 19:17 legitimize the broader perspectives on two sides. On the one hand, they provide a theological connection between the divine judge and the poor so that mercy and kindness shown toward those who risk poverty and death in order to present the gospel is properly connected with faith in that gospel. On the other hand, the exercise of Christian faith in deeds of kindness and compassion is not limited to a single group, however much they uniquely represent Christ, but overflows in that super-abundance of grace that characterizes God's acts toward his people and so necessarily characterizes those acts of believers toward all the needy of the world.

4. *Giving and Receiving Gifts*

Psalm 68 describes God as a warrior and examines his great military victories on behalf of his people. In the middle of the Psalm we read of God's triumphant march with his people from Mt. Sinai to the mountain on which the temple would be built. Verse 18 may be translated:

> You went up to the heights.
> You took captive those who were captured.
> You received gifts among the people and even the rebels.
> So, Yah(weh) God, you came to live there.

A widely accepted interpretation of this passage sees the historic advent of God coming to Mount Zion and ascending it to live in his temple. Along the way he captures those who resist his march and he takes booty from

[22] Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 111.

them. He also may receive offerings and tribute from all his people who worship him.[23]

The quotation of this passage in Ephesians 4:8 appears to follow the first three lines of the Psalms verse:

> Ascending to the heights,
> He took captive those who were captured.
> He gave gifts to the people.

The major differences are the shortening of the third line and the fact that the action involves giving gifts rather than receiving them. Of course, here the reference is to Jesus Christ in the third person rather than to God the warrior in the second person. The commentaries on Ephesians provide lengthy discussions on the basis of these differences. Noting that the Targum to the Psalm also supports "giving gifts" (though by Moses on Mt. Sinai), and that, as early as the second century B.C. Book of *Jubilees*, the giving of the Torah at Sinai was associated with Pentecost, there is a tendency to locate the origins of this text in some other Jewish or Christian tradition, and to argue that there was no attempt by the author of Ephesians to quote directly from Psalm 68.[24] There is much learned discussion on this matter. However, I suspect that the targumic interpretation, whether it falls under the category of midrash or some other approach, points in the correct direction and illustrates what Ephesians 4:8 is doing. Rather than positing an unknown text or some other basis for these changes, it might be of value to examine a common theme connected with God as warrior and king, and with God's mountain, whether Jerusalem/Zion or Sinai. A consistent pattern emerges and is illustrated by texts such as Genesis 14, Exodus 24, and 2 Samuel 6. In each of these, a king and warrior receives honors and also gives gifts. Thus near Salem (Jerusalem?) Melchizedek blesses Abram the warrior, gives him bread and wine, and receives back a tithe of the booty. At Mt. Sinai the people

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[23] C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 107–8; John Goldingay, *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42–89* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 325–26; Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 126; Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition, Vol. 5. Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 520.

[24] Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1998), 378–83; William W. Klein, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition, Vol. 12. Ephesians–Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 111–12; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 242–44; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 200–1.

promise their total dedication to God (twice) and receive back a feast (Exod 24:9–11). And in 2 Samuel 6, following on David's receipt of kingship over all Israel and the loyalty of the people, he celebrates the ark's advent on Mt. Zion and distributes gifts of food to all the people (vv. 18–19). Thus when God as warrior and king receives tribute from his followers, he may also be expected to give something in return. This is where the writer of Ephesians is going with his discussion. The parenthetical remark of vv. 9–10 may also support the view that this theme was clear in the author's mind. For, if, like the warriors of old, Christ gave just as he received, could the implication of Psalm 68:18 be taken a step farther and understood as Christ descended just as he ascended?

5. *The Sea*

In Rev 21:1, the passing away of the sea, in contrast to the new heaven and new earth, evokes some comment. Beale and Osborne note the negative associations with the sea elsewhere in Revelation, as a symbol of evil.[25] They provide the clearest awareness of this text as building on the imagery of Isaiah and Ezekiel, especially the final chapters of the Isaiah scroll. New Testament appeal is made to John's negative imagery of the sea, so that Witherington suggests it may be entirely symbolic: "John may just mean that evil has finally been removed from the world."[26] Mounce shows an awareness of possible Old Testament roots for this imagery, but he locates it in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk defeats Tiamat, "the ancient dragon of chaos." He suggests the possibility that the Hebrew writers took over this myth to describe God's victory over idols.[27] However, the Old Testament imagery of the sea does not derive from Babylon. It comes from the West Semitic mythological tradition where the chief warrior god battles and defeats the sea. Attested at Mari in the eighteenth century B.C., it emerges in the battle of Baal and Sea in the Ugaritic Baal cycle (copy preserved from the thirteenth century B.C.) and is repeatedly

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[25] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1039–1043, 1049–1051; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 730–31.

[26] Ben Witheringtin III, *Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 253.

[27] Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 381.

found in the background of Old Testament themes, beginning with Genesis 1:2 and coming to light especially in many of the Psalms.[28] Thus the sea remained perhaps the most powerful force known by those living on or near the Eastern Mediterranean. Its defeat in the Old Testament again and again symbolized the powerful reign of Israel's God over all threats to his will and order.

Osborne is the rare commentator who observes the tripartite universe reflected in Revelation and in this verse, but he does so only in a footnote. He nowhere connects this with the Old Testament.[29] The student of Genesis will know that this worldview begins the Bible in days two and three of the Creation week (Gen 1:1–2:4). The tripartite universe is found there in the creation (or, more accurately, separation) of the sky, sea, and dry ground. God then fills these with living and moving things in days four, five, and six. Nor is this the end of this world view. It forms one principle for the distinction between clean and unclean animals, as Douglas has shown.[30] Thus in Leviticus 11 most of the clean animals are those that have locomotion appropriate to the sphere in which they live. Many winged birds that fly, scaled fish that swim, and creatures with four legs that move on the ground are clean. On the other hand, creatures such as the ostrich is unclean because it has wings but cannot fly. Creatures that move back and forth between earth and water, such as snakes and salamanders, are unclean. Thus the three divisions of the universe form a fundamental part of the Old Testament faith and practice.[31] The elimination of the sea may in part reflect the elimination of the unclean, for so many of the unclean creatures described in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are associated with water.

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[28] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 86, 99–100.

[29] Osborne, *Revelation*, 731, writes that Park "points out also that in Revelation the 'heaven, earth, and sea' are part of a tripartite universe (5:13; 10:6; 14:7; perhaps implied in 5:3; 7:1; 12:12). This would also explain the presence of the 'sea' here." See S. Park, *More than a Regained Eden: The New Jerusalem as the Ultimate Portrayal of Eschatological Blessedness and Its Implications for Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 153–54.

[30] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1966); idem., "The Forbidden Animals in Leviticus," *JSOT* 59 (1993): 3–23.

[31] R. Hess, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition, Vol. 1. Genesis-Leviticus* (ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 568–70.

6. *Christian Discipleship*

With this last category we return to a key theological matter connected with Christianity, not unlike our first example. However, this does not consider the definition of a word nor does it look at a specific text in the New Testament. Rather, it begins with a general conclusion that many commentaries and, more often, many books on Christian discipleship have drawn from their study of the epistles of the New Testament. That is to say, there is a road of discipleship to which the apostles call the followers of Jesus Christ. It begins with confession of one's sin and the finding of forgiveness in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It moves forward to the call to dedicate oneself completely to following Christ, at all times and in every aspect of one's life (Rom 12:1–2 is a great example of this). It also often includes the enjoyment and celebration of fellowship with the Son of God in the Lord's Supper, in the community of worship, and in all aspects of one's life. These aspects of the life of the disciple are daily reintroduced, for no one is without sin. So again and again we come before Christ to find forgiveness in his sin offering. We dedicate ourselves anew to following our Lord, and we return to the fellowship that the redeemed community knows.

I have never read a commentary or study that has not rooted this understanding of discipleship squarely in the New Testament and its epistles. No one, it seems, has looked behind this to the possible origins of this understanding of discipleship in the Old Testament. I believe that there is one major reason for this. It has to do with the mistaken assumption that, because Jesus Christ completes and fulfills the sacrifices of the Old Testament (as so well expressed in Hebrews), there is nothing more to be said of that system. Old Testament theologians may argue whether it is ceremonial law and how it is to be done away with, and various theologies may face the issue of a restored temple (or not) and what is to be done there in the millennium. However, the sacrificial system is no longer relevant for the Christian.

It is this writer's contention that students and scholars of the New Testament, and especially commentators, have missed a rich source in the Old Testament sacrificial system for understanding better the way of discipleship, and for finding its true origins in biblical theology, not in some remarkably identical (albeit inspired) set of insights that suddenly came upon the various writers of much of the New Testament.

A second dilemma in identifying the origins of discipleship in the Old Testament sacrifices has to do with a misunderstanding in their presentation. Leviticus 1–7 traces the details of the sacrificial system as a handbook of procedures for both laity and priests.[32] It groups the sacrifices topically for easier study. It was never intended (nor does any scholar claim that it was) to represent the chronological order of the sacrifices. However, the tendency is for modern readers to look at the sacrifices as listed here as a bewildering array of diverse animals and other elements to be killed and applied in various ways in the Tabernacle. Thus the main point of the sacrifices and their normal order is overlooked. One needs to turn to actual ceremonies where the major sacrifices are applied. Whether one looks at the ordination of the priest in Lev 8, the Day of Atonement (for both the high priest and the laity) in Lev 16, or elsewhere in the Old Testament, one finds a consistent order to three major sacrifices.[33]

The sequence of sacrifices is consistent. Basically, the sin offering comes first and the burnt offering follows it. The sin offering is better designated a purification offering because it renders atonement for sin. The one who offers it receives forgiveness. The burnt offering can also serve for atonement according to its description in Lev 1:4. Nevertheless, as the purification offering has already accomplished this, the burnt offering serves a second purpose that is represented by its unique status. Of all the sacrifices described in Leviticus and elsewhere in Israel's law, only the burnt offering is offered without any edible parts left over. All the fat and meat are burnt on the altar. In other words, everything is offered to God and nothing is held back to be eaten by the priests. In this unique manner, the burnt offering provides a model for complete dedication to God. Nothing is held back.

The consecration of the priests in Leviticus 8 adds a third offering. There it is called the ordination offering. However, this represents the so-called peace offering in the descriptions of Lev 1–7. The peace offering is the only offering where some of the meat is reserved for the person making the offering (rather than only the priests who supervise). They eat with God and thus know something of the fellowship and joy of this special communion. This is true of the ordination offering. Some of it is left for the new priests, who made the offering, to eat. This represents the fellowship that the offerer enjoys with God and is therefore better identified as a fellowship offering.[34]

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[32] For this and the following material, see the discussion of the relevant sacrifices in Hess, "Leviticus," 583–644.

[33] Hess, "Leviticus," 644–55, 715–29.

[34] Hess, "Leviticus," 651–53.

Thus the offering system of the Old Testament, as it appears in actual use, anticipates the teaching of discipleship in the New Testament.[35] One begins with the forgiveness of sin rendered by Christ who is our sin or purification offering. This is followed by a call to dedicate one's life to God and hold back nothing. Finally, there is the privilege of walking in fellowship with Christ, especially as experienced in the fellowship of believers. As needed, these elements are repeatedly appropriated and experienced in the Christian's daily walk of faith.

7. *Summary*

The examples chosen above began with specific concepts as found in faith/faithfulness, in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, and in the parable of the sheep and goats. The fourth and fifth examples illustrated the application of diverse areas of study such as ancient Semitic protocol of giving gifts, mytho-poetic imagery of the West Semitic world, and anthropological studies of social and cultural boundaries in areas of world view and of clean and unclean foods. The sixth example considered a theological perspective that sought to address a broad area of New Testament doctrine and practice. In this manner, methods of interpreting the Old Testament addressed New Testament commentaries and exegesis at all levels of study. Of course, as specialists we cannot know everything about other fields. However, if this essay has proven anything, it is the importance for ongoing dialogue and awareness of research and results in both testaments.

[35] Hess, "Leviticus," 572–73.

THE HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCE OF NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

D. A. Carson

Well-known for his textbook on hermeneutics and for his many commentaries, Grant Osborne has for years melded several disciplines. While it is a privilege to contribute to this *Festschrift* in his honor, I should perhaps confess that no essay has given me as much trouble as this assigned topic, not least because, on the one hand, hermeneutics is a field that touches innumerable contributing disciplines, and, on the other, the number and range of New Testament commentaries written across two millennia in many languages is beyond the grasp of any one person. Add to this the demand to address, not the hermeneutical *practice* reflected in New Testament commentaries, but the hermeneutical *competence*, and one finds oneself awash in a search for criteria by which to measure such competence.

So in what follows, I shall first of all survey a variety of approaches to hermeneutical issues and their bearing on commentary writing, and then take courage and offer some evaluative observations.

1. *Approaches to Hermeneutics*

1.1 *The Early Centuries*

One might begin inductively by comparing, say, some of the expository commentaries of John Chrysostom with Origen's commentary on Romans. Most of the expository homilies of Chrysostom were produced toward the end of the fourth century while he was still living in Antioch, before he became Archbishop of Constantinople. His expositions of Pauline epistles, including Romans, proceed line by line through the text, in a more-or-less straightforward fashion that does not seem entirely alien to many commentators today, but with an emphasis on moral application and a tendency toward affirming ascetic practice. Along with Theodore of Mopsuestia, Chrysostom well represents the Antiochene school of interpretation. Writing two or three decades after Chrysostom, Theodore crafted commentaries on books of both Testaments. Most of these have been lost, but his commentaries on Galatians and the ensuing nine shorter epistles of Paul have come down to us in Latin translation.[1]

Origen's commentary on Romans is the first commentary on that epistle to come down to us (ca. 246). The original, written in Greek, has been lost, but the Latin translation by Rufinus, prepared early in the fifth century, has recently been made available in English.[2] Written before Origen was declared a heretic, and more than a century and a half before the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius erupted, this commentary on Romans reflects the theological interests of the time when it was written. Origen argues passionately against various Gnostic beliefs, not least the "doctrine of natures," which asserts that all human beings are born with unalterable natures that inevitably bring them to salvation or damnation, irrespective of anything they do in this life.[3] Origen's defense of the freedom of the will could not (of course) take on board the complexities of discussion that would develop across the centuries, but he boldly opposed the fatalism intrinsic to many kinds of Gnostic thought. Equally, Origen opposes the reductionism of Marcion: he argues strongly for the harmony of law and gospel, and for the unity and integrity of Old and New Testaments together.[4]

Nevertheless the form of his argumentation, generated by his hermeneutical commiments, places him within the Alexandrian school of interpretation—indeed, one of its ablest exponents. For many of the Church Fathers, Scripture has two senses: the *literal* sense and the *spiritual* sense. The literal sense is variously described: for instance, it is sometimes said to be the verbal or grammatical sense, the sense intended by the author (human or divine), the plain sense, the obvious sense, the sense conveyed by the words themselves. The spiritual sense is the meaning readers find when, aided by the Spirit, they discern in the text (especially of the Old Testament) the deeply Christian sense, the paschal sense. The distinction sprang in part from the conviction that the Old Testament must point to

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[1] The works of both Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia are readily available in the standard Migne edition; in English translation, Chrysostom is readily accessed through the older but standard NPNF series. The relevant work of Theodore of Mopsuestia has recently been made available in contemporary English in the excellent critical version of Rowan A. Greer, trans., *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

[2] Thomas P. Scheck, ed. and trans., *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2001–2002).

[3] Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 22.

[4] Ibid., 93.

Christ in some way or other. In the patristic period the spiritual sense was also variously called the allegorical sense, the mystery or mystical sense, or sometimes *theoria*. Contemporary readers tend to find the hermeneutical assumptions of Origen not so much perverse or arbitrary as manipulative: they enable the interpreter to ensure that the "right" interpretation emerges, ostensibly on public hermeneutical grounds, but not transparently so.

Any sense that is labeled "spiritual" is bound to be appealing, so it is not surprising that the spiritual sense, variously understood, exerted huge influence from the time of Clement of Alexandria (150–ca. 215) to the end of the fourth century. Precisely because it embraced within itself approaches that were fundamentally different (and were not systematically codified until later), one must not think that only the Alexandrian school pursued the spiritual sense while the Antiochenes remained strict literalists. Yet arguably, the distinction between the two schools is more than a matter of degree. It will be easier to make this point in the next section.

1.2 *The Medieval Codification*

By the medieval period, while the literal sense continued untrimmed, the spiritual sense had been codified into three: the allegorical (which included some forms of what is now called typology), offering the hidden meaning of the text; the tropological, i.e. the moral sense of the text, and the anagogical or future sense. These have sometimes been tied, rather romantically, to the three cardinal virtues: the allegorical sense is what the words of Scripture mean within the context of the larger story of God (*faith*), the tropological sense is what the words of Scripture mean with respect to how we are to conduct ourselves (*love*), and the anagogical sense is what the words of Scripture mean regarding the end of history (*hope*).

The allegorical method gains its primary impetus from the Greek world, not least from the Platonic heritage that tried to find transcendental significance in the ancient Greek myths of gods and goddesses whose conduct, at surface value, was scarcely inspiring and still less to be imitated. It became important to find a deeper meaning, a meaning beyond the surface. In the Jewish diaspora, the greatest proponent of allegorical interpretation of whom we have any detailed knowledge is Philo of Alexandria. While he did not doubt, for example, the historical existence of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in reality, he argued, they are to be identified with the three fundamental values of a Greek education.[5] Indeed, many an Old Testament figure is identified with either an abstract virtue or a stage of the soul's progress toward virtue.

Origen and other figures identified with the Alexandrian school are adept at similar leaps, at similar identifications, when they offer allegorical interpretations (though at the time, as we have seen, these were all considered *spiritual* interpretations. But the allegorical label, both in the patristic period and well into the middle ages, included a wide range of phenomena, including (as we have seen) what we would call typology. Both Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia (not to mention Augustine and Jerome) resort to some kinds of typology, but do not treat this as something different from allegorical method or the spiritual sense. Indeed, many point out that the apostle Paul is the precursor of Christian allegorical interpretation (Gal 4:22–26).

A further distinction begins to clear up this muddle. It is helpful to distinguish two kinds of allegory: (a) allegory in which the "deeper meaning" cannot be inferred from the text itself, but only by the imposition of an extra-textual grid; (b) allegory in which the "deeper meaning" can be inferred by some kind or other of phenomenon within the text itself. Philo commonly represents the former: there are no Pentateuchal phenomena that warrant identifying Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the three basic principles of Greek education. Paul's example in Galatians 4 represents the latter: the polarities he detects, along several axes within the Pentateuchal narrative, constitute a pattern (a "type" if you will) that he thinks he can extend to another polarity. Of course, he does not pretend he would have detected this pattern if he had not come to see the central place of Christ in the drama of redemption. This reading of *Tanakh* is certainly not what he would have pursued before his encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road. Yet in writing to the Galatians his argument is not, "Don't you foolish Galatians understand that to read the Scripture the way I do you too must undergo your own experience of a Damascus-Road conversion?", but "Don't you foolish Galatians read your Bibles? The patterns are right there in the text."

The point of this digression back to the example of Paul is to demonstrate something of the range of meanings of "allegory" even in the

[5] Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 71.

first century—in exactly the same way, though perhaps not to the same degree, that "spiritual" sense covers a multiplicity of interpretive strategies. Advancing to the medieval period, the codification of the spiritual sense into three distinctive senses clearly left plenty of room to maneuver. Inevitably, it was easy in some circles to appeal to the "allegorical" sense to make the text line up with whatever the orthodoxy of the day demanded, with the result, of course, that Scripture was unlikely to have a hugely reforming function since it could always be domesticated by an appropriate appeal to the fourfold senses of Scripture. Of course, some of the ablest interpreters insisted that only the literal sense could *establish* doctrine: witness Thomas Aquinas. Nevertheless, Thomas supported the fourfold hermeneutic in the interpretation *of Scripture alone*, not only by appealing to the example of the Fathers but also on the ground that only God could use language in this multi-signifying way. Meaning is tied to authorial intent, and because God "by one act comprehends all things by his intellect," he may charge the biblical text with multiple layers of meaning.[6] Even here, Thomas is careful to avoid falling into the trap of uncontrolled equivocal meanings. But not all were as restrained as Thomas.

1.3 *Calvin, the Reformation, and Beyond*

All the major Reformers formally rejected the fourfold method, but inevitably they had to think through how they were interpreting Scripture in order to generate their theology, the theology that was challenging the Catholic Church. Both Catholics and Protestants held to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, of course—so why were their respective readings so very different on crucial matters? Part of the answer lay in their differing views of the locus of revelation, one group finding it deposited in the church, including Scripture but also including the unfolding understanding of the Magisterium, whereas the other party found it in Scripture alone (hence *sola Scriptura*). That debate is beyond the remit of this essay. But in avoiding the medieval fourfold method, the Reformers needed to defend their own approaches.

We shall focus on Calvin—but Calvin's theory of commentary writing is best understood when it is compared and contrasted with that of two of his contemporaries. In the tradition of Aristotle, Philip Melanchthon sought out the *loci* of texts, the matters he judged most important

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6 *Summa Theologica* I Q 1, A 10.

and worth considering at length.[7] In other words, because the matters chiefly dealt with were often theological topics Melanchthon held to be important, the text became a spur and goad to unpack one's theology. In adopting this course, however, he not only refrained from commenting on many other things in the text, but he was backing a method that could and often did lead to the arbitrary choice of *loci*: these were Calvin's chief criticisms of Melanchthon's approach.[8]

While accepting the basic approach of prioritizing the *loci*, Bucer understood the limitations of the method and sought to compensate for the weaknesses of the Aristotelian tradition of commenting by supplementing his discussion of the *loci* with extended commentary on everything else in the text. It does not take much work to perceive that each of Bucer's commentaries constitutes the marriage of two books, one on the *loci* and the other extended commentary—so much so that it is relatively easy to separate the two components. The result, of course, was very long books. Calvin criticizes Bucer for prolixity and what he politely calls "profundity" (though he probably means obscurity).[9] In other words, as far as Calvin is concerned Bucer's method cannot achieve his aims: far from making the biblical text clear and understandable, Bucer's commentaries are too long and detailed to be enjoyed, and too complicated and distant from the text in the discussion of the *loci* to shed light on what the Bible actually says in the passage at hand. Thus Calvin distanced himself from the commentary methods of both Melanchthon and Bucer: "The one did not explain everything; the other explained everything too fully for anyone to be able to read him through quickly."[10]

By contrast, Calvin argues that "the chief virtue of an interpreter lies in clear brevity (*perspicua brevitate*)."[11] Both "clarity" (*perspicuitas*) and "brevity" (*brevitas*) were among the aims of the Renaissance. The former Calvin associates with *facilitas*, by which he means "simplicity" in the sense "easily understood."

It appears, then, that Calvin's understanding of what a commentary should be both values and distances itself from both Melanchthon and Bucer. As Parker shrewdly puts it:

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[7] Philipp Melanchthon, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon* (trans. Charles Leander Hill; Boston: Meador, 1944).

[8] Thomas Henry Louis Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 88.

[9] Ibid., 88.

[10] Ibid., 88.

[11] Ibid., 86.

> [Calvin] learns from both of them what ought to be done and the best way to do it. With Melanchthon he accepts the need for systematizing the teaching of the Bible. Unlike Bucer, however, he cannot combine the two methods in one book. His solution is to make . . . a separate book for the systematic *loci*. This book is the *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, beginning with the second edition of 1539.[12]

Calvin's *Epistola ad Lectorem*, his "Letter to the Readers" by which he introduces the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, was written in Strasbourg on 1 August 1539. Calvin wrote the preface to his *Romans* commentary in the autumn of the same year, so apparently he was working on both books at the same time. In the preface to Romans, Calvin writes that since the only duty of the commentator "is to lay open the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to explain, he deviates from his mark, or at least strays out of his own sphere, to the extent that he leads his readers away from it."[13] He then proceeds to unpack what he means by "clear brevity." As for his purpose in writing the *Institutes*, disclosed in his "Letter to the Readers," Calvin says this:

> Moreover, my attention in this work was so to prepare and train aspirants after sacred theology in reading the Divine Word that they might have an easy access to it and then go on in it without stumbling. For I think that I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts and arranged it systematically [i.e., in the *Institutes*], that if anyone grasps it aright, he will have no difficulty in determining both what he ought especially to seek in Scripture, and to what end he should refer everything contained in it. And so I have, as it were, paved the way. And if I shall hereafter publish any commentaries on Scripture, I shall always condense them and keep them short, for I shall have no need to undertake lengthy discussions on doctrines, and digress into *loci communes*. By this method the godly reader will be spared great trouble and boredom—provided he approaches [the commentaries] fore-armed with a knowledge of the present work as a necessary weapon. But because the commentary on the epistle to the Romans will furnish an example of this intention, I prefer to let the thing appear in practice rather than forecast it by words.[14]

In short, this "Letter to the Readers" is important not only for understanding what Calvin intended to accomplish in his *Institutes*, but equally for understanding what Calvin intended to accomplish in his commentaries,

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12 Ibid., 89.
13 Ibid., 91.
14 Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

and how he thought the two species of works should operate in tandem. The two were complementary. The *Institutes* covered the *loci*, suitably arranged—material largely kept out of the commentaries; the commentaries provided the exegetical and expository details that sought to unpack the text of Scripture in brief compass, material that would have been out of place in the *Institutes*, as the *loci* of the *Institutes* would have made the commentaries cumbersome, falling under the same faults as Bucer's work. In Calvin's mind, however, his work on the *Institutes* was to be read in the light of his commentaries, and vice versa. This approach would remain operative for the rest of Calvin's life.

To recognize how Calvin conceived of the relationship between his commentaries and the *Institutes* is to exclude the views of those who hold to a "static" view of Calvin's theology—viz, the *Institutes* contain all of Calvin's theology, while his commentaries contain the application of his theology. This approach fails to recognize (1) that sometimes Calvin does not transfer to later editions of the *Institutes* arguments developed in his commentaries, and (2) that some issues were raised in his commentaries for the first time after Calvin had finished editing his last edition of the *Institutes* (1559).

At the risk of providing some evaluative judgments without the detailed textual comparisons that would ground them, we might venture three observations. First: It was not uncommon for Calvin's opponents, especially from the camp of Lutheran orthodoxy, to dismiss him as a "Judaizer." Writing soon after Calvin's death, the Lutheran theologian Aegidius Hunnius wrote a book entitled *Calvin the Judaizer: Judaistic Glosses and Corruptions by Which John Calvin Did Not Fear to Corrupt the Clearest Passages of Sacred Scripture and Its Witness to the Glorious Trinity, Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, Including the Predictions of the Prophets Concerning the Coming of the Messiah, His Birth, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension to Heaven, and Session at the Right Hand of God, in a Detestable Fashion*.[15] In terms of the totality of Calvin's thought, the charge is ludicrous; in terms of what he sometimes does *not* say in his commentaries (see, for example, his restraint on Genesis 1:2, 26), it is at least understandable. It will not suffice to say that when it comes to writing commentaries, Calvin was an unsystematic theological "minimizer"; rather, in his commentary

[15] David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1.

writing Calvin follows something like a principle of grammatico-historical sense, rather than Luther's christological method. Yet this analysis will not quite do, either, for in the totality of his thought Calvin is no less Christ-centered than is Luther. That prompts Fullerton to draw this commonly-held distinction: "In the case of no great commentator is it more necessary to distinguish between the theologian and the exegete than in the case of Calvin."[16] Yet this, too, is not quite right. Both in his *Institutes* and in his commentaries Calvin thinks he is unpacking what is actually there in Scripture, but that in the one case he is outlining the totality of Christian thought, and in the other he restricts himself to "clear brevity," ceding little or no ground to the *loci*. In his own self-understanding, Calvin attempts in his commentaries to draw attention to what is "solid." In a methodological reflection on his comments on Hosea 6:2, where he judges Jewish interpretations to be "frivolous" and Christian interpretations to be "overly subtle," Calvin writes, "Subtle speculations please at first sight, but afterwards vanish. Let every one, then, who desires to be proficient in the Scriptures keep to this rule—to gather from the Prophets and the Apostles what is solid (*solidum*)."[17]

Second, judging by his last major commentary, *Harmony on the Last Four Books of Moses* (1563), Calvin himself was changing his mind toward the end, incorporating far more theological reflection and re-ordering of texts for theological purposes than he had ever done before in any of his commentaries. Informed contemporary Christians sometimes find it frustrating to read hundreds of pages in some of Calvin's OT commentaries before stumbling across the first reference to the Lord Jesus. Even if Calvin was no "Judaizer," was he unwise to be so restrained in his theological synthesis in his commentaries?

At the pastoral level, the answer must surely be that Calvin never left his hearers without a running exposition of the gospel and of the centrality of Christ. The pace of his ministry—the number of times he lectured and preached per two-week cycle, the amount of biblical material he covered, especially during the last fifteen years of his life—ensured that his regular hearers heard him put the Bible together with Christ at the center again and again. But that material is often absent from his commentaries.

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[16] Kemper Fullerton, *Prophecy and Authority: A Study in the History of the Doctrine and Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 133.

[17] Calvin, *Comm.* Hos. 6:2 (*Opera quae supersunt omnia*; ed. W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, 1863–1900), 42: 320.

Third, as long as his rationale was, in part, that his commentaries were based on what was "solid," Calvin could scarcely avoid giving the impression that to include more theological reflection and synthesis would have been to build on something *un*-solid. Surely Calvin would not have wanted to formulate such an inference, but how can he properly avoid it? Yet with the exception of his massive *Harmony on the Last Four Books of Moses*, most of the work that shows *how* Calvin puts the Bible together, i.e., the hermeneutical reasons why he puts the Bible together as he does (as opposed to work that shows the results of his hermeneutic) surfaces from time to time within the *Institutes*, not within the commentaries. It is in the *Institutes* that one sometimes comes across *trajectories* that trace the Bible's story-line and lead to Christ—just as in the *Harmony*, uniquely among the commentaries, one finds the creation of a biblical grid *drawn from the text itself* to justify reading the Decalogue in such-and-such a way. Here, however, most of the commentaries do not help us very much (even without stumbling over prolonged expositions of *loci*) to locate and identify the inner-biblical trajectories, the typologies, that teach us *how* the inner-canonical structures drive us toward Christ. In contemporary categories, we might say that the commentaries do too little to build a biblical theology as a mediating discipline toward systematic theology. The *Institutes*, by contrast, while constructing a systematic theology, sometimes provide relatively brief excursuses that supply the lacunae. It is not surprising that in his "Letter to the Readers" (connected with the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*), as we have seen, Calvin affirms that the *Institutes*, properly read and digested, will enable aspiring ministers to read the Bible faithfully, to determine what they should seek there and to what end such a finding should be put; surprisingly, Calvin says nothing about how the commentaries, properly read and digested, will enable aspiring ministers so to understand their Bibles that they will be able to construct a faithful systematic theology.

One suspects that one of the reasons many people still read Calvin's commentaries is that he is committed to "brief clarity": hermeneutically, they are not "too clever by half," as the Brits put it. On the other hand, Calvin's failure to explain how he connects, hermeneutically speaking, his commentaries with his even more influential *Institutes*, where he is again constantly making appeal to Scripture, makes us wonder if the Reformer deployed slightly different hermeneutical stances *according to the genre of literature he himself was writing*.

Arguably, over the next two centuries commentary writing tended to become imbued with more dogmatics than Calvin allowed it. There are so many variations that one is reluctant to risk a sweeping generalization, but let us take the plunge: with relatively rare exceptions, commentary writing was commonly shaped by the dogmatic stance of the form of orthodoxy in which it was written, and by the hermeneutical assumptions needed to bring about the desired outcome. That, certainly, was the perception of Johann Philipp Gabler when he gave his inaugural address at the University of Altdorf in 1787: “On the Correct Distinction Between Dogmatic and Biblical Theology and the Right Definition of Their Goals.”[18] Gabler reserved “dogmatic theology” (which expression I will use interchangeably with systematic theology) to refer to structures of theological thought espoused and defended by the church and her professors, structures increasingly removed from the text of Scripture itself, but built rather on inferences upon inferences, traditions upon traditions. By “biblical theology” Gabler referred to the theology of the biblical documents themselves, the theology of the documents in their historical setting, which, he averred, scholars of good will could happily agree upon if they set the dogmatics to one side. Once such widespread agreement as to biblical theology had been achieved, it would be time to reconstruct dogmatics.

One smiles at the naïveté: if the last one hundred years have taught us anything, it is how much *dis*agreement can be achieved by scholars who think they are doing nothing other than interpreting the text of Scripture. But before we tease out where this emphasis on biblical theology led, it is time to take note of another movement.

1.4 *The Rising Impact of Skepticism*

Even the briefest survey of the rise of skepticism is beyond the range of this essay. The history does not run in a straight line; it is more convoluted than some think. Yet the subject cannot be entirely ignored, for the various forms and degrees of skepticism generated their own *hermeneutical* transformations that in turn shaped the writing of New Testament commentaries. To keep this paper within bounds, I shall restrict myself to two observations.

First, some examples may clarify the connections among skepticism, hermeneutics, and the shaping of commentaries. In some academic circles in France and Germany in the late 1700s and early 1800s, John’s Gospel was

[18] John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33 (1980): 133–58.

thought to be *more* historically reliable, and certainly more historically attractive, than the Synoptic Gospels, because John seemed less interested than the Synoptists in the miracles of Jesus themselves than in what they signified. He describes not "miracles" and "wonders" but "signs"—and not infrequently he appends lengthy discourses. In 1835, however, David Friedrich Strauss published his massive *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*.[19] Strauss had bought into a thoroughgoing naturalism. As a result he was utterly scathing of the view of John he saw around him, with a God-man, massive claims on the lips of Jesus that make no sense in a purely naturalistic world, resurrection appearances, claims of pre-existence and the like. The bold anti-supernaturalism of Strauss landed him in a great deal of academic trouble, for although most of the authorities could no longer align themselves with historic confessionalism, such absolute anti-supernaturalism was, for them, a step too far. What cannot be doubted is that commentators influenced by Strauss now read John differently from those who were merely uncomfortable with miracles but who liked the discourses, and they in turn read John differently from, say, Calvin, three centuries earlier. For many, the credibility of John's Gospel declined until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls more than a century later.

Or consider the work of F. C. Baur (1792–1860) who founded what came to be called the Tübingen School. Heavily influenced by Hegelian dialectic, he conceived of the early history of Christianity as a struggle between Jewish Christianity and Pauline Christianity (thesis/antithesis) that was not resolved into a stable synthesis until the second century.[20] Where any document lay along that one Hegelian axis largely determined, for him, when a document was written, and therefore its authenticity. The Pastoral Epistles could not have been written by Paul because they were too late. Acts was a second-century document. Baur's thesis depended on his reading of the Clementines, which depended on his reading of Epiphanius, who interacted with a fourth-century Ebionite sect. This sect viewed Paul as an apostate. Baur insisted that this Ebionite stance should be traced back to the twelve apostles, represented by Peter, while Paul, in massive disagreement with Peter and the Twelve, laid down a line that resulted in Marcion in the second century. The Clementines, then, represent the Jewish, Petrine, legal tradition of the church. Simon Magus never existed

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[19] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (translated from the Fourth German Edition by G. Eliot [M. A. Evans]; 3 vols.; London: Chapman, 1846).

[20] F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878), 44–76.

but is a code for Paul. Of the New Testament documents, only the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* and the Apocalypse were judged to be early.

The point of canvassing the Tübingen School afresh in this essay is to point out what was in fact a controlling reductionistic historicism grounded in a simplistic naturalism led to more than half a century of (mostly German) commentaries that were *hermeneutically* affected. Even when later scholarship demonstrated that most of the tenets of the Tübingen School were untenable—very often by showing that the dates ascribed to the documents by Baur and his colleagues were simply untenable (judging by the patterns of use in the patristic sources)—the influence of the School continued in some circles. Even the commentaries (by J. B. Lightfoot and others) that were in some measure responses to the Tübingen School were obviously shaped by these debates. Indeed, even today not a few *Neutestamentler* bleed into their interpretation of a number of New Testament documents the assumption that Peter and Paul were not only at odds as depicted in Gal 2:11–14, but continued to be at odds and represented enduring polarities in early Christianity.

Again, consider the seminal work of W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*.[21] After the briefest survey of earlier works, Gasque focuses on the history of Acts criticism from Baur on. He discerns two quite different trajectories of commentaries and other Acts studies. The (largely) German tradition tends to build on a massive thesis (like that of the Tübingen School) that hermeneutically shapes commentaries to conform with the thesis; the (largely) British tradition tends to work inductively out of texts, convinced this is the safer (if less exciting) way of proceeding. I say "largely" because there were of course exceptions on both sides, carefully detailed by Gasque. For example, on the English side, the impressive multi-volume set by F. J. Foakes-Jackson, Kirsopp Lake, J. H. Ropes and H. J. Cadbury, published in the first half of the twentieth century,[22] preserved a fair amount of historical skepticism, while in the second half of the twentieth century the multi-volume set edited by Bruce Winter and others preserved equally high standards of scholarship while maintaining the essential historical credibility of Acts.[23]

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[21] W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975).

[22] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, Kirsopp Lake, J. H. Ropes, and H. J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part 1: The Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920–1932; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

[23] The series title is *The Book of Acts in Its First-Century Setting*. Vol. 1: Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids:

Both polarities generate, and to some extent are generated by, interpretive patterns that shape the writing of commentaries: witness, in clearest form, the contrast between F. F. Bruce on Acts[24] and Ernst Haenchen (who dedicated his work to H. J. Cadbury) on Acts.[25] And of course there is any number of important commentaries that mingle these traditions in interesting ways—e.g., remaining rather skeptical on the historical front while maintaining a fair bit of traditional orthodoxy on the theological front (which of course extends beyond Acts to other New Testament books) or the reverse.

A second way of surveying the influence of skepticism on the interpretation of the New Testament (and hence on the writing of commentaries) is by considering the interplay between the development of biblical theology and the development of salvation history. Begin with the former. We left the subject with Johann Philipp Gabler's inaugural address at the University of Altdorf. The first part of his appeal—the rupturing of the link between biblical study and confessional instruction, in order to create "biblical theology" that examined the biblical documents in their historical context—was rapidly and widely adopted. The second part of his appeal—that the results of such biblical theology should then be deployed in the construction of dogmatics—was almost entirely ignored. This was not out of malice but out of an increasing perception in some quarters that responsible historical method, largely decoupled from any concern or responsibility to synthesize all the material in the Bible, could highlight only the *differences* in the biblical material. So it was not surprising that, instead of a *biblical* theology, G. L. Bauer produced, first, an Old Testament theology (1796) and then a two-volume New Testament theology (1800–1802). By the turn of the next century, New Testament theologies were developing into discussions of Pauline theology, Synoptic theology, Johannine theology, and so forth; a few decades on, many discussions distinguished between Pauline theology and deutero-Pauline theology.

Eerdmans, 1993); Vol. 2: David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Vol. 3: Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Vol. 4: Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Vol. 5: Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

[24] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[25] E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971; trans. from the 14th German edition, 1965).

Treatment of the Apocalypse was commonly removed from Johannine theology (or it was somehow connected to the Johannine "School"), while entire volumes were devoted to the theology of "Q." Inevitably, many commentaries mirrored these developments. Thus Raymond Brown's seminal commentary on John's Gospel tracks not only the theology of the finally redacted document, but of the five steps that Brown believes he can trace in the development of the Johannine community,[26] while his commentary on the Johannine Epistles presupposes a highly specific re-creation of developments within the Johannine community after the Gospel was published.[27]

It would be a mistake to imagine that developments were uniform. In the nineteenth century, for instance, J. C. K. von Hofmann, who significantly influenced Adolf Schlatter in the twentieth century, kept arguing for a unified whole-Bible biblical theology (what came to be called "eine gesamt biblische Theologie") while allowing for sensitivity to the nuances of the individual documents and their historical location.[28] Their successors are numerous. Even so, one should remember that organizing the study of the Bible in this way is part of the outflow of Gabler's proposal. It brings with it many strengths, but rarely does it feed directly into reflection on whole-Bible biblical theology. Directly or indirectly, many of the New Testament commentary series published today are constrained in part by the same historical impulse that shaped these various biblical theologies—whether of a moderately skeptical sort (e.g., the AB series; EKKNT), a conservative sort (e.g., NICNT; NIGTC), or something else.

Transparently one of the concerns of the various forms of biblical theology is the proper place for the role of history in the interpretation of the biblical texts, whether the history depicted by the documents, the historical setting when the documents were written, or how history is to be understood *across* these documents. On some accounts, salvation history is the historical process through which God has brought about (and will bring about) the redemption of the world, and it includes both the historical process itself and God's interpretation of it. If one is convinced

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[26] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966–71). The scheme is nicely put together in Brown's *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

[27] Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1982).

[28] J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Nördlingen: Beck, 1886).

that the only processes worthy of the tag "history" are those that are naturalistic, i.e. that take place without reference to God and any appeal to the supernatural, then much of the biblical (including New Testament) depiction of history is impossible. Consequently, one may talk about New Testament theolog*ies* (i.e., what various Christians in the New Testament period believed), but not of any unifying theolog*y*. In that case one is forced to pick and choose as to which constructions are most plausible—to choose, self-consciously, a canon within the canon. In a more confessional stream, scholars acknowledge the diversity of the witnesses but insist that these witnesses point to one reality, one Jesus, one gospel, making a unified biblical theology possible. The point is that these highly diverse perspectives on history and biblical theology, nurtured by the skepticism that characterized some streams from the Enlightenment—and I have mentioned only a handful of the options (for instance, I have said nothing about the Barth/Bultmann debate that was important in the first half of the twentieth century)—were at the same time *hermeneutical* developments that shaped successive waves of commentaries: compare, for instance, from a hermeneutical perspective, Karl Barth's 1922 edition of *Der Römerbrief* with, say, the 1964 edition of Rudolf Bultmann's commentary on John. Moreover, on occasion the arguments for a highly naturalistic and reductionistic Jesus eventually evoked a pendulum swing that called forth new "quests" for the historical Jesus: currently we are on the trailing edge of the third such quest (even though some argue that the analysis of three "quests" is artificial and misleading). Once again, these quests, rightly or wrongly, have called forth their own series of commentaries.

1.5 *The Turn to the Subject*

To many, everything I have said so far about hermeneutics will sound terribly old-fashioned. For the better part of a century, hermeneutics has no longer been identified with the principles of interpretation that were thought to enable the interpreter to uncover faithful (read "true") interpretations: I, the subject, develop responsible hermeneutics with the aim of rightly interpreting it, the text. With the turn to the subject, however, hermeneutics becomes a far more complex subject that has given rise to new terms, theory, and sub-specialisms seldom if ever envisaged before: the hermeneutical circle (or spiral), horizons of understanding, interpretive communities, the new hermeneutic, reader-response criticism, speech-act theory, asymptotic approaches to truth, critical realism, and much more. As usual, developments have not rolled out in a straight line.

Nevertheless there is a world of distance between Bernard Ramm's *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*[29] and the voluminous writings of Anthony C. Thiselton,[30] doubtless the premier expert on hermeneutics, at least in the English-speaking world. What, then, is the impact of this turn to the subject on the writing of commentaries?

One can identify at least four distinguishable trends. First, some commentators largely ignore the impact of the turn to the subject. They interact primarily with post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment literature, often interacting with (in support or dissent) the more skeptical developments of the last three hundred years, in such a way that it is difficult to imagine how (m)any of their comments would have to be modified if none of the new hermeneutic literature had been written. Part of the reason for this is that many of the best insights of the turn to the subject, cautiously expressed, had already found expression in different forms in much earlier literature. For example, in one of his papers, Thiselton considers speech-act theory in connection with 1 Corinthians (on which he was then writing a commentary), arguing that the *uses* or *functions* of language did not have to await the writings of J. L. Austin and John Searle: ancient epistolary theorists had their own classification of the functions (i.e., speech-acts) of letter writing.[31] When Thiselton's magisterial commentary on 1 Corinthians appeared, the comments were doubtless enriched by the years of study that Thiselton had devoted to hermeneutics, but much of the influence was subtle.

Second, the hermeneutical literature that has flowed from the many branches of research tied to the turn to the subject is so voluminous and complicated that it seems almost to have intimidated some scholars into drawing as few conclusions as possible. The hermeneutical literature today *is* daunting, of course: even coming to grips with Thiselton is a considerable challenge, let alone the literature with which he wrestles. Readers will shortly find available, as a comprehensive guide to Thiselton, a book by Robert Knowles, who acknowledges that hermeneutics is today

[29] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956). By the third edition, however, Ramm was incorporating more of the new hermeneutic.

[30] In particular, see his *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); idem, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: HarperCollins, 1992).

[31] Anthony Thiselton, "Speech-Act Theory and 1 Corinthians," *SBL Greek Language and Linguistics Sections* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1996).

"a disorganized and confusing discipline."[32] The result, for some commentators, is an over-cautiousness to commit oneself. One thinks, perhaps, of the extraordinarily learned commentary on Revelation by Aune,[33] whose breadth of knowledge is matched only by his reluctance to come down on very much.

Third, almost in direct contradiction to the previous point, the hermeneutical turn to the subject has spawned an array of creative "readings" of biblical texts quite unlike anything in the past. If meaning is not so much located in the text, something that can be released by appropriate hermeneutical discipline, but something located in the mind of the reader, or, at very least, shaped by the bouncing back-and-forth of the reader's identity, questions, and responses to the text with the words of the text itself, then highly creative readings might be warranted by the identity and questions of a specific individual or group. For the strongest voices in this heritage, this is how the Bible can continue to be "prophetic," i.e., to speak to the issues of our day. Hence have arisen post-colonial studies, queer studies, feminist studies, and ecological studies of the Bible—both hermeneutical analyses within these sub-disciplines, and commentaries that reflect them. If one were to ask the question, "Do you really think that the New Testament writers have any significant interest in, say, green matters?", the response would be that the question presupposes an antiquated view of hermeneutics that has not grasped the deepest significance of the turn to the subject. More cautious respondents would say that we have too often been blind to all that the texts might tell us if we changed the questions we are prepared to ask, and these questions emerge from who we are, where we live, and our own experiences that have shaped our agendas.

Moreover, because the turn to the subject is often associated with diversity (in this case, diversity of interpretation, since monolithic interpretations are viewed as particularly manipulative and totalizing), there has also arisen a new interest in, say, Asian biblical studies, African biblical studies, and so forth, along with salutary reminders that what most of us regard as "biblical studies" are in fact Euro-American biblical studies. Increasingly, however, these geography-specific biblical studies are as diverse as biblical studies prosecuted in the North Atlantic countries. For example, there are African biblical studies that owe a great deal to the

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32 Robert Knowles, *Anthony Thiselton and the Grammar of Hermeneutics* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, forthcoming).

33 David E. Aune, *Revelation* (WBC 52 A–C; 3 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1997–1998).

liberal European university tradition where the African scholars studied, but there are also African biblical studies that owe a great deal to the evangelical heritage. Indeed, when the large, one-volume *African Bible Commentary* appeared,[34] it was accompanied by a great deal of exuberant exultation that we are learning how Christians have so very much to learn from other Christians in different parts of the world from very different cultures and heritages. But what a close reading of the *Commentary* shows is how much of the work could be read with profit and judged unexceptional in its unpacking of what the text of Scripture says by believers in many parts of the world. Why should that surprise us? These various, scattered, culturally diverse Christians *are reading the same text*: surely it will not be too surprising if there are huge overlaps with commentaries *on the same text* written by Christians elsewhere. The chief distinctive emphases in this *Commentary* have to do with the more generous allotment of space to demonism and exorcism, to emphases on the community versus the individual, to questions that touch on ancestor worship, and the like.

In short, the turn to the subject has been used to justify some unyielding distinctive readings of biblical texts that have more to do with contemporary agendas than with the texts themselves, but ironically at least some of these putative distinctive readings are rather less distinctive than some allege.

Fourth, the turn to the subject has made some commentators focus so much attention on the function of texts that the reliability or authority or truth of these texts is not infrequently ignored or at least downplayed. Before it was the naturalistic approach to history that diverted attention from what the texts actually said about God; now it is the assumption that when we have explored the putative community that penned the text, and considered the various ways the text might be read today, we have discharged all of our interpretive obligations.

1.6 *The Impact of Assorted Literary "Tools"*

Both under the trailing edge of the older hermeneutics, and under the influence of the turn to the subject, scholars developed "tools" that then defined how commentaries were written: source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, reader-response criticism, narrative criticism, genre criticism, socio-rhetorical criticism, linguistic analysis,

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[34] Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *African Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

and so forth. Since all of them touch on the interpretive process, all of them belong to the domain of hermeneutics. Therefore even though several of these topics are treated elsewhere in this volume, they cannot be entirely ignored on this chapter devoted to hermeneutics. Two observations will clarify how these tools have shaped commentaries.

First, most of these tools have introduced some genuine gains in biblical studies. For example, when one reads the commentaries of B. F. Westcott or J. B. Lightfoot, while admiring their learning one cannot help but discover again and again that they read the standards of Attic Greek into Hellenistic Greek—and even their understanding of Attic Greek is in line with assumed linguistic theory in their own day. Doubtless there are ongoing debates about the nature and relevance of verbal aspect theory for our understanding of the Greek verb, but no scholar today thinks that reading Attic Greek as understood in 1860 into the pages of the New Testament is a responsible thing to do. Genre criticism has been underpinned by sophisticated theory. Some genres have of course received a great deal of attention: one thinks, for instance, of the complex developments in the theory of parable interpretation. One should also recognize that a term like parable is sometimes spectacularly abused, as when, for instance, the resurrection of Jesus, or even the entire Gospel of Mark, is claimed in a commentary to be a parable. But no one today says that the nineteenth-century work of Adolf Jülicher is the last word on parables.

Yet, second, one worries about commentaries that have elected to unpack the New Testament documents by appealing primarily, if not almost exclusively, to one particular tool. How do such commentaries fare on the long haul? Some label themselves as a certain kind of commentary (e.g., the many "socio-rhetorical" commentaries by Ben Witherington III), but in reality are fairly broadly-based commentaries with no more than a special interest in one or two tools or approaches. Others, by contrast, focus so heavily on one tool that it is difficult for a reader to avoid the suspicion that this is an exercise in reductionism.

1.7 *The Use of the Old Testament in the New*

As we have seen, the earliest Christian reflection on the need for an appropriate hermeneutic arose not out of the experience of reading New Testament texts but out of the experience of reading Old Testament texts. Christians had to make sense of what was initially their canon, and what became part of their canon. Two chapters in this book probe various aspects of the New Testament use of the Old. Yet once again the subject must be mentioned here, for in some ways the need to sort out how the Old and New Testaments cohere has lurked behind most of the major *hermeneutical* developments across the centuries: the "spiritual" interpretations of the Fathers, the four-fold interpretive grid of the Middle Ages, Reformation wrestling with law and grace, the changing understandings of what "biblical theology" might be, and so forth.

The last half-century has witnessed a formidable resurgence of interest in the way the New Testament cites the Old. Sometimes commentaries downplay this dependence on the Old in favor of Greco-Roman influence (one thinks, for instance of Betz on Galatians),[35] but a preponderance of contemporary commentaries does not underplay the influence of the Old Testament and the literature it has called forth. Yet that does not mean there is widespread agreement as to *how* the New Testament writers read the Old—and therefore the commentaries on these New Testament books are similarly affected. On the one hand, Barnabas Lindars insists that a large number of Old Testament texts are cited in the New Testament with little respect for their Old Testament contexts: these passages have been ripped from their contexts to provide prooftexts for Christian writers.[36] On the other hand, in 1952 Dodd's seminal lecture stimulated many scholars to show how often the New Testament writers presupposed the context of the Old Testament texts that they cite.[37] Nowadays specialist studies regarding the use of the Old abound for almost every book of the New Testament, and these are assiduously deployed by the commentary writers. Indeed, occasionally the same scholar who produces a major study of the use of the Old Testament in one New Testament book also writes a major commentary on that book.[38] Much of the best of this material has been gathered in a large commentary that studies every Old Testament quotation or clear allusion in the New Testament.[39]

[35] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

[36] Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 19.

[37] C. H. Dodd, *The Old Testament in the New: The Ethel M. Wood Lecture Delivered before the University of London on 4 March, 1952* (London: Athlone, 1952).

[38] E.g., G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); idem, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

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

We have got well beyond the point where commentators simply observe how much the appropriation techniques employed by New Testament writers mirror the *middoth* of the rabbis. We have learned to distinguish quotations, allusions, and echoes. At least since the publication of Moo's dissertation, commentators have learned to distinguish between appropriate techniques and hermeneutical axioms.[40] The study of typology has flourished since the seminal work of Leonhard Goppelt in 1939,[41] and much of this work continues to find its way into commentaries.

1.8 *The Demand for Theological and Spiritual Relevance*

There has long been a distinction between, on the one hand, academic or scholarly commentaries, and on the other, "spiritual" commentaries (Catholic terminology) or "devotional" commentaries (Protestant terminology). During the last three decades, however, there has been something of a revolt against the perceived aridity of many commentaries, not least if they focus attention on endless historical and grammatical details (sometimes so as to diminish the credibility of the documents, sometimes so as to enhance it) without wrestling with the massive structures of theology that have been connected with the Scriptures in the past and that long nourished the church's life. Sometimes there is an open appeal to return to the hermeneutics of an earlier period, perhaps the Fathers, perhaps the Middle Ages. In part to help this trend along, one publisher has been providing us with summaries and fresh translations of what the Fathers said about every book in the Bible.[42]

Perhaps the driving movement that unites several of these concerns is the one dubbed "Theological Interpretation of Scripture" (TIS). The movement is complex, and the introductions to the subject many. So far I am driven to the conclusion that what is most valuable in TIS (and much is), is not new; what is new in TIS varies from ambiguous to mistaken. Several publishers have started entire series of commentaries that claim to reflect the interests and commitments of TIS. Although there have been

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40 Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983).

41 Surprisingly not translated into English until 1982: *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

42 The series is ACCS (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture), published by InterVarsity Press. The same publisher has just announced a similar project for Reformation sources.

exceptional volumes, the consensus has been that most of the commentaries that have appeared so far have been disappointing, not least when they have leaped from the New Testament text to discussion of theological debate that erupted centuries later without explaining either the text or how the leap was made. Meanwhile one comes across individual creative authors who want to distance themselves from TIS as a movement, but also from mainstream exegesis, yet share many of the concerns of TIS: one thinks of Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture*. Leithart's central thesis is that virtually all contemporary forms of hermeneutics dichotomize between the formal husk of Scripture and its material kernel. The aim of the exercise is to strip away the former to discover the latter. Leithart rejects the dichotomy and suggests, instead, a "deep exegesis" that is nothing other than "a hermeneutics of the letter."[43] As always, his writing is provocative, playful, and enjoyable. But I confess I have not always found his own commentaries as convincing as they are interesting.

Like almost all of the hermeneutical trends across the centuries that I have here briefly catalogued, TIS is generating a slightly different *kind* of commentary, but these commentaries are not united because in large measure TIS as a movement is disunited along many fronts.

2. *Some Evaluative Observations*

My assigned topic is the hermeneutical competence of commentaries on the New Testament, written across the centuries. The presumption in agreeing to this topic was considerable—and then I realized that I would really have to trace at least the outlines of how hermeneutics, including its effect on commentaries, has changed across the centuries. The following reflections are either inductions drawn from the preceding survey or, quite frankly, my own subjective musings in the wake of the survey.

(1) Although it is easy to demonstrate that almost all of the changing hermeneutical stances that readers adopted across the centuries affected commentaries in some ways, they were not *solely determinative* of interpretive outcomes. Both Origen and Chrysostom engaged in what they called "spiritual interpretation," but the theological results were considerably different (as were the degree and application of these "spiritual"

[43] Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 34.

readings). When they wrote commentaries, both Rudolf Bultmann and F. F. Bruce claimed to be engaging in historical-critical interpretation, but with vastly different historical and theological outcomes in their respective commentaries. So what criteria should one offer to evaluate hermeneutical competence in a particular commentary?

(2) Before going further, it is important to acknowledge that some people, regardless of whether they have been schooled in any hermeneutical tradition, are simply better readers than others. This means that their hermeneutical competence may excel some whose formal competence in the discipline of hermeneutics may be far greater, but who are not as able to read texts. This may owe something to too little serious reading, or to genetic makeup, or to doctrinaire commitments to one narrow hermeneutical approach that turns out to be reductionistic, or to inferior ability to write well. This does not mean that those who are good readers and competent commentary writers but whose conscious knowledge of hermeneutics is limited are able to work *without* relying on hermeneutical commitments and assumptions. It simply means that the ability to write able commentaries does not necessarily depend on detailed knowledge of the history of hermeneutics; similarly, it means that the ability to analyze and articulate hermeneutical principles within the discipline of hermeneutics is not necessarily the same skill set that is needed in the interpretation of New Testament texts. Thus it is possible to be *more* hermeneutically competent in the writing of commentaries while being *less* competent in the formal discipline of hermeneutics. Inevitably this makes the task of evaluating the hermeneutical competence of commentaries even more daunting.

(3) If the primary aim remains understanding the text as it was first given in its contextual setting and intended by its author (so far as that intention can be discerned *in the text itself*: there is no value in slipping into the intentional fallacy), then the best commentaries are those that approach this ideal, and the best hermeneutical discipline is what fosters it. That means that whatever the valid insights gleaned from those hermeneutical stances that locate the meaning in the reader *at the expense* of locating meaning in the text (e.g., some forms of reader-response theory), they will be less prized in the evaluation of the hermeneutical competence of a commentary than those hermeneutical stances that contribute most directly to understanding the text as it stands (e.g., the best forms of genre analysis). This is *not* to claim that readers enjoy a detached, Olympian position on which to rest such conclusions; it is *not* a return to the simplest forms of foundationalism. Yet if we are to avoid the bleakest

forms of nihilism, if we are to acknowledge that communication across cultures and centuries is possible (however challenging), then we must also acknowledge that asymptotic or spiral approaches to the knowledge held by other individuals in other times and places is not beyond us.

(4) Appeal to multiple hermeneutical approaches, rather than a simplistic stance, is far more likely to bring maturity of judgment to the interpretations found in our commentaries than attempts to lean almost exclusively on one hermeneutical insight. To integrate, as best one can, grammatical and linguistic exegesis, historical rigor, genre analysis, the *analogia fidei*, the role of salvation history, the many valid insights that spring from the turn to the subject, and much more, will more likely generate a hermeneutically competent commentary than one that focuses exclusively on, say, socio-rhetorical approaches. Mercifully, many a commentator who claims to be writing a socio-rhetorical commentary is in reality utilizing the panoply of hermeneutical approaches, but merely emphasizing socio-rhetorical insights, so that the resulting commentaries may be more hermeneutically competent than their labeling suggests. Nevertheless a hermeneutically reductionistic "reading" of a New Testament text may be hermeneutically competent in the sense that it plays its self-defined hermeneutical game pretty well, while remaining hermeneutically incompetent if the aim is to understand the text as the author intended it to be read.

(5) While happily acknowledging that different cultures in our day and in other centuries bring their own insights to the task of interpreting the New Testament documents and thus to the correlative writing of commentaries, we should not be embarrassed by the insights gained by our own heritages. As we evaluate the hermeneutical competence of various commentaries, we ought not disown our own cultural location. Yet if critical realism has taught us anything, there is enough discoverable meaning in the text itself, open to people of every culture, that it is folly to assume that every interpretation is equally valid.

(6) If one assumes, as Christians across the centuries have most commonly asserted, that whatever the extraordinary diversities in the New Testament documents, they are nevertheless nothing less than the Word of God, then part of analyzable hermeneutical competence in commenting on these texts is bound up with the consequential ability of the commentator to show how these texts display the one Mind, the mind of God who is their ultimate author. That means, of course, commentators ought to be teasing out how the New Testament documents, and indeed the entire Bible, cohere, without turning the genre of the commentary into

systematic theology, or importing Bucer's *loci* into all our commentaries. It also means that those who adopt an exclusively naturalistic reading of the texts will most likely deploy a hermeneutic in line with their naturalism, and this is likely to shape their commentaries. However technically competent the resulting commentaries may be, Christians who hold to another understanding of the very nature of these texts must inevitably conclude that, as skillful as such commentaries may be in their deployment of the hermeneutical axioms and stances chosen by their authors, such commentaries cannot finally be judged the most hermeneutically competent if they disavow the very nature of the documents. Alternatively, commentators may genuinely unpack, in substantial measure, the meaning of the texts, but not believe any of it to be true, or, worse, believe it to be true but disavow any attempt to live life in conformity with such truth. If the turn to the subject has taught us anything, this, too, is a horrible hermeneutical defeat, even in the most lucid commentary.

WHO DO COMMENTATORS SAY "THE LORD" IS? THE SCANDALOUS ROCK OF ROMANS 10:13[1]

Daniel I. Block

Introduction

From the early beginnings of the church Christians have been in debt to interpreters who have rendered the sacred Scriptures meaningful and translated its message of divine grace and redemption into their own language. Grant Osborne, the person to whom this essay is dedicated, stands in the train of commentators like Paul, who in Romans 10:13 declared, in the words of Joel 3:5,[2] "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." This is a remarkable statement on many counts. Commentators on the book of Romans have rightly addressed four primary issues raised by Paul's use of this quotation: (1) the universalism of the Gospel: salvation offered in Jesus Christ is available to *all* (πᾶς) who call on him; (2) the way of access to the Gospel: salvation comes by *calling* (ἐπικαλέω); (3) the focus of the Gospel: the *name of the Lord* (τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου); (4) the promise of the Gospel: they shall *be saved* (σωθήσεται).

The concern of this paper is to explore how commentators have treated the third element: what does Paul mean by pointing his readers to the name of the Lord, and what are the implications of his declaration within its literary context and for the readers of the book? While my general interest in this subject arises out of longstanding curiosity about the history of Israel's treatment of the divine name, this study was precipitated by a recent conversation a half dozen colleagues here at Wheaton had with a half dozen Jewish rabbis representing four different traditions

[1] I am delighted to make this small contribution to a volume dedicated to my very good friend Grant Osborne. Our relationship goes back almost thirty years, to a time when life was less complicated and we were young colleagues on the faculty of Providence College in Otterburne, Manitoba. I am grateful to my current colleagues, Daniel Treier and Michael Graves, for reading an earlier version of this paper and offering helpful counsel on content and presentation, and for my assistant, Daniel Owens, for proof reading the paper. Of course, any infelicities of substance or style are my own responsibility.

[2] Since Paul quotes the Septuagint, hereafter all references to Joel will cite only the LXX verse numbers.

within Judaism.[3] By their choice, the subject for discussion was Romans 9–11, specifically Paul's view of the Gospel and his disposition toward Jews. From this conversation it struck me that Rom 10:13 declares in a nutshell the "scandalous rock" (πέτρα σκανδάλου, Rom 9:33).[4] It is not Christian claims to Jesus' Messiahship that Jews view so blasphemous, but claims of his divinity.[5] As in 1 Cor 1:31; 2:16; 2 Cor 10:17; and Phil 2:10–11, in Rom 10:13 an Old Testament text is applied to "prove nothing other than that the Pauline κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός has been deified . . ., has become ἰσόθεος, and has his essential being in God."[6] If this is how Jewish interpreters understand τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου in this text, how have Christian commentators treated it? This paper seeks to answer this question. However, before we explore how interpreters understand the phrase we should inquire concerning the origins of Paul's notion of "the name of the Lord."

1. *The Treatment of "the Name of the Lord" in Commentaries on Romans 10:13*

Through the centuries Christian commentators have responded to Paul's reference to the name of the Lord in different ways. In the first instance, many commentators do not find the expression noteworthy at all. The following represents all that the notable New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce—whose training was in the Old Testament—says about this citation:

> Quoted from Joel ii. 32, where it relates to the period on the eve of 'the great and terrible day of the Lord' when God's Spirit is to be poured out on all flesh; compare Peter's use of the same Scripture to explain the events of the day of Pentecost: 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet' (Acts ii. 16).

He says nothing of the significance of the quotation—let alone the phrase, "the name of the Lord"—in this context. Similar gaps are found in many

[3] While we meet regularly once each semester for the sheer joy of dialogue, our conversations revolve around specific texts.

[4] Note also "the stone of stumbling" (τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος and λίθον προσκόμματος) in Rom 9:32–33.

[5] See more fully H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (trans. H. Knight; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 160–67.

[6] Ibid., 154.

significant commentaries.[7] I am painfully aware that commentators must write within restrictions set by publishers, but many commentaries simply restate the obvious and fail to open the window for readers to critical nuances underlying the text, which is particularly important when dealing with New Testament citations of Old Testament texts.[8]

Second, some commentators retroject Paul's identification of Jesus as the Lord back on the antecedent text in Joel. Citations and allusions to Rom 10:13 are relatively rare in early Christian writings.[9] Although not a commentary on this text, we notice the influence of Paul's statement on a recension of the first century A.D. pseudepigraphic work, *The Lives of the Prophets*, attributed to Dorotheus of Tyre (3rd century). Concerning Joel, the standard version (which apparently goes back to a Hebrew original) has only a brief two sentence comment: "Joel was from the territory of Reuben, in the countryside of Bethomoron. He died in peace and was buried there."[10] Dorotheus quotes the text from Joel 3:1–5 [ET 2:28–32], but

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[7] E.g., M. Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (trans. W. Pauck; Library of Christian Classics Ichthus Edition; Philadelphia: Westminster), 296–97; J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (trans. J. Owen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 396–97; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 202–3; J. P. Heil, *Romans—Paul's Letter of Hope* (Rome: Biblical institute Press, 1987), 72–73; R. H. Mounce, *Romans* (NAC 27; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 210–11; G. R. Osborne, *Romans* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 273. Perhaps the most disappointing is M. A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 660.

[8] For a focused attempt, see the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[9] The most notable are (1) Origen (ca. A.D. 185–254); for the Latin text, see C. P. Hammong Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins Buch 7–10* (Vetus Latina: aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 34; Freiburg: Herder, 1998); on this text, 651–54; (2) John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 347–407), *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. B. Morris, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christians Church*, vol. 11, ed. Philip Schaff; on this text "Homilies" 17–18, pp. 474–78, though with little comment on the issue that concerns us here; (3) Hilary of Poitiers (ca. A.D. 315–367), *De Trinitate*, Book V, in *St. Hilary of Poitiers: Selected Writings*, trans. E. W. Watson, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christians Church*, vol. 9, ed. Philip Schaff, 94–95; he quotes Rom 10:13–21 but does not comment on v. 13; (4) Ambrosiaster (4th century A.D.); for translation, see *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians: Ambrosiaster* (trans. Gerald L. Bray; Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 85; (4) Didymus Alexandrinus (ca. A.D. 310–398 B.C.), *De Trinitate,* Book 1, 28.78; for the Greek text and German translation, see J. Hönscheid, *Didymus der Blinde* (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 44; Meisenheim: Hain, 1975), 194–95. This list is not exhaustive, but often the echo of Rom 10:13 is actually an echo of Joel 3:5.

[10] As translated by D. R. A. Hare in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:392.

he prefaces his citation by declaring that Joel prophesied about the Lord Christ (τὸν δεσπότην Χριστόν), and concludes with a reference to Peter's comments at Pentecost in Acts 2:14–21.[11] In his full length commentary on Romans, Origen of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 185–251) begins the discussion of Rom 10:13 by citing Joel, and then gives considerable attention to the person to whom people must call to be saved. Referring also to 1 Cor 1:2 ("all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours"), he identifies the Lord to whom the prophet Joel referred and the Lord to whom Enosh, Moses and Aaron, and Samuel had effectively called as Christ.[12] Although this interpretation may be found in modern homiletical commentaries on Joel,[13] it is rare in commentaries on Romans, and when it occurs it is more restrained.[14]

A third approach is to interpret κύριος in Rom 10:13 in its appellative or titular sense, that is, "sovereign, [divine] lord." This interpretation also has a long history. After quoting Rom 11:11–13, the fourth century theologian from Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, asks, "With which name shall they call upon the Son, those who refer to him neither as unbegotten God nor as Son, who is of the same essence as the Father, who is the renowned triumphant one, the savior of the heavens, the earth and the sea?"[15] Ambrosiaster comments, "If he is the Lord of all, then he is called on by his servants, and because this is the case, Paul adds what follows."[16] But this view is also found in modern commentaries. In 2005, Leander Keck writes,

> Here Paul does not indicate whether "Lord of all" refers to God (as in 9:5) or to Christ, whose lordship is confessed in verse 9. Paul does not need to specify one or the other because the status of the resurrected and exalted Jesus as Lord does not compete with the lordship of the one God, but expresses

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[11] According to David Satran (*Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* [Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 10), "The Dorothean recension is characterized by lengthy christological prefaces to the individual *vitae*."

[12] For the Latin text, see C. P. Hammong Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins Buch 7–10* (Vetus Latina: aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 34; Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 651–54.

[13] E.g., A. Rowland declares ("Joel," in *The Pulpit Commentary* [ed. H. D. M. Spence and J. S. Exell; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950], 13:43), "His 'name' is *Jesus.*" [italics his].

[14] Note for example, J. A. Beet: "Joel refers evidently to the day of Christ. . . . The Lord: in Joel *Jehovah*, the proper name of the God of Israel. But it is easy to apply it to Christ our Lord." *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), 287 [emphasis his].

[15] Cf. Honscheid's German translation, *Didymus der Blinde*, 195.

[16] As translated by Bray, *Ambrosiaster*, 85.

> it, as in Phil 2:9–11. There God, by resurrection, "highly exalted him and gave him the name [Lord] that is above every name"—God's own name; moreover the cosmic acclamation, "Jesus Christ is Lord," is "to the glory of God the Father." For Paul, the lordship of the one God and the lordship of Christ are distinguishable but not separable, for God's lordship is now exercised through the lordship of Christ.

Similarly, on vv. 12–13 Tom Schreiner comments,

> One could claim that God's lordship is intended here, especially since the citation of Joel 3:5 LXX refers to the lordship of Yahweh in its Old Testament context. It is more likely, though, that the lordship of Christ is asserted, since verse 9 emphasizes that saving faith acknowledges that Jesus is Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), and the application to Jesus of Old Testament texts that refer to Yahweh is evident elsewhere in Paul.... The lordship of Jesus postulated here is a beneficent one, for he is rich to all who call upon him.... Paul would certainly have identified the prophecy of Joel with the outpouring of the Spirit on those who confessed Jesus as Messiah and Lord.[17]

Schreiner is certainly correct in his interpretation of v. 12, but he seems oblivious to the shift in nuance of κύριος in verse 13, where the issue is a "name," and not a title.

Fourth, laudably many commentators recognize that in citing Joel 3:5 and applying "the name of the Lord" (τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου) to Jesus, Paul is actually identifying Jesus with YHWH, the God of Israel, and ascribing divinity to him. Some acknowledge this only in passing. Leon Morris notes, "It is significant that once again Paul takes words which in the Old Testament are used of Yahweh and uses them of Christ."[18] Similarly, A. M. Hunter, "In the OT the lord is Jehovah. That Paul can apply this scripture to Christ, shows how completely, for him, he stands on the divine side of reality."[19] Though he does not mention that κύριος = יהוה, John Murray writes,

> [T]his is another example of the practice of taking Old Testament passages which refer to God without qualification and applying them to Christ. It was the distinguishing mark of New Testament believers that they called upon

[17] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 561–62.

[18] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 388; similarly.

[19] See also A. M. Hunter, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM, 1955), 97; A. Theissen and P. Byrne, "Romans," in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (ed. R. C. Fuller; London: Nelson, 1969), 1132; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 532; J. R. Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 285; E. F. Harrison, "Romans," in vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 113; Moo, *Romans,* 660; etc.

> the name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22) and therefore accorded to him the worship that belonged to God alone.[20]

A few offer more expanded explanations. Herschel H. Hobbs observes,

> "Jesus" (*Iēsous*) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua (*Yeshua*) which means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah saves." "Lord" (*Kurios*) was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) to translate the word for "Jehovah" (*Yahweh*), the peculiar name for the true God of Israel. It is his saving name (see Exod. 3:7–22, especially v. 14; literally, "He will be that [which] he will be"; Jehovah was revealing himself as the one redeeming Israel from bondage). When used of Jesus in the strictly Christian sense, it means that he is Jehovah in the flesh for man's salvation. No Jew would confess "Lord Jesus" who did not really believe it. No Gentile would do so who still called Caesar *Lord*. Paul says that no one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12:3).[21]

C. H. Dodd begins by considering the Greek background of *Kyrios*, which referred to state–deities as objects of special cults and implied "both divine status and a sort of 'covenant' relation between the god and his worshippers," but then declares that Paul's usage is Semitic, rather than Greek, in origin:

> "[T]he Hebrews read the name Jehovah in their Scriptures as the corresponding Hebrew word 'Adonai' . . . For them too it denoted a God who stood in a covenant relation with his worshippers." This double usage forms the background of the confession, **'Jesus is Lord.'** Paul brings it into connection with ordinary usage in 1 Cor. viii. 5–6, where he says that paganism has many so–called gods, and many 'lords' too; but Christians have **one God, the Father from whom all comes, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom all exists.** Paul also, as we shall presently see, freely applies passages in the Old Testament which speak of the LORD (i.e. Jehovah) to Christ. . . . With the Hebrew background in view, it would suggest that God had conferred upon Christ His own Name as the covenant God of Israel—the **Name above all names** (cf. Phil. ii. 9–11)—to indicate that all divine activity for the salvation of men is henceforward concentrated in Him [emphasis his].[22]

According to Robert Jewett,

> The κύριος for Joel was clearly Yahweh, who would destroy Israel's enemies and usher in a new age of spiritual and material abundance. In Romans, however, the word κύριος clearly refers to Jesus, who brought salvation through his own death and resurrection and thereafter by means of evangelical

[20] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 57.
[21] Herschel H. Hobbs, *Romans: A Verse by Verse Study* (Waco, TX: Word: 1977), 135.
[22] C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper, 1932), 167–68.

> persuasion that equalizes the honor of the entire human race. It is likely that Joel's formulation of the "name of the Lord" would have been understood in the light of the baptismal formula, "into the name of Jesus." Whereas "salvation" in Joel refers to Israel gaining precedence over other nations, with the word "every one" referring to all Israel, including the returning captives, the new context is fully ecumenical, following the explicit reference to the lack of distinction between Jews and Greeks.[23]

James Dunn discusses at length the implications of Paul's citation of Joel:

> This hope and promise held out in Joel with reference to the God of Israel, Paul refers without apparent qualm to the exalted Christ. The point Paul is making is not, however, a Christological one; rather it is a salvation–history point. At its simplest he is stressing the complete continuity between God's purpose through his covenant with Israel and the climax of that purpose in Christ. The remnant of Judah, who according to Joel will be saved (cf. 9:27–29), are once again identified as those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. But there is more involved in Paul's thought that that, for it is precisely through the exaltation of Christ to his right hand that God can now be seen to exercise his own lordship as a lordship over all, Greek as well as Jew; for in fact it is through Christ's exaltation that God extended his effective lordship and covenanted authority to all nations—a point Paul might easily draw from the combination of Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:6 which was already well established in primitive Christian apologetic (1 Cor. 15:25–27). . . . Now that God has acted in and through Christ to bring in the final stage of his purpose for all humankind, the Jew can no longer claim special rights of access to God which are unavailable to the uncircumcised Greek, but must recognize that God has so disposed himself that access is now henceforth through Christ. Paul does not shrink from the boldness of his conclusions. It is not simply that the extension of God's grace to all has ended Israel's special covenant privileges as privileges enjoyed by Jews alone. It is also that God, who showed himself to be concerned for all humankind in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to his right hand, cannot now be understood or recognized other than in terms of Christ. In committing himself to act so decisively in and through Christ, he obliged men and women to recognize God-in-Christ and to address themselves to God through God-through-Christ. Thus it is now through this Christ that all will be saved, share in the final wholeness of God's fulfilled purpose for the world—and that "all" includes Jew as well as Greek. This is the seriousness of Israel's plight so long as it continues to reject the gospel. To reject the word of faith is to reject its own covenant as now transposed into universal terms by Christ; to turn one's back on Christ is to refrain from making appeal to God in and through Christ by which salvation comes, the salvation for which Paul prays (10:1).[24]

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[23] R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 633.
[24] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas: Word, 1988), 617–18.

Even if we cannot agree entirely with Dunn's formulation—I do think Paul's point is christological, and not merely salvation-historical—comments like these begin to invite serious students of the Scriptures to go beyond superficial readings and to drink deeply of the fuller meaning of the text.

2. *Another Look at "the Name of the Lord" in Romans 10:13*

The task of commentary writing is difficult, and the more earnestly one wrestles with the text the more difficult. Almost by definition, those who write commentaries cannot write everything they would like to say, and they certainly cannot be as thorough as the authors of detailed presentations in technical essays and monographs devoted to specific topics. Concerning the present text, those who have interest and access to libraries are aided by a series of discussions in such works.[25] My concern here is not to reexamine how recent technical scholarship treats Rom 10:13, but to summarize, as I see it, how Paul has adapted the prophecy of Joel to proclaim the Gospel based upon the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ,[26] and in so doing try to account for the resistance to this Gospel among the Jews of Paul's day and the Jews of our own time.

The Roots of "the Name of the Lord" in Romans 10:13

Variations of the Greek phrase τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου "the name of the Lord," occur twenty-six times in the New Testament.[27] Of these, thirteen explicitly

[25] See among others, L. Cerfaux, "'Kyrios' dans le citations pauliniennes de l'Ancient Testament," in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux : études d'exégèse et d'histoire religieuse, réunies à l'occasion de son soixante–dixième anniversaire* (BETL; Gembloux: Duculot, 1954), 1:173–88; W. Foerster and G. Quell, "κύριος," *TDNT* 3:1039–98, esp. 1088–94; Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (Studies in Biblical Theology 50; Naperville: Allenson, 1966), 75–107, esp. 75–80; Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11* (WUNT 2/63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); N. Richardson, *Paul's Language about God* (JSNTSup 99; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); C. K. Rowe, "Romans 10:13: What is the Name of the Lord?" *HBT* 22 (2000): 135–73; R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), esp. 195–97.

[26] This raises the important question—which cannot be answered here—whether Paul is actually engaging in exegesis of Joel, or applying Joel to a new situation, or simply finding inspiration for his present utterance in Joel.

[27] τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου: Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13; 2 Tim 2:19. τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου: Acts 8:16; 19:5, 13, 17; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Thess 1:12; ὀνόματι κυρίου: Matt 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John

identify the Lord by glossing the epithet κύριος with the name Ἰησοῦς or Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.[28] The present phrase occurs elsewhere only in Acts 2:21 and 2 Tim 2:19. The former also involves a quotation of Joel 3:5, πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, “all who call upon the name of the Lord,” while the latter involves a typically Semitic combination of verb and cognate noun, πᾶς ὁ ὀνομάζων τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, “all who name the name of the Lord.”

Unlike Peter in Acts 2:21 (cf. v. 16), in Rom 10:13 Paul does not preface his quotation from Joel with a citation formula.[29] However, when we juxtapose Romans 10:13 with the Joel text it is obvious he is quoting from the Septuagint version of the prophetic book:

Romans 10:13	<u>Πᾶς</u> γὰρ <u>ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται</u>.
Joel 3:5	καὶ ἔσται <u>πᾶς</u> <u>ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται</u>.

The LXX translation is interesting on several counts.

First, it renders a name as a title. κύριος is not a name. Paul’s earlier declaration, ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς κύριος πάντων, “For the same [One] is lord [i.e., sovereign] of all” (v. 12), proves he knew the word was a title or an epithet. However, it is not a name, which may explain why Paul and others frequently added “Jesus Christ” to “Lord.” The problem reflected in the Septuagint did not originate with the translators of this version; it reflected an increasing hesitancy among Jews in the intertestamental period to verbalize the divine name and in the reading of Scripture in the synagogues to replace it with surrogates or appellative expressions like הַשֵּׁם (“The Name”) and אֲדֹנָי (“Lord,” “Master” = Greek κύριος). Whether the Alexandrian translators of LXX rendered the *nomina sacra*

12:13; Col 3:17; Jas 5:10. ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου: Acts 9:28; 1 Cor 5:4; 6:11; Eph 5:20; 2 Thess 3:6; Jas 5:14. ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου: Acts 15:26; 21:13; 1 Cor 1:10.

[28] Acts 8:16; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 1 Cor 1:2, 10; 5:4; 6:11; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 2 Thess 1:12; 3:6. This by no means exhausts the texts in which Jesus is specifically identified as κύριος. Note the ubiquitous references to “the Lord Jesus Christ” (20+) and “the Lord Jesus” (30+), etc. In pronominal expressions like “my Lord” (John 20:28; Phil 3:8) and “our Lord” (60+), we need always to determine whether κύριος is simply an epithet of respect, equivalent to “Sir,” or actually a substitute for YHWH. But personal names never appear with modifying pronouns or with the article.

[29] This contrasts with many of the citations from the Old Testament in chapters 9–11: 9:9, 13, 15, 17, 25, 27, 29, 33; 10:5, 6, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21; 11:3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 26, 27, 34, 35 .

as the Tetragrammaton יהוה,[30] transliterated it as ΙΑΩ,[31] or translated what Jews pronounced (Qere) when they encountered the divine name as κύριος—which seems likely,[32] Christian versions of LXX consistently read κύριος. Though unlikely, it is possible that in oral speech Jesus and the disciples vocalized the divine name.[33] However, Paul's reference to κύριος in Rom 10:13 adheres to the pattern that is followed consistently in the New Testament and carries over into the early church. This means that when we encounter κύριος we should always ask whether the speakers in the narrative or the biblical writers who use the name were thinking specifically of the God of Israel, who identified himself as YHWH and invited his covenant people to address him by name (Exo 3:13–15; 34:6–7), or more generally of the divine Suzerain, referred to in the Old Testament as אֲדֹנָי, "Lord, Master," a title that other peoples ascribed to their gods as well.[34] While the difference may seem insignificant on the surface, these

[30] Thus P. E. Kahle, *Die Kairoer Genisa. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des hebräischen Bibeltextes und seiner Übersetzungen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962), 232–62; S. Schulz, "Maranatha und Kyrios Jesus," *ZNW* 53 (1962): 128–30; G. Howard, "The Tetragram and the New Testament," *JBL* 96 (1977): 63–66. J. A. Fitzmyer, "Der semitische Hintergrund des neutestamentlichen Kyriostitels," in *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie* (ed. G. Strecker; FS H. Conzelmann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975), 267–98 (published in English as "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Kyrios–Title," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* [SBLMS 25: Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979], 115–42). So also D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 660.

[31] So P. W. Skehan, "The Qumran Manuscripts and Textual Criticism," in *Congress Volume: Strasbourg, 1956* (ed. G. W. Anderson et al.; VTSup 4; Leiden: Brill), 148–60; H. Stegemann, "Religionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu den Gottesbezeichnungen in den Qumrantexten," in *Qumran. Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu* (ed. M. Delcor; BEThL 44; Leuven: Peeters, 1978), 205; F. E. Shaw, "The Earliest Non-Mystical Jewish Use of ΙΑΩ" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2002).

[32] Thus A. Pietersma, "Kyrios or Tetragramm: A Renewed Quest for the Original Septuagint," in *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Mississauga, ON: Benben Publications, 1984): 85–101; M. Rösel, "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 411–28.

[33] The high priest's charge of blasphemy in response to Jesus' declaration Ἐγώ εἰμι, "I am," in Mark 14:62, suggests he interpreted Jesus as uttering the holy name of God. So also Schoeps, *Paul*, 161. Compare also the effect of Jesus' utterance of this phrase in John 18:5–6. The phrase translates into Hebrew as אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (Exod 3:14).

[34] Represented in the Aramaic of New Testament times as מָרֵא. This epithet is reflected in the expression, Μαράνα θά, "Our Lord come," in 1 Cor 16:22. Of course, this raises the question whether or not the original addressees of the New Testament epistles would have recognized YHWH behind the references to κύριος. Although the question cannot be answered with certainty, the frequency of citations and allusions to Old Testament texts in the epistles—even to predominantly Gentile communities; e.g., Galatians) suggests that early evangelistic and discipleship efforts were accompanied by instruction in the Old Testament Scriptures, which insisted that the God of Israel was the one and only

two expressions reflect totally different relationships; the name is personal, while the title is formal.[35] We may illustrate the point with many modern equivalents: addressing the queen of England as "Your majesty," or Elizabeth; the mayor of a city as "your worship" or Sid; a professor as Dr. Jones or David. Commentators are generally agreed that in Rom 10:13 Paul is linking Jesus with YHWH, but the nature of that linkage is disputed; is he associating Jesus with YHWH as Sovereign over the universe and lord of his people, or is this YHWH of the exodus and the covenant? We will withhold a consideration of the answer until later. Our concern here is to explore how sensitive commentators over the centuries and millennia have been to this issue and what significance they drew from it.

Second, whereas the Hebrew, אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, translates literally "Who call on/with/ by the name of YHWH" (e.g., Gen 4:26), LXX renders the clause with the accusative, ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, "who call out the name of YHWH." Actually, LXX translates the idiom קְרָא בְּשֵׁם יהוה, "to call by the name of YHWH," either with a preposition, "to call *upon* the name of the Lord" (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου),[36] or "to call *in* the name of the Lord" (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου),[37] or as a dative, "to call to the Lord" (τῷ

true God. Whether they identified him by name as YHWH or by title as κύριος is unclear. On early preaching to Gentile audiences, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1385–92. Understanding Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John, particularly the "I AM" statements that climax in John 18:5–6, seems to depend on awareness of the Tetragrammaton as the name of God.

[35] The current debate in some quarters concerning how we should render "Son of God" in translations aimed for Muslim readers involves a similar issue. Is Jesus' divinity really surrendered if we render the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ as "the Son who comes from God"? For discussion, see Collin Hansen, "The Son and the Crescent," *Christianity Today* 55/2 (February, 2011): 19–23. Unfortunately the discussion tends to overlook the fact that the epithet "son of God" is not primarily an affirmation of divinity, but a Messianic title, as Peter recognized in his confession, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." Given the Old Testament background of the phrase, this title reflected the "son's" status as vassal (equivalent to Hebrew עֶבֶד = Greek δοῦλος) vis à vis a "father," that is an overlord (Hebrew אָדוֹן = Greek κύριος; cf. 1 Kgs 16:6). Although the Israelites collectively were YHWH's firstborn, the title "son of God" applied especially to David and his descendants in a particular messianic sense. The descent of the Spirit of God upon Jesus and the heavenly declaration of "This is my beloved Son" have less to say about Jesus' divinity than about his status as Messiah; this is the moment of his anointing for messianic service. Belief in Jesus' divinity is not dependent upon this title; it is firmly established by attributing to Jesus the name "Yahweh" (as in Rom 10:13), the personal name of the God of Israel, the creator of all things, and the divine King who rules over all. As "Son of God," Jesus is the Son who has come to do the will of the Father.

[36] Gen 12:8; Exod 33:19; Isa 44:5 (name of Israel).

[37] 1 Kgs 18:24–26; 2 Kgs 5:11; 1 Chron 16:8.

ὀνόματι κυρίου).[38] However, in Joel 3:5, as in the majority of cases,[39] what appears as an adverbial phrase in Hebrew, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, "all who will call in the name of YHWH," LXX renders with an accusative construction, πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, "all who will call [out] the name of YHWH."[40] Although the idiom represents an appeal to YHWH for aid or deliverance in a few contexts,[41] in the majority of cases it seems to involve simply the verbal utterance of the name YHWH. This is clearly the case in Exod 33:19 and 34:6–7, where YHWH declares his own name—he is obviously *not* appealing to himself for aid.

The significance of the utterance when it comes from human lips varies. Sometimes it involves declaring the name of YHWH in worship, either to get his attention (1 Kgs 18:24–26) or to sing his praises.[42] Several texts suggest that calling out YHWH's name represented a cry of allegiance or a declaration of covenant commitment, perhaps in the form of the Shema, "Our God is YHWH, YHWH alone!"[43] To those who call out his name YHWH declares, "They are my people," to which they respond, "YHWH

[38] Exod 34:5; Jer 44:26 (LXX 51:26).

[39] 2 Chron 6:33; Ps 79:6; 80:19[ET 79:19]; 99:6[LXX 98:6]; 105:1[LXX 104:1]; 116:4[LXX 114:4]; 116:13[LXX 115:4]; Isa 12:4; 43:1; 64:6; Jer 10:25.

[40] Cf. the translation of T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 273: "all who call the Lord's name will be saved."

[41] 1 Kgs 8:43; 1 Chron 16:8; 2 Chron 6:33; Ps 116:4[LXX 114:4]. Cf. the use of the accusative in appeals for aid with "name," Lam 3:55 (קָרָאתִי שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה, "I call [out] your name, O YHWH!"), and without: Ps 86:5 (לְכָל־קֹרְאֶיךָ, "to all who call you"); absolute, without reference to YHWH or his name: Ps 27:7; 34:7[ET 6]; 56:10[ET 9]; 69:4[ET 3]; 102:3[ET 2]; 116:2[LXX 114:2].

[42] 1 Chron 16:8; Ps 80:19[ET 18], in response to divine aid; 105:1[LXX 104:1]; 116:13[LXX 115:4]; 116:17 [missing in LXX]; Isa 12:4. According to Allen Ross ("שֵׁם," *NIDOTT* 4:148), the idiom "could very well signify making proclamation of the Lord by name—proclaiming what the Lord is like (Gen 4:26 and 12:8 [which Luther translated 'preached'])." Isaiah 48:1 speaks of a perfidious nation disingenuously swearing by the name of YHWH and affirming by the God of Israel (הִזְכִּיר בֵּאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).

[43] On this interpretation of the Shema, see D. I. Block, "How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4–5," *JETS* 47 (2004): 193–212. On Joel 3:5, H. W. Wolff suggest suggests קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יהוה "to call on the name of YHWH," does not mean "to call with," but to enter into an intensive relationship. See H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (trans. W. Janzen, S. D. McBride, Jr., and C. A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 56. Later he adds, "'Call by the name of Yahweh' means veneration through worship generally (Gen 12:8), especially the confessing of Yahweh among other faiths (Isa 41:25; 44:5), worshiping him in the midst of the nations (Isa 12:4; Ps 105:1; Zech 13:9). Joel can cite this promise insofar as through his exhortations (2:12–17) he has led endangered Jerusalem to a new confession of loyalty to Yahweh" (ibid. 68). Cf. also *HALOT*, 1130.

is our God." (Zech 13:9).[44] According to Zephaniah 3:9, a person who calls out the name of YHWH declares his vassal status and his readiness to serve him: "At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, so all of them may call on the name of YHWH and serve him with together" (Zeph 3:9).[45] This covenantal link may provide the key to Genesis 4:26, where the narrator declares that in the days of Enosh people "began to call [out] the name of YHWH" (לִקְרֹא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה), as well as repeated references to Abraham and Isaac doing the same. In each instance this verbal act was accompanied by a non-verbal cultic gesture of devotion: building an altar (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 26:25) or planting a tree (21:33).

If calling out the name of YHWH signified a cry of allegiance or a declaration of commitment, then not calling out his name signaled the absence of a relationship with him. Nations that do not know YHWH do not call out his name (Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25). In Jeremiah 44:26, YHWH describes his rejection of those Judaeans who went down to Egypt in the aftermath of Gedaliah's murder: "Look, I have sworn by my great name that my name shall no longer be pronounced on the lips of any of the people of Judah in the whole land of Egypt, saying, 'As Adonai YHWH lives.'" Isaiah 64:6–7[ET 7–8] speaks of a time when no one called YHWH's name or roused up to take hold of him, for YHWH had hidden his face from his people and made them melt for their iniquities. However, now they acknowledge YHWH as their father; he is the potter, and they are the clay.

With this interpretation we may have discovered a key to Joel 3:5:

וְהָיָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא	Then all who call out
בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט	the name of YHWH will be delivered;
כִּי בְּהַר־צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַםִ	for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
תִּהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה [כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה]	there will be escape [as YHWH has said],[46]
וּבַשְּׂרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה קֹרֵא׃	and the survivors whom YHWH calls.

[44] On this covenant formula, see K. Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary: in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); R. Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (trans. M. Kohl; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

[45] In the context of describing the faithful service of Samuel and Moses and Aaron (Ps 96:6–8[LXX 98:6–8]), the psalmist characterizes them as "those who called his name (קֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ, accusative); they called to YHWH and he answered them" (v. 6).

[46] The clause כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה, "as YHWH has said," refers to his ancient covenant promise to restore Israel to full relationship with himself within their land after the judgment, as declared in Lev 26:40–45; Deut 4:29–31; 30: 1–10. Cf. Deuteronomy's use of כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה, "as YHWH has declared" (Deut 6:3, 19; 9:3; 27:3).

This text is striking for its pairing of concepts: those who "are delivered" (יִמָּלֵט) and the "survivors" (שְׂרִידִים);[47] Mount Zion and Jerusalem; those who call on YHWH and those whom he calls. Indeed this statement sandwiches the divine promise of salvation between two declarations of the preconditions: people will call upon YHWH, and YHWH will call on the people.[48] The syntax of the two clauses is identical, with both involving the conjunction אֲשֶׁר, "who," the verb קָרָא, "to call," and the preposition בַּ + noun. However, the word order has been altered to create a suggestive A B B A chiasm:

כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה

וּבַשְּׂרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה קֹרֵא

If the first line should be translated, "all who call *on* the name of YHWH," as if this is an appeal for deliverance, then we should render the second line similarly, "those survivors *on* whom YHWH calls." But this is absurd; YHWH does not call on anyone to rescue him. The translators of LXX got it right when they rendered יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה with an accusative: ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, "who call out the name of the Lord."[49] It remains to be seen whether Paul accepted this understanding of Joel or whether he adapted his statement to some other purpose in Rom 10:13.

Paul's Use of "the Name of the Lord" in Romans 10:13

When Paul cites Joel 3:5 in Rom 10:13, the apostle to the Gentiles makes several significant moves. First, he universalizes the scope of a prophecy that originally concerned only Israel's survival on the day of YHWH. The prophet's focus in Joel 2 is entirely parochial; those who were once known as the people of YHWH and as his special possession (נַחֲלָה; 2:17), have

[47] To this pair we might be tempted to add פְּלֵיטָה, "escape" at the end of line 2. However, פְּלֵיטָה denotes "escape" in the abstract, rather than "escapees," which is represented by פְּלִיטִים. See D. I. Block, *The Kingship Belongs to YHWH: Hearing the Message of Obadiah* (Hearing the Message of Scripture; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

[48] Just as Israel calls YHWH by name, so YHWH calls Israel by their name (Isa 43:1). But Israel is also called by YHWH's name (1 Chron 7:14; Isa 43:7), which probably means that they are stamped by his name and marked as his vassals (cf. Isa 44:5). Those over whom YHWH does not rule as divine patron are not called by his name (Isa 63:19). However, in his grace, to a people that was not called by his name, he has declared his covenantal presence (Isa 65:1).

[49] See note 40 above.

been divorced from their land and their God and scattered among the peoples. However, out of zeal for his land and pity for his people, on the day of YHWH (2:31), YHWH will restore the deity-people-land covenantal triangle, securing their status as his covenant people by pouring out his Spirit on all Israelites.[50] The nations are indeed involved in this picture, though not as participants in the salvation, but as the objects of divine fury (2:1–15). When Paul prefaces his citation from Joel with a quotation from Isa 28:16, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame," and then adds, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him" (NRSV), he has sprung the ethnocentric boundaries of the covenant and universalized the promise of Joel.

Second, Paul reshapes the nature of the salvation. In Joel 3:5 "to be saved" (Hebrew יִמָּלֵט; Greek σωθήσεται) meant escape from the cosmic upheaval on the day of YHWH. When the nations will face the fury of God, Israel will be spared. It is not that Israel herself has not been the target of divine fury. On the contrary, the first chapter of Joel has portrayed in vivid terms Israel's experience of her own "day of YHWH," because of her persistent rebellion against YHWH her Lord. However, in chapter 2 the focus shifts to a day in the distant future, when the descendants of the survivors of the first "day of YHWH" will be faced with a second cosmic "day of YHWH." This time her salvation will climax in the full restoration of Israel in her land and YHWH dwelling in her midst.

Salvation is an important notion in Romans, particularly chs. 9–11.[51] Romans 10:1 is especially important for setting the stage for Paul's development of the notion in these chapters, for here Paul expresses a narrow ethnocentric concern for the salvation (σωτηρία) of all Jews, whom he had earlier identified as "my brothers, my physical kinsmen, who are Israelites" (9:3–4). But there is a certain irony in this statement. The first annual observance in the religious calendar of the Jews was the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover, when they celebrated their rescue by YHWH from

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[50] Contrary to the reading found in many translations (NIV, NAS, NLT), כָּל־בָּשָׂר in 2:28[LXX 3:1] does not refer to all humanity, but to all Israelites (like the scope of the new covenant in Jer 31:31–40). On the covenantal significance of the liquid metaphor, "to pour out my Spirit," see D. I. Block, "The View from the Top: The Holy Spirit in the Prophets," in *Presence, Power and Promise:* The *Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (ed. David Firth and Paul Wegner; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 202–6.

[51] The word σωτηρία occurs three times (10:1, 10; 11:11), and variations of the verb σῴζω five times (9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:14, 26). Elsewhere in Romans the former occurs twice (1:16; 13:11), and the latter three times (5:9, 10; 8:24).

the tyrannical hands of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Therefore, almost by definition, in their minds to be Jewish is to be saved! Admittedly, the word groups represented by σῴζω and σωτηρία do not appear in the LXX translation of the narratives of the Exodus, but the word occurs in later poetic reflections on that event. Indeed Moses concludes his benediction of the tribes in Deut 33:29 with a congratulatory outburst: "How privileged you are, O Israel, a people saved (σῳζόμενος) by YHWH."[52] Paul alludes to that event with his reference to Pharaoh in Rom 9:15–18 and his summary of the Jews' privileged role in God's economy: they are his adopted sons; they have witnessed his glory; they enjoy covenant relationship with him; they possess the Torah—the revelation of his will; they practice a ritual that has been divinely revealed and actually works when performed according to his will; they have received the promises of God's steadfast love; they possess the traditions of the ancestors; and they are the agents through whom the physical—though cosmically regnant—Messiah would come (9:4–5). But then he exposes his hand: physical membership in Israel is no guarantee of salvation (vv. 6–8). Despite the history of divine grace in their election and salvation from Egypt, and despite their zeal for God, because they did not pursue righteousness by faith, like the Gentiles they need salvation from the wrath of God still to come. Paul's notion of salvation in chs. 9–11 is actually informed by his earlier references to the concept, especially in 5:9–10

> Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God (ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς). For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (NRSV).

Accordingly, whereas Joel had envisioned the people of Israel as exempt from the fury of YHWH in the day of cosmic judgment, Paul includes them with the Gentiles as the target of God's wrath.

Third, and most critically for our purposes, Paul changes the understanding of the way of salvation—specifically the perception of its source and agent. Whereas for Joel יהוה was the personal name of the God of Israel, Paul applies the name to Jesus Christ, thereby transferring to him all the status and authority previously associated with the God of Israel (cf. Phil 2:2–11). But of which name is he thinking now? Now we learn that

52 See also Ps 106[LXX 105]:8, 10, 21, et al.

Christ actually has two names: Jesus and YHWH. While acknowledging that this takes us outside the Pauline corpus, it is significant that the first was the name given to him by his human step-father. According to Matthew's infancy narrative (Matt 1:21–25), Joseph named Mary's son "Jesus"—albeit at the direction of the envoy of YHWH,[53] who also thereby interpreted the significance of this child by interpreting the name: "he shall save his people from their sins." Not only is "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς) the Greek version of "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ; Josh 13:16), which alludes to Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh and their exodus from Egypt,[54] but the explanation also uses the language of salvation (σώσει) and covenant ("his people"; τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ). This is Jesus' earthly name, given to him by a human. The name YHWH represents God's self-definition and self-identification. He had revealed this name to his people (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה; ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν) and invited them to address him by this name in perpetuity (Exod 3:14–15). But later Moses had also personally heard him introduce himself by this name and then offer an exposition of its significance (Exod 34:6–7).[55] In Christ these two names meet.[56]

When Paul referred to Jesus as YHWH in Rom 10:13, he did not abandon the monotheism of Israel by introducing a new deity, who was distinguished from the God of Israel and who had usurped his place. On the contrary, his previous declaration was rigorously monotheistic: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him" (Rom 10:12, NRSV). If the allusion to the Shema is only implicit here, Paul has been explicit in identifying Christ with YHWH confessed in the Shema in Rom 3:29–30:[57] "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith" (NRSV).[58] The old creedal confession still stands, but in the face of Christ's resurrection, to the Shema we must add, "Jesus is YHWH." By raising Jesus from the dead

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53 Greek ἄγγελος κυρίου in Matt 1:20 is equivalent to Hebrew מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה.

54 Moses renamed "Hoshea" (a generic name meaning "He has saved") as "Joshua" ("YHWH has saved") in the light of YHWH's self-revelation in the events associated with the exodus (Josh 13:16).

55 יְהוָה יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן . . ., "YHWH YHWH, the gracious and compassionate El. . . ." The Greek reads, κύριος ὁ θεὸς οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων. . . .

56 The significance of these names is matched by the significance of his titles in the Gospels: from the human earthly point of view he is the "Son of God"; from the heavenly point of view he is the "Son of Man." Cf. Dan 7:13.

57 So also Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 193–94.

58 Cf. also 1 Cor 8:5–6.

God demonstrated both Jesus' lordship over all (Rom 10:12) and his identity with YHWH (v. 9). Within the broader context Paul presents the way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles with a syllogistic argument:

YHWH is the one and only God.	(the Jewish conviction)
Jesus Christ is YHWH.	(the reality demonstrated by the resurrection)
Therefore, Jesus is the one and only God.[59]	(the conclusion)

Conclusion

With these three transformations of Joel's prophecy Paul gave his Jewish detractors three reasons to reject his gospel. By ascribing the name of YHWH to Jesus, this Israelite and Messiah "after the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα, Rom 9:3, 5), who died[60] ignominiously by crucifixion (Rom 6:6), Paul has presented the scandalous rock that is the Gospel (9:33; 11:9). He has done so elsewhere even more explicitly and fully in Phil 2:5–11. It is no wonder then, that the Jews are offended. To them, "Jesus is accursed" (Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς; 1 Cor 12:3). In the words of Schoeps, "*This myth of the condescension, sacrificial atoning death, and ascension of the heavenly man is radically un-Jewish.*"[61] Paul's Christology is "a 'scandal,' i.e., an impossible faith-idea; for it violates the sovereignty and sheer transcendence of God, and in fact destroys the world."[62] In John 10:33 the Jews tried to stone Jesus for blasphemy (βλασφημία), because he claimed to be God—even though he was only a human being (cf. John 5:18; Acts 7:54–60). The messianic hope within Judaism is summarized by Trypho, the Hellenized Jewish conversation partner of Justin Martyr, "We all expect that Christ will be a

[59] That is, Jesus is integral to and shares in the identity of the one and only God, who identified himself by name to Israel as YHWH. For fuller development of this notion, see D. S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (ed. S. E. Fowl; Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology; Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 87–100. I am grateful to my colleague Daniel Treier for drawing this essay to my attention.

[60] Paul repeatedly associates Jesus with the words νεκρῶν, "dead" (1:4; 4:24; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:7, 9) θάνατος, "death" (5:10; 6:3, 4, 5, 9), and ἀποθνῄσκω, "to die" (5:6, 8, 15; 6:8, 9, 10; 8:34; 14:9).

[61] Thus Schoeps, *Paul*, 155 [italics his].

[62] Ibid., 162.

man born of men."[63] Through the centuries Jewish readers of Paul have recognized the significance of Paul's application of the epithet, κύριος, to Jesus in Rom 10:13. However, they have generally rejected his Christology because, apart from the reviving and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, no one can affirm Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus is Lord," i.e., "Jesus is YHWH!" (1 Cor 12:3). If in ancient Israel a true and godly Israelite was identified as one who proclaimed "YHWH is our God, YHWH alone," in the New Testament the self-defining declaration of a Christian is "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 1:2; Acts 9:14, 21; 2 Tim 2:22). To call out the name of the Lord is to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.[64] In the New Testament those who called out his name were baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ; Acts 8:16; 19:5; cf. 1 Cor 1:13), or simply "into Christ Jesus (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27).[65]

This identification of Jesus with YHWH is at the heart of Paul's quotation of Joel 3:5. Throughout Romans 9–11 his focus has been on Jesus Christ, who, while being Christ (מָשִׁיחַ) in the flesh (9:5; cf. 10:6–7), through his death and resurrection has been declared to be both Lord (אֲדֹנָי) and the LORD (יהוה). While commentators on Rom 10:13 have done well to highlight the universality of the salvation offered in Christ ("All [πᾶς] who call]"), the means by which this salvation is appropriated (by calling [ἐπικαλέω]), and the blessed benefit that results from the call (salvation [σωθήσεται]), these features are relatively obvious to readers of the epistle. What is not so apparent, and therefore in need of clarification for readers of Scripture, is the significance of Paul's reference to "the name of the Lord" (τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου). Given the unfortunate loss of the name of God in Judaism and the inheritance of this loss by the church, without such aid casual readers will continue to misread this text primarily in terms of "lordship" Christology. However, when believers cry out the name of the Lord, they cry out a name, not merely a title. Titles like κύριος highlight the distance between addressee (the suzerain; Hebrew אָדוֹן; Greek κύριος) and addresser (the vassal; Hebrew עֶבֶד; Greek δοῦλος), and call for the submission of the latter to the former. But the revelation of a name is an invitation to a more personal relationship and an invitation to

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[63] *Dialogue with Trypho*, 49:1. For further description of Jewish protestations of Paul's Gospel, see Schoeps, *Paul*, 160–67.

[64] So also H. Langenburg, *Der Römerbrief: Der heilsgeschichtliche Missionsberuf der Gemeinde und der paulinische Lehrtypus* (2nd ed.; Hamburg: Schriftenmission Langenburg, 2003), 270.

[65] Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 633; D. Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1985), 187.

conversation. According to the Scriptures, this is what separates the God of Israel from the gods of the nations. Gods of wood and stone have eyes, ears, and mouths (Deut 4:28; Ps. 115:5–7)—all vital organs of communication—but they do not speak.[66] By contrast, the one true and living God speaks not only in glorious acts of redemption but also though verbal revelation. But he does more. He introduces himself to his people by name, and in so doing invites them to address him directly (Exod 3:13–15). Paul's message to the Romans and to the whole world—including Jews—is that this God has revealed himself dramatically and climactically in Jesus Christ. In the face of the incarnation, the cross, and the exaltation of Jesus, allegiance to God, who more than a millennium earlier had performed his paradigmatic work of salvation for Israel, is now declared by naming the name of Christ, for he bears YHWH's name: "Jesus is YHWH!" As Kavin Rowe declares, "Paul's use of Joel 3:5 (LXX and MT; EV 2:32) in Rom 10:13 . . . eliminates the possibility of thinking of the God of Israel, YHWH, as apart from the human being Jesus."[67]

To reject Jesus is to reject God, who was in Christ, reconciling not only Jews but the whole world to himself (1 Cor 5:19). As undeserving beneficiaries of the Gospel, we long for the day when all, Jew and Greek, will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and the LORD and in so doing gain access to the boundless riches of his grace, made available for all who call upon him (Rom 10:12).

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66 Compare the pathetic "Prayer to Every God," addressed to "the god/goddess whom I know or do not know," by an ancient Mesopotamian. *ANET*, 391–92.

67 Rowe, "What is the Name of the Lord?" 136. In similar vein, Yeago writes, "In the resurrection, as the church confesses it in worship, God has so utterly identified himself with Jesus, and Jesus has been so inextricably associated with God, that *it is not possible to turn to the God of Israel without at the same time turning to Jesus*" ("The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 90; italics his).

THE ETHICAL RELEVANCE OF NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES: ON THE READING OF ROMANS 13:1–7

David W. Pao

More than thirty years ago, Walter Wink claimed that historical biblical criticism was bankrupt "because it is incapable of achieving what most of its practitioners considered its purpose to be: so to interpret the Scriptures that the past becomes alive and illumines our present with new possibilities for personal and social transformation."[1] While many scholars would not consider this outcry a novel one, most recognize the continued need for critical scholarship to address the concerns of believers and the life of the Church. One area in which this problem is best illustrated is the way critical scholars approach the question most often raised by the laity: how shall we then live? Often considered to be mediators of the authoritative message embedded in the text, one of the tasks entrusted to commentators is to provide a clear response to such enquiries. While commentators may debate among themselves the technical details of the theological constructs embedded in the text, it is the provision of concrete responses to such enquiries that determines the success of their hermeneutical tasks. Confronted with richly complex passages that are at times difficult in a variety of ways, commentators are often humbled by such tasks, especially when they are forced to face the difficulties of constructing reliable and accessible bridges that can satisfy the needs of their contemporary audience.[2]

In the discussion of the bridges between the ancient text and the contemporary audience, the parenetic sections in the Pauline corpus make a natural starting point as the apostle himself apparently seeks to draw

[1] Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 2.

[2] This article is dedicated to my colleague and friend, Grant Osborne, whose well-known scholarly contributions range from careful technical studies of texts to the wise and pastorally sensitive presentations of the results of such studies for the general public. Equally important is his significant study *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006) that unpacks the processes in the construction of the bridge between the ancient text and the contemporary audience.

out the practical implications of his theological discussion.[3] In this article, we shall focus on one passage that is widely considered to be of singular importance for understanding Paul's political ethics: Rom 13:1–7. Some have even considered this as one of Paul's most influential teachings: "Despite the immeasurable importance of Paul's teaching on 'justification by faith,' it may well be that Paul's advice to submit to the governing authorities has influenced Western civilization even more."[4] Though influential, this passage has also been labeled as "perhaps the strangest and most controversial passage in the entire letter."[5] Treatments of this influential yet debated passage provide examples by which various issues related to the ethical relevance of New Testament commentaries can be identified.

Without providing an exhaustive survey of scholarship,[6] the first section will focus on the different kinds of proposed readings of Rom 13:1–7. This section will cover specialized studies as well as commentaries on Romans, and it will provide a partial glimpse of the options available to the contemporary commentators as they seek to wrestle with this pericope.

After laying out the options available to commentators, the second section will focus on the role of commentary literature in the formulation of our moral discourse. Issues highlighted in this section will allow us to reflect on the ethics of reading as we seek to draw out the contemporary moral implications of the ancient text. In the end, this article functions as a critical appreciation of the significance of the commentary genre in forming the moral vision of both the laity and scholarly community.

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[3] This is not, however, to assume that the doctrinal sections are to be understood strictly as theoretical discussions and the parenetic as practical ones. In the Epistle to the Romans, for example, the first section (1–11) can be considered as a redefinition of God's people in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, while the second section (12–16) is no less theoretical as it focuses on the reconstruction of this new identity among the true people of God.

[4] Graydon F. Snyder, "Major Motifs in the Interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett* (ed. Sheila E. McGinn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 48.

[5] Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 385.

[6] For detailed bibliographies and surveys of scholarship, see, for example, Vilho Riekkinen, *Römer 13: Aufzeichnung und Weiterführung der exegetischen Diskussion* (Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum 23; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1980), 2–202; Lutz Pohle, *Die Christen und der Staat nach Römer 13: Eine typologische Untersuchung der neueren deutschsprachigen Schriftauslegung* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1984), 23–28; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 12–16)* (EKKNT VI.3; Zürich: Benziger-Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 43–66; Stefan Krauter, *Studien zu Röm 13,1–7: Paulus und der politische Diskurs der neronischen Zeit* (WUNT 243; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 4–54.

1. *Critical Appropriations of Romans 13:1–7*

In his commentary on Romans, Douglas Moo notes that "[i]t is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Rom 13:1–7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning."[7] While this memorable quote does highlight certain aspects of the history of reception of this passage, its use of "avoidance" language imputes on interpreters an ignoble motive as they approach this difficult passage. Instead of an intentional avoidance to submit to Paul's teaching here, many have attempted to read this passage in its historical and literary contexts, thus problematizing even the existence of a "plain meaning" embedded in this text. Taking this text seriously, many wrestle to find ways to apply this text responsibly in light of competing statements elsewhere in Paul and other New Testament writers.

1.1 *"Its Plain Meaning"*

In its long history of interpretation, selected statements by some interpreters appear to argue for an unequivocal acceptance of Paul's blanket call to submit to civil authorities. In commenting on Rom 13:1, for example, Calvin notes Paul's emphasis on the universality of his command to submit: "By mentioning *every soul* Paul removes every exception, lest any should claim to be immune from the common submission to obedience."[8] He further notes that abusive authorities are no excuse for ignoring Paul's teachings: "If a wicked ruler is the Lord's scourge to punish the sins of the people, let us reflect that it is our own fault that this excellent blessing of God is turned into a curse."[9]

Such unequivocal endorsement of this reading is often supported by the observations that Paul's statement was made when he was fully aware of the evil practices within the Roman imperial system. Paul's command to pay taxes to the Roman government best illustrates this point since such taxes "would be used to finance the emperor's vain pleasure palaces and entertainment venues, his armies making war on other nations for no other cause than greed and glory, his civil government administration

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[7] Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 806.

[8] John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (trans. Ross MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 280.

[9] Ibid., 282. This same sentiment can be found in Martin Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," in *Luther—Selected Political Writings* (ed. J. M. Porter; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 108–11.

which routinely erected and staffed pagan temples as part of a large and powerful civic religion."[10] Paul's command in spite of his awareness of such practices seems to necessitate a strict observance of Paul's words in Romans 13.

From the first-century to the contemporary setting, many have found the relevance of this plain reading of Paul's teaching. See, for example, a more recent American appropriation of this text: "[E]very person without exception must submit to the higher powers. Whether high or low, Christian or non-Christian, Republican under Democratic rule or Democrat under Republican rule—everyone must submit. Whether a person's views are in the ascendancy or not, he must obey governmental powers."[11]

Many of those who affirm versions of this reading would readily concede that behind Paul's statement lies the significant affirmation that one's ultimate allegiance is to God himself. The limit to one's submission to the state becomes the area of intense debate, and such debate is often framed by the ways one is to understand the rationale behind Paul's command here in this epistle and the reason behind his positive evaluation of the state.

1.2 *Authenticity of the Text*

Perhaps the most efficient way of dealing with Rom 13:1–7 is to challenge its authenticity. Despite the lack of text critical support for this conclusion, some have pointed to the awkward disruption caused by the presence of this paragraph,[12] the apparent fit of this passage in a *Sitz im Leben* of a later period,[13] and even the general presence of interpolated passages in Romans[14] in support of the argument that this is not the product of the

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[10] Andy G. Olree, "Government as God's Agent: A Reconsideration of Romans 12 and 13," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 8 (2005): 188. See also Bruce Davidson, "Is Civil Disobedience Biblical," *Searching Together* 19 (1991): 13.

[11] O. Palmer Robertson, "Reflections on New Testament Testimony Concerning Civil Disobedience," *JETS* 33 (1990): 345.

[12] Alexandros Pallēs, *To the Romans: A Commentary* (Liverpool: Liverpool Bookseller's, 1920), 14; James Kallas, "Romans xiii, 1–7: An Interpolation," *NTS* 11 (1965): 365–74; J. C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (PNTC; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 206.

[13] See, for example, Winsome Munro, "Romans 13:1–7: Apartheid's Last Biblical Refuge," *BTB* 20 (1990): 164, who identifies the background of this interpolated passage in the Trajan period when heavy levies were imposed on the whole empire because of the unusual intensity of wars and revolts during his reign.

[14] See, in particular, Pierre-Antoine Bernheim, "Interpolations in Romans: Loisy, O'Neill and Others Revisited," in *The Letter to the Romans* (ed. Udo Schnelle; BETL 226; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 827–38, who argues for the possibility of interpolations in Romans 2; 7:7–25;

authentic Paul. Such readings would provide a convenient solution for the problems posed by this passage, but these readings appear to reveal the desire of these critics rather than that of Paul.

1.3 *Conceptual Frameworks*

On more solid grounds, various proposals of the conceptual framework of this passage have been evoked in dealing with its significance and applicability. These proposals highlight Paul's indebtedness to Old Testament exilic prophetic teachings,[15] Hellenistic Jewish theology,[16] and Greco-Roman philosophical and political traditions.[17] While no scholar would assume that Paul develops his position within a cultural and historical vacuum, some consider these conceptual frameworks as sufficient in explaining Paul's discussion in this passage. For James Dunn, for example, this discussion of conceptual antecedents combined with the observation of the lack of elements that reflect a unique Pauline theology suggests that this passage is simply "the carry over of Jewish wisdom, it is creation theology if it is anything."[18] Others are even less generous: "there is no principle enunciated here, no high-flown notion of the 'orders of creation,' no 'Christological' grounding of the state—just simple, homespun, garden-variety, practical wisdom."[19] For some, the identification of conceptual parallels and the lack of uniquely Pauline arguments become the basis for rejecting this paragraph as the basis of the understanding of Paul's political philosophy.

While it is profitable to identify the sources behind Paul's moral discourse, we should not assume that he is therefore controlled by the

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11:25–27; 13:1–7; 16:17–20; and 16:25–27. This is related to how one views interpolation in ancients texts in general; cf. Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1988), 458.

15 Cf. Jer 29:7; and its later expressions in Bar 1:11; 1 Macc 7:33; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 665.

16 Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 106: "in Rom. 13:1–7 Paul is using a form of paraenesis that had been formulated by the diaspora Jewish communities." Similarly, Matthew Black, *Romans* (2nd ed.; NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 179–80.

17 Cf. Seneca, *De Clementia* 1.1–4; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12–13: The Role of 13.1–10 in the Argument," *JSNT* 29 (2006): 163–72.

18 James D. G. Dunn, "Romans 13.1–7—A Charter for Political Quietism?" *ExAud* 2 (1986): 67. Some have, however, noted that Paul's use of the "anachronistic" Jewish tradition is meant to challenge the centralized Roman imperial system; Dieter Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology* (trans. David E. Green; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 102.

19 Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 204.

sources that he does use. Even if he is borrowing from such sources, sufficient attention has to be paid to the ways such traditions function within Paul's wider theological and christological arguments.

1.4 *Historical Contexts*

Moving from the conceptual framework to the *Sitz im Leben* of this paragraph, many believe that knowing the historical context of the mid-50s A.D. would at least contribute to our understanding of the reason(s) why Paul wrote the way he did. Various scenarios have been proposed, and a combination of the factors identified may provide a clearer picture for our contemporary appropriations of this passage. First, some have attributed Paul's positive evaluation of the state here to his positive experience of the *Pax Romana* in his earlier missionary activities. This passage is understood as having been "written at a moment of some peace in the realm, and is guiding Roman Christians as to how to respond if the state is operating in a just and fair manner."[20] Paul's position here therefore reflects "[h]is happy experience of Roman justice,"[21] and his goal is "to avoid disturbing the *Pax Romana* which specifically favoured the new religion."[22]

Others have, however, pointed to a number of instances where Paul's experience with the Roman rule is less than ideal (2 Cor 11:25).[23] Moreover, Paul is surely aware of the early Christian understanding that "Herod and Pontius Pilate assembled together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against . . . Jesus" (Acts 4:27). The experience

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[20] Ben Witherington, III. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 307.

[21] F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (rev. ed.; TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1985), 219. See also Simon Légasse, *L'Épître de Paul aux Romains* (LD 10; Paris: Cerf, 2002), 821–22.

[22] Black, *Romans*, 179; cf. Pierre Grelot, *L'Épître de saint Paul aux Romains: Une lecture pour aujourd'hui* (Versailles: Saint-Paul, 2001), 168–71. This reading is often accompanied by the observation that Paul is writing during the early years of Nero, a relatively peaceful time before his more erratic behavior especially against the Christians. This reading of Nero's early years of rational and peaceful rule is, however, questionable. For a discussion of this myth of *quinquennium Neronis*, the myth of five peaceful yeaers (A.D. 54–59) in Nero's reign, see T. E. J. Wiedemann, "Tiberius to Nero," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 10 (ed. A. K. Bowman, E. Champlin and A. Lintott; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 241–48.

[23] Gerhard Krodel, "Church and State in the New Testament," *Dialog* 15.1 (1976): 21–28.

of the "peace and safety"[24] offered by the Roman government may not be able to explain fully Paul's discussion in Rom 13:1–7.[25]

Instead of the general condition of the early Roman imperial period, many have attempted to identify specific historical events as the context within which Paul wrote this paragraph. The prime candidate is perhaps the expulsion of the Jews or the Jewish Christians during the reign of Claudius (cf. Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4). With this paragraph, therefore, "Paul wanted to be certain that the Christian community in Rome was not responsible for any unrest, for they had already been rejected from Rome once."[26] Some further consider this event as the main reason for Paul's writing of this entire epistle: "Paul wrote Romans to oppose this gentile-Christian 'boasting' over Israel, and the corresponding indifference to the plight of real Jews in Rome in the wake of the Claudian expulsion."[27]

> Others see the beginning stages of the development of anti-Roman sentiments in Palestine as prompting Paul to prevent such sentiments from spreading throughout the Roman Empire. This is best captured by Marcus Borg: When Paul wrote this passage to the Christians in Rome Judaism was on the brink of catastrophe as a result of its longstanding resistance to Roman imperialism. An emerging Christianity, founded by a Jew whom the Romans had crucified... was inevitably caught up in the crisis of Jewish-Roman relations. What was the right posture to adopt toward Rome? This was a burning question for Diaspora and Palestinian communities alike.[28]

This reading is adopted by a number of commentators who see Paul as urging "Christians to avoid all revolutionary aspirations or actions as well as insubordination to magistrates in the rightful exercise of their authority."[29]

Moving beyond the earlier verses of this paragraph, some prefer to focus on the final verses where taxation becomes the focus of Paul's discussion

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[24] Note Paul's use of this phrase in 1 Thess 5:3 precisely to challenge those who thought that they could rely on the *Pax Romana*.

[25] Cf. Wolfgang Schrage, *Die Christen und der Staat nach dem Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), 51–53.

[26] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 679. Cf. André Viard, *Saint Paul, Épître aux Romains* (SB; Paris: Gabalda, 1975), 273; Rudolf Pesch, *Römerbrief* (NEchtB 6; Würzburg: Echter, 1983), 95. See also the more recent statement in Craig S. Keener, *Romans* (New Covenant Commentary Series; Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2009), 153.

[27] Neil Elliott, "Romans 13:1–7 in the Context of Imperial Propaganda," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 190.

[28] Marcus Borg, "A New Context for Romans XIII," *NTS* 19 (1972): 218.

[29] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 1959), 146.

(Rom 13:6–7).[30] Evidence of unrest prompted by the collection of indirect taxes during the time of Nero provides yet another context for this paragraph (cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.50; Suetonius, *Nero* 10),[31] and this has been taken by a number of commentators as providing the "most likely" scenario beyond the writing of this paragraph.[32]

Finally, moving from the situation of the Roman church to the situation of Paul's own missionary activity, some believe that Paul's intention is to gain the support of the Romans "whom Paul is attempting to recruit in support of his Spanish mission."[33] The call to submission is therefore not based on a theology of church and state, but an expedient and pragmatic policy for sake of the greater good.[34]

Without evaluating these competing proposals, it is worth noting that many of these proposals are meant to relativize the power and applicability of this text. Borg, from whom we have quoted above, concludes his study by noting that "Paul's famous generalizations about governing authorities were intended, not as abiding principles to be applied in every situation, but as specific advice to particular people facing a historically identifiable set of circumstances."[35] Others who argue for a different context likewise conclude that "Romans 13:1–7 was not intended to create the foundation of a political ethic for all times and places in succeeding generations—a task for which it has proven to be singularly ill-suited."[36]

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[30] Most consider taxation as a concrete historical issue that Paul intends to address. For a reading that sees taxation rather as a symbol that evokes resentment and thus the need for the call to be obedient as an act of detachment, see Fabian Pfitzmann, "Paiement des impôts et obéissance aux autorités: Le défi d'une foi incarnée selon Paul (Romains 13,1–7)," *ETR* 79 (2004): 411–23.

[31] See, in particular, J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher, "Zur historischen Situation und Intention von Röm 13,1–7," *ZTK* 73 (1976): 153–59.

[32] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 792–93. See also A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 62; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 386.

[33] Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 786. See also Jan Botha, "Creation of New Meaning: Rhetorical Situations and the Reception of Romans 13:1–7," *JTSA* 79 (1992): 24–37.

[34] Many thus see a sense of "political realism" behind Paul's discussion here; cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 67; Jon Nelson, "Paul's Political Paraenesis in Romans 13:1–7," *ResQ* 46 (2004): 11–28.

[35] Borg, "A New Context for Romans XIII," 205.

[36] Jewett, *Romans*, 786.

1.5 *Textual Ambiguities*

From the historical contexts to the text itself, certain words and phrases can be interpreted in ways to suggest that Paul is not advocating an absolute command to submit to civil and political authorities. Four verses in particular have attracted the attention of many. In v. 1, Paul begins with the general command: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." The word translated as "the authorities" (ἐξουσίαι) has been taken as a reference to other forms of authorities. These include spiritual powers,[37] Jewish synagogues,[38] and even ecclesiastical leadership.[39] In their different ways, these proposals divert attention away from the obedience to the political authorities, even though there is a near consensus that these "authorities" are to be understood as political authorities especially in light of references to taxation in Rom 13:6–7.

Paul's statement in v. 4 ("for it is God's servant for your good") also provides space for a conditional reading of this passage. This statement can be understood as a universal and absolute declaration of the "goodness" of all governing authorities, and some who hold this reading have accused Paul of being detached from reality.[40] Others consider this statement to be a conditional one as Paul points to the need for the governing

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37 Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner), 65–70. This interpretation can be traced back to the second century as reflected in Irenaeus' refutation of this reading as adopted by the Gnostic interpreters (*Adv. Haer.* 5.24.1).

38 Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 289–36.

39 See, in particular, the paraphrase of part of this paragraph by Arthur Bud Ogle, "What is Left for Caesar: A Look at Mark 12:13–17 and Romans 13:1–7," *ThTo* 35 (1978): 260: "Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities, for there is no genuine authority apart from God, and those continuing in God's ordination. So the ones resisting the authority have opposed God's directions, and, having opposed God's authority, will take judgment on themselves. For the church's servant-leaders are not a fear to the good work (e.g., feeding hungry enemies 12:21) but to the evil (e.g., executing your own style of justice in wrath [12:20]) or lying to the Holy Spirit as Ananias and Sapphira did [Acts 5:1–11])." Others who do not see church leaders as the primary referents nevertheless see this as a legitimate application of the message. See, for example, Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (trans. J. Theodore Mueller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 360–62, whose struggles with the Church are reflected in his concluding note: "I am inclined to think that the secular powers fulfill their office better and more happily than the ecclesiastical ones do."

40 See, for example, Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 237: "Paul presupposes almost näively that as a matter of course the state not only can distinguish between good and evil but will in fact promote what is good and oppose what is evil." Others simply consider Paul's statement here as a "mistaken assertion." Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation. Volume Two: Human Destiny* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996),

authorities to act in accordance with that which is "good."[41] Their failure to do so would also impact how the citizens are to react to their claim of power.

Those who read v. 4 in a conditional manner will likely consider the previous verse as providing a related implicit condition: "do good and you will receive its commendation" (v. 3). This expectation of reciprocal relationship has been read as a form of "social contract," and "[i]f the concept of 'social contract' is what really underlies Paul's legitimation of the state in Romans 13, then a state which ceases to reward virtue and punish vice, which ceases to protect its citizens but preys upon them, would also cease to receive legitimation."[42] In reaction to such readings, some who argue for a "plain reading" of the entire text do not apply the same "plain reading" for this verse as "commendation" (or "honor") would no longer refer to the immediate acknowledgement of good deeds: "The promise of v. 3 is absolute: the Christian, in so far as he is obeying the gospel, may be sure that the power will honour him. It may indeed intend to punish him, but its intended punishment will then turn out to the praise. It may take his life, but in so doing it will but confer a crown of glory."[43]

Finally, a similar conditional reading has been considered to be implied in v. 5: "it is necessary to be subject [to the authorities]... because of your conscience." To some, this reference to one's "conscience" (διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν) points to one's obedience to one's conviction rather than the

270 n. 1. See also S. Légasse, "Paul et César: Romains 13,1–7: Essai de synthèse," *RB* 101 (1994): 516–32.

41 See, in particular, Dunn, "Romans 13.1–7," 68: "where a government was not serving God for the good of its citizens, any appeal to this passage as a way of maintaining their subservience would be a complete distortion and an abuse both of Paul's purpose and of its continuing scriptural significance." This reading appears in numerous ways in the history of interpretation. Calvin, *Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 282, for example, considers this verse as shifting from the duty of the citizens to that of the authorities. Others have also argued for the same conditional reading behind v. 1 where the verb often translated as "governing" (ὑπερεχούσαις) is taken in a qualitative sense to denote the authorities who are morally superior. "The implications of Paul's formulation are that any authority which is unjust is an authority to which the Roman Christian does not owe obedience" (Stanley E. Porter, "Romans 13:1–7 as Pauline Political Rhetoric," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 3 [1990]: 127).

42 Jonathan A. Draper, "'Humble Submission to Almighty God' and its Biblical Foundation: Contextual Exegesis of Romans 13:1–7," *JTSA* 63 (1988): 37. See also Jean Hering, "'Serviteurs de Dieu': Contribution a l'exégèse pratique de Romains 13:3–4," *RHPR* 30 (1950): 31–40.

43 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:665.

external demands imposed by the governing authorities.[44] When the demands contradict one's conscience, one's obedience would no longer be required. This would at least conform to our modern (Western) understanding of one's inner "conscience."[45] Others further suggest that an act of obedience that violates one's conscience as an "idolatrous" act, one that would certainly justify a disobedient reaction.[46]

These readings take Paul's words seriously, but consider Paul's uncharacteristically positive evaluation of the secular state as a sign of the conditionality of his own command for believers to submit to such governing authorities.

1.6 *Rhetoric of the Powerless*

The final strategy adopted by some commentators is to move beyond the simple conditionality of individual statements in the text and consider Paul's discussion as rhetorically powerful in providing an implicitly critical stance in challenging the power claim of the Roman imperial system. A weaker version would point to the presence of a rhetoric of irony embedded in the perceived discrepancy between Paul's benign description of the Roman government and the historical reality with all its abuse and blasphemous claims. This "irony" is only detectable by those who are suffering at the hands of the Romans:

> If the letter's original readers shared with the author an experience of oppression at the hands of the authorities, that shared experience would have paved the way for the readers' understanding of Paul's use of irony, by

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[44] See, in particular, Pierre Debergé, "Romains 13,1–7: de la soumission requise à la désobéissance possible?" *BLE* 108 (2007): 289–314.

[45] For a critique of this in light of the Hellenistic notion of "conscience" being a reference to "the fixed and determinate order of things-as-they-are," see Page Lee, "'Conscience' in Romans 13:5," *Faith and Mission* 8 (1990): 85–93. Others see "conscience" as an obedient submission to Paul's command here: "Believers should obey the state because they know in their conscience that God has established the states as mediators of his rule" (Schreiner, *Romans*, 680).

[46] Franz J. Leenhardt, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Romains* (3rd ed.; CNT 6; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995), 182: "La façon dont l'apôtre pose le principe de l'obéissance exclut toute servilité. Il n'y a d'obéissance que 'pour motif de conscience.' L'obéissance n'est donc pas en elle-même une vertu. Dès qu'elle cesse d'être critique, l'attitude positive à l'égard des pouvoirs publics néglige leur raison d'être, qui est de servir; elle devient idolâtrique en cessant d'être 'consciencieuse'. Pour demeurer consciencieuse, l'obéissance n'exclut jamais la possibilité de la résistance et, à la limite, de la désobéissance."

> rendering the surface meaning of Paul's commendation of the authorities blatantly implausible to them.[47]

Moving beyond simply the presence of irony, some have argued for a stronger reading that sees Paul as providing a subversive stance against the Roman system. Comparing Paul's statement and the Roman imperial propaganda, Paul's description here that emphasizes the governing authorities as "God's servant[s]" (θεοῦ . . . διάκονός, v. 4) who are accountable to the God of Israel in performing His assigned task can be read as a critique of the self-perception of the divinized Roman emperor. As such "[t]he Roman authorities would not have been pleased to read this passage in Romans, since it suggests that they are serving the God of the Jews, indeed, even the God who expressed himself in Jesus Christ, who was crucified by Roman authorities."[48] Within such a reading, Paul is not simply qualifying the power of the Roman imperial system, he is providing a strong theological critique of it:

> Romans 13 constitutes a severe demotion of arrogant and self-divinizing rulers. It is an undermining of totalitarianism, not a reinforcement of it. By implication, if the rulers themselves are given the task of judging wicked people within their sphere of authority, they themselves will be judged by the God who set them up.[49]

Both versions of this reading suggest that the power of this paragraph lies in the dissonance felt by the first-century readers of the text. Borrowing from the work of James C. Scott,[50] some have further identified this perceived "irony" or "subversiveness" embedded in the text as a "hidden transcript" that articulates the concern of the powerless ones who are suffering under the colonial power.[51]

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[47] T. L. Carter, "The Irony of Romans 13," *NovT* 46 (2004): 215. See also Robert Hurley, "Ironie dramatique dans la mise en intrigue de l'empire en Romains 13,1–7," *Sciences Religieuses* 35 (2006): 39–63.

[48] Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 307.

[49] N. T. Wright, "Romans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 10; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 719. See also John B. Cobb, Jr. and David J. Lull, *Romans* (Chalice Commentaries for Today; St. Louis: Chalice, 2005), 172.

[50] Cf. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[51] See, for example, William R. Herzog, II, "Dissembling, A Weapon of the Weak: The Case of Christ and Caesar in Mark 12:13–17 and Romans 13:1–7," *PRSt* 21 (1994): 341: "In a setting where power relations are asymmetrical, it will be much more likely that the political speech of the weak will dissemble, that is, it will feign obedience and loyalty to the colonial overlords while pursuing its own hidden agenda." An alternative reading that also considers Rom 13:1–7 as the discourse of the disenfranchised would employ the concept of

Others who detect a subversive layer in Paul's discussion in Rom 13:1–7 focus not on the implicit challenge to the Roman imperial claims, but to the positive transformative power of the Christian love to be exercised by believers who live within an oppressive system. This reading rests on two observations. First, this section is sandwiched between two sections that focus on the need to love one's enemies (cf. 12:9–21; 13:8–10). It can therefore be read as providing a concrete expression of the power of love.[52] As an oppressed people, the expression of love becomes the most powerful instrument in the transformation of the world.[53] Second, the statement, "do good and you will receive its commendation" (v. 3), has been read more specifically against the Roman patronage system. In the Roman system, the powerful patron is supposed to "do good" to their clients by bestowing material goods and services, while the clients should in turn by honoring them with "commendation." Here, Paul reverses the direction of service and honor: the subjects (i.e. believers) are now called to "do good" and they should expect "commendation" from the authorities.[54] This reversal may point to the power of the powerless ones in transforming the world, but this transformation is to be carried out not by force, but by love and the acts of kindness. This reading therefore also affirms

"hybridity" as it explains the ambiguity of the voices detected in the text itself. See John W. Marshall, "Hybridity and Reading Romans 13," *JSNT* 31 (2008): 174: "Employing the concept of hybridity makes it possible to see Paul's thought in a coherent frame, without imputing to it a false coherence. Paul is both 'in and of' that world, working in relation to its centre from its margins, gathering and deploying its resources in the interest of his own programme, whether that means swimming with or against the current of imperial power in an particular moment." A similar reading can also be found in Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 152–56.

52 See, for example, Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, & Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 319; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Scott J. Hafemann; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 206; and Jean-Noël Aletti, "La soumission des chrétiens aux autorités en Rm 13,1–7: Validité des arguments pauliniens?" *Bib* 89 (2008): 457–476. This is to argue against those who see Rom 13:1–7 as "an independent block" that can be called "an alien body of Paul's exhortation" (Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* [trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 352).

53 Adopting this reading, see also Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 342: "Paul's purpose is not disengagement or radical separation, but transformation."

54 Philip H. Towner, "Romans 13:1–7 and Paul's Missiological Perspective: A Call to Political Quietism or Transformation?" in *Romans and the People of God* (ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 149–69. It is also possible to see the same patronage background behind this paragraph without hints of subversive transformation. This paragraph would then point to the presence of believers of means who could serve as benefactors in the church of Rome; cf. Bruce W. Winter, "The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors: Romans 13.3–4 and 1 Peter 2.14–15," *JSNT* 34 (1988): 87–103.

a soft subversive reading as Paul points to unique ways Christians can transform the world.

2. *New Testament Commentators As Moral Guides*

The brief survey above is sufficient to highlight the difficulties associated with moving from the search for the meaning and focus of a biblical text to the application of this text in the contemporary setting. Instead of evaluating the various proposals and building an application based on the best of such proposals, in this section we will build on our discussion above and focus on a few issues surrounding the role of commentators as moral guides. We will attempt to navigate between the descriptive and the prescriptive as we highlight elements in various prior studies that may contribute to the construction of a more effective bridge between the ancient text and the modern audience.

2.1 *Limitations of Commentary Literature*

First and foremost, it needs to be said that the commentary genre may not be the best vehicle for providing general and comprehensive guidelines for readers as they struggle with moral dilemmas and wrestle with a multitude of factors in making moral decisions. The survey above highlights the *ad hoc* and partial nature of Paul's discussion in Rom 13:1–7, and it is unfair to mine this one paragraph in the search for a comprehensive statement of Paul's position on believers' responses to the authority of the state.

Relying on exegetical and historical observations found in commentaries, general works on New Testament ethics and specialized studies on New Testament views on Church and state may provide more useful resources for believers. In one study on New Testament ethics, for example, the wider database upon which the study is built allows the author to elaborate on the statement that "Paul's failure to discuss a case of conflict, abuse of power, and the limits of obedience in Romans 13 does not mean that he was ignorant of such problems."[55] In another study on New Testament political ethics, one finds the mapping of the existence of possible responses by New Testament authors in their different contexts:

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[55] Schrage, *Ethics of the New Testament*, 238, who makes reference to 2 Cor 6:5; 11:22–25, 32–33.

a. Ethic of Submission (Romans, 1 Peter, Pastorals, Hebrews)
b. Ethic of Resistance (Revelation)
c. Ethic of Critical Distancing (Gospels)[56]

Regardless of whether such mapping is the best possible way to categorize the biblical witnesses, such systematic work allows the various canonical witnesses to have a voice as one approaches an issue in this area of concern. The need for both genres is illustrated well by Calvin's work. In his commentary on Rom 13:1–7, he focuses on historical and exegetical details,[57] while reserving his more systematic discussion for his *Institutes* where he is able to read Rom 13 in light of other canonical witnesses and theological concerns.[58]

2.2 *Commentators and the Canonical Witnesses*

Noting the limitations of the commentary genre, many recent commentators have rightly made references to other biblical authors as they formulate ways Rom 13 can be applied in the contemporary setting. Although full-scale discussions of all relevant passages cannot be expected, such references may help in pointing to the first steps in bridging the gap between the ancient text and the modern audience. Two groups of texts are particularly helpful. The first group contains references to the examples of Jesus (Luke 23:6–12; Mark 15:1–5; John 19:8–11), Paul (Acts 22–26), and the other apostles (Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–42). These texts point to conditions and situations where disobedience to the demands of the State is acceptable or even necessary, and such uses of biblical examples in reference to a

56 Walter E. Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors: Church and State in the New Testament* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

57 Calvin, *Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 280–84.

58 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 2:650–76. For discussions on Calvin's ways of commenting on Rom 13:1–7 as compared to other commentators of his time, see also David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin and Melanchthon on Romans 13:1–7," *ExAud* 2 (1986): 74–81; Richard A. Muller, "Calvin, Beza, and the Exegetical History of Romans 13:1–7," in *The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth, 1564–1864* (ed. John B. Roney and Martin Klauber; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1998), 39–56; and G. Sujiin Pak, "Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin on Romans 5 and 13: Three Reformation Approaches to Reading," in *Reformation Readings of Romans* (ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 122–43.

fuller understanding of Paul's teaching in Rom 13:1–7 can be traced to the early Christian commentators of the second century.[59]

The second group of texts focuses on Jesus' teachings and the apostolic teachings concerning believers' relationship to the state. Three texts are particularly relevant: Mark 12:13–17 (par.); 1 Pet 2:13–17; and Rev 13:1–18. Each of these texts has its own long and difficult history of interpretation, but taken together they will provide a more balanced picture of New Testament teachings on Church and state. To allow the present text to be applicable in the contemporary setting, on the principle of "the analogy of Scripture," commentators are obliged to listen to these varied voices within the New Testament canon.[60] Unlike systematic ethicists, however, their task is to highlight the presence of and interrelationship among the different voices without flattening the biblical witnesses in the attempt to produce one succinct and final statement on the subject.[61]

2.3 *Historical Conditionality and Ethical Imperatives*

The presence of the various biblical voices points naturally to the different historical contexts within which they were situated. The discussion on Historical Contexts (§1.4) above has provided several possible scenarios behind Paul's writing of Rom 13.1–7. Many who claim to have identified the precise historical context argue against seeing Paul as expressing any timeless truths concerning believers' relationship with governing authorities,[62] while others argue against the power of such historical conditioning and suggest that "[w]hat we have here is a general exhortation that delineates what is usually the case: people should normally obey ruling authorities."[63]

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[59] See Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 12–16)*, 45, who points to the works of Hippolytus and Origen.

[60] Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 149. Thus also C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 249; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 206–207; David L. Bartlett, *Romans* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 117.

[61] On the affirmation of the need of synthesis without a forced harmonization, see, in particular, Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 187–92.

[62] Cf. Krauter, *Studien zu Röm 13,1–7*, 284: "Röm 13,1–7 ist keine zeitlose Staatslehre des Apostels Paulus. Doch genausowenig ist es eine auf ein aktuelles Problem (sei es in Rom, sei es im Umfeld des Paulus) zugeschnittene situative Handlungsanweisung."

[63] Schreiner, *Romans*, 687. See also Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005): "Indeed, being part of Paul's extended exhortation, it [Rom 13:1–7] can stimulate unusually serious thought about the character of actual Christian life in a world where

Those who rest their interpretation on one particular reading of the historical context face the undeniable challenge that scholarly consensus is lacking in this particular case, and disagreements among commentators often discourage lay readers from considering their works as useful resources for a contemporary appropriation of Paul's ethical teachings.[64] More importantly, all of Paul's teachings are historically grounded, and to conclude from such historical particularities that the text cannot serve a different generation is to argue against the power of any texts that are removed from one's immediate temporal and historical location.

Those who downplay the historical particularities of the text may also limit the power of this text by ignoring the specific context in which this text can best exert its prophetic power. Not only would such a reading often ignore other equally powerful voices within the canonical texts, to claim that this text can be applied in all possible contexts is to render this text useless in most.

Mediating between these two positions are those who affirm the historical particularity of the ancient text while acknowledging the importance of finding rough parallels in the contemporary scene where such general truths can be applied. Despite the failure to identify one specific context, most would agree that Paul is fully aware of the presence of evil forces within all expressions of human power, and most would also agree that the emphasis lies in the transformative power of a submissive love within an oppressive system. This prophetic message remains powerful in the twenty-first century, especially in places where such "evil forces" are particularly evident in the everyday existence of the followers of Christ.

2.4 *Social Location of Commentators and Their Audience*

Moving from the first-century to the twenty-first when the biblical text is read globally in drastically different cultural and political contexts, commentators increasingly recognize the significance of one's social location in the interpretive processes. In contemporary literature on Rom 13.1–7, this is illustrated in two ways: the reading of this text in the two-thirds world's context, and a self-critical reading of this text in the West.

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there *are* authorities to cope with, as well as about the character of God in light of the Christ-event."

64 This is explicitly noted by some who expresses the frustration with both scholarly disagreement and ambiguities in the text; cf. Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, "Towards a Postcolonial Interpretation of Romans 13:1–7: Karl Barth, Robert Jewett and the Context of Reformation in Present-day Indonesia," *Asia Journal of Theology* 23 (2009): 121.

In the global context, especially where "rulers" do cause "fear to those who do good work" (cf. Rom 13:3), a "plain reading" of the text becomes especially troubling to many. In many of such contexts, "Paul has been made an agent of oppression in our age."[65] In response to such misuses of Paul's teachings, especially those that can be found in Rom 13:1–7, one finds a constant stream of literature that provides challenges to readings purported to be produced by those in power. Examples of such challenges can be identified as originating from, among others, the Philippines,[66] Indonesia,[67] China,[68] South Africa,[69] and minority groups in the United States.[70] For many of these groups, "Romans 13:1–7 does not apply, because the governmental authorities lack legitimacy."[71]

In the West, the same struggles in discerning the meaning and significance of this text are evident in particularly difficult periods of the history of the church when the governing authorities challenged those who claimed to be faithful to the Christian faith. These include the striking rereading of Rom 13:1–7 in the Lutheran Magdeburg Confession (1550) at the end of the Schmalkald War,[72] the various kinds of creative readings

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[65] Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 9.

[66] E.g., Daniel Kroger, "Paul and the Civil Authorities: An Exegesis of Romans 13:1–7," *Asia Journal of Theology* 7 (1993): 344–366; Arnold T. Monera, "The Christian's Relationship to the State according to the New Testament: Conformity or Non-conformity," *Asia Journal of Theology* 19 (2005): 106–42.

[67] E.g., Singgih, "Towards a Postcolonial Interpretation of Romans 13:1–7," 111–22.

[68] E.g., Li Xin Yuan, "Ji Du Tu Yu Zhi Zheng Zhang Quan Zhe – Luo Ma Shu 13:1–7 Shi Yi (Christians and the Authorities: Reading Rom 13:1–7)," *Christian Life Quarterly* 52 (2009): 13–20. See also Sam Tsang, "Talking Back to the Empire: An Imperialistic Background for Romans (Or: What does Mission to Spain have to do with Roman Imperialism?—Asking New Interpretive Questions of Old Data)," *CGST Journal* 47 (2009): 135–56.

[69] E.g., Allan Aubrey Boesak, "What Belongs to Caesar: Once Again Romans 13," in *When Prayer Makes News* (ed. Allan A. Boesak and Charles Villa-Vicencio; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 138–56; Draper, "'Humble Submission,'' 30–38. See also the signed declaration by 150 South African theologians in *The Kairos Document. Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 17–20.

[70] Monya A. Stubbs, "Subjection, Reflection, Resistance: An African American Reading of the Three-Dimensional Process of Empowerment in Romans 13 and the Free-Market Economy," *SBLSP* 38 (1999): 375–404.

[71] Winsome Munro, "Romans 13:1–7: Apartheid's Last Biblical Refuge," 166.

[72] The Magdeburg Confession turns Paul's statement into a command of God: the rulers are therefore called to be servants of God. See David M. Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 68. See also the shift in Luther's own reading of Rom 13:1–7 during the final period of his career; cf. Manfred Hoffman, "Martin Luther: Resistance to Secular Authority," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 12 (1984–85): 35–49.

in the Elizabethan period,[73] the post-World War I theological reading of this paragraph that challenges all existing order,[74] the debate as to the relevance of Paul's teachings here in East Germany prior to the building of the Berlin Wall,[75] and the reevaluation of the applicability of this passage during the Watergate Crisis in the United States.[76] It is clear that the difficulties in reading and applying this text are not limited to the two-thirds world.

Even when the text is read in a relatively peaceful period in the West when the separation of the Church and the state is perceived to be firmly established, the historical distance between the first and the twenty-first century should not be ignored. Among the commentators, C. E. B. Cranfield has noted that "[t]he proper exposition of Paul's words involves for the Christian living in a democracy the translation of them into the terms of a different political order."[77] The peculiar characteristics of a democratic system that prevent a direct transfer of the statements in Rom 13:1–7 is spelled out by Ulrich Wilckens: (1) in modern democratic societies, the distinction between "rulers" and "subjects" is blurred; (2) the democratic system requires the participation of every individual in its power operation; (3) the use of the "sword" is no longer simply the responsibility of the ruler; (4) taxation has a different set of connotations in this modern system; (5) within this checks-and-balances system, citizens are obliged to offer criticisms of those in power; and (6) certain forms of resistance within the framework of conscience take on a different set of meanings within this system.[78]

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73 See Glen Bowman, "Elizabethan Catholics and Romans 13: A Chapter in the History of Political Polemic," *Journal of Church and State* 47 (2005): 531–44, who concludes: "Romans 13 was consistently molded, and remolded, to fit the changing debates of the time. The principle force behind this continual, chameleon-like change of face can be found not in developments within theology, but rather in the practical exigencies of politics."

74 Cf. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. from 6th ed. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 482: "Even the most radical revolution can do no more than set what *exists* against what *exists*. Even the most radical revolution—and this is so even when it is called 'spiritual' or 'peaceful' revolution—can be no more than a revolt, that is to say, it is in itself simply a justification and confirmation of what already exists."

75 See, in particular, the discussion in Martin Greschat, "Römer 13 und die DDR: Der Streit um das Verständnis der 'Obrigkeit' (1957–1961)," *ZTK* 105 (2008): 63–93.

76 Cf. William Stringfellow, "Watergate and Romans 13," *Christianity and Crisis* 33.10 (1973): 110–12.

77 Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:663. This is followed by many, including Harrisville, *Romans*, 207–208; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 664–65; Keener, *Romans*, 154.

78 Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 12–16)*, 41–43.

Whether one agrees with Cranfield and Wilckens in their problematization of the ancient text through their exegesis of the contemporary political context, or with other interpreters who are reading this text from different social and political locations, it is clear that commentators can no longer assume that the text can be understood and applied without an adequate understanding of both the ancient and the contemporary contexts. Such an awareness forces any interpreter of the canonical text to recognize his or her obligation in providing morally responsible readings for the community of believers. A discussion of the ethical relevance of commentaries is thus intricately linked with the ethics of biblical interpretation.[79]

2.5 *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*

How then should this ethics of biblical interpretation be delineated? In the case of Rom 13:1–7, some commentators consider it their responsibility to soften "Paul's extreme expression of his convictions,"[80] although one wonders if they truly understand Paul's "convictions." Others highlight the significance of identifying one's social and political location and thus allow "the multiplicity of readings" to take its full effect in the process of interpretation.[81] Reception history would then play a critical part in the hermeneutical process. In the postmodern context, this "rhetorical hermeneutic" is often considered to be the only viable one as "[i]t does not understand historical sources as data and evidence but sees them as perspectival discourse constructing their worlds and symbolic universes."[82]

While this "rhetorical hermeneutic" takes full consideration of limitations of one interpreter, it can, in effect, erase the prophetic power of the

[79] The elements contained in the intersection of these two aspects are well articulated by J. I. H. McDonald, *Biblical Interpretation and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 244: "Interpretation involves ethics; texts raise moral issues; ethics considers the treatment of such issues in ancient and modern settings; interpreters consider the moral consequences of their interpretations."

[80] Cobb and Lull, *Romans*, 171.

[81] Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 29. Speaking for the White European male scholars, he further highlights the importance of his practice as an "androcentric" and "Eurocentric" interpreter. In the case of Rom 13:1–7, see also the practice of multiple readings in James W. Voelz, "A Self-Conscious Reader-Response Interpretation of Romans 13:1–7," in *Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger; London: Routledge, 1998), 156–69.

[82] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 107 (1988): 15.

text to challenge both the minds and the hearts of its audience. Commentators are then only called to be accountable to their own contexts and not to the canonical texts. Replacing a responsible historical reading of the text, this postmodern ethic of interpretation becomes "a seriously irresponsible act of interpretation" when it bypasses the historical text "to make all sorts of claims about possible implications of biblical material for our current social and ecclesiastical contexts."[83]

How then can a commentator carry out a responsible interpretive act? Postmodern hermeneutics has taught us that "[w]e owe it to ourselves and others to scrutinize the extra-exegetical interests and values that guide our choices between interpretations, so that these considerations and criteria can be examined, criticized, revised, and enlarged."[84] Instead of despair, however, this scrutiny should lead to a humble posture that acknowledges the limitation of one's interpretive lens without downplaying the significance of the text because of the impotence of its interpreters. In the existing commentary literature, this humility is reflected in the inclusion of a survey and critical evaluation of competing interpretations available to contemporary interpreters,[85] a history of the reception of the text in various social and political locations,[86] a self-awareness of one's own interpretive location,[87] and an admission of the limitation of the bridges that are to be built between the ancient text and the contemporary world with yet the courage to provide a possible sketch of such a bridge.[88] More importantly, this humility is to be shown through a willingness to submit to the authoritative text, even when that which is demanded of the believers goes beyond one's expected realm of expectations. It is with such a humility that commentaries can retain their prophetic voices in challenging all believers who are called "to the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5).

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[83] Jan Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority? Multiple Readings of Romans 13* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 6. This claim is all the more significant in a monograph that deals squarely with competing readings of Rom 13:1–7.

[84] Charles Cosgrove, "Toward a Postmodern *Hermeneutica Sacra*: Guiding Considerations in Choosing between Competing Plausible Interpretations of Scripture," in *The Meaning We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminancy and the Conflict of Interpretations* (ed. Charles H. Cosgrove; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 61.

[85] See, for example, Moo, *Romans*, 806–809.

[86] See, for example, Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 12–16)*, 43–66.

[87] See, for example, Keener, *Romans*, 155–57.

[88] See, for example, Wright, "Romans," 723.

THE PASTORAL RELEVANCE OF COMMENTARIES

Robert W. Yarbrough

It is fitting that the pastoral relevance of commentaries be considered in honoring Grant Osborne's life work as a New Testament scholar. For one thing, he paid his dues as a pastor prior to the Evangelical Free Church's call to the professorate where he has spent most of his career. He has pastored two churches and served as interim for two more.[1] Many colleagues have heard him remark that whenever he is tempted to lament the admittedly crushing load of responsibilities that befall a professor, he remembers how much worse things were when he served as pastor. Whereas some college- and graduate-level professors project indifference or even skepticism regarding the pastoral task, Grant's assessment growing out of his own experience is one of respect and appreciation for the load that hard-working pastors bear and the sacred office they occupy.

For another, for decades he has served in a setting (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) where the institutional bread-and-butter is pastoral equipping—most students Grant teaches are training for pastoral service. The very cast of his pedagogy has for decades been shaped by the needs of pastors-in-training. Nor is this merely a matter of a professor dispensing information: in most sizable classes Grant will have students who are currently engaged in pastoral service. To teach in most seminaries today is to receive ongoing feedback regarding the evolving challenges of the pastoral task. At Trinity, there is the added benefit of students from various traditions whose histories and polities may conceive of pastoring in quite contrasting ways. For a professor who cares about and listens to students—and that describes Grant Osborne—to participate in the give-and-take of Master of Divinity classes is to engage in ongoing intelligence gathering about the office of pastor as it has developed and morphed over the years.

Add here the dynamic that many Trinity students are international—so the input a professor receives is as variegated as the national churches represented by those students. A Romanian contemplating ecclesial office

[1] Cf. Grant Osborne, "Author's Preface," *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 14.

will, upon returning to that country, wrestle with roles and expectations that contrast significantly with a student heading back to, say, Korea—and if the Korean or Romanian ends up serving in an ethnic church in North America, the dynamics will take yet another set of turns.

A third reason why Grant's New Testament scholarship fits naturally with this chapter's topic is that his commentaries—whether as author (Matthew, John, Romans, Revelation) or as editor (dozens of volumes in a couple of series to date)—are written explicitly with pastors in mind. This can be traced back to his contention that "the final goal of hermeneutics is not systematic theology but the sermon. The actual purpose of Scripture is not explanation but exposition, not description but proclamation."[2] Since "pastor" is to some extent synonymous with "preacher," and since Grant's conception of the Bible's "actual purpose" relates so closely to the homiletical task, his commentary labor over the decades has never strayed far from the aim of pastoral relevance.

1. *Commentaries in the Pastor's Upbringing*

The relevance of commentaries for pastors begins when they are children. Many grow up in churches where they first observe pastors at work. A woman I know who attended seminary and now pastors a Lutheran congregation told me, "When I was little I watched the pastor lead the congregation. I told myself, 'When I grow up, I want to do that.'" Even adult pastors who did not grow up in the church are influenced by preaching ministries whose cumulative effect is to promote a knowledge of the Bible, or lack thereof, at the national level. Many adults can look back and recall impressions of the Bible from a televised Billy Graham "crusade" they viewed as children. Likewise, black churches and African-American communities in North America in general have been influenced by the biblical passages and allusions that peppered the discourses of Martin Luther King and those who followed in his steps. The commentaries pastors rely on (or dearth thereof) can shape a nation's thinking and preaching. Today's most-used commentaries are forming the minds and souls of children who will be tomorrow's pastoral leaders. Pastors who make good use of commentaries are sowing seed that can provide a harvest of well-grounded pastors in the future.

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[2] Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 29.

By Gospel accounts, Jesus was not indifferent to children in his ministry, though his disciples seem not to have shared his concern, even drawing his rebuke on occasion for trying to turn children away (Matt 19:13–14; Mark 10:13–14; Luke 18:15–16). Yet the word "children" occurs in the Gospels more frequently than "faith" and "righteousness" combined.[3] Children were part of Jesus' pedagogical horizon and were in fact what he saw, metaphorically, when he looked upon disciples, whom he at times addressed as "children" (Mark 10:24; John 13:3; 21:5). Those who believe his gospel message and thereby enter the kingdom of God (or in John's Gospel receive eternal life) are "children of God" (John 1:12; 11:52). Jesus told disciples, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3). It would be ironic if commentaries on the Scriptures that point to Jesus had no semblance of the consciousness of children, their frequent plight, their importance to the human family Jesus came to address, and their integral role in coming generations of the Christian community.

The suggestion here would not be to write commentaries for children. Nor is it to assert that all commentaries must have overtly pastoral concerns, like regard for children, at the forefront. Commentaries have various aims and designs. The translator of *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*, M. Eugene Boring, quotes Leander Keck to the effect that "even a smell of a primary source is better than a shelf of secondary sources," hence Boring's willingness to expend vast labor as translator of this hefty volume.[4] Keck's remark would seem to place primary source excerpts above "commentary" on the Scriptures in the usual sense. This can be debated, but there is no gainsaying that background citations and commentaries on them can be of value in understanding and explaining Scripture. And of course the aims of such volumes have nothing in particular to do with children, at least directly.

It is not even the case that commentaries on Scripture must be religious (in the partisan sense that a religious commentary user might define that) in their orientation. It is a scholarly commonplace that we often learn the most from those with whom we disagree. "Most profit comes from grappling with what is new or controversial, and entering into debate with it."[5]

[3] "Children" 50 times, "faith" 30 times, "righteousness" 10 times (ESV).

[4] M. Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe, eds., *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 11.

[5] Victor C. Pfitzner, "New Testament Reading for Busy Pastors," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 21 (1987) 133.

Maimonides offers wisdom for life in general, including thinking about the Scriptures; this 12th century Jewish sage can be of value for anyone who reads him in opening up the Bible today. Calvinists can learn from Arminian commentators; readers with historic Christian convictions can gain from the scholarship of interpreters who deny cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith and who may not even believe in God. Raymond Brown's commentaries on John's Gospel and the Johannine letters are widely recognized as containing Roman Catholic elements. But their detail, erudition, and clarity make them useful for anyone seeking help for interacting with the Johannine corpus.

And yet *someone* needs to write commentaries that are not indifferent to the nurture of tomorrow's pastors who are currently in church nurseries, youth centers, and worship sanctuaries. Years ago Calvin Katter commended *The Layman's Bible Commentary* (which included contributions from seasoned scholars like Bruce Metzger and A. M. Hunter) with the words, "In the face of the discouraging status of biblical knowledge current in the wider circle of laymen, it would be too bad if our laity encountered these volumes only at second hand," by which Katter meant via pastors who read them. Katter continued, "Some of them are particularly well suited to group study and we . . . may hope they will be put to such use."[6] Today numerous commentary series can be named which are suitable for lay use and might therefore have immediate impact on children through their parents and church leaders who draw on such aids to Bible understanding: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Believers Bible Commentary, The Bible Exposition Commentary (by Warren Wiersbe), Everyman's Bible Commentary Series, For Everyone Series, IVP New Testament Commentary, NIV Application Commentary, Welwyn Commentary Series, Westminster Bible Companion, and others.[7]

There is another approach to this matter: not through commentaries that might be aimed toward those who parent or teach children in the church, but through commentaries that help pastors create church cultures that nurture what is most essential to children's flourishing in

[6] Calvin Katter, "Some Biblical Commentaries for the Pastor's Study," *The Covenant Quarterly* 21/2 (1963) 4.

[7] For basic description of most of these commentary series, plus almost 90 more, see John F. Evans, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works* (9th ed.; Oakland, TN: Doulos Resources, 2010), 27–46. Other series continue to appear, like Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Westminster John Knox) and International Theological Commentary (T&T Clark). Evans lists only a few non-English language series.

or least toward Christian faith. C. Clifton Black has written trenchantly in this vein with his essay "Augustinian Preaching and the Nurture of Christians," published most appropriately in *The Lectionary Commentary: Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts*.[8] Black points out that contrary to how many remember him, Augustine was foremost a preacher.[9] At the core of the preaching pastor's concern and aim is . . . *caritas* (ἀγάπη, love).[10] Black speaks of Augustine's "relentless concentration on this twin love of God and neighbor," a concentration so engrossing that Augustine's advice on preaching strategy and technique was somewhere between miminal and austere. To quote Black, Augustine taught simply: "Know your listeners. Expound the Scriptures. People must understand, so be clear. Pray for clarity . . . Most important of all: 'Abundantly eloquent is the preacher whose life can speak.'"[11]

Commentaries that encourage and assist pastors to read and represent Scripture in this way will help create an ecclesial climate in which children and youth may be prepared to hear the divine call to vocational service. Candidates for pastoral service will emerge, eager for equipping and in need of the assistance that commentaries offer.

2. *Commentaries in the Pastor's Education*

Children schooled at home or attending Christian high schools might encounter a commentary at a relatively tender age. But most pastors would probably say, looking back, that it was in college or seminary that they discovered the world of commentaries.

Colleges with ambitious biblical studies programs typically acquaint students with this era's and sometimes classic commentaries and commentators. Teaching at the college level over a span of six years, I can recall assigning commentaries or commentary-like works for study of the Fourth Gospel by John Ashton, F. F. Bruce, George Beasley-Murray, John A. T. Robinson, John Calvin, and Augustine. Students consulted many other works in the course of their term paper research, Raymond Brown's two-volume Anchor Bible commentary a proven staple for that purpose.

[8] C. Clifton Black, *The Lectionary Commentary: Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts*, vol. 3: *The Third Readings* (ed. Roger E. Van Harn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 60–314.

[9] Ibid. 604.

[10] Ibid. 606.

[11] Ibid. 607. The Augustine quote is from *De doctrina christiana* 4.27.59.

In a short course in Ephesians we read G. B. Caird[12] and Calvin, consulting Markus Barth's two-volume work on Ephesians in the Anchor Bible series and also C. L. Mitton's commentary. Commentaries often play key roles in laying a foundation for pastoral training even at the undergraduate level.

While many commentaries are written in the hope of attracting as wide and varied a readership as possible, it is not unheard of for publishers to commission commentaries with the college classroom specifically in mind. Baker Book House did this a decade ago resulting in a five-commentary series covering individual biblical books which, research showed, are often taught in colleges: Genesis, Psalms, Gospel of John, Romans, and Hebrews.[13] Authors were enlisted who were over-qualified, in a sense, to write for college students. The idea was that it would be easy for them to write clearly and offer challenge since each had handled their respective biblical books in more scholarly publications and could draw on that expertise to produce shorter but still meaty college texts. Other series were not conceived for the college classroom per se but may well serve the needs of that education level well, particularly when students have not yet studied Greek or Hebrew or have done so only at the rudimentary level. Examples would include the IVP New Testament Commentary, NIV Application Commentary, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament, Pillar New Testament Commentary, and the Tyndale Commentaries on both Old and New Testaments.

Some pastors will have studied in colleges that introduced them to the commentary genre, providing a foundation for their subsequent theological education. It is at the seminary level, however, that most future pastors encounter commentaries in rigorous and sustained ways. This depends in part, of course, on the seminary curriculum. In many cases even M.Div. students are no longer required to study the original languages to obtain their degree. In this case they may be less likely to be initiated into the commentary world. (The jury is out whether ignorance of the original languages leads pastors to consult commentaries less because their access to Scripture is more superficial, or more because they want to compensate for their ignorance by consulting commentaries.) Moreover, seminary

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[12] G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[13] Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Andreas Köstenberger, *Encountering John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

students are probably influenced more by their professors than by the books they read, and more by the preponderance of books they encounter across the seminary curriculum than by commentaries in particular, as these are most commonly assigned in elective exegetical courses. Commentaries are a means to an end, tools to open up the deeper and fuller meaning of aspects of the Bible. Few students are going to find themselves as inspired by a commentary as they might be by a classic volume by, say, Bonhoeffer, or by a current best-seller that relates to their training or eventual ministry.

In connection with an English Bible class on Jeremiah, I recently assigned Kathleen Norris' *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*. Perhaps half of the class of about 70 students were counseling students. Both they and the M.Div. students (who had different syllabus requirements than the counseling students) would say, I suspect, that Norris' book gave them sharper vision for aspects of Jeremiah than the more traditional commentary[14] or commentary-like[15] volumes they were assigned, although without these Norris might not have drawn the rapt attention and intense discussion that she did. The inevitable staidness of commentaries can make a more novelistic approach to a topic almost unbearably attractive by comparison—students devoured Norris like candy and picked at Kidner like broccoli.

Despite commentaries' lack of racy appeal—with the rare exception of a book like Barth's Romans commentary (first edition 1919), which helped usher in new era of theological inquiry—they nevertheless are an important part of many seminarians' education and maturation. Students ask professors for recommendations on the best commentaries. Many are building a library along with piling up credit hours toward graduation, and commentaries can be a major percentage of book acquisitions. Students discover commentary guides like those of Longman[16] or Carson[17] and compare notes with each other on best buys. Students receive a double benefit if their professors are currently writing a commentary, as this can add freshness to their teaching, or if a professor has published a

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14 Derek Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987).

15 Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

16 Tremper Longmann III, *Old Testament Commentary Survey* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

17 D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

commentary that is being used in a course they are taking. I know a pastor who still savors commentaries written by his professors at Gordon-Conwell, where he studied in the 1980s. "I can hear Dr. Fee's voice when I read his commentaries," he says wistfully.[18] Commentaries preserve and extend the scholarship of some of each generation's best biblical interpreters, and pastors in training and beyond are the beneficiaries.

3. *Commentaries in Non-Western Pastoral Settings*

The availability of commentaries for pastoral utilization varies widely according to geography. One could reasonably argue that Western countries and especially those with Protestant heritages tend to be over-served, while those quarters of the world that have seen meteoric growth in Christian numbers in the past century are vastly under-served by comparison.

The new world dominance of non-Western peoples in the church regarded globally means that in numerous locales the availability of commentaries is nil, particularly in local vernaculars but often even in international languages like Chinese or Arabic in which few commentaries exist or have ever been written. In Nepal, a half century ago there were almost no Christians; today there are 900,000, with little available in the way of formal education, let alone published resources. "Many pastors receive only a rudimentary five-month training program"; beyond that little educational opportunity exits.[19]

As for Chinese, developments leading to the production and use of commentaries are promising. In conjunction with the increase in the Christian population of China to 40 million or more, "theological education in China has experienced a remarkable resurgence," so that "between 1981 and 2009 some 10,000 theological students graduated from the nineteen theological seminaries in China."[20] The publication of learned Christian resources lags behind this growth. David Pao, a colleague of Grant Osborne at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, recently published *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (2 vols.; Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2008–2009), the first Luke commentary in Chinese ever written that interacts with the

[18] Gordon Fee has published commentaries on 1 Corinthians, Philippians, 1–2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles.

[19] Dietrich Werner, "Theological Education in the Changing Context of World Christianity—an Unfinished Agenda," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35/2 (April 2011) 95.

[20] Ibid. 94.

Greek text. Pao reports that scholarly commentaries in Chinese on other Old and New Testament books are available, some quite good (e.g., the 4 volume commentary on Romans by Ronald Fung). A project in which Pao serves as New Testament editor, the Tien Dao Bible Commentary Series, is the first-ever series of scholarly commentaries in Chinese on the entire Bible. Of the projected 100 volumes, 70 have now been published.[21] These are encouraging developments. Yet the access of most pastors in China, or who speak and read only Chinese, to published commentary resources remains meager.

As for Arabic, Kenneth E. Bailey reminds us that "Arabic-speaking Christian theologians and exegetes from roughly A.D. 900 to 1400 produced five centuries of the highest quality Christian scholarship, quality that is also found in the present."[22] Bailey's book attempts to mine some of that scholarship for interpretation of the Gospels in the West today. Bailey mentions in particular Ibrahim Sa'id, "a prominent Egyptian Protestant scholar who in the twentieth century produced able commentaries in Arabic on Luke and John."[23] Bailey also draws from Matta al-Miskin, an Egyptian Coptic scholar who died in 2006. Matta al-Miskin "spent decades of his monastic life writing commentaries on the New Testament in Arabic. His six large volumes on the Gospels are stunning and unknown outside the Arabic-speaking Christian world."[24]

It is reassuring to be reminded that in Arabic and in Chinese, commentaries have a history and an ongoing presence. But it is doubtful that they are easy to come by in countries that speak those languages. And many Christian enclaves speak languages in which no commentaries have ever been written. Even if they did, there are staggering numbers of pastors serving among peoples whose daily livelihood is always uncertain and the luxury of purchasing printed books is unthinkable.

In many quarters even Bibles are hard to come by, never mind commentaries, whether for political reasons (as, e.g., in China and many Muslim countries) or because of infrastructure challenges—in many countries around the world it is hard to import books of any kind due to customs demands and then lack of means for sale and distribution.[25] This is to

[21] My thanks to David Pao for information provided in this paragraph.
[22] K. E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 10.
[23] Ibid. 13.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Addressing this issue in Africa is Oasis International, Ltd.; see http://oasisint.net/about/boardstaff. Accessed April 28, 2011.

say nothing of corruption and theft at points of entry or beyond. Western nations take for granted the free exchange of ideas signified by books that much of the world does not and cannot experience. This is of course one reason for the migrations from some nations out to others that has come to loom so large in world affairs. People crave certain freedoms that are severely curtailed, among them the freedom signified by conditions under which it is possible to produce and buy commentaries on the Scriptures that tens of millions in developing nations hold to be God's inspired and holy word.

The temptation to value commentaries too highly dispels when one observes how rapidly Christianity has spread in areas like Africa, Asia, and Latin America[26] over the last century and how superfluous biblical commentaries were, in any direct way, to this explosive growth.

On the other hand, at some point gospel seed had to be sown for the growth to get underway. Often this can be traced back to missionary thrusts, from abroad or from churches in proximity, informed by sound Christian teaching sustained over centuries by the depth and rigor of investigation and reflection that commentaries contain.[27] When Presbyterian and other missionaries were forced out of China after World War II, a basis remained from which fewer than a million believers expanded to something over 30 million in about 30 years. The biblical knowledge promoted by commentaries and established in China by Christian workers schooled in that knowledge was at least part of the foundation from which the Chinese Christian population grew during that period.

Burgeoning Christian populations in developing nations maneuver desperately to train pastoral leaders who know and can ground new believers in the Bible and its teachings. This is the forte of commentaries. One need only consult the website "Theology in Africa"[28] to gain a sense for the ferment that is underway. In the wake of the groundbreaking *Africa Bible*

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[26] For orientation in this expansion, see essays by Tite Tiénou (Africa), Richard Cook (Asia), and J. Daniel Salinas (Latin America) in Martin Klauber and Scott Manetsch, eds., *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008).

[27] See from among a vast literature Christopher E. M. Wigram, *The Bible and Mission in Faith Perspective: J. Hudson Taylor and the Early China Inland Mission* (Doctoral thesis; Utrecht University, 2007). More seminally, and with reference to Africa, see Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (2nd ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

[28] http://theologyinafrica.com/blog/?page_id=105, accessed April 28, 2011. The website is subtitled "A Social Justice Journal of African Theology, Philosophy, Christian Religion, and Life."

Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars,[29] volumes in the Hippo/Africa Bible Commentary Series are appearing. The Hippo commentaries are

> divided into preaching units that contain detailed exposition of the passage as well as contemporary applications. The unit is not intended to be preached as a sermon, but provides material to be drawn on in sermon preparation. . . . Academic issues relating to the Greek text and disputes about interpretation are dealt with in the extensive end notes. The book is thus suitable for use as a teaching resource for theological colleges and Bible schools while also being suited to readers who are looking for ways to preach and apply the Scriptures.[30]

To date volumes on Galatians (2010), Romans (2011), and the Pastoral Epistles (2009) have appeared or are in press. Both the New Testament books chosen for initial publication (central Pauline-gospel books) and the practical approach in the description above indicate these commentaries are tailored for relevance to the pastoral task.[31]

The need for such resources is dire in scores of nations and languages. Commentaries may not be direct necessities for Christianity to spread. But given a religion so tied to a message from a book, they are inevitable accessories to Christianity's flourishing as churches are founded and begin to undertake their work of worship, service, and outreach. Pastors are foundational to this movement, and commentaries (or other commentary-like publications) are invaluable to performance of their duties, at least in settings where biblical instruction is central to church life. This describes the kind of Christianity that is most widespread internationally in recent generations.[32]

Central Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri recently exercised great vision in contributing substantially to support the printing (in Africa) of a rudimentary commentary on the Bible's teaching in the Tigrinya language (Douglas Alban, *God's Answer to Man's Questions: 100 Bible Lessons*).

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[29] Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

[30] See www.zondervan.com/Cultures/enUS/Product/ProductDetail.htm?ProdID=com.zondervan.9789966805386&QueryStringSite=Zondervan#productdetails. Accessed April 28, 2011.

[31] For an example of an Old Testament commentary, see Hugh R. Page Jr., *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010). Its target audience is more academic than pastoral.

[32] Cf. Phillip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

Websites report that there are 350,000 copies of this book in print. This is far more than most commentaries in any language and at any level. The book is said to have been translated into 16 languages. Tigrinya would be the seventeenth. It is the language of thousands of expatriate Eritrean Christians, driven from their country into neighboring African nations. Pastoral leaders among this people known to me eke out a sparse existence in exile that may be permanent. But they engage in ongoing pastoral training, even in Sharia law settings, and, next to Bibles, their highest need is for practical commentary on Scripture. One of their leading pastors with sufficient command of English translated Alban's book. It is hard to imagine a clearer demonstration of the pastoral relevance of commentaries, at least from the standpoint of impoverished and persecuted Eritrean believers who have been driven from their country, lost all their property, and now languish in foreign lands with no sure prospects for the future. For them, "man shall not live by bread alone" is more than a metaphor or platitude, and they place a high premium on commentary that will open up for them "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," i.e., the Scriptures.

4. *Commentaries in the Pastor's Church Tradition and Personal Study*

Pastors serve in ecclesial contexts that may be more or less disposed to the consultation of commentaries. The traditional ethos of the Lutheran pastor is expressed by Pfitzner: "A parish pastor is well advised to make a thorough study of the Greek text of at least one New Testament book each year, with the help of a scholarly commentary."[33] The Lutheran tradition has upheld high academic standards in pastoral training since its Reformation beginnings. This is not to overlook grave shortcomings in that tradition; for example, as of 2002, Werner Schmülke could note that the topic of "evangelism" had no formal place in Germany's Protestant theological education system in the university faculties.[34] More fundamentally, much of the scholarship of that tradition has been destructive of historic Christian belief. Still, it must be said that the central impetus of biblical studies

[33] Pfitzner, *Lutheran Theological Journal* 21/3 (1987) 138.

[34] W. Schmülke, "Theologische Ausbildung und Evangelisation," in *Evangelisation in Gegenwind* (ed. Herbert H. Klement; Giessen/Basel: Brunnen; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2002) 288. As exceptions he notes Peter Beyerhaus, Manfred Seitz, Eberhard Winkler, Michael Herbst, Christian Möller, and Gerhard Henning.

in the Western university in recent centuries has emanated most of all from Germany and its Lutheran theological faculties. The ethos of scholarship associated with Lutheran pastors was largely maintained in North America when northern European immigrants arrived on these shores in the nineteenth century.

Commentary series whose authors hail mainly from this tradition include Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, Concordia Comentary Series: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture, Continental Commentaries, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar,[35] and Hermeneia. A number of the authors of the evangelically-oriented series Historisch-Theologische Auslegung are German Lutherans or heirs of that scholarly tradition; biblical books commented on to date (and their authors) include Mark (Hans Bayer), 1 Corinthians (Eckhard Schnabel), 1 Timothy (Heinz-Werner Neudorfer), James (Gerhard Maier), and Revelation 1–11 (Gerhard Maier).

The Reformed and Presbyterian offshoots of the historic Reformation church have a number of commentary series to their credit, as well. Major publishing houses with roots in this heritage include Eerdmans, Zondervan, Baker, and Westminster John Knox. The popular homiletics textbook by Presbyterian seminary president Bryan Chapell is one of the few books of that genre that comments explicitly on the use of commentaries.[36] Another book on preaching that talks about commentaries is likewise authored mainly by scholars who are Reformed in orientation.[37] But in North America, the bulk of major commentary series seem to be growing out of evangelical scholarship rather than Reformed or Presbyterian series per se. The Reformed heritage of commentating in the vein of Calvin, one might say, has gone to seed. Yet scholars who write for evangelical series may or may not have Reformation church roots, and much of the impetus for these volumes comes from British scholarship: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Expositor's Bible Commentary (revised edition), Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, IVP New Testament Commentary, New International Commentary on the New Testament, New International

[35] As the series title suggests, some contributors will be Catholic.

[36] B. Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 74–75, 109, 114. Commentary-conversant preaching is also encouraged by Appendix 9 in the same manual (363–71). There commentaries are not listed, but the scholarly tools that make commentary use productive are.

[37] Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson, eds., *Preach the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 55, 56, 59, 60–61, 81–82, 86, 87, 88.

Greek Testament Commentary, Pillar New Testament Commentary, Tyndale New and Old Testament Commentaries, Word Biblical Commentary, and many more. A similar register of hermeneutical outlook and theological orientation is found in a trio of Baptist series, the Broadman Bible Commentary, the Holman New Testament Commentary, and the New American Commentary. Catholic scholarship is represented in series like Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, New Testament Message, and Sacra Pagina. Many Catholic scholars publish commentaries in series whose contributors hail from various confessional locations.

The various kinds and levels of commentary series are often a reflection of the conception of the pastoral task distinct to various denominations and communions. Some denominations place less stress on graduate level or seminary degrees; they may be concerned rather with a pastor's sense of divine call and manifest ministry giftedness. Studied sermons may not be as prized on Sunday as gripping rhetoric, practical application, and spiritual vision. It may be rare to hear a commentary or commentary-derived insight referenced in a sermon, because commentaries are rarely consulted in the course of sermon preparation. In Catholic and Episcopal services a short homily is the rule, not focused biblical exposition; the extrusion of commentary insights in that setting will not be the norm.

In many church circles, however, some level of intellectual sophistication is expected of the pastor's sermons. A published exchange between D. A. Carson and John Piper sets forth this traditional (if today too frequently receding) vision: *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry*.[38] Many seminaries work hard to provide pastors and pastoral candidates with the tools needed to read Scripture in the original languages, draw on knowledge of the history of the church through its major periods, and propound the Bible's message in a confessional framework compatible with the church being served and connected with the faith affirmed by historic Christianity in all eras. The commentary series Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture was produced in part to help church leaders access the biblical interpreters of the patristic era.

Commentaries are more, however, than just repositories of information for stocking sermons with substance. To the extent that a minister

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[38] Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011. On the profound and often unproductive tension that has arisen between these two roles (or offices) in some circles, see Gerald Hiestand, "Pastor-Scholar to Professor-Scholar: Exploring the Theological Disconnect between the Academy and the Local Church," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 355–69.

understands that the study of Scripture has its doxological and sacramental aspects—so that faithful and diligent reading and reflection become acts of praise and worship and not just mechanical "sermon preparation"—commentaries become preachers to the preachers. They minister the Scripture's message to pastors in ways that will fortify them to proclaim it clearly, winsomely, faithfully, and compellingly to listeners when the hour of biblical exposition or meditation arrives. Some commentaries, or commentary-like studies, take up the task of exposition with the declared aim of edification. An example would be Raymond C. Ortlund's *A Passion for God: Prayers and Meditations on the Book of Romans*.[39] Adolf Schlatter's *Do We Know Jesus?* constitutes an exposition on Bible passages associated with the chronological unfolding of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.[40] To consult such helps in the course of sermon preparation may elevate mind and heart in ways that greatly fortify the minister for pulpit service. It then becomes possible for "serious, dedicated, multifaceted sermon preparation" to become "a profound spiritual discipline . . . It becomes a time for growth in faith and understanding, a place for encounter with the Holy One in whose grace our lives and ministry are grounded, though we too easily forget."[41]

Such fortification does not require, of course, the consultation of works aimed at edifying. Pastors trained in the lore of their calling will often find their spirits soaring in the course of word studies, lexical work, and other routine exegetical labors foundational to preparing a sermon. They will want to stop their reading and talk to a colleague or spouse about what they just discovered new or anew in the biblical passage under scrutiny. It is precisely solid and scholarly commentaries that often provide such insights. Tried and true commentaries become treasured in somewhat the same way as, say, a family photo album which never fails to give rise to rich recollections no matter how many times it has been opened over the years. Personally, I seldom come away from a foray into commentaries by certain authors without emerging much heartened and recharged by how they have reopened the Scriptures to me: Luther, Calvin, F. F. Bruce, Peter O'Brien, Don Carson, Grant Osborne, Rudolf Schnackenburg, Howard Marshall, L. T. Johnson, Anthony Thiselton, Doug Moo, C. E. B. Cranfield, C. K. Barrett,

[39] Wheaton: Crossway, 1994.
[40] Translated by A. Köstenberger and R. Yarbrough; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005.
[41] Lawrence W. Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 29.

Craig Keener, Eckhard Schnabel, and others. A personal favorite is Adolf Schlatter.

The challenge is often to find and take the time to do the reading. It is also to remind oneself of the importance of pastoral preaching that *informs* listeners. I am convinced that much preaching does little more than rehearse what most churchgoers have already heard a thousand times. But this is next to criminal given the vastness and richness of biblical revelation, how much there is to learn about and draw from it, and how little time there is in a sermon to do justice to any given topic and the often fascinating facts surrounding it. It is not that sermons can or should be purely informational. But in too many cases, congregants will sit through the entire half hour or more of preaching and not hear anything they did not already know. How will that ever produce *disciples*, learners? If faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), to hear nothing and learn nothing new is to cultivate a stagnating faith. Good commentaries can inform and thereby inspire pastors in ways that will equip them to be conduits of incendiary, new knowledge to the intellectually starving sheep that wander into houses of worship seeking cognitive sustenance leading to spiritual strengthening from week to week.

5. *The Pastor and the Abuse of Commentaries*

Several sources caution of potential misuse of commentaries in pastoral labor. Bryan Chapell warns against rushing "to commentaries as the first step of sermon preparation."[42] It is too easy to get distracted by the commentator's agenda and thereby lose sight of the situation a pastor needs to address.[43] More broadly, Chapell observes that commentaries can be both a boon and a bane. He speaks of

> two types of pastors who will never make great preachers: The first will not listen to what others say; the other will say only what others say. A preacher who refuses to pay attention to what gifted scholars have discovered mistakes personal arrogance for erudition. God does not give all his insights to any one person. At the same time, a preacher who says only what a commentator concludes is trying to preach by proxy.[44]

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[42] The same warning against resorting to commentaries prematurely is found in the classic work by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 220.

[43] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 74.

[44] Ibid.

John Evans warns against substituting the information gleaned from commentaries for one's own informed wrestling with the text.[45] In other words, make your own best effort to understand a text fully before entering into dialogue with the commentary literature. Not only will this prevent uncritical acceptance of someone else's judgment, it will also equip the interpreter with information needed to understand commentary discussion based on one's own independent command of the text, its features, and its message.

With Evans' remarks in view we can turn the idea of "the abuse of commentaries" around: above we used the phrase to denote how the pastor misuses commentaries—commentaries are the objects of pastoral abuse. But the words could also denote how commentaries abuse pastors—they ill serve the ends for which pastors consult them. Evans laments "technical works" that "reveal little or no interest in the message and theology of the text."[46] This occurs when "the intricacies of ... historical critical debate take precedence over interpreting the text as we have it" or when the commentary does little more than "catalog the history of scholarly opinion" and then "leaves you hanging and fails even to draw a conclusion."[47] An opposite problem is the "many breezy homiletical commentaries that pay no serious attention to the text at all."[48] To address these twin problems Evans' guide includes, among other things, reference to over 3,500 reviews of commentaries so that prospective readers can glean what peers have to say about a commentary one is trying to decide whether to buy.

John Nolland offers counsel for commentary writers in dealing with the twin poles of the ancient setting of the text and the current setting of commentators and commentary readers:

> Commenting inevitably involves, whether consciously or not, the bringing together of the horizons that belong to the text and the horizons that belong to the interpreter. If the horizons of the interpreter are dominant, then the text is unlikely to have been heard in more than a superficial manner: it will have been stretched upon a procrustean bed. If the horizons of the text are given exclusive dominance, then the danger is of a product that is technical and sterile, and distances readers from the text. A good commentary will be sensitive to the tension involved here, and seek to work with it creatively.[49]

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45 Evans, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works*, 10.
46 Ibid. 11.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 John Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 306.

But exactly what does "work with it creatively" mean? How will that help? What will be the outcome? Nolland is undoubtedly correct, but the counsel does not take us very far. That fact is that he has placed his finger on a long-standing problem: how to bring the then-and-there into connection with the here-and-now. Walter Kaiser spoke of it a quarter-century ago: "The Reformers excelled in combining both of these features, and our generation must do the same if we are to be effective as they were."[50] Kaiser then quotes Robert Grant from an article published in 1948 and finding direction in patristic practices. Neither Kaiser nor Grant offer much help here in resolving the challenge they identify.

Pastors do well to bear in mind that all commentaries struggle to do justice to this tension. Or, they give up and focus on either the historical or the contemporary pole. The temptation here is inherent in the nature of the sources (from another time and cultural setting) and then what is being asked of them by pastorally inclined readers. This would be things like truths about God and redemption, inspiration for worship, and practical guidance for dealing with the church's mission and church members' daily lives. Pastors get frustrated with commentaries that are sterile relative to such concerns. Scholars get frustrated with definitions of "commentary" that are not confined to antiquarian and academic values. Frank H. Gorman defines the biblical commentary as "a site for scholarly discursive practices associated with historical, exegetical, and interpretive analyses of biblical books."[51] Or again, "The critical, scholarly, biblical commentary is a genre that takes shape within the context of the professional and institutional world of scholars, publishers, professional organizations and the academy."[52] Notably absent is mention of any faith community. For all kinds of reasons, it is easy for scholars to lose sight of "what was probably the beginning of New Testament commentary—the work of preaching."[53]

One courageous New Testament scholar reported recently that she taught in seminary for a quarter century with mainly an antagonistic

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[50] W. Kaiser, "Appendix B: The Usefulness of Biblical Commentaries for Preaching and Bible Study," in *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 154.

[51] F. H. Gorman, "Commenting on Commentary: Reflections on a Genre," in *Relating to the Text: Interdisciplinary and Form-Critical Insights on the Bible* (eds. Timothy Sandoval and Carleen Mandolfo; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 100.

[52] Ibid. 118.

[53] C. K. Barrett, "Commentary (New Testament)," in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; London: Routledge, 2007), 59.

sense toward what she calls "personal relationship with Jesus."[54] Her essay reports how, through contact with pastors she was leading, that relationship became real to her. For many pastors, this relationship is at the core of what moves them to search the Scriptures and share them with others. When professors and commentary writers proceed oblivious to this dimension of awareness, or even hostile toward it, disconnect between what is produced by commentary writer, on the one hand, and what is sought by commentary user, on the other, is likely.

Probably all commentary users have felt a bit betrayed by commentaries that fail to deliver what users expect. Users should bear in mind that commentary writers inevitably come to rue positions they have argued or interpretations they have taken. As one author wrote to me after I sent him editorial remarks on a commentary manuscript prior to publication, "Thank you for the miscues you flagged. Due to physical strain while writing the commentary, I had to get my eyes examined. Now that I have read your comments, I wonder if I should get my head examined." He wrote somewhat in jest, but there are few commentary authors who in the course of time would not wish to change some of their stated views. Author prefaces in many commentaries thank friends, spouses, associates, editors, and others for reading the work in advance of publication so as to save the author from errors, ignorance, blind spots, and other lapses or limitations. But they also apologize in advance for slips or errors in judgment that are impossible to avoid in any extended exegesis of a biblical text.

It is Nolland who again offers wisdom here.[55] He notes that commentaries help readers "engage more successfully with biblical texts." Commentaries are "helpful companions for the journey" as readers including pastors wrestle with a passage. And yet:

> We should not . . . expect too much of them. In the end it is each reader who needs to make sense at the deepest level of the biblical text with which they are engaged. The commentator provides a thoughtful and well-informed instance of how, at a certain level, one person coming from one place, in conversation with many others coming from various places, has traveled the journey for themselves.

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54 Mary Schertz, "Now it's personal," *Christian Century* 128/2 (January 25, 2011): 10–11.
55 For all quotes in this paragraph see *JSNT* 29 (2007): 311.

Pastors who keep this counsel in mind will be less likely to abuse commentaries by placing more weight on them than they are designed to carry. Yet they will also not fail to engage to the full in the gratifying hunt for the meaning and construal of the inspired texts through which new life flows from each studious pastor to the needy and eager recipients of their services. For this enterprise few resources are more relevant than the best commentaries used in the wisest ways.

THE PREACHING RELEVANCE OF COMMENTARIES

Walter L. Liefeld

I write this for my former student, former colleague, and long-time friend, Grant Osborne. You, Grant, are known and deeply appreciated for your preaching as well as for your teaching. What follows in this chapter about commentaries and preaching is certainly not new to you. I hope, however, that you will enjoy it, as we have enjoyed one another.

1. *Commentaries in a Post-Expository Age*

The listening habits of those accustomed to communicating by tweeting and texting have surely been transformed in a way that could erode the preaching of expository sermons even beyond its present minimal state. Forty years ago, a visiting professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School said that seven minutes was the average human attention span. He advised an illustration every seven minutes. A few weeks ago, after sending a text message to a grandson, I walked from my study into the living room. As I entered that room my cell phone informed me that a return message had already been sent. This speaks not only about the speed of communication but also about the intense engagement of this generation in communication, a matter that has been well documented and frequently addressed in the media.

It only takes a few minutes of television watching to realize that both in the programs and in their sponsors' ads there is a frequent shifting of scenes back and forth. The irony is that college students still listen to long complex lectures and readers still sit with books, even those on an electronic pad. It is also still true that some preachers insist on having forty minutes for their sermons. Some sermons are indeed worthy of that span of time; the question is whether the less dedicated members of the congregation are concentrating through it all.

One might think, therefore, that it is overkill to read many commentaries in preparation for preaching if there is not enough time for the information and insights to be fully unfolded in the sermon. Since the duties of pastors keep increasing, one might also suppose that except for those who have preaching as their only or main duty, they have less time to consult commentaries. Yet conversations with pastors on this subject have revealed that those who are attracting large congregations by their preaching regularly consult several commentaries in their preparation.

Strangely, most books on homiletics that I have searched do not even mention commentaries, let alone offer guidelines as to their use. *An Invitation to Biblical Preaching* by Donald R. Sunukjian[1] is a welcome exception to this neglect. After recommending a study of the sermon passage in its original language, the author encourages the use of good recent commentaries. He categorizes commentaries as expositional (or synthesis), exegetical (or critical), and sermonic (or homiletic).[2] Though I have not followed his grouping, several of the commentaries I describe below fit into the first, having some value in helping a preacher think through grammatical relationships and types of clauses. Although I do not normally recommend use of what he calls the sermonic commentary, I have included one by James M. Boice,[3] which also fits into category one. The commentaries I discuss are therefore essentially exegetical.

Until the later decades of the twentieth century, many pastors' libraries were impoverished because of a paucity of exegetically sound and up-to-date commentaries. The availability of old commentaries, mainly those whose copyrights had expired, filled the vacuum. This is not to criticize honored names such as Jamieson Fausset and Brown, Matthew Henry, John Nelson Darby and preacher Charles H. Spurgeon, author of the immensely popular commentary on the Psalms, the *Treasury of David*. Although far from the authors of today's critical exegetical commentaries, and not in the same league as the Reformers' writings, they did expand the horizons and warm the hearts of many preachers. Decades ago a regular column in *Moody Monthly* magazine called "In the Study," by Wilbur M. Smith, frequently offered observations on the commentaries of his day and earlier. Another source available to seminarians and preachers in those days was *Bibliotheca Sacra*.[4]

In our times, even when there is fear of the demise of printed books and when expository sermons are perhaps heard less frequently, good commentaries abound. Without them the preaching of the Word and the

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[1] Donald R. Sunukjian, *An Invitation to Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007).

[2] Ibid., 24–26.

[3] James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971).

[4] *Bibliotheca Sacra* was first published 165 years ago and since 1934 has been published by Dallas Theological Seminary.

saving gospel would be attenuated and congregations of believers would be impoverished.

2. *The Multiple Goals of Sermons*

On the surface of it, this is a simple topic with foregone conclusions. The purpose of a sermon is surely to achieve such goals as worship, faith, hope, love, obedience, spiritual growth, and good works. Also it is my conviction and practice that the sermon should include sufficient, even if only passing, reference to the gospel that anyone listening who is not yet a believer can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be moved towards salvation.

Beyond that there is another goal that ought to be considered. That is to provide an example for personal Bible study. Ironically, the better an expository sermon is, the greater the danger of leaving the congregation in awe of the preacher, feeling that they could never have such a grasp of Scripture. However, those of us who preach ought to be dissatisfied if our sermon does not provide incentive and help for the hearers to access the Word of God on their own. I believe that it is our responsibility—perhaps especially the professors among us—to free the congregation from dependence on us and to lead them into the Word for themselves.

The relevance of commentaries to preaching is basically, of course, that they provide information for the sermon. That, however, can profitably be extended to the layperson, and that does not only mean transmission of information. In addition to seeking the truths of the biblical text for the sermon itself, the preacher can have in mind how to express those truths in such a way that the congregation can see where *in the text itself* they came from and go "do likewise." This, of course, does not mean that the pastor needs to make frequent reference to commentaries. We preachers often quote good books and the media; perhaps an occasional reference to a good commentary could be useful in prompting personal Bible study.

3. *Contributions of Commentaries to Preaching*

Preachers consult commentaries to find stimulating material for sermons and to clarify the meaning of difficult texts. Unfortunately the pursuit of the former could deter one from selecting some excellent commentaries because their detailed handling of critical issues overwhelms material helpful for sermons. The Anchor Bible series comes to mind. The inclusion of the eminent archaeologist William Foxwell Albright as one of the two authors of the volume on Matthew, for example, inevitably meant the inclusion of much data that, though important, might not directly edify one's congregation. There are plenty of commentaries that do have sermonic ideas. It would be pathetic if in the search for sermon helps the preacher neglects other benefits of a scholarly commentary. At this point we will look at some contributions of commentaries that are not always at the forefront.

A commentary can help the preacher close the gaps between biblical times and today. John Stott's book *Between Two Worlds* addressed this problem three decades ago.[5] Opinions may differ as to which gaps are the greatest hindrance in sermonic communication. The language gap is less of a problem given the plethora of translations now available. In a society so well informed by the Internet and the media, the gaps between geographical settings and historical circumstances also constitute less of a problem. The cultural gap is more difficult to handle.[6]

There is another goal, mentioned above, that can be pursued in almost any kind of sermon, and to which a commentary can contribute. That is to enable the hearers to pursue their own Bible study more competently. The pastor who desires to prepare Christians for "works of service" (Eph 4:12), can contribute to that by thinking of opportunities in and outside of the church members may have. Preaching sermons that demonstrate, among other things, wise use of commentaries can help. Preaching the sermon can be a model of accessible skill. My personal goal is to make the Word so clear and accessible, even at the expense of homiletical merit, that the hearer would be able to say, "I could do that myself." The exposition should always be excellent and informative, and also a model. This goal will naturally make the preacher alert to explanations in commentaries that can be adapted in the sermon to the level of the hearer's experience.

Romans 12:2 speaks of the "renewal of the mind." This, too, is a contribution that commentaries can make to preaching. The life of a pastor is sometimes sparked by unexpected events that call for sermonic attention. But otherwise there can exist a routine mentality: another week, another sermon. The need for a spiritual and mental renewing can be met in part

[5] John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).
[6] A commentary that helpfully discusses backgrounds is Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

by a new book by a stimulating author, but so can a new commentary—with longer lasting effects on sermons!

4. *The Misuse of Commentaries*

On a visit I once made to a popular American preacher I found him in his study surrounded by three desks in a U shape. Along with his Bible he had spread out a number of commentaries. Probably in his case he was wise enough to use them carefully, but one can imagine a novice preacher doing that beyond reason. It is possible to develop a commentary dependency problem.

Consultation of commentaries should *not* be the first step in sermon preparation. That should be the careful reading of the text, ideally in the original language. This reading should be inductive, including attention to grammatical structure and significant vocabulary. The biblical text should, of course, be read first of all for its personal word to the preacher. Not only can this help make the sermon more heartfelt but may also help the congregation follow the preacher's own train of thought. The subsequent reference to commentaries can bring further light and perhaps correction of any misinterpretation on the preacher's part, but the Word itself should always be first.

A second misuse of commentaries is taking the opinion of the majority of commentaries consulted. This would not be tolerated in the seminary classroom, and it should not be allowed in the pastor's study. A related misuse is taking the opinion of the most celebrated commentator. A sound seminary course in exegesis should have prevented this tendency, but novice preachers doubt their own opinion alongside that of an esteemed scholar. Comparison of commentaries will often reveal how often the scholars disagree among themselves!

The last misuse I will mention here is focusing too much on interpretive problems. This is often necessary, for example, in the case of the statement "work out your own salvation," which we will discuss later. Undue attention to less important disagreements (beyond honest acknowledgement of the differences) can interfere with the congregation's appropriation of the basic message. However, the opposite extreme is not commendable either. Sermons may leave unaddressed issues that are troubling to alert hearers or that are important enough, especially with regard to doctrine, to need attention. A good commentary will assign space wisely to such issues.

5. *What Can a Commentary Provide to Inform and Enhance a Sermon?*

A commentary can help the preacher inform the congregation about the background and circumstances of the passage. Hearers need to be transported from their mental preoccupations to the spoken Word of God. This can be done, of course, by the use of a good introductory illustration drawn from the contemporary scene. But it can also be a biblical scene in which the hearers can imagine themselves. In the process they can be brought to an issue, a problem, a need, or perhaps an opportunity for action.

A commentary can help the preacher correct the all too common practice of seeking God's will by jumping to a verse and applying it out of context. Even seasoned preachers may not always think to make the biblical context clear in the sermon. The preacher may approach the Scriptures with some congregational disharmony in mind and, in spite of all good hermeneutical intentions, force that problem onto the text. A commentary can keep the reader's mind attuned to the context. This is so simple a matter that were it not for what I have heard from some pulpits I would not mention it.

Commentaries can help give movement to a sermon. It is difficult to keep up interest in a long sermon. It can seem like a static lecture rather than a sermon. In contrast, movement is found everywhere in Scripture, whether in an exciting narrative (or a parable), poetic parallelism, sequence of proverbs, successive figures in apocalyptic writings or even in a succession of Levitical laws. Statements in the epistles have their own logical movement. Surely a well-written commentary can convey that to the benefit of the preacher and congregation, but this is sometimes neglected or wrongly assumed to be obvious to the preacher intent on just the facts. Even grammar has movement as it guides the reader's or the hearer's comprehension step by step by the use of its various constructions. We might note that movement is also important in the sermon titles. Seminary students are sometimes critiqued in their homiletics class for proposing static titles. A sermon title such as "Intercessory Prayer" stirs little interest compared to "Changing Lives through Prayer." But even that vibrant title will be useless if the sermon points are lifeless. A good commentary can provide concise grammatical insights to propel the train of thought throughout the sermon.

The sermon can inspire interest in a word study drawn from a commentary. Of course a word-by-word sermon can be deadening. Few members of a contemporary congregation want to hear an etymological recitation. I am reminded of a speaker's comic imitation of a fictitious pompous preacher: "Now chaos is from the Greek word *chaos*, meaning chaos."[7] For an earlier generation of preachers, Greek and Hebrew word study was a frequent part of sermon preparation, a tedious burden for some or, for the enlightened, a time-consuming pleasure. Now both the onus and joy have been displaced by the click of a mouse. At the same time addicts of, say, the Visual Thesaurus Word of the Day know that the choice of appropriate vocabulary can be mentally stimulating and enjoyable. A commentator with the mind to do it can explore the reasons for a biblical author's choice of one word over another and weave that into the fabric of exposition.

6. *Comparison of Commentaries on Philippians*

This comparison is not simply to measure commentaries against the values mentioned above or against each other. Perhaps comparison is not even the right word. The intent is to observe what is helpful for preachers among selected commentaries on a particular passage. My purpose is not to critique scholarship, but to explore a selected group of commentaries with regard to what I perceive is their usefulness in preaching. There is subjectivity in this procedure because my evaluation reflects my thoughts regarding the purpose and nature of sermons.

I have selected Phil 2:12–18 for this exploration, but not as though it were a major section in Philippians. The immediately preceding Christ hymn is far more significant, but this section is more difficult to preach from. I want to see how well the commentary helps the preacher to understand the function of the passage in its context and with regard to the needs of the congregation at Philippi. Of special importance, of course, is the phrase "work out your salvation," not only because of its theological significance but also because of its relation to the larger context of the book itself and because of the help the preacher will need to interpret and apply it properly.

Like the interior designer of a building that contains a number of characteristic features—perhaps repetition of color or of period accoutrements—the Holy Spirit, through the literary brilliance of Paul, intersperses a series of lexical features in Philippians. These are not immediately obvious, but should catch the commentator's attention and then that of the

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[7] The speaker was Paul Little, an InterVarsity Christian Fellowship staff member in the 1950s and 60s and a visiting instructor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

congregation through the preacher's mediation. Like the *leitmotiv* in a Wagnerian opera (if I may change images), the identifiable but complex themes of *logical discernment* and *emotional attitudes* appear repeatedly. The most familiar theme is, of course, joy. Consequently we often refer to Philippians as the "Epistle of Joy." Yet to stop there is like turning off the stereo after hearing the first four beats of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, thinking that we now know the main musical theme.

The following is a survey of the terms of thinking, feeling and attitude in Philippians, using the NIV. The words are in the order in which the English word first occurs.

Joy (χαρά) 1:4,18,25, 2:2; 4:1,8; (κάυχημα) 1:26 "boast" in 2:16, NIV]
Convinced (πείθω) 1:6,14,25; 2:24; 3:3,4
Feel (φρονέω, "think") 1:7, 2:2 (2x),5,3:15,19; 4:2,10 (2x)
Long for (ἐπιποθέω) 1:8; 2:26, (ἐπιπόθητος) 4:1
Love (ἀγάπη) 1:9,16; 2:1,2; (ἀγαπητός) 4:1
Discern (δοκιμάζω) 1:10
Know (γινώσκω) 1:12; 2:22; 3:10; (receive news) 2:19; (be evident) 4:5
Envy, rivalry, goodwill (φόνος, ἔρις, εὐδοκία) 1:15
Selfish ambition (ἐριθεία) 1:17
Not sincerely (οὐχ ἁγνῶς) 1:17
Thinking (οἰόμενοι) 1:17
False motives or true (εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ) 1:18
Rejoice (χαίρω) 1:18 (2x); 2:17, 18 (2x), 28 (NIV be glad), 3:1; 4:4 (2x),10
Know (οἶδα) 1:16, 25; 4:12 (2x) 15
Desire (ἐπιθυμία) 1:23
Affection, compassion (σπλάγχνον) 1:8; 2:1
Encouragement (παράκλησις) 2:1
Comfort (παραμύθιον) 2:1
Tenderness (οἰκτιρμοί) 2:1
One in spirit (σύμψυχοι) 2:2
Consider (ἡγέομαι) 2:3,6,25 (think); 3:7,8 (2x)
Like, of the same spirit (ἰσόψυχος) 2:20
Distressed (ἀδημονῶν) 2:26
Sorrow (λύπη) 2:27 (2x)
Boast (καύχημα) 2:16
Think (δοκέω) 3:4
Consider (λογίζομαι) 3:13 (translated "think about" in 4:8)
Be anxious (μεριμνάω) 4:6
Mind (νόημα) 4:7

With such a broad, complex semantic field in a relatively short epistle, the commentator and the preacher have a responsibility to point out its significance. The preacher is responsible to a congregation that, by definition, congregates, and so its members relate, either well or poorly, to one another. It has been a surprise to me that no commentary that I have read has given this semantic field as a whole the recognition it deserves, though most do take note of individual words in this group. I will mention later the particular contribution of Moisés Silva. Mutual attitudes make or break relationships in a church, and Paul's own thinking about his role and about his relationship with the Philippians is essential in shaping the Epistle. O'Brien notes,

> In describing his attitude the apostle uses the term φρονέω (of the twenty-six occurrences in the NT all but three are found in Paul), which is a favorite one in this letter. . . . It is a rather neutral term that acquires its proper meaning from its immediate context and signifies to 'think', 'judge', and 'give one's mind to'. However, the references in Paul, especially in Rom. 8, make it abundantly clear that the way one thinks is intimately related to the way one behaves.[8]

While doctrine often occasions church dissension, and has done so throughout church history, bad attitudes play their part. This is the stuff of everyday life—our inner thoughts and our personal relationships. The Christ hymn in Phil 2:6–11, followed by the injunctions in vv. 12–18, are where doctrine and life meet. The Christ hymn not only dominates the Philippians Epistle, it should dominate personal and church life. The more vividly the vocabulary of attitude, feeling and thinking is presented in a sermon on Philippians, the more clearly the congregation will see the importance of the example of Christ.

All this can be laid out in the introduction to a commentary, as well as in references throughout. We need to give some attention here to the function of the introduction in a commentary with regard to preaching. It would be natural for a preacher seeking help on a particular passage to go directly to that section in a commentary. It would be unfortunate, however, if the preacher does so without having first read the commentator's introduction. There is an almost humorous, but also pathetic, parenthesis in the title to the Introduction section of the Scofield Bible: "Introduction (to be read)!" Perhaps some of those who use commentaries need the same parenthetic instruction. It is necessary to consider such matters as background, literary form and genre and critical issues in an introduction, along with discussions of content and theology.

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[8] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 66–67.

With regard to such introductions and to the list of terms above, commentaries on Philippians tend to mention the genial relationship between Paul and the believers at Philippi without going into detail. Hansen goes a step beyond this. Although he does not deal with the attitude/feeling/thinking semantic field as such, in his description of the Epistle as "A Letter of Friendship," he lists the motifs of affection, partnership, unity of soul and spirit, like-mindedness, yoke fellow, giving moral paradigm.

Earlier generations of biblical scholars and pastors referred frequently to the commentaries on several Pauline Epistles by J. B. Lightfoot, the eminent English mid-nineteenth century professor, minister and bishop. The style is terse (a feature welcomed by busy preachers) but the content is sparse compared to the great commentaries of recent decades. This contrast is seen in the section on Phil 2:12–18 and Lightfoot's thin remarks on "work out your salvation," but his paraphrase of the latter part of v. 12 is worth quoting:

> With a nervous and trembling anxiety work out your salvation for *yourselves*. For yourselves did I say? Nay, ye are not alone. It is God working in you from first to last: God that inspires the earliest impulse, and God that directs the final achievement: for such is his good pleasure.[9]

The comments that follow on this verse say nothing about the term salvation, only a brief note that "work out" "is a common word in Paul," along with a quotation from Xenophon. Today's preachers have more extensive resources than those did in Lightfoot's day, and we now proceed to consider some more recent commentaries. They are not listed in any particular order.

Gerald Hawthorne's commentary is in the Word Biblical Commentary series.[10] Some have found this series difficult to use because of the inclusion of extensive bibliography and textual notes and because of its somewhat dense writing. However, although much of the information might not be of much help to a congregation, it is ideal for those who desire to explore the meaning of a text beyond what is necessary for a sermon.

A section in the Word series entitled "Form/Structure/Setting" provides, when done well, the kind of information that is essential if the preacher is to communicate accurately the meaning of a passage in its biblical and historical context. An example is Hawthorne's first sentence in this section:

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[9] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (1st ed.; 1868; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

[10] Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983).

"The detailed attention just given to the Christ-hymn must not obscure the fact that vv 12 to 18 are part of a larger parenetic section—1:27–2:18." He mentions that "at Philippi the church was being torn apart because Christians were motivated by party spirit"[11] and proceeds to explain the connection between this section and the preceding Christ-hymn. He concludes: "it is clear, too, that this section is bound to 2:1–4 and continues the plea for unselfish action already begun there. Paul makes this plea not only in words but also by revealing his own willingness to have his life become a libation poured out in sacrifice" (v. 17).[12] I have quoted more from this commentary than I will for most others to show the kind of comments that might alert the preacher. At times, Hawthorne's writing is more grammatically technical than some might wish, but if the grammar is a hindrance, the remedy is not to discard the commentary but to review one's Greek!

"Work out your own salvation" is bound to trouble a congregation schooled on salvation as a gift of grace, and we shall briefly note how several commentators take differing positions on the solution. The preacher will have to sort these out, reach a conclusion and present it in a sermon in a way that will edify and motivate the congregation, not leave them in confusion. Hawthorne leads the reader through the relevant issues, with some dependence on unidentified and undated papyri. His conclusion (in contrast with some others to be noted below) is that the phrase means continual effort to accomplish corporate spiritual health. As his exegesis continues through the passage he calls God "The Great Energizer," thus providing a possible sermon topic.

At v. 15 there is a pause to re-introduce vocabulary from earlier parts of the Epistle to summarize the kind of spiritual character the Philippian believers should demonstrate, another help for preachers. Not all commentaries tie these together. The commentary as a whole is rich in vocabulary analysis. A final observation of Hawthorne's treatment is the way he sensitively connects Paul's sufferings with the believers' joy.

Among the characteristics of Walter Hansen's commentary[13] that make it "user friendly" for the preacher is the section "Nature of the Letter" in the Introduction. His analysis of it as a "letter of friendship" is illustrated by the full quotation of a letter by one Chairus to his "doctor friend."[14]

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[11] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 97.
[12] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 97.
[13] G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).
[14] Hansen, *Philippians*, 7.

Any pastor who is a true shepherd will appreciate this ancient letter that embodies a warm relationship. Hansen points out that the letter refers to a "social custom of the time by explaining that friends need not express their thanks to each other in words." He applies this to Philippians: "This insight helps us to understand why Paul does not explicitly verbalize his thanks to the Philippians for their gifts." In this way the preacher is not only introduced to facts about Philippians but is given an appreciation of the Letter that can flow through the sermon to the congregation. Hansen immediately follows this with ten aspects of the "friendship language" in Philippians that "run parallel to common motifs in Hellenistic letters and essays on friendship.[15] Thus, even before reading the commentary proper, the preacher will have the background and motivation to express a mutually appreciative relationship with the congregation.

Moving to Hansen's commentary on Phil 2:12–18, we note that he connects this section with an important statement of purpose in 1:27, "to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." This goes beyond the exhortations regarding unity in the church to the high motivation of glorifying Christ himself. In v. 12, Hansen observes, "Paul moves quickly and easily from theological contemplation to practical implication."[16] This would encourage the preacher to do the same. Hansen includes unobtrusive comments that can fit well into a sermon. (If quoted, one hopes proper attribution would be made to the commentary). This commentary, more than most I have seen on Philippians, connects with the contemporary Christian world and thought. His reference to Peterson's phrase, "a long obedience in the same direction" is an example.[17]

Moving to the troublesome issue concerning the working out of our salvation, we see that Hansen provides one of the more helpful discussions for the preacher to follow. There is not space to present here the carefully researched and explained steps to his conclusion; what is important is that he does so in a way that the student or teacher or, in our context the preacher, can follow. Readers must make their own choice, and Hansen gives the means for doing that. His own conclusion is that Paul is indeed addressing a social situation of disunity that needs resolution, but

[15] Hansen, *Philippians*, 8–11.
[16] Hansen, *Philippians*, 170.
[17] Hansen is referring to Eugene Peterson's book with that title, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

that this occurs as part of the believers' embracing of the eschatological "salvation."[18]

Along with content, Hansen's style must be noted. This again is a subjective evaluation, but it is truly engaging, much like a personal (though one way) conversation. In my judgment this enhances the value of his commentary in nudging the reader to emulate his style in preaching. It is in between the clipped, almost shorthand, style of some and the wordy presentations of others. It is "user friendly" as well as among the best for preachers.

Markus Bockmuehl's commentary[19] commences with a gracious reference to other worthy volumes on Philippians and proceeds to justify its publication with a flow of valuable comments in a visually satisfying format. This format, along with the helpful bold-faced incorporation of the biblical text, makes it handy for the preacher to consult. The language invites mental interaction more than perhaps some others do, and this, in turn, may help the preacher do the same with the congregation. Bockmuehl anticipates the thinking of the reader and addresses unspoken questions. There is repeated reference to the larger context in Philippians. Where useful there are references to the studies of other commentators, but these are relatively few. Some preachers who use this volume in sermon preparation may wish for more such references and more detailed interaction on issues. Others may want a more extended discussion of difficult texts. In that connection, Bockmuehl takes a moderating position regarding the troublesome phrase, "work out your salvation," saying that "it is best not to reduce the term salvation too readily either to the individual and spiritual or to the corporate and social realm."[20]

I am including a popular commentary by the late James Montgomery Boice[21] because he bridged the gap between the academy and the church. One result of this was a series of sermonic commentaries that are fine examples of expository preaching. Regarding Phil 2:12, as a preacher Boice knew that those in a church that taught salvation by grace would perhaps struggle with "work out your salvation." Addressing that is a sensitive task. On the one hand, exegetically, we are dealing with a combination of two words each of which has various shades of meaning. On the other hand,

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[18] Hansen, *Philippians*, 172–75.
[19] Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1998).
[20] Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 151.
[21] James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971).

theologically, the result or conclusion is immensely important and must be communicated clearly from the pulpit. While the preacher does not want to review his exegetical homework publicly, the hearers should, as I have urged earlier, see something of the process as a means of enriching their own Bible study. As always, we must avoid interpreting words independently of one another. In this case Boice notes that if "work out" means to accomplish, then, according to Pauline theology, this "salvation" cannot be personal salvation from sin and judgment. Conversely if the meaning of salvation here is theological, then "work out" cannot mean to accomplish, which implies salvation by works.

Boice clarifies the meaning of the phrase, as others do, not as working "for," "toward" or "at" salvation, but working it "out". Beyond that he depends on a parallel between Phil 2:12–15 and Deuteronomy 32. Moses and Paul were near the end of their lives and were giving instructions to the people. Boice's point is that the people of God addressed in Deuteronomy 32 had *already been* delivered. I cite this as an example of a commentary that is also a sermon in that he introduces a narrative and thus a change of pace. He also teaches something of Old Testament history and "salvation history." In doing this he provides a model for preaching, though that is probably not intended. Looking again at this as part of a series, it is not merely a reproduction of a sermon in a book, a genre of which there are many examples. His sermon is biblical, but not (like some) just a series of verse-by-verse comments. Boice knew how to produce a sermon that is also a thoughtful commentary carefully shaped for the church.

The semantic expertise of Moisés Silva makes his commentary exceptional, beginning with the section on language and style in the introduction. He refers there to "certain terms, not uncommon in themselves, that appear with disproportionate frequency" in Philippians.[22] He does not take note of the semantic field as such that I described above. He does, however, refer to rejoicing in his section on "Distinctive Teaching" in the Introduction, observing that "the strong emphasis in the epistle on the subject of rejoicing, along with the obvious affection that united the apostle with the Philippian church, have led many readers to think of the church as a model congregation with relatively few and minor problems. This feature also lends a very practical and personal tone to the letter, so that we tend

[22] Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 12.

to downplay its doctrinal content."[23] Preachers, especially those whose ministry tends to be oriented to pastoral needs, should take note of this guarding of the doctrinal message. Also, the church at Philippi was indeed not a "model congregation." At the same time the very fact that it had its interpersonal problems occasioned both the doctrinal teaching and the semantic set of terms that addressed interpersonal attitudes. Paul's solution to the attitude problem was based on doctrine, especially the Christ hymn. Silva's attention to both the problem and the doctrinal base for the solution provide a model for the preacher to follow.

Regarding Phil 2:12–18, Silva does not link it strongly with the preceding Christ hymn or make a point of its application to the problem of interpersonal attitudes (though he does label obedience as an "attitude" in his paraphrase). He argues strongly for a theological, not social, reference for "salvation," and his argument is worth the preacher's time in tracing.

Gordon Fee's view of "salvation" in Phil 2:12 is contrary to Silva's, and is argued extensively and strongly. I mention that up front both as a transition from the preceding paragraph and also as an introduction to the characteristics of his commentary and its contribution to preaching. I would like to quote part of the last paragraph in Fee's Preface. After the gratitude list containing the names of those who were helpful in this writing of the book, he unexpectedly writes, "I save (what for me is) the best for last. The writing of this commentary is unlike anything I have heretofore experienced as a part of the church." He goes on to describe how during the period of his writing "one Sunday after another either the worship (including liturgy) or the sermon was in some very direct way associated with the text of the preceding week."[24] He says that this divine circumstance let him "hear" the text in new ways. I cite this for the benefit of preachers who are reading this essay on "preaching relevance" with the hope that the use of commentaries will enable us to "hear" God's Word and to communicate its meaning faithfully to God's people. This does not mean, of course, that Fee's exegetical judgment is always correct, but that it is expressed with fervor. In how many commentaries does one find a hymn quoted in a footnote?[25]

Returning now to Phil 2:12–18, Fee describes the connection between this section and the Christ hymn more strongly than do some commentaries:

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[23] Silva, *Philippians*, 19.

[24] Gordon Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), xiii.

[25] Fee, *Philippians*, 226 n. 42, and 405 n. 22.

> Because of the splendor of the preceding passage, It is easy to forget its aim. But Paul has not forgotten. At issue is the gospel in Philippi: first of all their own "salvation" (v. 12), evidenced by continuing "obedience"—like that of their Savior (v. 8) . . . Thus, he returns to his present concern—"obedience" expressed through a common "mind set," for the sake of Christ and the Gospel—by applying to their situation what he has just written in 2:6–11.[26]

Although Fee is generous with his footnotes, he makes sure that the flow of thought in the text is not thereby interrupted. The preacher is helped along in his interaction with the text. The treatment of "work out your salvation" is extensive. Fee thinks that there is truth on both sides and further discussion is not needed.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary (hereafter EBC) is, as the title indicates, of special interest to preachers.[27] The preface to the original (1979) edition included these words, "Written primarily by expositors for expositors, it aims to provide preachers, teachers, and students of the Bible with a new and comprehensive commentary on the books of the Old and New Testaments." The revised edition changed the format somewhat, providing separate sections for Overview, Commentary, Reflections and Notes. Prior to my evaluation I must offer a disclaimer, because I authored the commentary on Luke in the first edition and co-authored it with David Pao in the revised edition. Having said that, I will say that I felt somewhat awkward in adapting the material to the several sections in the revised edition. The benefit of this, however, was for the very persons I have wanted to serve, the preachers.

In the revised edition of Philippians, David E. Garland's overview of Phil 2:12–18 elucidates the function of the passage more clearly than some commentaries do: "Paul draws out the logical consequences that Christ's acceptance of the role of a slave, his death on the cross, and his vindication by God have for his followers."[28] The commentary clearly addresses the need of the preacher. At one point Garland writes, "As a good pastor, Paul accentuates the positive and writes to them from a strengths perspective."[29] One advantage of this commentary is that it quotes from other recent commentaries. This gives the reader assurance that the author is bringing together the wisdom of other respected scholars. At the same

[26] Fee, *Philippians*, 229.

[27] Quoted in each volume, in this case volume 12, of the revised edition of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 7.

[28] David E. Garland, "Philippians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12 (ed. D. E. Garland and T. Longman III; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 224.

[29] Garland, "Philippians," 224.

time there is little discussion of alternate views, probably in the interests of making the best use of space to provide the most useful information. Regarding "work out your salvation," for instance, Garland notes that the verb is plural and does not refer to individual salvation. He quotes three scholars, two with apparent approval and the third with clear disapproval. In the Reflections section he comments further on the implications of that phrase.

The volume on Philippians in the NIV Application Commentary is by Frank Thielman.[30] As in the EBC, each passage is discussed under several categories, in this case they are Original Meaning, Bridging Contexts and Contemporary Significance. This allows the writer to attend carefully to the elements in the passage, to extract what might be called timeless truths adaptable in various cultures and circumstances, and then to express freely how it might be best applied in his own time and place. This last part varies considerably from author to author, as might be expected. Again a disclaimer is needed as I was author of the commentary in this series on the Pastoral Epistles.

Thielman's Preface gives us a personal understanding of what it meant for him as a professor to go beyond the text. Volumes in a series can be uneven in quality, and I have not sampled all those in this series, but I certainly can recommend Thielman's volume for those preaching from Philippians. His application of Phil 2:12–18 to contemporary circumstances is a good example. It is probably not necessary to discuss further the value of this and of the EBC series for the preacher in detail, because aiding the Bible expositor is the very reason for their publication and on the whole it is well done.

I will close by mentioning two relatively short commentaries published 20 years apart, The *New Century Bible Commentary: Philippians* by Ralph P. Martin[31] and *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* by D. A. Carson.[32] They are examples of how much can be expressed succinctly in a readable format, Martin using the embedded bold face text (RSV) and Carson quoting the biblical text (NIV) at the beginning of each chapter. Among their differences, however, is that Martin offers a typical

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[30] Frank Thielman, *Philippians* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

[31] Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1976; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

[32] D. A. Carson, *An Exposition of Philippians* (Basics for Believers; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

critical exegetical discussion, discussing issues at every point, whereas Carson uses a conversational style that warmly engages the reader, occasionally even by story telling, in the exploration of meaning and significance. Casual though it may seem, it presents biblical truth clearly and boldly (one would expect nothing less from Carson). To refer one more time to Phil 2:12, Carson lays out the alternative views we have already described and affirms both God's sovereign work, salvation, and our responsibility, obedience. He leaves it to the reader to see that this salvation is not merely salvation as solution to a social problem.

Placing Carson's exposition at the end of this chapter allows me to quote a paragraph from the back cover that presents an ideal picture of what should characterize commentaries, large or small, relevant to preaching:

> Those called upon to preach and teach regularly cannot help but benefit from *Basics for Believers*. Not only does it provide a model of preaching that melds solid exposition with relevant application, not only is it based on one of Paul's best-loved epistles, but it also reflects the keen insight of an internationally recognized Bible expositor.

There is clearly no best commentary for the preacher. The number, variety and quality of those now available will enrich the church and facilitate the calling of sinners to salvation through properly informed sermons. Perhaps the comments above will help in making appropriate choices. Preachers differ, congregations differ, modes of communication differ. God's Word remains true.

(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE PASTORAL OFFICE: WOLFGANG MUSCULUS'S COMMENTARIES ON 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

Scott M. Manetsch

Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) was one of the foremost commentators on Scripture in the age of the Reformation. During the course of his career as a Protestant minister and scholar, first in Augsburg and later in Bern, Musculus published ten biblical commentaries, including highly-regarded works on Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, John, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians. All of these exegetical writings were reprinted multiple times during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: his *Commentary on Matthew* was published nine times in all; his *Commentary on the Psalms* seven times; his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* five times.[1] Musculus's contemporaries recognized and praised the high quality of his biblical scholarship. John Calvin, in the preface to his own Psalms commentary, commended Musculus's interpretation of the Psalter, noting that "by his diligence and industry" Musculus deserved "no small praise in the judgment of good men."[2] In a similar fashion, Felix Cruciger, the superintendent of the Reformed churches of Small Poland, expressed his admiration and gratitude to the Bernese reformer in a letter written in 1556.

> We must give you great thanks because your sacred writings, which are especially helpful for building up the church of Christ, have benefited us more than all the others ... Your commentaries (*lucubrationes*) on the New Testament have been so useful to us and our church that we think that even if we had no commentaries other than yours in our possession that would

[1] For an inventory of Wolfgang Musculus's literary corpus, including the printing history of his commentaries, see Paul Romane-Musculus, "Catalogue des oeuvres imprimées du théologien Wolfgang Musculus," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 43 (1963): 260–78. See also Reinhard Bodenmann's discussion of the publications of Musculus, *Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563). Destin d'un autodidacte lorrain au siècle des Réformes* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2000), 556–70. Musculus published commentaries on Matthew (1544), John (1545), Psalms (1550), the Decalogue (1553), Genesis (1554), Romans (1555), Isaiah (1557), 1 and 2 Corinthians (1559), Galatians and Ephesians (1561), and Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy (1564).

[2] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. IV.2 (trans. James Anderson; repr. ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), xxxv.

> be sufficient to restore completely this edifice that was destroyed by the Antichrist.[3]

Musculus's reputation as a first-rate Protestant exegete continued after his death in 1563. In a work entitled *True Portraits of Illustrious Men* (1580), Theodore Beza celebrated the important role that Musculus had once played in the Protestant reformation through his preaching ministry and his weighty commentaries, thereby achieving "great honor and renown in the Church of God."[4] A hundred years later, the French Oratorian and biblical critic Richard Simon also singled out Musculus for special praise. "We can say," wrote Simon, "that this author knew the correct manner of explaining the Scripture."[5] Even so, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the exegetical and theological writings of Wolfgang Musculus had all but slipped into oblivion, a fact bluntly stated in Pierre Bayle's *Critical Dictionary* in 1740: "If [Musculus's] writings were at one time very useful to the party of the Protestants—as, no doubt they were—they are no longer. It has been a long time since anyone read them."[6] Musculus's method of exegesis was considered too old-fashioned, and his religious polemic too biting, to warrant serious consideration. Today, this state of benign neglect is only beginning to be rectified through the scholarship of historians such as Reinhard Bodenmann, Rudolf Dellsperger, Craig Farmer, and Marc van Wijnkoop Lüthi who are recovering the theological and exegetical insights of this important—but largely forgotten—theologian and biblical scholar of the sixteenth century.[7]

This essay will examine Wolfgang Musculus's Latin *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, an exegetical work of more than 400 pages in folio, first

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[3] Felix Cruciger to Wolfgang Musculus, 20 August 1556, cited in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 590–91.

[4] Theodore Beza, *Icones*, or *Les Vrais Portraits des Hommes Illustrés* (ed. Alain Dufour; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1986), 59–62.

[5] Richard Simon, *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1685), bk. III, chap. xiv, 438–39. Thereafter, however, Simon tempers his praise of Musculus by noting that his knowledge of the ancient languages was inadequate and that he did not make use of higher critical analysis: "On peut dire que cet Auteur a connu la veritable maniere d'expliquer l'Ecriture: mais il n'a pas eu tous les secours necessaires pour y réüssir parfaitement, parce qu'il n'étoit pas assez exercé dans l'étude des Langues & de la Critique" (439).

[6] Bayle, *Critical Dictionary*, 3:446. See Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 592.

[7] For a review of recent scholarship on Musculus, see Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 654–56, and Craig S. Farmer, "Wolfgang Musculus," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (ed. Donald McKim; 2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 765–69.

printed in 1559, that has never before received careful scholarly attention.[8] It is not my purpose to describe in detail the particular method of interpretation employed by Musculus in this commentary—although my analysis supports the findings of Craig Farmer who has shown that Musculus, in his exegetical approach, frequently appeals to moral and spiritual readings of the biblical text in order both to edify and promote the piety of his audience.[9] Rather, this study will demonstrate that one of Musculus's chief concerns in his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* is to describe and defend a distinctively Protestant, indeed reformed, conception of the pastoral office. For Musculus, commentary-writing serves as a platform for instructing ministers and ministerial candidates as to the duties, priorities, and difficulties that accompany the pastoral calling. In the conclusion of this essay, I will suggest that Musculus is not unique in this: many other Protestant exegetes in the sixteenth century employed the literary genre of biblical commentary to describe and defend a new model of the office of the Christian minister.

Wolfgang Musculus's role as an interpreter of the Bible was significantly shaped by the religious controversies in Germany and Switzerland during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. Musculus was born on September 8, 1497, in the village of Dieuze, Lorraine.[10] At the age of fifteen, he entered the Benedictine monastery in the nearby town of Lixheim, where he remained for the next decade and a half. During these years, Musculus was ordained to the priesthood and preached frequently in

[8] I have consulted for this chapter the second printing of Musculus's commentary, *In Ambas Apostoli Pauli Ad Corinthios Epistolas Commentarii* (Basel: Jean Herwagen, 1566), available at The Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts, http://solomon.tcpt.alexanderstreet.com, accessed on December 18, 2010. This edition of Musculus's commentary includes two parts, with separate pagination: *Commentarii Wolfgangi Musculi Dusani, In Priorem Epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios*, and *In Posteriorem Epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios Commentarii*. For the remainder of this essay, I will abbreviate these texts as *Comm. 1 Cor.* and *Comm. 2 Cor.*

[9] Craig Farmer, *The Gospel of John in the Sixteenth Century: The Johannine Exegesis of Wolfgang Musculus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8, 180–82.

[10] For essential biographical information on Wolfgang Musculus, see Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*. Bodenmann includes a richly annotated edition of the sixteenth-century biography of Musculus (in Latin, with French translation), written by his son Abraham Musculus in 1564. See Abraham Musculus, *Historia de vita et obitu clarissimmi theologi D. Wolfgangi Muscului*, in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 103–287. For additional biographical information, see Rudolf Dellsperger, Rudolf Freudenberger, and Wolfgang Weber, eds., *Wolfgang Musculus (1597–1563) und die oberdeutsche Reformation* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997); J. Wayne Baker, "Wolfgang Musculus," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (ed. Hans Hillerbrand; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3:103–104; Farmer, *The Gospel of John in the Sixteenth Century*.

the surrounding villages. These preaching assignments appear to have stimulated his study of Scripture and his interest in theology. He took to heart the advice of an old monk who once advised him: "If you want to become a good preacher, see to it that you become a good student of the Scripture."[11] Musculus probably encountered the writings of Martin Luther for the first time in 1518, and soon he was defending Luther's evangelical teachings within his monastery and incorporating them in his sermons. Musculus's reputation as "the Lutheran monk" soared.[12] Even so, it was only in 1527—when he was 30 years of age—that Musculus finally abandoned the monastic life and, with his young bride Margaretha Bart, moved to the city of Strasbourg in search of a new vocation.

The four years that Musculus lived in Strasbourg were decisive in his formation as a Protestant theologian and preacher. The city's reformers Matthias Zell and Martin Bucer quickly recognized the immense talent of this newcomer. Musculus was first assigned to the rural pastorate of Dorlisheim, and then called to Strasbourg where he served as Bucer's personal secretary and then as a preacher and pastoral assistant in the cathedral. In addition to his responsibilities as city minister, Musculus attended theological lectures delivered by Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, began to study biblical Hebrew, and continued to master Greek.[13] When Musculus departed Strasbourg for Augsburg in 1531, he did so as an accomplished preacher and a partisan of Bucer's brand of reformed Protestantism.[14]

Over the next three decades, Musculus provided strategic leadership for reformed churches, first in Augsburg and later in Bern. During his seventeen-year tenure in Augsburg, Musculus emerged as the chief minister and theologian of the city. He preached sermons daily in the cathedral church and delivered public lectures on Scripture three times a week intended for the city's pastors, vicars, students, and cultivated laypersons.[15] The material of these lectures was subsequently published as commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John. Musculus also played an important role in the fierce confessional debates of the period as he pressed Augsburg's magistrates to abolish the Catholic Mass and steered the church's official

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[11] *Historia de vita*, in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 130–31.

[12] *Historia de vita*, in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 132–33.

[13] For Musculus's acquisition and proficiency in the biblical languages, see Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 369–77.

[14] Though Musculus admired Bucer and subscribed to the general outline of his theology, he was not an uncritical disciple of the Strasbourg reformer (who was seven years his senior). See Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 327–33.

[15] *Historia de vita*, in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 160–63, 234 (n. 197).

theology between Lutheranism and Zwinglianism.[16] In the summer of 1548, Musculus's ministry in Augsburg came to an abrupt conclusion when the city's magistrates signed the Augsburg Interim in the aftermath of the military defeat of the Schmalkaldic League. Musculus, along with his wife and eight children, was forced to find a new home.

After months of uncertainty, Musculus was finally appointed professor of Holy Scripture at the municipal secondary school (*Hohe Schule*) in the reformed city of Bern, a post that he held for the final fourteen years of his life.[17] Musculus was not assigned regular parish duties during these years and, owing to his foreign dialect, he rarely preached in any of Bern's churches.[18] Instead, he spent his time engaged in intense biblical scholarship and delivering academic lectures in theology and biblical exegesis to young men who would one day become Bern's religious and political leaders. Many of these lectures subsequently appeared in published form, including a popular theological textbook entitled *Common Places on Sacred Theology* (1560) and six substantial commentaries covering Genesis, the Decalogue, Isaiah and ten of Paul's Epistles.[19] Given the institutional context of Musculus's exegetical writings, it is not surprising

[16] See James Thomas Ford, "Unter dem schein der concordien und confession: Wolfgang Musculus and the Confessional Identity of Augsburg, 1531–1548," in Rudolf Dellsperger, et al., *Wolfgang Musculus und die oberdeutsche Reformation*, 111–29. Though Musculus signed the Wittenberg Concord (1536), he never endorsed Luther's doctrine of Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper.

[17] For more on Bern's *Hohe Schule*, see Beat Immenhauser, "'Hohe Schule' oder Universität? Zur Pfarrerausbildung in Bern im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Politics and Reformations: Communities, Polities, Nations, and Empires* (eds. Christopher Ocker, Michael Printy, Peter Starenko, and Peter Wallace; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 143–77. A broader Swiss perspective is provided by Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 232–39.

[18] The *Historia de vita* reports that it was because of Musculus's lack of familiarity with the local dialect that he rarely preached in Bern. Bodenmann suggests, additionally, that Bern's magistrates were suspicious of Musculus's theological orientation, given his friendship with Martin Bucer and the fact that he had signed the Wittenberg Concord in 1536. See Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 181, 405–30.

[19] Bodenmann shows that Musculus's published commentaries began as public lectures in Bern's *Hohe Schule*. Thus, for example, Musculus delivered lectures on 1 & 2 Corinthians from the autumn of 1556 to early 1558; his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* was sent to the printer in June 1558 and published in Basel in January 1559. Although Musculus no doubt revised these lectures for publication, the overall structure, argument, and content of his exegetical comments probably remained largely unchanged. In a letter to Ambrose Blaurer in 1554, Musculus described his method of interpreting the Scripture at the *Hohe Schule* as follows: first, he surveyed various interpretations of the biblical text offered by the fathers of the Church and contemporary exegetes; then, he articulated and defended his own interpretation of the text. This same method of presentation is witnessed in Musculus's published commentaries. See Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 460–61, 570.

that his commentaries frequently address topics related to the theology and practice of pastoral ministry. Both in the lecture hall, and in his published commentaries, Wolfgang Musculus sets forth a broad vision of the pastoral office, its duties, priorities, and challenges, intended to instruct pastoral candidates as well as veteran parish clergy.

Musculus's *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* illustrates particularly well the reformer's concern to construct a reformed understanding of the ministerial office. Criticisms of the Catholic priesthood run as a leitmotif through his commentary. From Musculus's perspective, the traditional church has fundamentally subverted the biblical model of the pastoral office by vaunting the pope's authority over the church, turning a blind eye to clerical worldliness and veniality, and defining the priest's role in terms of reciting Masses and hearing private confessions rather than proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Musculus criticizes the Roman Church for preferring "one hundred priests, performing Masses" to "one minister of the Word of God, faithfully teaching the truth."[20] Instead of attending to the spiritual wellbeing and salvation of God's people, Catholic clergymen pursue their own selfish advantage, dominating their flocks to serve their own wealth and pleasure.[21] The Roman pontiff may boast that he is "the servant of all servants," but, in fact says Musculus, he is nothing more than an imposter of Satan who dominates, corrupts, and cheats the people of God.[22]

With the Catholic priesthood serving as his polemical foil, Musculus in his *Commentary* describes in detail the nature and responsibilities of the reformed office of pastor. On the one hand, Musculus affirms the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers: Scripture gives to all Christians the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming God's glory within the assembly. But even so, the office of Christian minister is a unique, divine vocation, and pastoral duties such as preaching or administering the sacraments should not be performed by lay persons except in an emergency.[23] Musculus draws on the rich language of Scripture to describe legitimate Christian ministers: they are shepherds, pastors, and bishops; they are stewards of God's mysteries; they are ministers of the Word, ministers of

[20] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 14:24*, 570.
[21] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 2:10, 5:10*, 74, 168.
[22] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 7:2*, 221.
[23] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 14:31*, 583–84. Musculus does not indicate what might constitute such an "emergency."

God's Spirit, ministers of the gospel. Ministers are like spiritual farmers who plant spiritual seed and cultivate and prune God's garden.[24] For Musculus, the importance of the pastoral office is derived from the glorious gospel message that ministers proclaim. Commenting on Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:14 that "those who proclaim the gospel should receive their living from the gospel," Musculus notes:

> The substance of Christian ministry is found in speaking the gospel—not in reciting and singing Masses. The method by which ministers serve the Lord is in proclaiming the Word. Notice here that Paul appropriately joins the gospel to proclamation, rather than to making laws or issuing commands. The gospel is the good news of salvation provided to the whole world through Christ, and received by faith in Christ. The Lord wants this gospel to be proclaimed to people throughout the whole world, with great joy and gladness.[25]

As pastors announce the gospel message they impart spiritual life to God's people, providing them "true happiness in this present life" and "eternal happiness" in the next.[26]

Owing to the dignity of the pastoral office, Musculus believes that Christian ministers should possess exemplary character and be committed to the well-being of Christ's church. Ministers must be persons of faith, moral purity, wisdom, and humility.[27] Theological training and extensive biblical knowledge are important, but ultimately Christian ministers should find their sufficiency in God alone, who equips them with the spiritual armor of truth, zealous faith, burning love, and patience in affliction.[28] Musculus defends clerical marriage. Whether married or unmarried, pastors must conduct themselves in moral purity, free from lust and fornication.[29] In his treatment of 2 Corinthians 6:3—a passage where the apostle defends the moral integrity of his ministry—Musculus enumerates a laundry list of vices that Catholic clergy regularly commit, and that evangelical pastors must scrupulously avoid: ministers must not drink at taverns, gamble, engage in business deals, break their word, charge usury, or run after more lucrative pastoral positions. Faithful Christian ministers must be above

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[24] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 3:6*, 86.
[25] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 9:14*, 287.
[26] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 9:11*, 281–82.
[27] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 4:1*, 113.
[28] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 3:5* and *10:4–5*, 89–90, 301–302.
[29] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 6:5*, 200–201.

reproach, committed to promoting God's glory rather than their own pleasure, always attentive to the spiritual needs of their parishioners.[30] One quality that Musculus believes is especially important for reformed pastors is that they love their people.[31] Pastoral affection and concern must be expressed for all God's people, the rich and poor, nobles and common folk, the well-educated and the ignorant.[32] Ultimately, God will judge pastors according to the well-being of their spiritual flock. Musculus comments: "The glory of the shepherd is his flock, if it is well cared for. And the glory of the flock is its shepherd, if he is genuine."[33]

Of all the pastoral duties required of a Christian minister, Musculus argues that none is more important than preaching. In his *Commentary* where Musculus enumerates the chief duties of a pastor—and here he includes administering the sacraments, leading public worship, reciting public prayers, visiting the sick, and catechizing the ignorant—he declares that all of these are "of lesser importance" (*quae minoris sunt momenti*) than preaching the gospel.[34] It is through the ministry of preaching that the Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Christ. It is through preaching that the Spirit renders God's people holy and spiritually mature. It is through preaching that Christians are united to Christ.[35] Nothing in this world, writes Musculus, is "more useful and precious" and "worthy of greater honor" than proclaiming the gospel.[36] Consequently, when Musculus lists the five essential marks of a Christian minister in his comments on 2 Corinthians 2:17, three of these marks treat the ministry of preaching: (1) true ministers *preach*; (2) true ministers preach *Christ*; (3) true ministers preach *with sincerity*; (4) true ministers are appointed by God; (5) true ministers perform their duties in the sight of God and for his approval.[37] For Musculus, preaching stands at the center of the minister's vocation.

Musculus's *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* offers extensive practical advice to preachers. Faithful Christian preaching includes two basic

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30 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 6:3*, 197.

31 Musculus comments: "The minister of Christ loves the believers whom he governs by the Word" (*Comm. 2 Cor. 7:15*, 240).

32 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 11:29*, 364.

33 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 1:14*, 43–44.

34 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 14:31*, 583. Elsewhere, in his comments on 1 Corinthians 1:17, Musculus notes that preaching the gospel "excels the responsibility to baptize people" (*Comm. 1 Cor. 1:17*, 33).

35 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 3:6*, 86 and *2 Cor. 11:2*, 324.

36 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 11:7*, 335.

37 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 2:17*, 82.

elements: teaching and consolation (*doctrina et consolatio*).[38] Ministers *teach* when they preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers and when they instruct God's elect from the Word so as to build them up in faith and godliness. Preachers provide *consolation* as they apply Scripture to their parishioners' particular life circumstances, their problems, struggles, temptations, and needs. Musculus believes that homiletic style needs to be adapted to achieve these objectives. Sermons must be in the vernacular tongue. Preachers should avoid flowery rhetoric and cryptic language; they need to speak with clarity, confidence, and boldness.[39] "In the church of Christ," Musculus notes, "it is more important for ministers to possess the knowledge of divine things and proclaim . . . indispensible knowledge with intelligible words than to employ splendid rhetoric."[40] Moreover, the Christian minister must preach with passion, eager to win unbelievers to Christ and to impress God's Word on the hearts of his Christian audience. The effective preacher makes every effort to demonstrate to his congregation the ways in which the message of the Bible informs and is consistent with the experiences of daily life.[41] In every sermon, then, the Protestant preacher should attempt to "accommodate his teaching to the understanding of his hearers."[42] Musculus does not believe, however, that the effectiveness of Christian preaching is determined solely by the content of the minister's message and the homiletic style employed. Ultimately, preaching is a spiritual activity whose fruitfulness depends on the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, Christian ministers need to pray diligently as they prepare and deliver their sermons to their congregations. Musculus observes,

> Ministers of Christ should pray to God not only for the gift of understanding and speech, but also for fruitful growth [in their hearers]. They should pray not only in church with the congregation of the faithful in the customary fashion, but also in the privacy of their own homes out of their burning zeal, praying that they might also speak in church more passionately and powerfully. The mouth of the person who instructs is cold and lifeless if his heart has not first warmed the sermon with the spirit and ardor of prayer.

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38 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 14:31*, 583. Elsewhere, Musculus identifies three aspects of Christian proclamation: aedificatio, exhortatio, and consolatio. See *Comm. 1 Cor. 14:3*, 537–38.

39 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 3:11*, 103; *2 Cor. 6:11*, 207.

40 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 11:6*, 332.

41 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 9:8*, 279–80.

42 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 9:19*, 295–96.

In sum, the Christian minister "should be one who prays before he speaks."[43]

The general outline of Musculus's pastoral theology that we have described to this point was not at all original with him. Nearly all Protestant leaders in the sixteenth century gave priority to the ministry of preaching, recognized the Spirit's decisive role in pastoral work, defended clerical marriage and the priesthood of all believers, and launched blistering attacks on the Catholic clergy. The distinctively *reformed* texture of Musculus's theology of the pastoral office is seen in the way he treats the sacraments and church discipline. In his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, Musculus identifies two legitimate sacraments in Christ's Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each of these sacraments communicates God's gifts to those who receive them in faith. The sacrament of Baptism is the seal by which God pledges himself to the elect and binds them to himself through the Holy Spirit.[44] The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, is a sacramental feast in which believers enjoy spiritual communion with the true flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.[45] In his sacramental theology, therefore, Musculus subscribes to neither Zwingli's memorialism nor Luther's doctrine of real presence.[46] In addition to administering the sacraments, reformed pastors are also responsible to oversee the moral behavior of their parishioners and, when necessary, apply church discipline to those who refuse to repent. Ministers are spiritual fathers who "care for the souls of believers" through moral discipline.[47] According to Musculus's *Commentary*, there are three purposes for ecclesiastical discipline: to maintain the purity of the church, to bring sinners to repentance, and to prevent the contagion of sin from spreading to other church members. Excommunication should be reserved only for the most

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[43] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 13:7*, 408–409.

[44] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 1:22*, 55.

[45] Musculus writes: "Qui sic spiritualiter communicant, hi non in sacramento, ut cum Augustino loquar. i. sacramentaliter tantum, sed & vere carnem Christi manducant, & sanguine bibunt, hoc est, vere de merito & fructu mortis illius vivunt" (*Comm. 1 Cor. 10:16*, 345–46). Hence, the believer communes on Christ's body neither spatially nor corporally, but sacramentally. For a helpful statement of Musculus's Eucharistic doctrine, including discussion of this passage, see Craig Farmer, "Eucharistic Exhibition and Sacramental Presence in the New Testament Commentaries of Wolfgang Musculus," in *Dellsperger, Freudenberger, and Weber, Wolfgang Musculus*, 299–310.

[46] See Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 502–34, and Farmer, "Eucharistic Exhibition," 299–310.

[47] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 2:6*, 69–70.

egregious of sins; it should be imposed in public by the entire Christian community; and, it should include social separation as well as religious sanction. The goal of church discipline must always be restorative rather than punitive.[48] Though Musculus defends the practice of church discipline, he warns repeatedly against its abuse. "I see some people today," he notes, "who are not so much committed to mourning [sin] as they are to excommunicating people. And they use excommunication not so much for restoring sinners as for excluding them."[49] (Musculus may well have Geneva-style church discipline in view here.)[50] Musculus argues that such severity is not only unbiblical, but pastorally disastrous. Following the example of the Apostle Paul, reformed ministers must show moderation and gentleness as they correct sinners. They must avoid all pharisaical zeal and self-righteousness.[51] They should intermingle tears with their reproaches.[52] Pastors must never forget that church discipline is spiritual medicine intended to heal, not kill, the patient.

Finally, Wolfgang Musculus in his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* has much to say about the challenges and difficulties that faithful pastors are likely to encounter in their ministries. Despite the Apostle Paul's instruction that ministers "should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14), many evangelical churches do not provide adequate financial support for their ministers. Pastors should not be surprised if their service on behalf of Christ's Church is not valued and they receive insufficient compensation for their labors.[53] Moreover, preachers who announce God's truth should expect to face hostility from those who are enemies of the gospel, both within and outside of their congregations.[54] The more zealous a minister is in proclaiming Christ, the more troubles, afflictions, and dangers he should expect to encounter.[55] "This is the common lot of all true ministers of Christ," Musculus observes, "that even as they are praised by good people, they are attacked and harshly criticized with countless insults by

48 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 5:9–13*, 147–48.
49 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 12:21*, 397.
50 Helpful discussion of the tensions between Bern and Geneva over the practice of church discipline is found in Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus*, 339–43; and Michael W. Bruening, *Calvin's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 180–82, 239–63.
51 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 10:1*, 297.
52 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 2:4–6*, 65–67.
53 Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 9:7*, 277–78 and *1 Cor. 11:7–8*, 335–37.
54 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 4:8*, 132.
55 Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 11:23*, 358.

wicked people."[56] Paradoxically, such hostility and difficulties—when they are borne on account of the gospel—serve as sure proofs of faithfulness in Christian ministry. Reformed pastors will endure other kinds of suffering as well. They will experience deep anguish and shed many tears as they witness the miseries of the world and the moral failings of their people.[57] They will engage in constant spiritual battle with Satan and his servants who seek to destroy the Church. They will often be despised and taken for fools.[58] Yet, in the face of these continual hardships, Musculus insists that those who labor in God's vineyard will also experience true joy and contentment as they watch men and women growing in Christian faith and personal holiness. "I do not doubt that comfort of this sort . . . consoles the faithful minister of Christ who seeks in his ministry nothing else than to produce much fruit for his Lord."[59]

In this essay we have demonstrated that Wolfgang Musculus in his *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* develops in detail a distinctively reformed conception of the pastoral office. Musculus's pastoral insights are sometimes drawn directly from the language of the biblical text itself. On other occasions, the reformer moves well beyond the horizon of the text to make moral lessons and draw practical applications especially relevant for men preparing for the pastoral vocation or already engaged in parish ministry. The prominence of pastoral themes in Musculus's *Commentary* is not all that surprising given the reformer's extensive experience in pastoral work as well as the academic setting for which these exegetical lessons were originally written. Like any good professor, it appears that Wolfgang Musculus shaped his lecture material to meet the needs and career goals of his students.

Nevertheless, the correlation between commentary-writing and pastoral formation deserves special emphasis, for it has received inadequate attention from scholars who have studied the history of exegesis during the age of the Reformation. In the midst of turbulent religious change, Protestant leaders in the sixteenth century substantially redefined the role of the Christian minister, calling for nothing less than a reformation of the pastoral office. Whereas the traditional church defined the role of

[56] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 6:8*, 204.
[57] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 2:4*, 67.
[58] Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor. 4:11–13*, 123.
[59] Musculus, *Comm. 2 Cor. 7:13*, 237–38.

parish priest as primarily sacramental and liturgical—performing baptisms, celebrating the Mass, and hearing confessions—the Protestant reformers argued instead for a model of pastoral ministry that gave priority to preaching the gospel and providing pastoral supervision within the church. This evangelical conception of the pastoral office was institutionalized through Protestant church ordinances, and then transmitted to new generations of Protestant clergy and pastoral candidates through a variety of pedagogical forms. Young men were trained in theology, homiletics, and biblical exegesis at Protestant universities and academies, and through institutions such as Zurich's *Prophezai*.[60] Many pastoral candidates learned their craft with the help of catechisms, pastoral handbooks, and preaching manuals produced by scholars and practitioners such as Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Martin Bucer, Niels Hemmingsen, and Andreas Hyperius.[61] In rural parishes, Lutheran and reformed ministers may well have used printed sermon collections, written by popular Protestant preachers, to glean practical pastoral advice and theological instruction for their own ministries.[62] Finally, as we have demonstrated in this essay, Reformation commentaries also served as an important resource for shaping pastoral identity and guiding Protestant ministers in their work of preaching and pastoral care. The rich deposit of pastoral material that we have mined out of Wolfgang Musculus's *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, is also found in the published commentaries of other

[60] See, for example, Amy Nelson Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel, 1529–1629* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560–1620* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1995).

[61] Most of the major Protestant reformers wrote catechisms, many of which addressed the nature and duties of the pastoral office. Additionally, several of the reformers published handbooks to instruct Christian ministers in their roles as preachers and spiritual counselors. See, for example, Philip Melanchthon, *De officiis concionatoris* (1523), Martin Bucer, *Von der waren Seelsorge* (1538), Andreas Hyperius, *De formandis concionibus sacris* (1553) and *De recte formando theologiae* (1556), and Niels Hemmingsen, *Ecclesiasten sive methodum theologicam interpretandi, concionandique continent* (1559).

[62] Luther recommended that his *postills* be read aloud in parish churches that did not have pastors competent to preach. See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*. Vol. 2. *Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532* (trans. James L. Schaff, 3 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 15–17. Likewise, Beza reports in his preface to the Latin translation of Calvin's sermons on the book of Job (1593), that the reformer's sermons were "greatly appreciated" in French reformed congregations. Indeed, in parishes "that did not have their own shepherd and teacher, these sermons were presented from the pulpit in regular meetings of the congregations." Hence, "in these very difficult times in France, many people are wonderfully encouraged by them both in the church and in their families" (*CO* 33, cols. 13–14).

sixteenth-century exegetes, including Martin Luther, Heinrich Bullinger, John Calvin, and Lambert Daneau, to name but a few.[63] During the first generations of the Reformation, therefore, commentary-writing was one important way that Protestant leaders dismantled the medieval conception of the priesthood and constructed a new model of the office of Christian pastor.

[63] The frequency with which Protestant commentators discuss the pastoral office and its duties is illustrated in the first three volumes of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* that I have reviewed to date. See, for example, Gerald L. Bray, ed., *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011).

PART THREE

COMMENTARIES AND THEOLOGY

THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY AND "THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN": EXEGESIS, ONTOLOGY, AND THE TRAVAIL OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Kevin J. Vanhoozer

> You must take care when interpreting the Scriptures not to be too greatly fixated upon the places, times, or people who wrote them down, as if they were merely human compositions. Rather you ought to rely on the clarity and sufficiency of the Spirit.
>
> Hilary of Arles[1]

> The great peril of theological commentary, let me say right here at the beginning, is the peril of allegorical exegesis, treating Scripture like a wax nose, making it say whatever the theological commentator already believes it should say, and so 'using' Scripture rather than being used *by* Scripture to say only what it says.
>
> Frederick Dale Bruner[2]

Kevin Vanhoozer, a servant of the gospel and minister of understanding, to Grant Osborne, fellow servant of the word of God, and to all the saints and scholars who diligently study the New Testament Scriptures: grace to you and peace. I give thanks, Grant, for your partnership in hermeneutics, and praise for your years of faithful service in the vineyard of theological education. What follows is a theological offering to an exegete and friend, a contribution to an ongoing discussion about the hermeneutical partnership of biblical studies and systematic theology. Such conversation is necessary, perhaps more now than ever, as a recent e-mail exchange with one of my doctoral students makes abundantly clear.

1. *Prefiguring the Problem: Theological Competence in Biblical Interpretation*

"Michael" sent me a methodological question in connection with a paper he was writing exploring Matthew's account of the transfiguration,

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1 *Comm. on 2 Peter* in A. Hamman, ed., *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1958–), 3:110.

2 *Matthew: A Commentary.* Vol. 1. *The Christbook* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), xxxi.

specifically the allusions to Moses' speaking with God on Mt. Sinai. Exodus 20:18–21 refers to the people's seeing the thunder and lightning that accompanied God's speaking to Moses and stresses their fear of hearing God's voice: "[The people] said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Exod 20:19). The account in Deuteronomy does not mention fearing, but rather not seeing God: "The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deut 4:12). What struck Michael was not simply the number of parallels between Jesus' Transfiguration and Sinai (scholars have noted these before) but rather a significant contrast: while Deuteronomy insists that the people saw "no form," Matthew takes pains to note that the disciples, when they recovered from their fear, saw "no one but Jesus only" (Matt 17:8). What is the point of this detail? What kind of theological comment might one give here? Michael confessed to being stuck: "I want to say something about Jesus' divinity but I don't really know how. I don't know whether to call what I am doing proof-texting, systematic theology (arguing that we can deduce Jesus' divinity from Matthew), theological interpretation (reading Matthew 17 though the lens of Nicene Christology), biblical theology, or something else!"[3] He is not alone: how to read the Bible—like any other ancient text or uniquely as Christian Scripture—has become a bone of hermeneutical contention between biblical scholars and systematic theologians. What types of observations are appropriate with regard to New Testament texts? In particular, what is a "theological" comment?

Grant Osborne is everything a systematic theologian could wish for in a dialogue partner about the nature of theological commentary: he has written one of the standard textbooks on biblical interpretation, four commentaries and, most recently, an important essay on hermeneutics and theological interpretation.[4] Moreover, it so happens that Michael's question concerned a paper he was writing on the transfiguration for a course on the Gospel of Matthew taught by . . . Dr. Osborne![5] When I learned that Grant himself had written his M.A. thesis on the Transfiguration, devoted

[3] Michael Kibbe, personal correspondence (March 17, 2011).

[4] G. R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Theological Interpretation," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century. Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger and R. W. Yarbrough; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011) 62–86.

[5] I am indebted to Michael for giving me permission to share this anecdote, and for letting me see his completed paper, "'Who do you say that I am?' Jesus, Moses, and God at Sinai in Mt. 17:1–8."

separate sections to "exegesis" and "theology," and opened with the claim that "Hardly a systematic theology has been written which discusses the theological significance of the Transfiguration,"[6] the inter-textual connections proved too compelling to ignore. I immediately decided to take up the challenge and focus the present essay on the ways in which commentators have interpreted the voice from the cloud heard at Jesus' transfiguration. There are several reasons why the voice from heaven is a particularly apt choice. In the first place, as to subject matter, the voice of God clearly qualifies as "theological." Second, the theme of divine speaking pervades the Scriptures, and the voice from heaven occurs at several crucial junctions in both the Old and New Testaments. Yet, third, the prominence of the theme seems to be in inverse proportion to the attention commentators typically give it. Fourth, the voice from heaven is a subset of a much larger class of divine speech acts for which commentators must give a theological account. Finally, the voice from heaven raises questions about the possible relationship between the voice coming from the cloud at Jesus' transfiguration, the voice that comes from the cloud of canonical witnesses (i.e. the human authors of the biblical texts), and the voice from out of the cloud of post-apostolic witnesses (i.e. the tradition of biblical interpretation in the church).

2. *Theological Commentary or Theological Interpretation of Scripture? The State of the Question*

What makes exegesis and commentary "theological"? One of the most surprising developments in the genre of commentary writing over the forty-year course of Osborne's career has been the resurgent interest in "theological interpretation of Scripture" after a century of various kinds of critical commentary. Miroslav Volf says, "the return of biblical scholars to the theological reading of the Scriptures, and the return of systematic theologians to sustained engagement with the scriptural texts … is *the most significant theological development in the last two decades*."[7] While significant, it is not entirely novel: some of the elements that make exegesis "theological" are evident in the work of evangelical biblical scholars in

[6] Grant Osborne, "The Transfiguration: A Critical, Exegetical and Theological Study" (M.A. thesis; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1971), 135.

[7] M. Volf, *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 14.

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The purpose of the present essay is therefore to strengthen the theological right arm of exegetes who are already doing what this article recommends, and to encourage other evangelical biblical scholars to make sure that their faith conviction in the divine authorship of Scripture does not remain merely notional but becomes fully operative. Just what "operative" means remains to be seen.

"TIS" has become the mantra for several new institutional and publishing ventures: ETS and SBL working groups, the *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. It has also generated new commentary series, including the Two Horizons Commentary (Eerdmans), the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Brazos), and the International Theological Commentary (T&T Clark). Though the renewal movement is still in its early stages, evangelical biblical scholars have already begun to express serious concerns, leading the observer to wonder whether TIS will fulfill its initial promise to be a "uniter rather than divider" of the two disciplinary approaches that lay claim to providing theological commentary, namely, biblical scholarship and systematic theology.[8]

There are now a number of good introductions to theological interpretation.[9] What they present is not a single uniform approach so much as a number of related "theological" interests. These include a concern (1) to read the Old and New Testaments together as the church's unique and unified Christian Scripture, (2) to read in continuity with the church fathers, guided by the creeds, (3) to read Scripture for the sake of the church's edification and communion with God, and (4) to read with interpretive virtues and with an aim to the interpreter's spiritual formation. In sum, biblical interpretation is theological because it begins, proceeds, and ends with the reality of the triune God—the author, subject matter, and finisher of the "word of faith" (Rom 10:8).

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[8] I try to mediate this strained marriage in "Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies and the Hard Place of Systematic Theology: The State of the Evangelical (Dis)union," in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission* (ed. Richard Lints; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming). Frequently cited concerns include (1) its lack of definition, (2) its tendency to focus on Nicene rather than Reformation theology, (3) its openness to multiple meanings in Scripture, (4) its lack of clarity, or consensus, on the nature of Scripture.

[9] See Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Stephen Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

The Exegetical Industrial Complex Strikes Back: On Not Abandoning the Historical

"Theological interpretation of Scripture" is not so much a uniform method as a set of shared concerns, and not everyone puts the accent in the same place. The movement has had a growth spurt, but has yet to achieve its final stature. Yet it has reached a certain degree of maturity, and a number of biblical scholars find some of its adolescent tendencies disturbing, not least its boast in the superiority of precritical interpretation. In particular, these biblical scholars take issue with the way in which theological interpreters appeal to the church fathers (and their medieval sons) to support the superiority of theology over history, ruled meaning over original meaning, and interpretive community over authorial intentions.

Osborne deconstructs all three binary hierarchies by claiming that the author's historical meaning *is* the theological meaning: "There is no need to replace historical interpretation with theological interpretation, for they are one and the same."[10] This will surprise those champions of theological interpretation who complain that biblical scholars too often treat the text as if it had a "natural history" only. One rightly suspects that the various parties in the discussion are working with differing, even opposing, concepts of history and theology. Don Carson agrees. He supports the desire associated with theological interpretation of Scripture to set free those who are captive to methodological naturalism (the idea that history is simply one non-supernatural thing after another). Such flat views of history systematically exclude "strong" theology (i.e. talk about *God*) from the discussion and make do with "weak" theology (i.e. describing the beliefs and feelings—the religion—of those who talk about God). Yet "it is not history that is the problem, but a kind of naturalistic history."[11] If "history" refers to what happened in the past, evangelical biblical scholars want to insist that this includes *supernatural* events. Not all who employ the grammatical-historical method therefore bow the knee to naturalism. Something good has come out of Berlin after all: surely Reformation philology and modern archaeology represent net gains to our understanding of the text and contexts of the Bible. Adolf Schlatter is an excellent example of a biblical scholar who displayed grammatical sensitivity, historical awareness, *and* theological acumen. He corroborates the point that

10 Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Theological Interpretation," 66.
11 D. A. Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, but . . .," in *Theological Commentary* (ed. R. M. Allen; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 190.

Osborne and Carson want to make: that many evangelical biblical scholars who practice grammatical-historical interpretation approach the text with theological concerns too. More pointedly: grammatical-historical interpretation *is* theological interpretation of Scripture. Exegetes who believe this to be so are understandably confused about the fuss over theological interpretation. It is not as if the hermeneutical wheel was first invented in the twenty-first century.

Towards an Ancient/Future Commentary: On Relocating the Theological

Theological interpreters tell the story differently. Once upon a time, the commentary was one of the "primary means of theological reflection."[12] As the Bible became a document of the university, however, what was once a living word turned into an object of critical historical reflection. What previously housed the voice of God has become a den for source, form, and tradition critics concerned with the world behind the text and the history of its composition.

Osborne's and Carson's points are well taken: being historical is not necessarily inimical to theology. Indeed, Christian theology is thoroughly historical: "He is risen!" However, the ambiguity on the part of theological interpreters over the meaning of "historical" is matched by a similar vagueness when biblical scholars employ the term "theological." Hence the urgent question: what exactly is the force of "theological" when we use it to qualify "exegesis" and "commentary"?

The question is not new. Hans Windisch was already discussing the difference between historical and theological exegesis in the mid-twentieth century.[13] The former concerns "the message in its original setting, while theological exegesis has to do with the message itself."[14] Specifically, theological exegesis "looks for the authoritative Word of God in this literature ... [and] endeavors to interpret the New Testament, its statements, admonitions, warnings, threats, and promises, as directed to us in our own situation."[15] Theological exegesis builds on and respects the original

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12 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts* (BTCB; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 25.

13 As was Karl Barth even earlier. See Richard E. Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

14 Hans Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount: A Contribution to the Historical Understanding of the Gospels and to the Problem of Their True Exegesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1951), 154–55.

15 Ibid., 157.

historical context, though its attention is on the present situation: "the historian criticizes the Bible, while the theologian with the help of the Bible criticizes himself, and his times."[16] Windisch views the necessarily subjective element in this enterprise as "both the strength and the weakness of all theological exegesis."[17] F. F. Bruce works with a similar distinction. Grammatical-historical exegesis aims at discovering what the human author intended to convey, theological interpretation approaches the Bible as Scripture, the unified record of God's unique self-revelation. Bruce goes on to say, intriguingly enough, that "the whole canon provides a theological context," with the whole of church history with its reception of the Bible as Scripture, constituting "a further context."[18] We shall return to the question of context in due course. The salient point at present is that Bruce never explains how the two forms of exegesis/commentary relate. By and large, there is no consensus on what makes interpretation theological: is it a function of context (and if so, how large), content (and if so, what kind), or community interests (and if so, which ones)?

To judge by the relative space given over to "theology," commentaries produced by biblical scholars typically make it a side dish; theology is almost never the main course. The Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series (to which Osborne has contributed the volume on Matthew) is a case in point. Contributors situate each biblical passage in its broader literary context, outline its structure, sum up its main idea, and then "explain" it. "Explanation" is the moment of exegesis proper, where the commentator conveys the author's meaning: "Commentators examine words and images, grammatical details, relevant OT and Jewish background to a particular concept, historical and cultural context, important text-critical issues, and various interpretational issues that surface."[19] Only in a subsequent section ("Theology in Application") do commentators "take a moment and reflect on the theological contribution that [the passage] makes," first to the message of the book as a whole and then for the church today.[20] This way of putting it confirms the suspicion that biblical scholars mean something different by "theological" than do theological interpreters when they employ the term.

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[16] Ibid., 165.

[17] Ibid., 166.

[18] F. F. Bruce, "Interpretation of the Bible," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 565–58.

[19] Clinton E. Arnold, series introduction to *Matthew*, by Grand R. Osborne (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 11–12.

[20] Ibid., 12.

Evangelical biblical scholars typically dance the historical-theological "two-step": first description ("what it meant"), then application ("what it means"). To be sure, they come to the task with theological presuppositions (faith) and purposes (edification), so there is something "theological" at both the beginning and end of their interpretations. However, Daniel Treier identifies a worrisome theology-shaped hole in the "middle" of the exegetical exercise: the hard work of interpretation—establishing the text; parsing the verbs; researching the background; making sense of the text in light of its background, its human author(s), and immediate historical context—is by and large non-theological.[21] The order is exegesis (interpretation) first, *then* theology (application). In other words, this is interpretation *sans* theology, *not* "theological interpretation." What, then, is missing? I am tempted to reply: attention to the properly *theological* context, by which I mean (a) the *canonical* context, i.e. the whole of Scripture as a unified work of the divine author, (b) the *creedal* context, i.e. the Trinitarian theology of orthodox tradition and their concomitant biblical interpretations, and (c) the *catholic* context, i.e. a consciousness of what the church at other times and places have discovered in the text.

Perhaps the key difference between the two approaches to being theological is as simple as the contrast between *content* and *context*. Biblical scholars believe they are interpreting theologically when they reflect on the theological content of Scripture in historical context (e.g., what Matthew believes about *Jesus Christ*; what Paul says about *justification by faith*). This is partially correct. However, though the topics are theological, the context is still historical; unbelieving historians could in principle (depending on presuppositions) achieve the same results. In contrast, theological interpretation insists that the context for the whole process of biblical interpretation—beginning, end, and middle—is *theology-laden*, reliant on presuppositions concerning God's presence, nature, and character.[22] Every aspect and element of biblical exegesis—every jot and

[21] See his chapter in the present volume. John C. Poirer complains that proponents of TIS have illegitimately co-opted, and narrowed, the label "theological" in order to exclude other approaches, such as the grammatical-historical, by definition ("'Theological Interpretation' and its Contradistinctions," *TynBul* 61 [2010], 105–18). In my view, both exegetes and systematic theologians are obliged to say what they mean by "theological," hence the burden of the present essay.

[22] Note that this is not just a regional instance of the more general phenomenon of being "theory-laden." By theology-laden I mean that every element in the process of biblical interpretation—authors, texts, readers—is caught up in the divine economy of communication (see below).

tittle; every context, past and present—is related to God: biblical interpretation involves *God's creatures* interpreting *God's word* in *God's world*. While this insight may not affect what happens on the more basic levels of exegesis (an aorist is an aorist for Christians and non-Christian alike), it will have a decisive effect on other levels (e.g. whether or not to read in canonical context).[23] It is therefore incumbent on would-be theological interpretation to use theological categories to understand the author, subject matter, reader, and process of reading itself.[24] I shall return to this point below. Suffice it to say that theological interpretation goes beyond (but not against!) typical grammatical-historical approaches by refusing to accord pride of place to the original historical context. Better: theological interpreters refuse to limit the notion of historical context to what modern historiography can ascertain. "We must appropriate without capitulating. Historical method is a wonderful handmaid and a terrible master."[25] The real problem is that biblical scholars are often not historical enough. One reason why exegetes employ the two-step approach described above is that they assume a "thin" conception of history that overlooks just how theologically saturated events—the history behind, in, and in front of the text—actually are. By contrast, theological interpreters view historical context itself in relation to God. This point requires further elaboration.

"Theological interpretation of Scripture" means attending not only to the doctrinal *content* of the Bible (e.g., its message about God and Jesus Christ) but also to the theological *context* of its interpretation. Historical context we know, but who, theological context, are you?[26] By "theological context" I mean the redemptive-historical context of authors, texts, and readers alike.[27] What is theological about the redemptive-historical context is its reminder that history is the field for divine action (more on this

[23] I owe this clarification to a question from Andrew Cowan.

[24] Darren Sarisky defines theological interpretation as "a mode of reading whose aim is knowledge of God and which uses theological categories to depict the text, the situation of its readers and the practice of reading" ("What is Theological Interpretation? The Example of Robert W. Jenson," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 [2010] 202).

[25] R. Michael Allen, "Introduction: Theological Commentary," in *Theological Commentary* (ed. R. M. Allen; London: T&T Clark, forthcoming).

[26] Cf. Joel Green's discussion of context in terms of the sociohistorical setting of authors, co-texts of texts, and situations of readers ("Context," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* [ed. K. J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 130–132).

[27] This contrasts with proposals like Walter Moberly that view the theology of the book of Genesis "in the context of its reception and use" (*The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xxii). The redemptive-historical context includes the world in front of the text, but is not limited to it.

below)—divine speech action in particular. Rightly conceived, the historical *is* theological.[28] Theological commentary must not remain camped in the plains of modern historiography, where events are explained in linear fashion in terms of purely immanent forces; it must rather go up the holy mountain, enter the cloud of God's active presence, and listen for "the voice from heaven." The church's great theological commentators were not primarily interested in the history behind the text, or even in the history of the text's interpretation, valuable as they found the latter. No, their chief aim was "to hear the word of God in the text and to articulate it freshly for their own time."[29] Aye, there's the rub: how does one hear the divine voice above or amidst the canonical cacophony of human authorial voices? Answer: by attending to the thick redemptive-historical context behind, in, and in front of the biblical text. Behind the text: the authors of Scripture were part of redemptive-history. In the text: the Bible not only recounts but counts as redemptive-history; the Old Testament plays an important role in the history of Jesus Christ. In front of the text: interpreters too are caught up in the flow of redemptive-history, actors in the drama of redemption. Indeed, the ultimate goal of theological commentary is not merely to provide objective knowledge about the text but to give readers "inside" knowledge, or rather, to *make them insiders* who see themselves and their own situations as caught up in the same drama of redemption that unfolds in the Bible.

Theological commentary is ultimately a matter of bearing witness to what we have seen and heard, in and through the text, of the history of redemption and of the divine voice that propels it forward: "one of the aims of theological commentary must be to allow others to hear the voice of God."[30] William Lane eloquently expresses the vocation of the theological interpreter: "my primary task as a commentator was to listen to the text and to the discussion it has prompted over the course of centuries as a child who needed to be made wise."[31] Amen, with an amendment: theological interpreters are not listening to the text *per se*

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[28] So Matthew Levering: "The integrity of linear-historical research does not require bracketing the participatory reality of God's presence and action in history" (*Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008], 13).

[29] C. Kavin Rowe and Richard B. Hays, "What is a Theological Commentary?," *Pro Ecclesia* 16 (2007) 32.

[30] Stephen Fowl, *Philippians* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5.

[31] William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), xii.

but rather to the voice of God speaking in and through the text's human authorial discourse. It is precisely because God speaks *by means of* these human authors that theological interpreters must listen closely to what the authors are saying.

3. *Biblical Reasoning: From Grammatical-Historical to Ontological Explication*

> What is theology but grammar applied to the text?
> (Martin Luther)

Thus far I have argued that theological commentary involves reading the biblical text in redemptive-historical context, in relation to God's presence and activity in the world of authors and readers. We can further specify what makes commentary theological by spelling out four ways in which we think about things in relation to God: (1) how God relates to what is not God; (2) how realities other than God are to be understood in their God-relatedness; (3) who the God who relates is (and how God relates to himself); (4) how we in our present circumstances may rightly relate to God.[32] To understand things in redemptive-historical context is to understand them in terms of these relations. To understand the whole system of these relationships is to grasp the "grammar" of theology.

Ontology: What Every Exegete Needs to Know

> The Bible conceives life as a drama in which human and divine actions create the dramatic whole. There are ontological presuppositions for this drama, but they are not spelled out.
> (Reinhold Niebuhr)

Mastering the grammar of New Testament Greek takes one only so far down the road of theological understanding. Ludwig Wittgenstein probably had a different kind of grammar in mind when he wrote: "*Essence* is expressed by grammar. Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar)."[33] Implied in what we say about things is what we think these things *are*. Theological interpreters believe that we understand

[32] These four ways are adapted from David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 1:459.
[33] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (3rd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1968), 116.

things as they really and truly are only when we relate them to God, which is to say, only when we interpret them in redemptive-historical context. This, at least, is what I propose: that to examine things in redemptive-historical (what I elsewhere term "theodramatic") context is to explicate their *ontology*.

For many exegetes, ontology—the study of being or the nature of things—is a dirty word that conjures up fears of an Athenian captivity of the church and its interpretations. However, as C. F. D. Moule observed, it is one thing to say the New Testament employs philosophical language, quite another to claim that philosophical language is necessary if we are to unpack and understand the implications of what the New Testament does say.[34] I am making the latter claim: *our grammatical analysis of biblical discourse is theologically incomplete until we have spelled out its ontological implications*. Historians cannot simply describe what Jesus said and did without assuming something about his nature and identity. We therefore approach the borderlands of ontology every time we wrestle with Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?"[35] Moule concludes: "However sparingly the New Testament borrows the [ontological] language of that country beyond the frontier, students of the New Testament discover themselves to be in some sense its citizens."[36] The category of redemptive-history is itself an attempt to unpack the ontological implications of what the Bible says about our world. To limit "history" to the linear space-time causal continuum is to be wedded to "thin" (i.e. reductionist) descriptions that fail to do justice to what history ultimately is: a staging area for divine speech and action. Because God has acted in history—of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church—theological interpretation requires thick descriptions of the biblical narrative, descriptions that not only trace the length of history (i.e. its horizontal linear sequence) but that also plumb

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[34] C. F. D. Moule, "The Borderlands of Ontology in the New Testament," in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays presented to D. M. MacKinnon* (ed. B. Hebblethwaite and S. Sutherland; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1–11. Moule notes that on occasion the New Testament authors employ explicitly ontological language (e.g. Colossians 1; Heb 1:3) and that Jesus himself makes an ontological claim (John 8:58), but for the most part the ontology is implicit.

[35] Why not include ontology too under "what it meant"? Isn't ontology simply another aspect of the text that can be described from a historical angle? This is a subtle query (thanks to Andrew Cowan for posing it) and I cannot do full justice to it here. Suffice it to say that, while historians can indeed describe the world view of individual authors, they cannot really explain how and why the biblical texts should be read together (only the principle of divine authorship can do that) or how individual authors from different times and culture can all be talking coherently about the same divine realities (i.e. Yahweh, God the Father, God the Son).

[36] Moule, "Borderlands," 10.

its breadth, height, and depth (i.e. its vertical, Godward dimension). What is true of history is also true of human being, both individual and corporate. Every description of what humans say and do ultimately involves a tacit understanding of what kind of beings we are.[37]

It was the Biblical Theology Movement's failure to give an ontological account of what it meant by "divine action" that led to its sudden and utter demise. As such, it is an apt cautionary tale for the would-be theological interpreter. G. E. Wright's *The God Who Acts* was a heroic, though tragically flawed, mid-twentieth century attempt to refocus biblical studies on God as opposed to where liberal theology had left it, stuck in human religious experience. Yet Wright also sought to avoid the abstract propositions of the systematic theologians in order to stick as close as possible to the Bible's own grammar, hence his preference for "a theology of recital."[38] Langdon Gilkey's celebrated essay "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language" exposed the fundamental (ontological) incoherence of Wright's project: "its world view or cosmology is modern, while its theological language is biblical and orthodox."[39] Gilkey's article convincingly demonstrates the Biblical Theology Movement's failure to work out the ontological implications of God's mighty acts. Indeed, it tended to restrict divine action to a single mighty act, namely, the Exodus-covenant. Accounts of God speaking and acting before the Exodus were viewed as expressions of post-Exodus Jewish faith: "Thus the Bible is a book descriptive not of the acts of God but of Hebrew religion."[40] God may be the grammatical subject of the verbs, but the Bible is really about Hebrew religious faith.[41] In the final analysis, the Biblical Theology Movement views all of God's mighty acts, with the exception of the Exodus, as "projections"—parables expressive of Israel's faith. Gilkey's verdict is devastating: "One can only conclude, therefore, that the mighty act of God is not his objective activity in history but only his inward incitement of a religious response to an ordinary event within the space-time continuum."[42] Did God literally speak to Moses on Mt. Sinai, or from the

[37] For example, my former doctoral student Lisa Sung argues that exegetes err in employing the category "race" because it lacks ontological validity and is therefore not what the Bible means when it speaks of "tribes," "peoples," or "nations" (" 'Race' and Ethnicity Discourse and the Christian Doctrine of Humanity: A Systematic Sociological and Theological Appraisal" [Ph.D. Dissertation; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011]).

[38] G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM, 1952), 12.

[39] L. Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *Journal of Religion* 41 (1961): 194.

[40] Ibid., 197.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 201.

burning bush? If not, then how could Israel know that its interpretation of the Exodus-covenant event was correct? While it appears pious to appeal to faith for discerning God's acts in history, the Biblical Theology Movement left unanswered the question of where this faith came from in the first place. Gilkey's essay rightly called attention to the importance of the originating revelation: "In what way does this faith come from God and from what he has done rather than from man and what he has discovered, or even just poetically imagined?"[43] Gilkey was astonished at the cavalier attitude taken by the Biblical Theological Movement towards this matter. To say that the Exodus event was actually the result of Israel's interpretive take on "the East wind blowing over the Reed Sea" is to evacuate Christianity of all orthodox content. To say that God acts, but to refuse to take any biblical depictions of God's acts literally, is to consign oneself to equivocal interpretations. Such interpreters are like the Athenians who worship an unknown god; they follow an unknown meaning. What do we mean when we say "God speaks"?[44] Did God *ever* say? Everything depends on how one answers this question, and thus on how one interprets the Bible's depictions of God's speech acts.

Theological Commentary As Biblical Reasoning

Evangelical exegetes must make every effort not to shipwreck their interpretations on the same ontological shoals as the Biblical Theology Movement. The way forward, I submit, is to engage in what we may term *biblical reasoning*. Theological interpretation means examining not only what the text *says* but also what it is *about*. It is the difference between making the text itself as the primary subject matter and taking it as the privileged means by which to think about something else (e.g. the reality of God the Father, Son, and Spirit). Biblical reasoning thus demands both exegetical and theological competence. Exegesis requires the linguistic, literary, and historical sensibilities and skills that are part and parcel of grammatical-historical understanding. Theology adds to these a broader historical context (i.e. a unified redemptive history), a broader literary context i.e. a unified canon), and a grammar of a higher order, namely,

[43] Ibid., 202.

[44] For a recent statement of the problem, see Gareth Moore, "Hearing the Voice of God: Two Conceptual Issues Concerning the Relationship between the Biblical World and Ours," in *Biblical Concepts and Our World* (ed. D. Z. Phillips and M. von der Ruhr; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 3–24.

the ability conceptually to elaborate the ontology implicit in biblical discourse. While historical-grammatical exegesis is integral and indispensable to answering ontological questions, these kinds of questions "cannot be answered in purely biblical language, because the questions are about the meaning of biblical language itself."[45] Theological interpretation eventually requires one conceptually to elaborate the ontology implicit in biblical discourse. It follows that we need "thicker" grammatical descriptions of the language of the Bible. An analogy may help: just as ordinary language philosophy seeks to make explicit the wisdom implicit in ordinary language (i.e. the sum total of the distinctions and relations that make up our understanding of the real world), so theological interpretation of Scripture—*biblical* language analysis—makes explicit the wisdom hidden in the Bible's discourse, especially the deep wisdom behind the many inner-biblical quotations, echoes, and allusions that point to Jesus Christ.[46] Biblical reasoning is ultimately a matter of formulating the same judgments about God, the world, and humanity, which the Bible expresses in conceptualities that may no longer be extant, in terms of present-day conceptualities.[47] It is a matter of elaborating the ontology presupposed, implied, and entailed in the ordinary language and literature of the Bible. Note well: biblical reasoning takes place in the "middle" of the interpretive process. Theology is not simply a second step that follows exegesis, but a partner in the process of explicating the text, a process that involves both *auditus fidei* (the hearing or reception of the content of faith) and *intellectus fidei* (the understanding and articulating of this content).[48] John Webster, in a seminal article, offers a theological interpretation of biblical reasoning itself.[49] We only know what the Bible and reason really are when we consider their natures (ontology) and ends (teleology) in relation to God. We do this by understanding their place in the divine economy, that is, "the historical form of God's presence to and action upon creatures."[50] The divine economy (Webster's term for what we have been calling the

[45] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), xxi.

[46] See Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), for an example of how one theological interpreter, Thomas Aquinas, uses ontology to explicate the Trinity and hence to understand the key *dramatis personae* of the drama of redemption.

[47] For extended discussion of this point, see my *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 188–90.

[48] The terminology comes from John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio.*

[49] J. Webster, "Biblical Reasoning," *Anglican Theological Journal* 90 (2008) 733–51.

[50] Ibid., 736.

redemptive-historical context) is the proper context for coming to see how persons and things relate to God, and thus the proper context for discerning what persons and things really are. Webster rightly views Scripture as a creaturely ingredient in the economy, a divinely appointed and commissioned human discourse, and a servant-form of the divine Word: the designation of the biblical texts as prophetic and apostolic "are ontological, not evaluative, qualifiers, indicating what these persons and their acts most basically are."[51] Scripture is a divinely commissioned means of communicating for the sake of establishing, maintaining, and enriching communion (i.e. the knowledge and love of God). That is the Bible's true nature and telos. As to reason, it is the created, fallen, and redeemed capacity for the intelligent adoration of God and his created order.

The vocation of theological commentary is to serve, and magnify, the intelligibility of God's Word in the biblical text. Both grammatical-historical exegesis and its theological-conceptual complement have something to contribute to the "middle" of the interpretive process in the model I am here commending. Better: it joins them at the hip. First, exegetical reasoning: "The principal task of theological reason is figuring out the literal sense, that is, what the text says."[52] Second, dogmatic reasoning, which sets out in a different idiom the same matter of biblical discourse, producing "a conceptual representation of what reason has learned from its exegetical following of the scriptural text."[53] Take, for example, the way theologians have elaborated the concept of God as three persons in one nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is the paradigm instance of what we have been saying about the ontological implications of biblical discourse. Once gained, such insights should inform exegetical reason as it goes about its work elsewhere, which is why it is a mistake to think that theology always comes last. Carson speaks for many biblical scholars when he describes the exegete as being "closer" to the Bible than the theologian: the latter's conceptual formulations are abstract and hence not as tied to the particulars of the text.[54] The danger is real. Yet by now I hope that even he could acknowledge that there is a sense in which the theologian is closer to *God* than the exegete (I speak of disciplinary approaches

[51] Ibid., 740.
[52] Ibid., 749.
[53] Ibid., 750.
[54] D. A. Carson, "Systematic theology and biblical theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. D. Alexander and B. Rosner; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 103.

and subject matter, not individuals!), insofar as the theologian's task is to focus more directly on understanding the divine reality in its fullness. The theologian's primary task is to interpret the text, the matter, and oneself in light of the redemptive-historical context; the theological meaning of passages and persons alike is a function of their relation to God and their place in the drama of redemption. Exegetes are by training primarily inclined to listen for the voice of human authors in historical context, but theologians seek understanding of God's voice speaking in and through the text in the context of redemptive-history—which brings us to "the voice from heaven."

4. *Commenting on "The Voice from Heaven"*

Osborne's twin working hypotheses for his M.A. thesis are still relevant: (1) the Transfiguration is *the* critical event in the life and earthly ministry of Jesus, the only event, in addition to his baptism, framed by the voice from heaven: "One cannot overestimate the intimate connection between the two critical events of Jesus' ministry."[55] (2) The Transfiguration has suffered from neglect in Western theology, perhaps because it is "too mysterious for theologians to grapple with."[56] This is not the place to compensate for the Transfiguration's systematic neglect by theologians, or to offer a full-fledged commentary of even one of the passages that recount it. Our interest is rather in how commentators treat the "voice from heaven" (Matt 3:17; 17:5; cf. Mark 1:11; 9:6–7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; cf. Acts 9:3–4; Rev 12:10–12). "A voice from [heaven; the cloud] said" (Matt 3:17; 17:5). Matthew's account clearly connects the voice that speaks to the three disciples from the bright cloud that overshadowed them on their "high mountain" (Matt 17:1–5) with the divine voice that spoke with Moses in the Shekinah cloud on Sinai (Exod 24:15–16). Almost all commentators catch the connection to Sinai. However, in order to comment on such texts theologically, we must do more than unravel literary antecedents; we must unpack the ontological implications. At minimum, for example, must we not say that one presupposition, implication, or entailment of Matt 17:5 is that God is a communicative agent, a person who communicates verbally with others?

[55] Osborne, "Transfiguration," 150.

[56] Ibid., 135. The situation is quite different in Eastern theology, where the emphasis on cosmic redemption and participation in the divine nature fits well with the idea of Transfiguration.

As soon as we pose the question, however, we confront Gilkey's challenge to specify the nature of God's acts, communicative or otherwise.

The Strange Silence of God in the New Testament (*and New Testament Studies*)

The "word of the Lord" is conspicuous by its absence from the New Testament. So, too, is the doctrine of God, at least according to Nils Dahl: "For more than a generation, the majority of New Testament scholars have not only eliminated direct references to God from their works but have also neglected detailed and comprehensive investigation of statements about God.... it is hard to find any comprehensive or penetrating study of the theme 'God in the New Testament'."[57] The spotlight is now on Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, though a certain "reaction against metaphysical theology" may be a contributing factor.[58] Be that as it may, the indelible signs of God's presence in the account of the Transfiguration are hard to miss. This has not prevented commentators from politely overlooking them, however. Here is how Davies and Allison interpret what happened at the Transfiguration: "Our own suspicion is that an unusual event in the life of Jesus lent itself to his being seen as some sort of counterpart to Moses on Sinai."[59] This is even weaker than Schleiermacher's idea that Jesus' transfiguration was a matter of his perfect "God consciousness" shining through.

Israel encountered God's voice at Sinai, along with a cloud, thunder, and lightning—characteristics included in the Psalmist's poetic depiction of the majestic voice of the Lord (Ps 29). The apostles see Jesus against a similar backdrop, speaking with Moses and Elijah, when he is transfigured: "they saw his glory" (Luke 9:32). They also heard the voice from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Neither the vocabulary nor the grammar of this claim is difficult, but what does it mean? Did the apostles see/hear something objective or did they experience a waking dream (i.e., a vision)? Did they see Jesus as he is, with pre-existent glory, or as he (and we) shall be, with

57 Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," in *Jesus the Christ: the Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 154. For a more recent assessment, and attempt to rectify matters, see Larry W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010). Interestingly, the voice of heaven fails to figure significantly in Hurtado's account.

58 Ibid., 155.

59 W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 2:692.

the glory of the eschaton (or resurrection)? By and large, modern biblical scholars have spent more energy on determining the sources behind the Transfiguration accounts and the way the Evangelists have put their narratives together than they have on understanding what happened and what it tells us about God. Those that focus on the event argue about its status: was it "an objective occurrence or a vision seen by one or all of the three disciples present"?[60] Jesus himself calls it a "vision" (*orama*—Matt 17:9), but the question is whether this refers to something actually seen or an apocalyptic vision-report.[61] It is worth pausing to consider what is at stake in this debate. The notion of a voice from heaven is familiar in rabbinic literature. There was even a technical term for it: the *bath qol* ("daughter of the voice"). However, the rabbis understood it to be only an echo of God's voice, first, because the revelation at Sinai was definitive and could never be superseded and, second, because the spirit of prophecy had departed after the death of Malachi as a judgment on Israel's sin. The rabbis believed that God continued to speak but "only through the 'echo of his voice' . . . a poor substitute."[62] The "daughter of the voice" lacks the authority of God's prophetic word written; only inspired prophets like Moses heard, and then spoke for, the voice of God himself.[63] Yet most commentators are struck more by the discontinuities. Matthew's account clearly implies that the voice is the same as the one that spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, as Calvin points out: "The voice was uttered from the cloud so that the disciples might know that it came from God."[64] Indeed, the voice provides us with "the most unmediated access to God's own view of Jesus."[65] On a literary level, Davies and Allison believe that Matthew 17:1–8 is structured as a chiasm, with the divine voice smack in the middle: "*If* this chiastic analysis is correct, it means that the voice from

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60 Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 106.

61 On the latter, see Edith M. Humphrey, *And I Turned to See the Voice: the Rhetoric of Vision in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), esp. 135–50 on the Transfiguration.

62 Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 81. For more on the *bath qol*, see C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit & the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 39–41.

63 The Talmud (*Baba Metzia*' 59b) recounts a story of Rabbi Eliezer appealing to a voice from heaven to prove a point, only to be told by the other rabbis that the prophetic word is more sure.

64 Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 201.

65 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 123.

heaven is the structural center of the pericope."[66] However, if the voice is something that the disciples "saw" rather than heard, does it still count as an instance of divine speech? Conversely, if the Transfiguration is an "objective" event, does it follow that a neutral observer who happened to be passing by would also have heard the voice from heaven? There are reports elsewhere in Scripture of a voice from heaven that some heard as speaking intelligible words and others did not (John 12:28–30; Acts 9:3–7; 22:6–9). In Matthew, the voice speaking out of the cloud (17:5) repeats verbatim what the voice from heaven declares at Jesus' baptism (3:17), with one significant addition: "listen to him." Whereas in Mark the divine voice addresses Jesus in the second person, in the Transfiguration, and in both places in Matthew, the voice speaks in the third person, suggesting that the voice intended a public communication to more than one person: "to whom it may concern." So: was there a voice from heaven or did the disciples only imagine it? Calvin is aware of this stark dichotomy, and does his best to avoid it. There is no point in disputing about the whiteness or the brightness, he urges: the light is not a substantial revelation of heavenly glory (the disciples would not have been able to bear that) but an accommodation to the capacity of their flesh. Must we say that Moses and Elijah were really present or were these only visions ("specters") set before the disciples? While Calvin is inclined towards the former, his real concern is that God *communicated* their presence to the disciples by providing "signs and marks by which they should be recognized."[67] How did they know it was the voice of God? By similar fashion: by signs and marks (e.g., the luminous cloud).

Does God get a speaking part in the New Testament? That may depend on what we mean by divine speech. The voice from the cloud did not produce sounds by passing air through vocal cords; God does not have a throat. But this may be an unnecessarily strict condition of what it is to speak. On the other hand, some notions of divine speaking are too "soft," such as the suggestion that the disciples (mis)took a clap of thunder as a divine seal of approval on Jesus. There are middle positions as well. For example, God could have stirred up sounds out of thin air, the reverse of

[66] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* vol. 2, 684.

[67] *A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 2:199. Just as Calvin's commentaries enriched succeeding editions of his *Institutes*, so the *Institutes* enhanced his work of exposition "by providing a broad frame of reference within which to understand individual texts" (David C. Steinmetz, "John Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible," in *Calvin and the Bible* [ed. D. K. McKim; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 291).

Jesus calming the winds and the sea. Or, as Richard Briggs has recently suggested, perhaps the disciples "saw" or construed God's will in verbal form, and that they were divinely prompted to do so.[68] In this case, we could say that God communicated by causing the disciples to hear words inside their heads. While this has certain advantages as an explication of the ontology of divine speech, 2 Peter 1:16–18 insists on the disciples' actually having been eyewitnesses—earwitnesses!—of these events, including the majestic voice: "we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven" (2 Peter 1:18). What ultimately matters is *that* we are able to ascribe this speech act to God; *how* God accommodates it to human hearing is ultimately a secondary matter. The essential point, to repeat, is that God is the communicating agent responsible for the determinate message and the one who brings about understanding on the part of the disciples. The voice from heaven is an instance of divine discourse, not the result of human projection, whether sleeping or waking. Even if R. T. France is right that "We cannot, and need not, know what a cinecamera on the mountain would have recorded,"[69] it is imperative that, minimally, we understand the voice from heaven to be a genuine communicative act that we can ascribe to God the Father. Given the emphasis on eyewitness testimony, the presumption should incline us to favor a literal (i.e., empirical) interpretation.[70] The Transfiguration is as much an "audition" as "vision" report. The gospel is about "that which from the beginning ... we have heard" (1 John 1:1; cf. 2 Peter 1:18). The good news is that God has spoken and acted to save sinners and renew creation in the history of Jesus Christ. The Transfiguration is the gospel in microcosm because there we catch a glimpse of God doing just that.

The "Voice from Heaven" in the Context of the Cloud: Why Multi-Level Theological Commentary Matters

Because human beings take up a relatively finite amount of space and time, determining the context in which to interpret their discourse is a relatively straightforward matter. Not so with God. The very idea of one

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[68] See Richard Briggs, "On 'Seeing' what God is 'Saying': Rereading Biblical Narrative in Dialogue with Kevin Vanhoozer's *Remythologizing Theology*," in *Visions and Revisions: The Word and the Text* (ed. R. Kojecký and A. Tate; Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012).

[69] *Gospel of Matthew*, 644.

[70] See the nuanced discussion in Stephen Williams, "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Part 1)," *Themelios* 28 (2002) 17–19.

who transcends space and time, the creator of all things visible and invisible, having a context is an oxymoron: there is no "context" for infinity. Nevertheless, God's communicative accommodations—divine speech acts—do have contexts.[71]

To this point, we have been interested in establishing that the voice is indeed from God. We turn now to the task of understanding what it is saying. Craig Keener's point is apt: "The fact of the voice is important, but *what the voice says is most important for this is what declares Jesus' identity to the reader*."[72] God speaks only twice in the Synoptic Gospels, and in each case he says the same thing. This one thing is "*the single most important fact that God wants the church and the world to know*."[73] Bruner's gloss on this point is also worth noting: the creeds are not detours or distortions of the pure simplicity of the gospel but obedient conceptual articulations of God's own confession of Jesus.[74] Who, then, does God say that he (Jesus) is?

Inasmuch as the "voice from heaven" is that of the divine author, we may distinguish God's speaking out of the cloud as described by a human author, God speaking through the voice-text of the human author, and God speaking through the whole canonical cloud of biblical authors. Interestingly, both Osborne and Carson acknowledge the importance of multiple levels of exegetical-theological reflection. I agree: theological interpretation of Scripture is a many-leveled affair. These levels are arranged hierarchically, in terms of expanding contexts: the "higher" levels/contexts (e.g., canonical) depend upon the "lower" (e.g., philological) but are ultimately irreducible to them.[75] The task is to understand not only what Matthew

71 Whether the contexts and intentions of these divine communicative acts coincide without remainder with those of the biblical authors is a significant, and challenging, question.

72 Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 134, his emphasis. Bruner goes further, claiming that the voice from heaven performs a *confessional* speech act: "the Transfiguration is the *Father's Confession* of his Son," the divine counterpart to Peter's earlier confession (*Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 2 *The Christbook* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 166).

73 Bruner, *Matthew*, 172 (italics his).

74 Ibid.

75 Osborne too distinguishes five levels: individual communicative utterances; the theology of an author in a book; the theology of the author's collected works (e.g., the Pauline epistles); the theology of a whole testament; the theology of the Bible as a whole ("Hermeneutics and Theological Interpretation," 77, 80–1). Each of these levels deals with "what it meant," namely the historical task of describing what the authors of Scripture believed. While I too want to distinguish five levels, I am more interested in what *God* is saying at each level than in trying to determine what Israel or the church believed. It is not clear

the human author is saying about the voice of heaven, but also what God the divine author is saying by means of Matthew.

On the first, grammatical-historical level we have what appears to be a declarative sentence with a simple sense and referent: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 17:5). We have already discussed the importance of an anchoring divine speech act: without some divine communicative initiative, there would be no promise, no covenant, no knowledge of God in the land. Similarly, this rare instance of a voice from heaven anchors, as it were, God's identification of and relationship to Jesus Christ. Apart from some broader context, however, it is difficult to ascertain what is being said: the syntactical level is basic, but it gets us only so far. Is the Father adopting Jesus as his Son, declaring that Jesus has always been his Son, or something else? A second, literary level expands the context by taking the literary co-text into consideration. There are a number of textual clues in the immediate vicinity that allow us to give a thicker description of what the voice of heaven is saying/doing: Jesus' face is shining like the sun and his clothes are as white as light (17:2); he is talking to Moses and Elijah (17:3); the voice is speaking from a bright overshadowing cloud (17:5). These clues refer suggestively to Israel's earlier experience at Sinai, but by themselves they still do not go far enough; we need not merely literary sensitivity but the ability to make good canonical judgments. In alluding to specific Old Testament passages, the voice from heaven identifies Jesus not only by doing things with words, but also with ideas, objects, and events from Israel's history. The theological commentator must discern these rich typological associations; it is through these that "what Jesus is in God's thinking is made unforgettably clear."[76] Should we hear an echo of Ps 2:7 and view the Transfiguration as a preview of the Son's eschatological enthronement—a prophetic apocalypse "of the final truth and reality of all things"[77]—or Isa 42:1 with its servant of the Lord imagery, or perhaps both? This is not the place for a definitive answer. The point is that Matthew's account of the Transfiguration is

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to me *whose* historical meaning we are describing at the level of "the Bible as a whole." Graham Cole similarly invokes multiple levels when he proposes to use biblical evidence "in a way that is sensitive to the biblical text in its immediate context in its literary unit in its book in the canon in the light of the flow of redemptive history" (*He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007], 28).

[76] Bruner, *Matthew*, 2:166. The discontinuities are often theologically significant too. For example, on Sinai Moses was the recipient of revelation, but here Jesus himself *is* the revelation.

[77] Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (BTCT; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009) 156.

itself overshadowed by a cloud of prophetic witnesses. The challenge for the theological interpreter is to hear everything that is being said directly and indirectly (i.e., all the intra-canonical overtones).[78]

It is this third, canonical level in which the redemptive-historical context and divine economy also come into sharpest focus. The Transfiguration stands at the crossroads of redemptive-history: "Here we perceive that … the old covenant and the new are inseparable, that the Cross and the glory are of one, that the age to come is already here, that our human nature has a destiny of glory. … Here the diverse elements in the theology of the New Testament meet."[79] The voice from heaven is not only in Matthew's text but also *around* it, unifying through authorial associations books and passages with which it otherwise has no connection. For example, modern commentators almost never mention Daniel 4:29–31 in connection with the Transfiguration, and this despite the rather obvious object lesson about the consequences of grasping for glory inappropriately. It relates how Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his palace (a high place, though admittedly not a mountain), surveying the city of Babylon with great satisfaction: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty" (Dan 4:30). Then, "while these words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven" (Dan 4:31; cf. Matt 17:5 "while Peter was still speaking"). God brings Nebuchadnezzar low ("he … ate grass like an ox;" 4:33) and then exalts him: "my majesty and splendor returned to me" (4:36). Nebuchadnezzar undergoes in his own way the two-beat humiliation/exaltation rhythm of the drama of redemption. This is not to say that Nebuchadnezzar is a type of Christ, only that his *disfiguration* narrative affords us a foil for Jesus' transfiguration, and a thicker description of the ways of God in the divine economy that culminate in the exaltation of Christ.

The fourth, catholic level expands the context of interpretation even further and envelops us in the cloud of post-apostolic witnesses *in front of* the text. Theological interpreters attend to the catholic context of the biblical text as well, to the various ways the church has interpreted the Transfiguration through the centuries and across cultures. Contemporary

[78] I agree with Stephen Williams: "There is no contradiction here. Reading the story of transfiguration in terms, for example, of the manifestation of the messianic king does not require reference to incarnation. However, it permits it, and if such a reference is justified, the reading is enhanced" ("The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Part 2): Approaching Sonship," *Themelios* 28 [2003] 19).

[79] Ramsey, *Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 144.

theological interpreters want to read with the Fathers and Reformers because they believe the Spirit has indeed been leading the church into all *biblical* truth, and because they know that every generation, including the present, has blind spots.[80] We do well to remember that the apostolic tradition preserved in writing in the New Testament is divinely commissioned and inspired, and hence must always be the judge of post-apostolic interpretation and tradition. Nevertheless, attending to precritical interpretations often yields genuine insights into the subject matter of the text, and we impoverish ourselves to the extent that we neglect these resources.[81] We should not see the Trinitarian formula of Nicaea as a new revelation, then, but rather as a deeper insight into what has already been said, and implied, in Scripture.

The fifth and final ontological level deals with the reality of the subject matter to which the biblical texts give witness: the *res* indicated by the biblical *signa*; the world *above* or *beyond* the text. This is the level on which one finally answers the question, "Who does the voice say that he is?" Please note: there is no shortcut to ontology. The prophetic and apostolic testimonies are our only normative specification of the reality of God in Christ. Doctrines and creedal statements are attempts conceptually to elaborate the meaning, significance, and implications of the biblical texts.

The Fathers read the Transfiguration account as history charged with theological significance: "the marvelous and supernatural events of God's self-revelation are described by means of human language and symbolism and can thus only approach the divine truth which is ontologically and essentially on a wholly other plane of reality."[82] They viewed the Transfiguration as an anticipation of the future glory both of Christ and of Christians. Some connected it with the resurrection, others with the Parousia. Some identified the cloud overshadowing the mountain with the Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation. Moreover, if the voice from the cloud is the Father's addressing the Son, then "the whole mystery of the Holy Trinity is declared."[83] Perhaps the most common theme was

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80 The Blackwell Bible Commentaries series is the first to focus primarily on the reception history of the Bible.

81 See Timothy George, "Reading the Bible with the Reformers," *First Things* (March, 2011).

82 Peter Chamberas, "Transfiguration of Christ: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Scripture," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 14 (1970): 62.

83 Venerable Bede, *Homily*, xxviii, cited in Ramsey, *Glory of God and Transfiguration of Christ*, 132. Cf. Thomas Aquinas: "the whole Trinity appears—the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Holy Ghost in the bright cloud" (*Summa Theologiae* III, Q.45, art.4).

that the Transfiguration was a revelation of Christ's divine nature: "He is transfigured . . . not by receiving something he is not, but by revealing to his intimate disciples that which He really is."[84] Biblical scholars are often reluctant to employ ontological categories in this manner.

"Listen to Him"

The voice from the cloud says one thing more at Jesus' transfiguration than was said at his baptism: "Listen to him" (Matt 17:5). At least one commentator thinks these three terse words (two in Greek) "are what this story is finally about."[85] Calvin agrees: "But in those words there is more weight and force than is commonly thought."[86] He says that the Father, with these words, appoints Christ as our teacher. Most commentators note the close connection between "Listen to him" and Deut 18:15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen." It is significant that Moses is there with Jesus, even though he is eclipsed by Jesus' brightness, now relegated to the wings and the shadows of redemptive history. Indeed, when the disciples recover from their prostrate fear, "they saw no one but Jesus only" (Matt 17:8). This brings us back to my doctoral student Michael's initial problem, how to explain the emphasis Matthew gives to what at first glance is an insignificant, and awkwardly expressed, detail: "they saw no one but Jesus only." Michael's initial reflex is an exemplary instance of what I have been calling biblical reasoning. We are meant to see the contrast between Matt 17:6–8 and what Deut 4:11–16 says happened when God spoke on Sinai. On Sinai God declares and commands, instituting and sealing the covenant on two tables of stone. The people heard God's voice, were afraid, but "saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deut 4:12). By contrast, in Matthew the disciples were afraid, and saw only Jesus. Matthew's account identifies Jesus by putting him in the spot hitherto reserved for God only. Who is Jesus? Not merely a greater than Moses but YHWH in the flesh. Michael's paper thus concludes: "Matthew's Christology is not typological but *ontological*: Jesus *is* YHWH himself."

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[84] St. John Damascene, *Homily on the Transfiguration*, cited in Chamberas, "Transfiguration of Christ," 55. For a modern rebuttal, see Howard Clark Kee, "The Transfiguration in Mark: Epiphany or Apocalyptic Vision?" in *Understanding the Sacred Text* (ed. J. Reumann; Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), 137–52.

[85] Bruner, *Matthew*, 2:173.

[86] *Inst.*, IV.8.7.

According to Bruner, the Transfiguration addresses a critical issue in the church: "*Who has supreme power and final authority in the people of God?*"[87] Whose voice has final say-so, for example, in matters concerning biblical interpretation? "Listen to him." Significantly, the Father does not say "Listen to me." Nevertheless, *when heard in canonical and redemptive-historical context, the voice tells us what God wants us to know*. Those who listen to Jesus—who hear his words; who receive him as God's Word made flesh—hear and see the Father.[88] The Transfiguration answers the disciples' question as to whose biblical interpretation is ultimately authoritative. Jesus is the teacher of the church who speaks on all five of the levels we considered above. "They saw no one but Jesus only." Only Jesus: *solus Christus*!

5. *Transfiguring Theological Commentary? Exegesis, Ontology, and the Glory of Biblical Interpretation*

Stephen Wellum rightly observes that "within TIS [theological interpretation of Scripture] there is still a great divide over the most fundamental question: What is the nature of Scripture?"[89] Hence it is fitting that we conclude our reflection on the nature of theological commentary by returning once more to the question of ontology, this time in connection with the theological interpretation of Scripture itself. We do so by reference to another commentary on the Transfiguration, this time drawn from the New Testament itself: 2 Peter 1:16–21. 2 Peter's commentary on the event of transfiguration, and the voice from heaven, yields a vital clue to the ontology of Scripture. The passage begins with an appeal to ear-witness testimony: "we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven" (2 Peter 1:18). This is particularly striking when we recall the later Jewish opinion that not even a voice from heaven (the *bath qol*) could overrule the Torah or the prophets. Yet 2 Peter

87 Bruner, *Matthew*, 2:167.

88 Robert Gundry suggests the Fourth Gospel may have developed its Christology of Jesus as the Word out of the transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus is the "heard Word" of God (*The Old is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 360). Cf. Alfred Loisy's comments that the Fourth Gospel is "a perpetual theophany" that sustains the note of God's glory in Christ that sounds only temporarily in the Synoptics (cited in Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 123).

89 S. Wellum, "Editorial: Reflecting upon the 'Theological Interpretation of Scripture'," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14 (2010): 3.

says that the voice from heaven makes the prophetic word "more" or "very sure" (2 Peter 1:19).[90] Whereas Matthew's account depicts the Old Testament bearing witness to the Transfiguration, 2 Peter shows the reverse: "that the Transfiguration bears witness to the permanent validity of the Old Testament."[91] The inference is clear: the voice from heaven is the same voice that spoke through the prophets (and vice versa). In the words of Hilary of Arles: "The light which shone on them was the light of Scripture."[92]

And that of Jesus. Jesus is God's first and last word, the word that was with God "in the beginning" (John 1:1) and the triumphant victory shout that will be heard on the future day of the Lord. It was the prophetic word that the disciples saw shining brightly on Jesus' face: "the Old Testament prophecies are caught up by and given new life in the revelation of the coming glory and sovereignty of Jesus Christ."[93] The voice from heaven interprets the prophecies in relation to Jesus, his divine person (Son) and work (Messiah): "*The transfiguration is God's own exegesis of the prophetic word*."[94] Stated differently: *the Transfiguration is God's own theological interpretation of Scripture*. For if God is indeed the author of Scripture, then "Scripture interprets Scripture" means "God interprets Scripture." The task of the theological commentator is thus to think God's interpretations after him. "The transfiguration reveals to us the proper understanding of the origin and interpretation of holy scripture."[95] Theological interpretation is not a matter of bringing an extra-textual interest to the text, but of reading the Bible for what it truly is: a creaturely medium for what is ultimately a complex (i.e., canonical) triune communicative act.[96]

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90 Richard Bauckham thinks the words are used in a superlative rather than comparative sense (*Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983], 223).

91 Ramsey, *Glory of God and Transfiguration of Christ*, 126. Bauckham argues that 2 Peter presents the Transfiguration against the background of Ps 2 and the idea of eschatological enthronement rather than Moses and Sinai as in Matthew (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 222).

92 Hilary of Arles, *Comm. on 2 Peter* (cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 140).

93 Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 159.

94 Ibid. In context, Harink mentions Ps 2 in particular, but there is reason to think that the voice from heaven alludes to Isa 42:1, Gen 22:2, and Exod 4:22–23 as well. Though the Fourth Gospel does not recount the Transfiguration, there is a sense in which its entire narrative is an extended reflection on the event.

95 Ibid., 160.

96 See my "Triune Discourse: Theological Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship* (ed. D. Lauber and D. Treier; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 25–78.

Theological interpretation of Scripture is a sustained reflection on the reality of divine authorial action. *2 Peter's commentary on the Transfiguration shows us the Spirit as the one who has spoken through the prophets, the Father as the one exegetes Old Testament prophecies in his own voice, and the Son as the Word of God to whom we must listen*. Hence we do not read the Bible like other books. The Bible is *like* other books because it involves authors, discourse fixed in writing, and readers, yet this continuity is marked by an even greater discontinuity for, *unlike* all other books, the Bible's ultimate author is God—the voice from heaven. The redemptive-historical context not only unifies the Old Testament and New Testament but also embraces authors and readers, bringing them together as a cloud of witnesses on the mountain from which God's voice speaks.

The glory of theological interpretation is spiritual understanding, a comprehension not only of the words but also of the thing—or rather, the divine person—these words are ultimately about. The vocation of the theological commentator, like that of the disciples with Jesus on the mountain, is ultimately that of bearing faithful witness to the true identity of Jesus. Stephen Williams acknowledges how recovering the Jewishness of Jesus has enhanced our reading of the Gospels. At the same time, if we know, thanks to Nicaea and Chalcedon, that Jesus was *homoousios* with the Father, then we "*ought* to read the Synoptic Gospels in that light."[97] This is no alien imposition, but rather a thick description and faithful conceptual exposition of the text in canonical-economic, redemptive-historical context. What Williams says about Jesus applies equally to the apostolic word about him: if we know that the Bible is *theopneustos*—the result of men speaking from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21)—we *ought* to read it in that light. Would Grant Osborne agree? I am inclined to think so. The present essay extends theological interpretation of Scripture as the right hand of biblical fellowship, and it would be a strange gift indeed that bites the hand to which it is offered. My concern is to repair the partnership between biblical scholars and theologians by reflecting again about the meaning of "historical" and "theological" exegesis. I have argued that the work of biblical scholars and theologians, though on different levels, is equally necessary for theological commentary and understanding. Let us therefore not be like those who heard only thunder but not the divine voice, or like those who see only

97 Williams, "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Part 2)," 17.

the pale form of a Palestinian Jew rather than the glory of the Son of God who is light himself. For, as Calvin says, "without the word nothing is left for men but darkness."[98] May we all, biblical and theological commentators, have the eyes to see and the ears to hear the voice of God shining in the face of Scripture, dazzling in the canonical fabric of the text.

[98] Comment on 2 Peter 1:19, in Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1855), 388.

CHRISTOLOGY AND COMMENTARIES: EXAMINING AND ENHANCING THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS

Daniel J. Treier

The purpose of this essay is to celebrate the exegetical commentaries of biblical scholars, while urging them to "excel still more" in their dogmatic engagement with Scripture's Christological teaching.[1] Such fuller theological engagement would ideally occur earlier in the exegetical process, with better hermeneutical understanding, than many technical commentaries presently reflect. To unfold this claim, given the perils of generalization on so vast a subject, the bulk of this essay examines a Christological interpretative crux, Phil 2:5–11. While that text's call for *phronesis*, or Christ-like practical reason, cannot claim primary attention here, the final section seeks wisdom for commentary-writing in light of the test case.

1. *Christology As Subject Matter: Philippians Commentaries As a Test Case*

It would be impossible, of course, to survey the plethora of commentaries, classic or contemporary, for their treatment of almost any biblical subject, let alone Christology. Largely limiting generalizations to modern New Testament commentaries and supporting evidence to Phil 2:5–11, the present examination further limits its primary interest to whether that passage teaches or implies a traditional doctrine of Christ's preexistence as God—with James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, and David S. Yeago as notable interlocutors. The hypothesis to explore is that Dunn's challenge to an Incarnation-oriented approach in Philippians 2 may reveal some Christological strengths and weaknesses of recent scholarly commentaries.

[1] It is a great privilege to honor one such scholar, Grant Osborne, whose *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006]) shaped my exegetical practice right from the beginning of seminary training and provided my first responsible encounter with hermeneutical theory. Grant's graciousness to students and colleagues, service to the church, and wide-ranging excellence will leave a significant legacy.

A. *Dunn, Wright, and Yeago*

In 1980 Dunn published the first edition of *Christology in the Making*. On Phil 2:5–11 his crucial argument was that the contextual background of the hymn lay in a two-stage Adam Christology, namely, identification with humanity even unto death followed by exaltation to life as Lord over all. In Dunn's view, this contextual background renders superficial the apparently straightforward, traditional readings of the text's surface. The "form of God" actually connects to Adam as the image and glory of God, the "form of a slave" to postlapsarian humanity. "Equality with God" alludes to Adam's temptation, "likeness of men" to the human condition that followed. Thus, "being found in form as a man" (2:7) recapitulates the one—Adamic—narrative shape of Christ's story.[2] For Dunn it follows that "[t]he terms used in the hymn do not have an independent value; *their sense is determined by their role within the Adam Christology*, by their function in describing Adam or more generally God's purpose for man."[3] The narrative in the early verses refers not to a specific event, but to the shape of Christ's character representing everyone.[4] Dunn even muses that the preexistence interpretation may owe to later Gnostic redeemer myths, thus discounting the force of the language in 2:6–8 and never reckoning theologically with the allusion to Isa 45:23 or Phil 2:9–11 in general.[5]

Wright's lengthy engagement with Philippians 2 gained even greater prominence when incorporated in *The Climax of the Covenant* (1991).[6] Wright questions how much we could reconstruct of Paul's "hypothetical predecessors," of "that shadowy phenomenon called pre-Pauline Christianity."[7] All the same, he accepts that the passage is an example of Adam- and therefore Israel-Christology. Yet, contra Dunn, Wright thinks that this does not preclude incarnational Christology but rather entails it. After an exceedingly thorough history—and, we might say, deconstruction—of interpretations, Wright offers an approach to Phil 2:6–7 that integrates well with the following verses, while integrating incarnational and ethical thrusts in the passage.

[2] James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 114–17.

[3] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 117.

[4] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 120.

[5] See Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 128; he makes incidental reference to Isaiah 45 on p. 118 but never clarifies his view of its meaning.

[6] N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 56–98.

[7] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 57.

Subsequent commentaries are replete with mentions of Dunn and, in response, appeals to Wright. Meanwhile, in 1993 Yeago's response to Dunn, making substantial use of Wright's work, appeared in a young theological journal.[8] This essay, especially its hermeneutical manifesto and implications, soon became a darling of theologians.[9] Nevertheless, despite seemingly ubiquitous citation in some circles, Yeago's essay garners almost no attention in recent commentaries. In research to date only one commentary cites Yeago, from the Two Horizons series, which is explicitly devoted to bridging the gap between New Testament studies and systematic theology. The particular volume is authored by Stephen Fowl, editor of the collection that brought Yeago to such prominence.[10]

The overlapping attention to Dunn and Wright, contrasted with selective interest in Yeago, raises intriguing questions. Most mundanely, how aware are biblical scholars and theologians of each other's work; in this case, do biblical scholars only learn of relevant theological essays if a biblical text appears in the title? More bracingly, is Yeago's argument regarding Dunn's flaws substantially correct, making a substantial contribution to Incarnation-oriented exegesis of Phil 2:5–11 beyond what he references from Wright? Do commentaries written after Dunn contain similar arguments to Yeago's, whether or not they are aware of the essay? In other words, how distinctive is Yeago's theoretical contribution? For that matter, how distinctive, and how distinctively theological, is Wright's exegetical contribution? In other words, did he simply provide a particularly cogent or well-written form of otherwise-available arguments?

Yeago contends "that the ancient theologians were right to hold that the Nicene *homoousion* [that the Son is "of one being" with the Father] is neither imposed *on* the New Testament texts, nor distantly deduced *from* the texts, but, rather, describes a pattern of judgments present *in* the texts, in the texture of scriptural discourse concerning Jesus and the God of Israel." He seeks to discern the New Testament doctrine of God from its primary reference points: "the distinctive practices of Christian worship, and the scriptures of Israel."[11] These two realities intersect in Philippians 2,

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[8] David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 152–64.

[9] As republished in Stephen E. Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 87–100, which is the edition cited hereafter.

[10] Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[11] Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 88.

with the possibility of appeal to an early Christian hymn and explicit allusion to the Old Testament.

Much of Yeago's burden is to explore how Paul speaks of Christ's exaltation using Isa 45:21–24, one of Israel's strongest monotheistic texts:

> The text from Philippians *identifies* the prophesied turning of all the earth to YHWH as the only God with the universal acclamation of Jesus as Lord; that Jesus is acclaimed as *kurios* "to the glory of God the Father" implies that YHWH comes to his rightful, exclusive sovereignty over the whole creation, proclaimed in Isaiah, precisely *through* creation's acknowledgement of the lordship of the particular person Jesus. Within the thought-world of Israel's scriptures, no stronger affirmation of the bond between the risen Jesus and the God of Israel is possible.[12]

How can such an affirmation be consistent with worship of YHWH as the one true God? As Yeago picks up from Wright, it cannot be that now there are two gods, or that the identity of YHWH has suddenly changed. If Paul is in fact claiming that Isaiah supports his teaching, then he could not have pulled enough wool over Philippian eyes to get away with such a rejection of Israel's basic monotheistic understanding. Therefore Philippians 2 must include the Son eternally in the identity of Israel's God, the one unchanging Creator of everything else. And, in the larger context of Isaiah 45, there must be anticipation of further revelation concerning YHWH's identity.[13]

Why then have many scholars, such as Dunn, hesitated to find "high Christology" in the New Testament, except perhaps in the Gospel of John? Yeago points out that Dunn's "Adam Christology" is a scholarly historical construct and should not be used to reject "the way the words go," what the text actually says. Furthermore, Dunn confuses concepts with doctrinal judgments. Concepts, the particular ways in which words convey ideas and refer to objects, are for the sake of communicating truth judgments. John 1 and Philippians 2 need not differ to the point of incommensurability simply because different concepts are used; Philippians 2 can teach that the Son who took on humanity is eternally one with the Father even if "Incarnation" does not appear.

Moreover, these New Testament passages together can teach the same judgment we find in the Nicene Creed even if they do not contain the

[12] Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 90.

[13] For further discussion of Isaiah 40–55 in connection with Philippians 2, showing how Paul's reading coheres with the identity of YHWH in relation to the suffering Servant, see Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Greek philosophical language developed later.[14] Much of the widespread opposition to engaging "dogmatics" within biblical studies, therefore, ignores the hypothetical or even speculative character of historical reconstruction as well as need for sophisticated understanding of how language relates to doctrine. To be sure, Dunn is a skilled exegete, and the present counter-claim is not that we should force Nicene dogma into every biblical nook and cranny. But it is striking that Dunn, relatively friendly to orthodox Christology on the whole, swims so strongly against a long-running tide in Phil 2:5–11. Plenty of doubt may exist about its conceptual fit with Nicaea, but few have doubted that some kind of incarnational paradigm is present. So, whereas Yeago too makes use of historical research, against Dunn he sees it ultimately as a servant rather than master of "the real theological-exegetical task":

> If "biblical theology" is anything coherent at all, it is just "theology," an engagement with the biblical texts no different in principle from that undertaken in the theological exegesis of St Athanasius, St Basil, St Thomas, Martin Luther, and Karl Barth, and it will not fare well if it is not pursued by the means proper to theological reflection. Those means are chiefly those of close reading and conceptual analysis, attention (in St Athanasius's terms) to the *skopos* and *akolouthia*, the tenor and coherence of the judgements rendered in the texts.[15]

This is boldly stated, by implication pointing fingers at contemporary theologians as much as biblical scholars, albeit on different grounds. But let us delay further evaluation of such claims long enough to examine the relevant commentaries from the last three decades.

B. *Commentaries between Dunn and Yeago (1980–1993)*[16]

Our survey begins with Hawthorne (1983), who presents a seemingly classic evangelical reading: he sees the text's importance primarily in terms

[14] Though it is beyond our present purview, much contemporary scholarship suggests that it was not the orthodox fathers whom Greek philosophy held captive. Rather, heretical parties such as the Arians were more captive, or at least committed, to deploying fully certain Greek assumptions. Yet, for understandable reasons, this patristics scholarship rarely informs the commentaries written by contemporary biblical scholars, where the "Hellenization thesis" remains alive and well.

[15] Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 97.

[16] For help with the following sources, I am significantly indebted to my research assistant, Stephen Pardue. Texts are generally cited once, for the range of relevant material, apart from referencing specific quotations. For helpful feedback overall, I am indebted to Michael Allen and Lynn Cohick, who are innocent of the essay's remaining faults.

of ethics, assuming reference to a preexistent Son throughout.[17] Dunn is cited among others regarding the Adam–Christ parallel, to which Hawthorne gives marginal credit. For all its helpful thoroughness, the commentary references Isaiah 45 as a source without really explaining the nature of its use.

Schenk's schema (1984) purports to divide Philippians into several different letters.[18] Never mentioning Dunn, he prioritizes form and redaction criticism for interpreting Philippians in general, and (for obvious reasons) Phil 2:5–11 especially. He is not unaware of Adam–Christ parallels or theological issues (citing Karl Barth on multiple occasions). Yet other priorities are clearly preeminent.

Craddock (1985) is afraid of moralizing the hymn.[19] Perhaps understandably, given the timelines of commentary-writing and especially the brevity fitting this series, there is no mention of Dunn. Discussion of "preexistence" appears, albeit abstractly, followed by qualifications regarding paradoxical and archaic language. Craddock knows of Adam–Christ parallels, but downplays them as peripheral. Isaiah 45 gets no mention.

First to reference Dunn substantially is Martin (1987).[20] Initially Dunn comes up simply as an example of an interpreter stating the Adam–Christ similarity, but then Martin takes issue with rejection of an eternal and divinely preexistent Christ. That makes no sense of the text: after all, by choosing to become human, Christ was leaving a previously different state. Martin is a notable example of treating "in Christ" soteriologically rather than ethically. He relates the monotheism of Isaiah 45 to the phrase regarding the Father's glory, but remains unclear about how open Isaiah is to Paul's Christological application.

Marshall (1991) cannot preclude Adam–Christ parallels but thinks that Wisdom is the chief "concept" behind the hymn's "ideas."[21] Interpreting the "form of God" as referring to the *imago Dei*, though initially possible, could not subsequently account for assuming the "form of a slave." While the hymn has ethical force, Jesus remains Savior and Lord too. Isaiah 45

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17 Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 71–96; on p. 96 he even suggests that the Christological material is "incidental."

18 Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus: Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 172–213.

19 Fred B. Craddock, *Philippians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 35–43.

20 Ralph P. Martin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.; TNTC 11; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 99–114.

21 I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Epworth, 1991), 47–59.

gets brief acknowledgement. In a commentary with little citation, Wright is mentioned whereas Dunn is not.

Melick (1991) echoes Hawthorne quite frequently and does not reference Dunn.[22] However, like others Melick relates Adam–Christ parallels more to contrast than similarity: Christ had something without taking advantage of it, whereas Adam sought something he never had. Isaiah 45 is referenced, but with no discussion of its significance.

O'Brien (1991) presents the Adam–Christ parallelism view with impressive depth and clarity, calling Dunn its strongest advocate.[23] However, he rejects this approach, due not primarily to theological reservations, but to insufficient evidence. As with all the other exegetical issues, use of Isaiah 45 is discussed at some length, treated as Christological not just eschatological. Yet, like many others, O'Brien does not press through to address the theological grounds by which Paul could use this monotheistic text regarding Jesus Christ.

C. *Commentaries after Yeago (1993–Present)*

As noted above, commentaries published subsequent to Yeago's essay, with one exception, do not reference it. By this time Dunn's position had become well known, although Müller (1993) does not cite either him or Wright or Yeago.[24]

Witherington (1994), giving brevity and focus along with reference to his own work elsewhere, treats none of the issues at stake here.[25] An endnote, however, does refer to Dunn and to critiques of his work.

Fee (1995) reflects on the mystery early Christians faced as they sought to understand how a truly human figure could be "characterized by what was essential to being God."[26] Treating Christ's divine preexistence as the "*presupposition*" of Phil 2:6, he then addresses Dunn in a footnote, under the category of "interpreters who deny pre-existence." Fee questions Dunn's methodology, but his objection is different than Yeago's: Dunn's

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22 Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (NAC 32; Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 95–109.

23 Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 186–271.

24 Ulrich B. Müller, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper* (THNT; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1993), 89–113.

25 Ben Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (NTC; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 56–74.

26 Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 191–229, quoting 205.

exegesis is suspect because "it requires a considerable accumulation of merely possible, but highly improbable, meanings, *all of which are necessary to make it work*."[27] Fee is skeptical about the Adam–Christ parallels, though he prioritizes the ethical rather than metaphysical implications as the text's main contribution. Amid repeated references to Isaiah 45, the logic of its use is not pressed beyond what Paul says by it. A subsequent, shorter adaptation (1999) follows suit.[28]

Bockmuehl (1998) is strongly convinced of Christ's preexistence appearing in the text, relating the "form of God" to divine glory via Jewish mystical traditions.[29] He follows Wright and others in the trend toward interpreting *harpagmos* as taking advantage, such that the pre-incarnate Son already had the highest possible status; there would have been nothing else to snatch at. Dunn's appeal to the image of God is rejected, with his broader interpretative paradigm treated as an already concluded failure. Bockmuehl's is one of the more canonically rich and theologically engaged commentaries, with reflections for example on suffering and how it should affect interpretation of the exaltation in Phil 2:9–11. Again, though, justification for Paul's use of Isaiah 45, here labeled "a kind of midrash," is largely absent.[30]

Osiek (2000) expresses concern that so much of the history of interpretation has been devoted to Christological concerns, whereas in its original context the text is primarily parenesis.[31] Though summarizing various interpretations (without mention of our protagonists), she does not advance the discussion or even decisively evaluate alternatives. Isaiah 45 is mentioned only cursorily.

Fowl (2005) references Yeago to introduce the question of what Phil 2:11 is describing if not a new relationship between Jesus and YHWH.[32] Leaving Dunn aside in his initial discussion, Fowl treats him explicitly in a four-page appended section on Adam Christology. There Fowl does not mention Yeago but argues that Dunn's evidence has been disputed by other biblical scholars, not succeeding even on its own terms. Fowl finds Wright's view of the Adam–Christ parallels to be superior to Dunn's, though not without criticism. Fowl's commentary is notably theological

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27 Fee, *Philippians*, 203 n. 41.

28 Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 89–102.

29 Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC 11; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 114–48.

30 Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 144.

31 Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 55–69.

32 Fowl, *Philippians*, 88–117.

in sources referenced, with Hans Urs von Balthasar, John Milbank, John Chrysostom, and Thomas Aquinas garnering citations. Regarding the relation of the text to metaphysics, Fowl asserts, "The question is not whether Paul thought this way himself. Rather, the question is whether one uses historical-critical, sociological, philosophical, or Christian theological categories for ordering" diverse concepts and perspectives.[33] Interpretations are ruled not by "strictly formal considerations" of "grammar, syntax, and semantics alone," which are underdetermined on key issues, but also by the "logic of salvation" within and informing the passage.[34]

Silva (2005), without mentioning either Dunn or Yeago, finds the passage to be consonant with fourth-century Trinitarian formulas even if its language is not philosophically loaded.[35] Consonant with Reformed sources, he allows for Adam–Christ associations handled with restraint. He is one of relatively few commentators directly resisting false dichotomies between ethical and non-ethical interpretative elements. Acknowledging the "stunning implications" of the application of Isaiah 45, still Silva proceeds without discussing its legitimacy.

Thurston and Ryan (2005) seem unconvinced about Adam–Christ parallels, basically seeing that discussion as too far afield.[36] Appealing to the hymnic genre rendering the text outside the purview of systematic theology, they make only passing reference to the major issue and no explicit reference to Dunn. Isaiah 45 is parenthetically acknowledged with no real explanation. Discussion of preexistence is counted pastorally relevant for feminist and liberationist concerns, as surely it is; but one could get the impression that questions about whom Christians are to worship have escaped this category.

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[33] Fowl, *Philippians*, 96.

[34] Fowl, *Philippians*, 98. Compare John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 247–48: "he is utterly blind who does not perceive that His eternal divinity is set forth in these words.... I acknowledge, certainly, that Paul does not mention here Christ's divine essence; but it does not follow from this, that the passage is not sufficient to overthrow the impiety of the Arians... For where can there be equality with God without robbery, except only in the essence of God? For God always remains the same who cried by Isaiah, 'I live; I will not give my glory to another' (Isa. 48:11)."

[35] Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (2nd ed.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 92–116.

[36] Bonnie Bowman Thurston and Judith Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (SP 10; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 77–92.

Reumann (2009) offers an unusually complex commentary to navigate.[37] He describes both a preexistent divine subject and a human subject as possibilities, but even his presentation of the former is theologically suspect: "a figure already within the realm of divinity who becomes mortal and then is lifted back up to whence he had come or even higher," apparently implying a temporary loss of divinity.[38] For various historical reasons Reumann cautions against strong parallels with Adam. Dunn's treatment is cited here and there, but may be receding from prominence in favor of Wright and others.

Cousar (2009) considers Dunn's position, but in the end rejects its tenuous linguistic arguments and inability to make sense of the whole passage.[39] Against an ethical focus, Cousar sees the hymn reinforcing Christ's Lordship for the Philippian community, clarifying the status of monotheism in the eschaton. This militates against Dunn; somewhat strangely, Cousar also thinks that this excludes Wright's view.

Hansen (2009) does not reference Yeago.[40] But he does expose the broad problem with Dunn's logic: it is fallacious to suggest that if Adam parallels are present (as Hansen grants, at an implicit level anyway), there must be no divine preexistence. Hansen cites Wright in the process, noting his claim that the contrast between Adam and Christ works best if there is a contrast in ontology rather than just behavior. Hansen too resists a false dichotomy between ethical and non-ethical interpretations, and provides extensive discussion of Isaiah 45, yet without directly addressing the exegetical warrant for Paul's moves. Indeed, the only substantial engagement with that issue surfaces outside the commentaries surveyed—in Wright as well as the Christological work of Richard Bauckham.[41]

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[37] John Henry Paul Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 332–83. See p. 365 for a summary.

[38] Reumann, *Philippians*, 366 n. 17.

[39] Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 50–59.

[40] G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 118–69.

[41] See Bauckham's sequel, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009)—which, it should be noted, is dedicated not only to Larry Hurtado but also to Dunn. Like Yeago, Bauckham makes theologically interesting moves; unlike Yeago, he is beginning to be cited fairly frequently in discussions of Philippians 2. And, obviously, his work makes historical arguments oriented to persuade the New Testament guild; its recent and broad reception history means that it eludes this essay's focus. So too do John B. Webster, "The Imitation of Christ," *TynBul* 37 (1986): 95–120; idem, "Christology, Imitability, and Eth-

D. *Philippians Commentaries and "Theological" Contributions*

In moving toward morals from this story, are Yeago on the one side, and detractors of pre-modern exegesis on the other, right to find substantial difference between classic and contemporary commentators? Without space for further surveys,[42] we may observe that in many respects the subject-matter is perennial: the text pressures us to address certain questions. Yet genres differ between various pre-modern texts and modern commentaries. The former often involve collection of sermons or catechesis, as well as appeals to Philippians 2 amid dogmatic polemics, rather than technical focus on the text itself. That ancient "commentaries" thus differ from modern ones does not make either kind simply better or worse. Exclusive preferences for one or the other probably speak loudest about particular readers.

The basic shift, as even the genre differences perhaps signal, concerns exegetical aims. The ancient focus was to understand the text as divine teaching for the church; the modern tendency is to treat the text as evidence for understanding the ideas of Paul or other early Christians as historical figures. By no means are these thoroughly and mutually exclusive aims. Indeed, many of the finest recent commentaries come from those who, like Grant Osborne, pursue the divine teaching primarily by understanding the ideas of Paul as they come to expression in the text. All the same, though, classic exegetes felt more pressure to move beyond or through the wording of the text dogmatically, we might say: to unfold logic by which its various surface parts provide divine teaching that coheres not only in a given text but also with the rest of Scripture as it shapes church tradition. Contemporary exegetes, by contrast, move behind the wording of a text historically, to unfold a narrative of Paul's developing—perhaps coherent—ideas as they come to expression in a particular passage. The corresponding moves made by each can be very fruitful, even necessary, but at times one does reach a resulting exegetical impasse, and in any case the correlate is a substantial difference of hermeneutical cultures.

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ics," *SJT* 39 (1986): 309–26, earlier theological essays addressing Philippians 2. Like Yeago, Webster's work appears to be neglected in the commentaries.

[42] For a taste and source trail regarding pre-modern exegesis of Philippians 2, see Sarah Coakley, "Kenōsis and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing," in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Challenges in Contemporary Theology; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 3–39, citing Friedrich Loofs, "Kenōsis," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (ed. James Hastings; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 7:680–87. See also Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (ACCSNT 8; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 222–25, and the sources therein.

Despite surface rhetoric, though, Yeago's essay need not entail dismissing "historical-critical" (or, if preferred, "grammatical-historical") concerns. Yeago borrows from Wright and makes multiple historical appeals. The strengths of modern commentaries on this front are obvious. To provide one illustration from a theologian's standpoint, the emerging consensus over *harpagmos* is an exegetical gift to theology, while much of Wright's other work is also theologically engaged. And, to the degree that Yeago highlights weaknesses of modern exegesis in Dunn and the commentaries engaging him, those limitations do not primarily concern subject-matter: most commentaries ponder substantially the question of Incarnation. The limitations, summarized below under three headings, lie rather in conceptual starting points and corresponding uses of evidence.

(1) Theological sophistication. The concepts-judgments distinction, however expressed, suggests that biblical scholars are sometimes hermeneutically and even logically underdeveloped. Of course we could all name theologians that are hermeneutically overdeveloped, so preoccupied with theory as to neglect the biblical text itself, whereas to a degree the biblical scholar's besetting sin is preferable. Nevertheless, the first lesson here is that everyone needs at least a basic hermeneutical toolkit; such a conceptual framework is operative, at the level of interpretative expectations, whether one knows it or not. Beyond hermeneutical weaknesses, some technical commentaries reflect poor definitions, theological stereotypes, historical flaws, and false dichotomies, as in the frequent polarization between ethical and Christological interpretations, which at a basic level fails to acknowledge the theological nature of ethics. Put simply, theological sophistication helps biblical scholars to accomplish even their historical tasks better. Over time, biblical scholarship often weeds out problems in these realms, as illustrated above in evaluations of Dunn's work, while sometimes reflecting the progress of a self-correcting academic guild moving toward small-scale consensus. But, at other points, considerable need for theological growth remains.

(2) Admission of evidence. Yeago's critique of Dunn is also revealing about the point at which an alien text or theological construct counts as exegetical evidence. On the one hand, Dunn distances Philippians 2 from other New Testament texts such as John 1 and from the Nicene dogma. On the other hand, Dunn simultaneously imports his own construct, an "Adam-Christology," based on relatively thin strands of overt textual evidence. Theologians ought not say, or be taken to imply, that different biblical texts or dogmatic tradition(s) can simply be read into a particular passage—or, conversely, that theology must be read straight off the

text's surface without reference to potential allusions or other elements of implicit context. Yet biblical scholars sometimes use conceptual resources every bit as alien to the texts they exegete as "dogma" is suspected to be. If use of conceptual resources from outside is inevitable when expounding any text, then why not allow overtly "theological" conceptualities—whether from elsewhere in Scripture, from subsequent tradition, or even from contemporary culture—to shape explicitly the questions asked in the exegetical process? Otherwise some concepts operate implicitly under a "historical" banner whereas others surface only at the end of the process, to be criticized based on already-determined exegetical results. Not only is that distinction itself potentially naïve, it also allows the historically-oriented exegete to avoid facing his or her relevant theological commitments straightforwardly, and to neglect material from elsewhere in the biblical canon or its effective history that might be informative—even historically.

(3) The scope of the task. Thus, one question on which Philippians commentaries are surprisingly silent is the warrant for Paul's use of Isaiah 45. The assumption seems to be that Paul merely borrows or applies its language without respect for whether or not textual clues support such Christological reading. Here, as noted above, the relevant work has scarcely begun, but we must look outside commentaries to monographs and articles for starting points.[43] It seems curious for so many Philippians commentators to operate as if they could engage Isa 45:23 only indirectly, treating Phil 2:9–11 without facing questions about Paul's interpretative rationale and the meaning of the Isaiah text itself.

More generally, we face the question of how commentators delimit their subject matter and task. Is the subject matter fixed in the textual wording, and/or the historical and literary context behind that? Or is the subject matter negotiated as the theological range of what the text says (or might say) is brought into relation not only with past but also canonical, effective-historical, and present contexts—so that the fullness of the exegetical task requires thinking with the prophets and apostles?[44] Exploring a responsible version of this latter possibility, we might celebrate the

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[43] Unfortunately, not even the much-anticipated *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007)—in which, see Moisés Silva, "Philippians," 835–39—alters this claim.

[44] Here is where Karl Barth's commentary, whatever its flaws, reads somewhat differently than most: see *The Epistle to the Philippians* (trans. James W. Leitch; 40th anniversary ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

strengths of modern critical commentaries while overcoming some of their limitations.

2. *Christology As Stimulus to "Theological" Commentary-Writing*

Texts elicit commentary for numerous reasons and in myriad forms, but the academic incentives for commenting upon the Bible are not a perpetual given.[45] In response, appeals for "theological interpretation of Scripture" seek to renew the interpretative prominence of canon, creed, and culture (engaging the church's mission in the world).[46] At least some advocates do not believe that theological interpretation entails rejection of critical methods, diminution of historical concerns, adoption of relativist pluralism, or refusal to write scholarly materials that contingently interact with broader standards of the guild and assumptions of religious others. Rather, theological interpretation incorporates the best "historical critical" tools within a more basic vocational framework.

A renaissance of theologically orthodox biblical scholarship has transpired since the 1960s. The resulting commentaries not only provide engagement with specific critical issues and a wealth of interpretative resources; they also embody renewed cultural engagement by virtue of their very presence. Contemporary Christian scholars owe profound gratitude to many such as Grant Osborne who have undertaken that mission, blazing a trail to follow and offering an embarrassment of exegetical riches for theologians to invest.

Hence theological interpretation, at least initially, seemed to offer a hermeneutical language for the enterprise in which many already engaged. Suppose, for analytical simplicity, we speak of the beginning, the middle, and the end of interpretation. When biblical scholars *begin* with acknowledged presuppositions or doctrinal convictions, and with prayer,

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[45] For historical treatments of the Bible's creation as a "cultural" artifact eliciting university study and commentary, see Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (OSHT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For a vigorous argument regarding the increasing disciplinary fragmentation of New Testament studies, see Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (STI; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

[46] For an overview see Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). For further theological perspective, see idem, "What Is Theological Interpretation? An Ecclesiological Reduction," *IJST* 12 (2010): 144–61.

anticipating the grace of the Holy Spirit working in and through natural talents and labors, this is an aspect of "theological" exegesis. When these scholars direct their service to churchly *ends*—preaching, teaching, translating, and so forth; when they sometimes address pastoral and lay readers instead of solely pursuing academic notoriety; and when the exegesis addresses canonical "biblical theology," the orienting vocation could be called "theological" interpretation.

Such language could not only support biblical scholars in their work but also obtain a wider audience for its results. Meanwhile, as a leavening influence, theological exegesis might make space in academic culture for theologians to engage Scripture and pursue the riches of biblical studies more robustly. Furthermore, theological interpretation might embolden biblical scholars to engage canon, creed, and culture more centrally and creatively in the exegetical process. In short, the goal would be iron sharpening iron between biblical studies and theology (Prov 27:17).

Yet the jury remains out: will appeals for theological exegesis ultimately prove to be wise, unhelpfully divisive, or both? Many biblical scholars need not quibble with the "beginning" presupposition of scriptural unity, or with creedal integrity as the "end" result in such an enterprise. The sticking point, then, concerns the "middle" of interpretation.

Often biblical scholars seem committed to a largely historical conception of their discipline and, accordingly, to commentaries offering author- or original context-oriented exegesis. Thus modern commentaries typically distinguish between the "meaning" of the text and its "significance" in the here and now. The historical dimension orients the scholarly task on which commentary material is grounded.

Given claims above regarding the beginning and ends of interpretation, it is misleading for theologians to accuse all biblical scholars of lacking theological interests and merely doing history. But, in return, biblical scholars routinely accuse theologians of ignoring scriptural particulars, so both guilds perceive that we have differences, and need to admit that "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov 27:6). What then is at stake? Most modern, scholarly commentaries do not substantially engage ancient or contemporary theological texts in the "middle" of what they call "exegesis," tending instead to reflect a two-stage model that distinguishes interpretation from theological reflection. Such "application" of the text to doctrine and life transpires once the exegesis is basically done. This two-stage model could simply reflect contingencies of writing within a historically-oriented guild, but often it goes farther, setting boundaries on what counts as evidence in exegetical argument.

Thus the recent spate of "theological" commentaries has garnered two basic kinds of reviews from biblical scholars, once due allowance is made for idiosyncrasies of individual volumes. Those that look like other modern commentaries, perhaps with enlarged components of biblical theology, have been favorably received. Those that do not look like other scholarly commentaries have been heavily criticized for lacking the requisite historical and literary analysis, not being "about" the text. This dispute rebounds from interpretative aims to the exegetical middle, namely, what considerations are important or less important—or even illegitimate—when theologians, pastors, and lay people read the Bible, since they so often manipulate, distort, or neglect it.

Some advocates of theological interpretation respond to negative reviews by largely dismissing historical concerns or attacking scholarly commentaries proliferated by the guild. Yet, on an ecumenical construal of theological interpretation, the point is not to uproot the existing field of biblical scholarship but to fertilize it afresh and to harvest its results more creatively. The two-stage model, and predominantly historical vocations of biblical study, are not entirely wrong but can be helpful, if submission to scriptural authority is not equated with naïve versions of objectivity and embrace of secular historical approaches does not preclude theological sophistication.

Commentaries answer questions people are asking, and raise questions people should be asking. They address relations, between components within the text such as words or sentences, and then between the text and its cotext(s) or context(s). From a theological perspective, commentary fits within the teaching ministry of the church. Fixed in writing, commentaries not only maintain the immediacy associated with verbal proclamation; they also mediate traditions of interpretation, influencing the proclamation of others. They reflect commitment to the priesthood of all believers while also resulting from prudential deployment of God's gifts to the church. Use of teaching gifts must be discerned through humble self-appraisal in faith, acknowledgment of others above ourselves, and appreciation of how the Spirit connects people and needs in communal settings near and far (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12). Because the church is the body of Christ, all of us are interdependent and no one is "God's gift to the world": the exercise of teaching authority must be received by others. How we speak to and about one another will be especially important if this process of reception is to result in discernment of God's will rather than division of Christ's body. For either biblical scholars or theologians to believe that our gifts should be the dominant priority is arrogant and unwise. Of course, the church may fail to recognize its need for any of our gifts, in which case scholars must respond with both humility and courage.

Churchly teaching is the ongoing ministry of God the Son's prophetic self-revelation within the royal priesthood being created by God the Spirit. Commentators are accountable to the church for their exercises of teaching authority, but even more so to the church's Lord. Christology is a stimulus to theological commentary writing not only because Jesus is so integral to Scripture's subject matter, but also because prudential gift-giving within the body of Christ is the basic form that constitutes commentary-writing as churchly service, and the threefold office of Christ—especially the prophetic—unfolds the basic content of such a teaching ministry: confronting and blessing God's people with the divine Word. Beyond secular reasons for commenting on biblical texts' christological significance, then, attention to Christology should be natural for commentators committed to the Rule of Faith—in other words, to canon and creed. Attention to Christology might also bring contemporary context(s)—culture—more effectively into relation with the text. Having labored over a theological commentary myself,[47] I would suggest that Christology is in play even when Scripture seemingly addresses everything else under the sun—for in Christ all things hold together (Colossians 1), even biblical texts.

To be sure, theological commentaries sometimes fail to bring *the text* into meaningful relation with the cotext(s) and contemporary context(s). But it remains unclear, in principle, why *all* commentaries should have to *excel equally* in historical and literary detail—or why engaging the text's *message* would always entail dwelling at primary length on *ancient context(s)*. Modern scholarly commentaries are a great gift. But why must they preclude substantial theological engagement in the middle of exegesis, or appreciation for other commentaries focusing on textual relations with additional contexts? What kind or extent of historical and literary responsibility is required for a commentary somehow to be "about" the text, addressing questions it evokes? Must a *scholarly* commentary primarily analyze textual language, or might specialized learning also help with addressing the subject matter . . . and addressing its inner logic *to us*, in a closer parallel with ancient sermons that might not deserve the dismissive label "devotional"?

47 Daniel J. Treier, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* (BTCB; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011).

Advocates of theological interpretation undoubtedly need to learn that "a gentle answer turns away wrath" (Prov 15:1), and wisdom requires all of us to be "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (Jas 1:19) amid hermeneutical controversy. Attention to Phil 2:5–11 provides a useful opportunity for understanding where biblical scholars and theologians differ, *along with* how close to each other we might already be. If commentaries concern questions we ask and relations into which texts are brought, then some differences in how we pursue answers might enhance growth in the body of Christ. Beyond such an intentionally theological perspective, however, the case study in this essay suggests that all biblical commentaries are actually theological, like it or not: the question is how well they engage their subject matter in its potential fullness.

CHRISTOLOGY, THE PASTORAL EPISTLES, AND COMMENTARIES

Linda L. Belleville

Theological analysis of the Pastoral Epistles (PE) has suffered from a one-sided emphasis on the question of authenticity. PE Christology particularly has been co-opted to either prove or disprove Pauline authorship. The introductory section of commentaries is telling. Most commentaries devote the majority of the introduction to the question of authenticity.[1] William Mounce's *Word Biblical Commentary* commits eighty-four of the ninety page introduction to the topic, while the remaining six pages cover the themes of faith and salvation.[2] George Knight's NIGTC and Ben Witherington's *Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* devote the entire introduction to this issue.[3] Almost half of Howard Marshall's 108 page ICC introduction deals with authorship issues.[4]

Commentaries that place one or all of the Pastoral Epistles in a late first or early second century ecclesial *Sitz im Leben* tend to view the letters' christological statements as traditional fragments that have no integral theological role to play.[5] Christology is understood in terms of early church

[1] See, for example, C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (New Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 9; Raymond Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1–14; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 147–54; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (NTD 9; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954); J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1963; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987); Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992); Walter Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy/Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); Jerome Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (BST; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

[2] William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 46–130.

[3] George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 13–52; Ben Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 49–74.

[4] I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles.* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 57–92.

[5] Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); B. S. Easton, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: SCM, 1947); Anthony T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NCBC; London:

traditions and not Pauline theology.[6] The church of the Pastoral Epistles is a social organization, whose main theological concern is Christology as codified in ecclesial tradition rather than Christology in the making.[7] Anthony Hanson, who understands the Pastorals as letters instructing the church on how to be a good citizen, is representative.[8] Luke Johnson similarly identifies οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ (understood as church administration) as the Pastoral's central motif.[9] Ben Fiore speaks of the Pastorals as "church order" letters, resembling the official duty-roster memorandum given to subordinate officials on assuming a new position.[10] Roman Catholic scholarship tends to view the Pastorals as a collection of baptismal and liturgical homilies, notes, and formulas pertaining to the order of worship.[11]

It is the rare commentary that treats the Christology of the Pastorals as substantive. On occasion, Christology finds its way into an appendix or excursus. For example, although Howard Marshall does not treat Christology among the introductory matters, he does do so in a lengthy excursus.[12] Lock's ICC introduction has it in brief.[13] Erdmans's NICNT and Tyndale's *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* series are two of the few commentaries to-date that treat the theology of the Pastorals at length and include Christology. In the NICNT volume, Towner states that he "seeks to introduce the PE's theological emphases in a way that does some justice to the unity of the PE and the diversity of the individual letters."[14] Even so, for Towner,

Marshall Pickering, 1982); Thomas Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1989); E. F. Scott *The Pastoral Epistles* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936).

[6] J. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (EKK 15; Zürich: Benziger, 1988); L. Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe: Kommentar zum ersten Timotheusbrief* (HTKNT XI/2; Freiburg: Herder, 1994); N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (RNT 7; Regensburg: Pustet, 1969). Less detailed commentaries such as V. Hasler, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (ZBNT; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), and H. Merkel, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (NTD 9/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), confirm the consensus that the PE are second-century or late first-century documents which can only be understood with this in mind.

[7] Eduard Schweitzer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1961), 18; Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*.

[8] Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13.

[9] Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 147–54.

[10] Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistle* (SP 12; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2007), 9–12.

[11] See, e.g., Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 18–22; Quinn, *Titus*.

[12] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 287–326.

[13] Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1924), xxi–xxii.

[14] Phil Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 53–70.

it is a Christology in continuity with Pauline theology rather than one that arises from and engages a concrete situation.[15]

Those that see ἵνα παραγγείλῃς τισὶν μὴ ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν in 1 Timothy 1:3 as the primary motivation behind these letters give much closer consideration in the body of the commentary to matters of Christology as a response to false teaching. Fee and Barclay are noteworthy in this respect.[16] Towner also takes the emphasis on false teaching at face-value. But it is a heretical disregard for *social* institutions (such as the family, the household, leadership) that puts the Gospel at risk and not Christological error per sé.[17]

While most commentaries note that Christology in some form is central to the Pastorals, there is little detailed attention given to it. This partly has to do with the focus of commentary genre on exegesis rather than theology. As James Dunn notes, theological comment in commentaries is often briefly mentioned in the introduction (if at all) or is relegated to an appendix and tends to get lost midst the mass of other details.[18] One expects larger works on New Testament theology to include such commentary. Yet most theologies treat Paul's letters as a whole and the Pastorals are rarely included among them. Marshall's 2004 *New Testament Theology* is exceptional in devoting an entire chapter to the Pastorals.[19]

Why the Pastorals are disregarded is not difficult to ascertain. The focus since F. C. Baur and Martin Dibelius has been on viewing the author of the Pastorals as a third generation Christian who saw his or her job as that of preserving and applying already existing Pauline theology to a time of leadership upheaval and organizational disarray.[20] Frances Young's 1994

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[15] Phil Towner, "Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method," *TynBul* 46 (1995): 287–314.

[16] Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBC 13; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988); William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (rev. ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1975).

[17] Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*; cf. idem, "Pauline Theology or Pauline," *TynBul* 46 (1995): 306, 313–14.

[18] James Dunn, "Preface," in Francis Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ix.

[19] I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 397–419.

[20] Ferdinand C. Baur, *Die sogenannten Pastoralbriefe des Apostels Paulus* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1835); Martin Dibelius, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1931). See Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 157–59; Hans Bürki, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an Timotheus* (Wuppertaler Studienbibel Neues Testament 14; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1994); Fritz Grünzweig, *Erster Timotheus-Brief* (Bibel-Kommentare 18; Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1990); Merkel, *Pastoralbriefe*; Heinz-Werner Neudorfer, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an Timotheus*

Theology of the Pastorals is a case in point, focusing on the practical and organizational issues with which church communities of the early second century struggled. Although the issue of false teaching is raised, it is construed as ecclesial in nature so that the "Christ" of the Pastorals becomes an exemplar for εὐσέβεια and sacrificial living over against aggrandizing con artists.[21] The recent work of James Aageson (*Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church*) goes even further in situating each of the Pastorals in what he calls the "Pauline legacy" based on the literary and theological patterns he finds in each letter. Their theological patterns place them closer to the apostle Paul, but their perceived concern for the good order and leadership of the household of God ultimately places them closer to the ecclesial situation of the Apostolic Fathers.[22]

1. *An Overview of the Christology of the Pastoral Epistles*

It is not that the Pastorals lack Christology. The titles "Christ Jesus," "our Savior Jesus Christ" and "our Lord Jesus Christ" (with minor variations) alone appear over thirty times in the Pastoral's thirteen chapters.[23] It is the perception that the Christology of the Pastorals are derivative, freestanding traditional fragments that only serve to give apostolic authenticity to pseudonymous letters addressing third generation issues of church polity and the congregational life. For example, in a 1935 *ZNW* essay Hans Windisch argued that the Christology of the Pastorals does not have a theological function.[24] They merely contain statements, formulas and hymns about Christ that are not integrated into the theological fabric or argumentation of these letters.[25] According to Dibelius, the Pastorals contain titles and statements that reflect early Christian kerygma but lack

(Historisch-Theologische Auslegung; Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2004); Oberlinner, *Titusbrief*, xlii–l; Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, 23–39.

[21] Francis Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–23.

[22] James Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2008).

[23] 1 Tim 1:1 (twice), 2, 12, 14, 15, 16; 2:5; 3:13; 4:6; 5:11, 21; 6:3, 13, 14; 2 Tim 1:1 (twice), 2, 9, 10, 13; 2:1, 3, 8, 10; 3:12, 15; 4:1; Titus 1:1, 4; 2:13; 3:6.

[24] This has been capably refuted by Andrew Y. Lau's *Manifest in Flesh: The Epiphany: Christology of the Pastoral Epistles* (WUNT 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) and George M. Wieland's *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006).

[25] Hans Windisch, "Zur Christologie der Pastoralbriefe," *ZNW* 34 (1935): 213–214.

connection with their respective contexts.[26] The 1931 edition of Dibelius's commentary, revised by Conzelmann, reflects German scholarship's opinion that the Pastorals are "bourgeois" documents, concerned with a middle-class ethic of respectability and conformity to prevailing social values. The term εὐσέβεια, distinctive to the Pastorals, sums up the PE's primary concern to instruct the church on how to live comfortably in the world.[27] Or the Pastorals are viewed as organizational manuals to guide post-apostolic church leadership.[28]

Yet, all this overlooks the intimate connection in the Pastorals between Christology and soteriology.[29] This is particularly the case regarding titles. Peter Trummer observes that Christology in the Pastorals is expressed primarily by means of titles, particularly the titles κύριος and σωτήρ.[30] The title κύριος is certainly prominent, occurring twenty-two times.[31] Yet, it is not found at all in Titus and it refers to Christ only seven clear times in 1 and 2 Timothy.[32] The title σωτήρ is found ten times and used four times

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[26] Martin Dibelius, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1931). For further discussion, see Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 16.

[27] See Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 8–10. Compare Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*; Bürki, *Timotheus*; Grünzweig, *Erster Timotheus-Brief*; Jeremias, *Timotheus und Titus*; Merkel, *Pastoralbriefe*; Neudorfer, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an Timotheus*; Oberlinner, *Titusbrief*; Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*.

[28] See, for example, J. H. Houlden, *Pastoral Epistles. I and II Timothy, Titus* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; London: SCM, 1989), 64–65; Robert Karris, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1979), 64. There has been a recent call to consider 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus individually rather than as a Corpus, given what some argue to be theological differences especially between 1 Timothy–Titus and 2 Timothy. See, for example, William Richards, who concludes that a detailed analysis of grammatical features shows that they were not written by the same person (*Difference and Distance in Post-Pauline Christianity: An Epistolary Analysis of the Pastorals* (Studies in Biblical Literature 44; New York: Peter Lang, 2002). Compare Raymond Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Karl Donfried, "Rethinking Scholarly Approaches to 1 Timothy," in *1 Timothy Reconsidered* (ed. K. Donfried; Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 153–82; Michale Gourgues, "Étude critique: La recherche sur les pastorales à un tournant?" *Science et Esprit* 61 (2009): 73–86. Raymond Collins's commentary is representative of this opinion, arguing that 2 Timothy (unlike 1 Timothy and Titus) is typical of the ancient testamentary genre—a farewell discourse composed by authors writing about their heroes (*1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 181–86).

[29] Linda L. Belleville, "Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles," in *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (CBC 17; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 16–17. See the detailed treatments by Lau, *Manifest in Flesh* and Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation*.

[30] P. Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe* (BET 8; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978), 193–94, 204.

[31] 1 Tim 1:2, 12, 14; 6:3, 14, 15; 2 Tim 1:2, 8, 16, 18 (twice); 2:7, 19 (twice), 22, 24; 3:11; 4:8, 14, 17, 18, 22.

[32] 1 Tim 1:2, 12; 6:3, 14; 2 Tim 1:2, 8, 24.

of Christ only in 2 Timothy and Titus.[33] Towner correctly notes that the Pastorals place the saving activity of God and Christ in a conspicuous juxtaposition that is unique to these letters.[34] God is the initiator and Christ the mediator of salvation. "God our Savior" (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4) desires that all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4; 4:10 2 Tim 2:10). This desire becomes effective through Jesus whose mission was to save sinners; that is why he came into the world (1 Tim 1:15).

What both Trummer and Towner fail to observe, however, is that κύριος and σωτήρ are not independent titles. In each instance they are descriptive of the primary title Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς found twenty-four times in the Pastorals. The word order Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς is significant. Ἰησοῦς is descriptive—"Christ the Saving One," rather than the usual Ἰησοῦς Χριστός—Jesus the "Anointed One" or "Messiah." It is *Christ Jesus* who came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15) and who gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5). Salvation is an expression of God's grace (Titus 2:11) and is found in *Christ Jesus* and him alone (2 Tim 2:10). As such, he is the *Savior Jesus Christ*, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession (Titus 2:13–14). Those who believe, believe in him (*Jesus Christ*) for eternal life (1 Tim 1:16). *Christ Jesus* is singularly said to have made a good confession when he testified before Pontius Pilate (1 Tim 6:13). The title "Our Savior Christ Jesus" captures the divine salvific purpose. Grace and peace come from God the Father and "Christ Jesus our Savior" (Titus 1:4). It is a grace poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:6) and manifested in the appearing of "our Savior Christ Jesus," whose coming abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10). Now we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

A cosmic, eschatological purpose is caught in the title "Christ Jesus our Lord." Grace, mercy, and peace in the letters to Timothy come from God the Father and "Christ Jesus our Lord" (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2). It is "Christ Jesus our Lord" who judged the apostle Paul faithful by appointing him to his service (1 Tim 1:12). Orthodox teaching is that which agrees with "the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim 6:3). When "Christ Jesus

[33] God as Savior: 1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Christ as Savior: 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6.

[34] Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 54.

our Lord" appears again (1 Tim 6:14), it will be as the "righteous judge" of the living and the dead (2 Tim 4:1, 8). He will repay us in accordance with our deeds (2 Tim 4:14). Those who disown him, he will also disown (2 Tim 2:12b). But for those who remain faithful, there is the promise of enjoying life with Christ forever and of reigning with him in his kingdom (2 Tim 2:12a, 13; 4:1). If we are faithless, he will remain faithful (2 Tim 2:13). His return is something we should long for (2 Tim 4:8). Until then Timothy is not to be ashamed of testifying to *our Lord* or shrink from suffering for the Gospel in the power of God (2 Tim 1:8).

2. *Preformed Christological Materials*

It is commonly acknowledged that the Pastorals contain preformed Christological materials.[35] William Conybeare and John Howson's 1852 *The Life and Epistles of Paul* is recognized as the first to acknowledge such materials.[36] Alfred Seeberg continued the discussion in his 1903 work *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*, where he maintained that the Pastorals contain several fixed catechetical units (1 Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 2:8; 4:1).[37] More recently Joachim Jeremias (1954) and Ceslas Spicq (1969) argue that the Pastorals cite a large number of established sayings and formulas, including 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:5; 3:16, and 2 Tim 2:8.[38] Earle Ellis (1987) contends that traditional materials make up at least forty-one percent of 1 Timothy, sixteen percent of 2 Timothy, and forty-six percent of Titus.[39] James Miller goes even further to propose that the Pastorals are a collection of preformed traditions compiled and stitched together by the author.[40]

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[35] Most recently, Mark Yarbrough identifies eight criteria by which to discern units of preformed material and identifies twelve passages in 1 Timothy that meet his criteria; see his *Paul's Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy: An Evaluation of the Apostle's Literary, Rhetorical, and Theological Tactics* (LNTS; London: T&T Clark, 2009).

[36] William Conybeare and John Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Paul* (London: Longmans, Green, 1852).

[37] Alfred Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (TB 26; Munich: Kaiser, 1905).

[38] Jeremias, *Timotheus und Titus*; Ceslas Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (EB; 4th ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1969).

[39] Earle E. Ellis, "Traditions in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. F. Stinespring; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 237–53; compare idem, "Die Pastoralbriefe und Paulus: Beobachtungen zu Jürgen Roloffs Kommentar über 1. Timotheus," *ThBeitr* 22 (1991): 208–12.

[40] James D. Miller, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents* (SNTSMS 93; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17–18. For a critical analysis of Miller's work,

Specialized studies on pre-formed traditional materials in the Pastorals can be readily found. First Timothy 3:16 has especially received much consideration.[41] Yet analyses have largely focused on matters of source and form, while little attention has been given to their substantive Christological contribution. This has especially been the case regarding 1 Tim 1:15; 2:5, and 3:16—the three distinctly Christological pericopes in the Pastorals.

a. *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος: 1 Timothy 1:15*[42]

The majority of discussion regarding 1 Timothy 1:15 revolves around the source of the phrase Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι. Since there is no exact parallel, suggestions are wide-ranging. Oden argues for a dependence on Matt 9:13: "'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."[43] Roloff suggests an allusion to Mark 2:17: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."[44] Guthrie opts for sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, such as, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world" (John 18:37).[45] Collins thinks more broadly in terms of the whole Johannine Corpus.[46] Marshall correctly notes that ἦλθεν and σῶσαι are reminiscent of Luke's ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός (Luke 19:10).[47] Hanson and Dibelius-Conzelmann posit a creedal formula taken from the

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see Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 280; London: Continuum, 2005).

41 See especially Werner Stenger, *Der Christushymnus 1 Tim. 3:16: Eine strukturanalytische Untersuchung* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1977); Martin Hengel, "Hymnus und Christologie, " in *Wort in der Zeit. Festgabe für Karl Heinrich Rengstorf zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. W. Haubeck and M. Bachmann; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 1–23 (reprinted in idem, *Studien zur Christologie: Kleine Schriften IV* [WUNT 201; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006], 185–204); Witmar Metzger, *Der Christushymnus 1 Timotheus 3,16* (AzTh 62; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1982); Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (SNT 7; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972); William H. Gloer, "Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament: Form, Content, and Criteria for Identification," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 11 (1984): 115–32; Robert Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. Ward Gasque and Ralph Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 203–22.

42 For a recent excursus on πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, see Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 41–45.

43 Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 42.

44 Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, 90–91.

45 Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 15.

46 Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 39–40.

47 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397.

community's tradition.[48] Lock and Towner think that 1 Tim 1:15 implies knowledge of the Gospels,[49] while commentators such as Knight and Johnson speak of Gospel "echoes."[50] Others such as Michel, Brox, Kelly, and Oberlinner treat 1 Tim 1:15 as a reworking of Luke 19:10.[51]

There is a division of opinion regarding the theological purpose of 1 Timothy 1:15. One opinion is that v. 15 emphasizes current relevance rather than historical fact. According to Towner it is not that Christ "came" (past tense) but that Christ "comes" (gnomic aorist) to save each generation of unbelievers; he comes to the community of humankind in need of salvation.[52] Another opinion is that v. 15 affirms the central point of the Gospel; the offer of salvation is the result of Christ's entrance into human history.[53] There are also differing views regarding the emphasis in v. 15. Some say the verse emphasizes Christ's preexistence[54] or incarnation.[55] Others think the verse has to do with salvation being present and future.[56] Still others say the focus is on salvation as universal rather than exclusive.[57]

First Timothy 1:15 is conspicuous in connecting redemption to the Incarnation and making a profound Christological statement thereby. Towner accurately observes that verse 15 telescopes the whole earthly experience of Jesus into the event of his coming.[58] But he appears to miss the fact that v. 15 echoes the central point of the kerygma: salvation is the result of Christ's entrance into history. This makes Christology and soteriology inseparable both here in 1:15 and throughout the Pastorals. Also overlooked is the connection between theology and Christology throughout the Pastorals. "God our Savior" (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4) desires that all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4; 4:10;

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[48] Hanson, *Pastoral Letters*, 61; Dibelius & Conzelman, *Pastoral Epistles*, 29.
[49] Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 15; Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 145.
[50] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 101–2; Johnson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 180.
[51] O. Michel, "Grundfragen der Pastoralbriefe," in *Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten. Festgabe für Theophil Wurm* (ed. M. Loeser; Stuttgart: Quell, 1948), 86; Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 111; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 54; Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 43.
[52] Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 146; cf. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy/Titus*, 72; Hasler, *Timotheus und Titus*, 16.
[53] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 398; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 55.
[54] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 102; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 53.
[55] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 54.
[56] Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 53; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 398; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 53.
[57] Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 134; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 57.
[58] Towner, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 146.

2 Tim 2:10). Salvation is an expression of God's grace (Titus 2:11) and is found in Christ Jesus and him alone (2 Tim 2:10).

There is also a connection between Christology and eschatology. It is as "Savior" (2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6) that Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim 1:10). Christ Jesus is "our hope" who breaks the power of death and shows us the way to everlasting life (2 Tim 1:10). Those who believe in him will receive eternal life (1 Tim 1:16; cf. 2 Tim 3:15). Christ provides us with sound instruction (1 Tim 6:3), stands by our side, gives us strength, delivers us from every evil attack (2 Tim 4:17), and brings us safely into his heavenly kingdom (2 Tim 4:18).

The apostle Paul is intimately connected to this Christology. He had experienced God's saving grace firsthand on the road to Damascus (1 Tim 1:16). Although he persecuted the church out of ignorance, he was not at all shy about assuming responsibility and calling himself "the worst of them all" for what he did (1 Tim 1:15). Instead of punishing Paul as he fully deserved, Christ saved him. And not only did he save him, but Christ also picked him to proclaim his Good News among the Gentiles (1 Tim 1:16).

b. *Creedal: 1 Timothy 2:5–6*

The fact that the Nestle-Aland 27th edition (NA 27th) of the Greek NT indents 1 Timothy 2:5–6 is a recognition of its poetic form. There are five compact phrases, the final one so dense that precise understanding is impossible:[59]

> Εἷς γὰρ θεός,
> εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων,
> ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς,
> ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων,
> τὸ μαρτύριον καιροῖς ἰδίοις

There are few today who dispute the creed's antiquity. There are Pauline and non-Pauline features. The idea of Jesus as a mediator is Pauline. Christ's role in Paul's view is a mediatory one. "*Through* him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth" (Col 1:16) and then reconciled it all to himself "*through* Christ" (2 Cor 5:18). The term μεσίτης is Pauline, but its usage in 1 Tim 2:5 is unprecedented. Μεσίτης is found in Gal 3:19, but it is used differently. In Galatians, Moses is μεσίτης, recalling

[59] For further discussion, see Miller, *Pastoral Letters*, 69; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 64; Ellis, *Traditions in the Pastoral Epistles*, 346.

the giving of the Law to Israel on Mt. Sinai. Here it is Jesus whose incarnation qualifies him to be μεσίτης between God and humanity. The phraseology of ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς as μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων is not found elsewhere in Paul. The idea of "ransom" (or possibly "redemption"), ὑπὲρ πάντων, is thoroughly Pauline, but the term ἀντίλυτρον finds no parallel in the Pauline corpus.

Discussion in the commentaries revolves around questions of source, parallels, and probable background. Fee supposes that the creed is a hellenized form of δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν (Mark 10:45).[60] Barrett suggests a conscious echo of the creedal "one Lord … one God and Father of all" of Eph 4:5–6.[61] Quinn and Wacker think in terms of a congregational acclamation similar to "one God, the Father … one Lord, Jesus Christ" found in 1 Cor 8:6.[62] Johnson is singular in thinking that there is no reason to consider these verses as other than one of Paul's typically compressed christological-soteriological statements.[63]

The creed begins with εἷς γὰρ θεός. Εἷς θεός recalls the central theological tenet of Judaism: Ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ· κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστιν (Deut 6:4 LXX). The *Shema* stands in stark opposition to the polytheism of Israel's neighbors and interjects a note of absolute exclusivity. God's utter distinctiveness is the basis for the demands, "You must not have any other god but me" (Deut 5:7) and "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength" (Deut 6:5). Yet, as Kelly notes, εἷς θεός in 1 Tim 2:5–6 does not stress Judaic exclusivity but global inclusivity.[64] God's "oneness" is the foundation that guarantees universal access to salvation. Belief in the one, living God is the "the pillar and foundation of the truth" of an inclusive salvation (1 Tim 3:15).

While God was the Father of Israel alone ("Israel is my son, my firstborn," Exod 4:22–23), as εἷς θεός he is the creator of all human beings. The implication is important: since there is only one God, he is the God of both Jews and non-Jews, slave and free, and male and female (Gal 3:28; cf. Rom 3:29–30). The net result is that he is God of all humanity. This first appears in God's covenantal promise to Abraham that all the peoples of

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60 Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 66.
61 Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 255–56.
62 Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 181.
63 Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 191.
64 Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 63. Compare Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 66; Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 197; Towner, *Letters to Timothy*, 181.

the earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:3) and that he would be the father of all nations (Gen 17:4).

While the creed begins on a monotheistic note, Christology is primary in the rest of the strophe. Christology is once again tied to the Incarnation (cf. 1 Tim 1:15). The key term is ἄνθρωπος, repeated three times in verses 4–5: God desires that πάντας ἀνθρώπους be saved, which is accomplished through ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς (who serves as μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων). Mounce takes εἷς μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων as referring to the one person-two natures of Christ.[65] However, the lack of an article with the noun ἄνθρωπος places the stress not on a definite person ("the man") but on the humanity of Christ—"himself human." As Lock notes, it is as ἄνθρωπος that Christ fully identifies with all people.[66] Also, the emphasis is on Christ's mediatory work and not on his divine-human makeup. It is as a human being that Jesus is uniquely positioned to represent all human beings. Christ does not reconcile God and humanity (singular) but God and human beings (plural ἀνθρώπων). Kelly, Fee, and Towner see in the term ἄνθρωπος a representational role parallel to Paul's Adam Christology. Christ as the second Adam inaugurated a new, redeemed humanity.[67] Jeremias and Quinn-Wacker think in terms of Jesus' self-designation as "Son of Man" and his representative function on behalf of all human beings.[68] As Johnson notes, it is through a shared humanity that God seeks to save all people.[69]

It is also ἄνθρωπος that allows Christ to fulfill the role as μεσίτης between God and humankind. The idea is Greco-Roman, where the μεσίτης brought about a mutually accepted agreement between two or more business parties and provided the surety or guarantee of an agreement or arrangement.[70] The target audience for mediation is all embracing: ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. But the route to redemption is wholly exclusive. It is as the *one* mediator (εἷς μεσίτης) that Christ redeems *everyone* (ὑπὲρ πάντων). Salvation comes solely through this mediator and none other. As Marshall notes, since there is only one God (and not many), there can only be one way of

[65] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 88.

[66] Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 28.

[67] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 63; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 65; Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 181.

[68] Jeremias, *Timotheus und Titus*, 226–29; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 184.

[69] Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 197.

[70] J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914–29), 399 s.v. Μεσίτης.

salvation. If there were many gods, there could be different ways of salvation, but since there is only one, the possibility is excluded.[71]

As a human being, Christ is uniquely positioned as ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων. Redemption is rooted in the teaching of Jesus. "The Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a *ransom* for many" (Mark 10:45). Although the compound ἀντίλυτρον does not appear in Mark 10:45, λύτρον occurs nineteen times in the LXX and twice in the New Testament. The backdrop is Greco-Roman economics: ἀντίλυτρον understood as "ransom" was the stipulated price to set captives free—be they prisoners of war or slaves. The theological milieu is the OT sacrificial system and the legal principle of "life for life." (Exod 21:23–24; Lev 24:19; Deut 19:21). The idea of Christ as a ransom in our place appears as well in Titus: ἔδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα λυτρώσηται ἡμᾶς (Tit 2:14). The contrast between εἷς μεσίτης and ὑπὲρ πάντων shows that "all" should be understood in its broadest sense. Yet, as Fee states, in the Pastorals the scope of salvation is universal, but effectual only for those who believe (1 Tim 1:16; 4:10).[72] And as Johnson notes, the confession of "one God" and "one mediator" provides the theological warrant for a Gospel of universal access to salvation.[73]

The polemical thrust of these verses is commonly overlooked. The opening γάρ connects the creed to what precedes and provides the support for the claim in verse 4 that God wants all people to be saved (ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι). Salvation for all is intimately tied to the one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—"Christ Jesus," himself human (2:5–6). God also wants all to come to know *the truth* (καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν, v. 4). The creed of verses 5–6 is immediately followed by an exclamation, asserting *the truth* regarding the universal call and character of Paul's ministry as "a teacher and apostle" of the non-Jews (v. 7).

c. *Hymn/Confession: 1 Timothy 3:16*

ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί,
ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι,
ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις,
ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν,
ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ,
ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ

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71 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 429.
72 Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 17.
73 Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 197.

As Quinn and Wacker note, a veritable library of specialized studies has been generated by 1 Tim 3:16.[74] Most of these studies have been concerned with the source and form of the text. For example, Barrett, Miller, Jeremias, Windisch, and Brox argue that verse 16 is a pre-Christian hymn that the author has taken up and applied to Christ.[75] Quinn and Wacker think that an Aramaic source can be reconstructed.[76] Johnson identifies the source as Paul himself,[77] while Lock supposes that 1 Tim 3:16 comes from the same source as Eph 5:14.[78]

Formal analysis of 1 Tim 3:16 has garnered the most attention. The text's free-standing, preformed character was first proposed by Johann Jakob Rambach in his 1817 volume *Anthologie christlicher Gesänge aus allen Jahrhunderten der Kirche*[79] and cited as such by Heinrich Holtzman in *Die Pastoralbriefe*.[80] The NA 27th edition indents verse 16, thereby recognizing its preformed character. The UBS 4th revised edition does as well. The poetic form is evident. Each line begins with a third person singular aorist passive indicative: ἐφανερώθη ... ἐδικαιώθη ... ὤφθη ... ἐκηρύχθη ... ἐπιστεύθη ... ἀνελήμφθη. There is also rhythm and assonance. Each line has -θη followed by ἐν (with the exception of line 3) plus the dative.

Debate revolves around the number of stanzas. The differing opinions are reflected in the NA 27th and the UBS 4th revised editions. NA 27th divides the hymn into three stanzas of two lines each. UBS 4th divides the hymn into two stanzas of three lines each. The KJV and older translations treat verse 16 as one stanza of six lines. Houlden and Lea support this formal understanding.[81] The unstated assumption is that they are in chronological sequence from the Incarnation to the Parousia: (1) the Incarnation (ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί), (2) Jesus' Spirit-empowered ministry (ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι), (3) his resurrection appearances (ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις),[82] (4) global

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[74] Quinn and Wacker *Letters to* Timothy, 318.

[75] Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 66; Miller, *Pastoral Letters*, 78; Jeremias, *Timotheus und Titus*, 27–34; Windisch, "Pastoralbriefe," 213–38; Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 162–63.

[76] Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 317–320.

[77] Johnson, *Letters to Timothy*, 236.

[78] Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 45.

[79] Johann Jakob Rambach, *Anthologie christlicher Gesänge aus allen Jahrhunderten der Kirche* (6 Bd.; ed. J. F. Hammerich; Altona und Leipzig: Hammerich, 1817–1833), 1:33.

[80] Heinrich J. Holtzmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe kritisch und exegetisch behandelt* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1880), 329.

[81] James L. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 84–88; Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 126. For further discussion, see Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 107.

[82] Whether ἀγγέλοις refers to human or angelic messengers is debated. The when and where are debated as well. See Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 91.

proclamation of the Gospel (ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν), (5) a favorable response (ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ), and (6) the Parousia (ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ).

Because of the difficulty of understanding ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ as anything other than Christ's ascension, a *heilsgeschichtliche* interpretation has either been abandoned or modified to fit an incarnation to ascension timeframe. In the latter case, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν (line 4) and ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ (line 5) apply to Jesus' earthly ministry. For example, Lea takes lines 4 and 5 as referring to Jesus' command "Go and make disciples" given prior to his ascension (Matt 28:19). The problem, however, is that the aorist verbs ἐκηρύχθη and ἐπιστεύθη and the location ἐν ἔθνεσιν assume a post-ascension period of evangelization (Acts 1:8).

Most commentators consequently favor a two or three stanza hymn. Commentaries are evenly split between the two. In a two stanza analysis, the first three lines describe Jesus' earthly ministry (incarnation, ministry, and resurrection/ascension) and the second three lines depict Christ's ongoing ministry through his church.[83] But this too has its difficulties. The final line, ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ, elsewhere in the NT is descriptive of Christ's ascension, not his activity through the church (Mark 16:19; Luke 9:51; Acts 1:2, 11, 22). Guthrie and Lock attempt to circumvent this problem by positing two stanzas of concurrent chronology. Lines 1–3 are Christ's triumph before his earthly enemies and lines 4–6 are his triumph before his heavenly enemies.[84] Or lines 1–3 are Jesus' ministry as seen on earth and watched from heaven and lines 4–6 as preached on earth and lived in heaven.[85]

A three stanza interpretation abandons any attempt at chronological analysis. Each set of lines is construed as an earthly and spiritual (or heavenly) pairing:[86]

Appeared in flesh (earth)
        vindicated in spirit (heaven)
Seen by angels (heaven)
        proclaimed among nations (earth)
Believed on in the world (earth)
        taken up in glory (heaven)

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[83] See, for example, Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 93; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 61; Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 45, Oden, *Timothy and Titus*, 44.

[84] Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 101–2.

[85] Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 45.

[86] See, for example, Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 61; Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 107–8; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 88–93; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 85; Jeremias, *Timotheus und Titus*, 27–34; Spicq, *Pastorales*, 60–63; Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 107.

Each schema has Christological implications. Yet the text's compact nature, exalted language, and strophic character make it difficult to interpret with any exactness. Towner therefore rightly observes that analysis of 1 Tim 3:16 can't be reduced to a debate about numbers of stanzas or matters of chronology.[87]

Even so, there is some Christological consensus. There is broad agreement that ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί concerns the Incarnation.[88] Although, ἐφανερώθη assumes Christ's preexistence it is not the focal point: ἐν σαρκί is. What the phrase refers to, however, is debated. Towner equates ἐν σαρκί with human weakness: Christ appeared as a weak human being.[89] But there is nothing in the phrase or the hymn to suggest more than Christ's participation in the human experience, similar to John 1:14 (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). The importance of Christ's humanness was already highlighted in 1 Tim 2:5's ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς who is μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων.[90]

There is also general consensus about the meaning of lines four and five. The language of line four, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, calls to mind the language of Luke 24:47: καὶ κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. The plural ἐν ἔθνεσιν and its inclusive scope over-against the exclusivity of Judaism is to be noted. The fifth line, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, recalls the faithful saying of 1 Tim 1:15: Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι. "Among the nations" and "the world" strike a universal chord in terms of the Gospel's inclusiveness similar to 1 Tim 2:4: ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν.

The difficulty in unpacking the compact language of verse 16 is evident in the bewildering opinions regarding the meaning of ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι. Lenski thinks it has to do with Jesus' holy obedience even to death.[91] Lea speaks of Jesus "declared righteous in the sphere of his human spiritual nature."[92] Bernard supposes it means "proven to be the Son of God by his words and works."[93] Marshall proposes: "vindicated in

87 Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 278.

88 Collins is exceptional in taking the entire hymn of "the risen One". "Appeared in the flesh" is Christ risen from the grave (*1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 108–11).

89 Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 279.

90 For further discussion, see Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 524.

91 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 612.

92 Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 125–26.

93 J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 63.

the supernatural mode of Jesus' two-stage existence as characterized by the activity of the Holy Spirit."[94] Lock suggests: "kept sinless through the action of the Spirit upon His Spirit [sic]."[95] Knight and Oden support a vindication as God's Son by the Spirit's raising him from the dead.[96]

The fact that the grammar can be construed in two different ways complicates matters. If ἐν plus the dative is local, then the sense would be either "vindicated in [his] spirit." or "vindicated in the realm of the Spirit." If ἐν plus the dative is instrumental, the sense would be "vindicated by the Spirit." The parallelism between ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί and ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι suggests a local "in." The phrase ἐν πνεύματι would then be poetic shorthand for "in the realm of the Spirit."[97] Lines 1 and 2 could then be a condensed form of Romans 1:3–4: Christ appeared in the human realm ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα (Rom 1:3), and he was vindicated in the spiritual realm when God τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν (Rom 1:4). The aorist ἐδικαιώθη as a divine passive supports this construal.[98]

The third strophe ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις is equally problematic and opinions similarly varied. "He *appeared to*" ἀγγέλοις is the general consensus. The debate revolves rather around the meaning of ἀγγέλοις. If ἀγγέλοις is translated "messengers" then this would have to do with the reports regarding Jesus' resurrection (e.g., ἀπήγγειλαν ταῦτα πάντα τοῖς ἕνδεκα καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς λοιποῖς, Luke 24:9). However, ἀγγέλοις can equally be translated "angels." Oden suggests that these are the angels who watched his earthly life (cf. Mark 1:13; Luke 2:13; John 1:51).[99] Fee, Lea, Barclay, and Kelly suggest worship given by angels to the ascended, glorified Christ (cf. 1 Cor 2:7–8; 1 Pet 1:12; Eph 3:10).[100] Guthrie proposes a triumphant Christ showing himself to his spiritual enemies (cf. Col 2:15; Eph 6:12).[101] Hanson thinks it refers to the triumph which the risen Christ enjoyed over all the powers of the universe, good and bad alike.[102] The last interpretation fits all the

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94 Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 525–26; cf. Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 280–81.

95 Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 45.

96 Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 184; Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 144.

97 See Maximilian Zerwick, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996), 631.

98 See Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated with Examples* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963) §236.

99 Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 45.

100 Fee, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 95; Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 126; Barclay, *Letters to Timothy*, 91; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 91.

101 Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 101.

102 Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 86.

other NT occurrences of ὤφθη that have to do with Jesus' resurrection appearances (Luke 24:34; Acts 13:31; 1 Cor 15:5–8).[103]

The sixth and final stanza ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ is typically understood as referring to Christ's ascension; ἀνελήμφθη is used in the NT specifically in this way (Acts 1:2, 22; cf Acts 10:16 and Mark 16:19 [longer ending]). Some think ἐν δόξῃ refers to Christ's elevation to God's right hand (cf. "God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly realms," Eph 1:20). Others see ἐν δόξῃ as a cosmic reference (cf. "the same one who descended is the one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe," Eph 4:10). Yet, the preposition ἐν with the dative δόξῃ suggests manner rather than status. The Koine sense of δόξα as "praise," "acclaim" fits the triumphal theme; there was heavenly praise and acclaim at his ascension.

Attempts to fit 1 Tim 3:16 into some sort of formal or chronological schema have overshadowed the text's distinctive Christological contributions. Even those who explore the hymn's theological content force it into conventional categories. For Lock, verse 16 is about "the one who really lived a perfect human life on earth has a message for the whole world and lives to give his righteousness to all."[104] Towner sees in verse 16 an attempt to revive the church's interest in the Gospel ministry by invoking the human weakness, suffering and exaltation of God's Son.[105] According to Knight the hymn captures the truth concerning the cosmic Christ who is the Lord and Savior of his church.[106]

One promising avenue of exploration is comparison of 1 Tim 3:16 with ancient enthronement hymns and epiphany motifs. Joachim Jeremias explored ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern enthronement rituals and noted that 1 Tim 3:16 follows the epiphany hymn form of (1) exaltation and acceptance of divine attributes, (2) presentation of the now deified king to the circles of gods, and (3) his enthronement.[107] While Jeremias's comparative conclusions were not widely received, the motifs of exaltation, triumph and enthronement are well founded.[108] Each verb expresses manifestation, vindication, or acclamation. Ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί is θεῖος

[103] For further discussion, see Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46.
[104] Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 45.
[105] Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 278, 284–85.
[106] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 186.
[107] Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus*, 25. For further discussion, see Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 92.
[108] Cf. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy/Titus*, 144, who identifies the main theme as the coming of Christ as an epiphany with his vindication and acceptance in heaven and on earth.

ἀνήρ language. God enfleshed makes his appearance (ἐφανερώθη) on the stage of human history (ἐν σαρκί). He is vindicated (ἐδικαιώθη) in the spiritual realm (ἐν πνεύματι). He appears triumphant (ὤφθη) before spiritual foes and friends in the heavenly realm (ἀγγέλοις). [109] He is proclaimed (ἐκηρύχθη) and affirmed (ἐπιστεύθη) on the global scene (ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐν κόσμῳ). He ascends (ἀνελήμφθη) on high accompanied by shouts of acclamation (ἐν δόξῃ).[110] "Heaven and earth did more than see him; they joined in giving him recognition and acclaim."[111]

3. *Christological Distinctives and the Way Forward*

More attention needs to be given to the four Christological emphases of the Pastorals and their distinctive contribution to New Testament Christology: (1) the title "Christ Jesus," (2) God/Christ as "our Savior," (3) Christ Jesus as ἄνθρωπος, and (4) Christ's coming as an epiphany.

First, the imperial backdrop of the Pastorals needs attention. The emphasis on Christ *Jesus* and the language of "God/Christ our Savior" appearing in a letter to a church located in a city that was temple-warden of the emperors is significant. Julius Caesar, for instance, is referred to in an Ephesian inscription as "the God made manifest … and common savior of human life."[112]

Second, more comparative analysis is warranted. For example, the title "Savior" was prominent in the religious piety of the day. It was the rare Greek letter that did not give thanks to some god or goddess for deliverance from peril on land or at sea (e.g., "I thank the lord Serapis that when I was in peril at sea, he saved me immediately;" *BGU* 423). The literary works of the oriental cults lauded the saving quality of a god or goddess. The highly popular Egyptian goddess Isis, in particular, was lifted up as the savior of humankind. She was the "holy and eternal guardian of the human race," who watched over the human race "on land and sea, driving away from them the tempests of life and stretching out over them [her] saving right hand" (Lucius Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.25).

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109 Cf. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 185.
110 Cf. Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 528–29.
111 Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 108.
112 Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. R. M. Strachan; repr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 344.

Third, the emphasis on ἄνθρωπος and how this uniquely positioned Christ to represent all human beings calls for further consideration. Son of Man and Adam Christology does not fully explain the usage in 1 Tim 2:5. Also, the identification of Christ as μεσίτης and the idea of a "mediator" as a universal redeemer is distinctive. Although Jewish parallels have been invoked on the basis of μεσίτης in Gal 3:19 to describe Moses's role between God and Israel in the giving of the Law, they do not adequately explain the redemptive μεσίτης found in 1 Tim 2:5.

Fourth, the epiphany language of 1 Tim 3:16 and the singular application of ἐπιφάνεια to the Incarnation calls for substantive consideration (versus relegation to an appendix or excurses). The insights of Andrew Lau's *Manifest in Flesh* need to be taken into account. In a Greco-Roman context ἐπιφάνεια signaled something's or someone's "appearance" or "coming into view." For instance, Polybius used it of day-break (3.94.3) as well as the sudden appearance of an enemy (1.54.2). Deities "appeared" to worshippers (Plutarch, *Themostocles* 30) and "manifested" divine power (LXX 2 Macc 15:27). Especially to be noted is the use of ἐπιφάνεια of royalty's appearance for a coronation or on returning home from war. Second Tim 1:10, where the incarnation τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is described in striking epiphany language (φανερωθεῖσαν δὲ νῦν διὰ τῆς ἐπιφανείας) and connected with soteriology (καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον) and eschatology (φωτίσαντος δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), is a particularly important text that calls for Christological comment typically missing in the standard commentaries.

PART FOUR

COMMENTARIES ON THE GOSPELS, ON THE EPISTLES, AND ON REVELATION

COMMENTARIES ON THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS: TRADITIONAL ISSUES OF INTRODUCTION

Darrell L. Bock

Commentaries are conversation partners about texts. The beauty is that one can have as many people at the table as one might desire. They help us think about the passages we are studying. Those who write commentaries often take years to do their work, so they bring an expertise to the handling of a book that others rarely possess. Yet like other skills, commentators bring strengths and limits to their work, either because of their own approach or because of the limitations placed on them by the series they are in. In my own thinking, the best commentaries open up the background to a text that the average user might not know. Strong commentaries also help the interpreter to see the issues that must be decided in order to understand the text. With this latter skill, the most helpful commentaries reveal the passage's theological emphases and themes, the social context, and how these together relate to the whole of the book. This means that commentaries need to have a balance between detailed analysis of a unit and care about the whole of the book, skills that mix micro and macro readings of a book. Less common, but just as important, are commentaries that suggest how the book can be read and applied for the church today. It is rare that commentaries have all of these skills in equal measure. This is why a mix of commentary partners often covers the ground better than just choosing "the best." Nonetheless, a few commentaries of the right mix are better than several that lack depth. Commentaries need to be weighed, not merely counted. The following survey of commentaries will keep these values in mind in commenting about them. The order of the commentaries is not a ranking. I simply proceed through a list of valuable treatments of each book. It will focus on technical commentaries on the Synoptics that work with the Greek text and that are not pastoral alone in focus. Sometimes these commentaries are the least well known, and yet can be useful in helping someone appreciate the scope of a text. In addition, I will focus on the points made in their introductions as often the settings of the Gospels are the most underappreciated by students of the Gospels. Such under-appreciation is especially the case when it comes to the rationale for debates about these settings. There is a common modern tendency to date the synoptic materials late and see them as largely disconnected from any real apostolic roots. This essay seeks to examine questions about that approach to the Gospels through the discussion among these more technical commentaries. The hope is that this survey will help interpreters know who to ask to the table as useful conversation partners in working with the Gospels.

1. *Matthew*

For centuries, Matthew was the most prominent of the Gospels. This was because it was believed to be the first Gospel written and one of two tied to apostles. This has changed in the last few centuries, but the Gospel still commands great attention because it is the most explicitly Jewish oriented of the four Gospels.

The most comprehensive and thoroughly critical English language commentary on Matthew is by W. D. Davies and Dale Allison for the ICC series.[1] This commentary comes with a one hundred forty-eight page introduction as well as treating each pericope of Matthew in microscopic detail. Both scholars are well versed in Second Temple Judaism, which means that background issues are fully addressed. They argue, as many do, that the author is a Jew, writing for Jews, citing the special material of Matthew as focused on Jewish concerns and his use of the Old Testament as reflecting an awareness of the Hebrew text.[2] The title of the Gospel tied to Matthew must have been solidly in place by A.D. 125, although they regard the Trinitarian statement of Matt 28:19 and the Gospel's echoes of Rabbinic Judaism as pointing to a date set late in the first century (A.D. 80–95).[3] Here internal evidence drives the conclusion that the author was an unknown Jewish believer from this period, not the apostle Matthew. A mystery is how this name came to be linked to this Gospel.

The commentary itself is a detailed treatment of the Greek text and its background. Bibliographies are assembled unit by unit. The exegesis is handled in an outline that goes structure, sources, exegesis, and concluding observations. Lexical data and possible allusions are fully treated both for options and conclusions. This is not a commentary for the light

[1] W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997).

[2] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:33, 58.

[3] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:129, 133–38.

hearted, because it requires a solid knowledge of the language and of critical issues tied to the Gospel. Its strength is its thoroughness in raising background and options, as well as its ability to gather a key array of options for the interpreter to consider. Some of the more recent debates about Matthew, such as how close or far the author is to thinking of himself as within a segment of Judaism are not a major concern. This issue has arisen to a place of prominence in Matthean studies since the commentary was written.[4]

Another key, critical commentary is by Ulrich Luz.[5] It comes with a full introduction as well. He also sees the author as a Jewish-Christian author from a Jewish-Christian community. His interest in matters pertaining to the Law point in this direction. He sees Matthean sources worked on by that community before the Gospel was released and has Peter as a central figure in his account. The Gospel seeks to defend the Gentile mission. One of the more controversial conclusions is that although Matthew does not know Paul, he would belong to a wing of the church that would have opposed Paul and had broken from Judaism. The Gospel should be dated not long after A.D. 80. Matthew is not written by the apostle, although Luz acknowledges that Papias's use places that name with the Gospel by A.D. 100. He thinks for an apostle to use a non-eyewitness's Gospel (Mark) precludes this option.[6] Luz's commentary engages in sections of analysis, interpretation, history of influence, and a summary. Thus, the history of interpretation and impact is a feature of this commentary not so present in other Matthean volumes. Analysis takes up issues of structure, redaction, the nature of the tradition as well as the exegesis. Backgrounds and key motifs are a special focus.

The commentary by Craig L. Blomberg is evangelical in emphasis.[7] The commentary opens with a twenty-four page introduction, short by commentary standards. He appeals to the work R. T. France as reflecting his own views.[8] Breaking the Gospel up into sections that begin with "From

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[4] Donald Hagner, "Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?" in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant Osborne; Grand Rapids; Baker, 2004), 263–82.

[5] Originally in German in the EKK series (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), it is now available in English in three volumes (1–7, 8–20, 21–28) in the Hermenia series (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001–2007).

[6] This underestimates the significance of Peter's connection to Mark, which might explain why Matthew is comfortable using it.

[7] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

[8] R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

that time Jesus began to" (Matt 4:17; 16:21), Blomberg speaks of three key sections to the Gospel with these points as the breaks. The bulk of the Gospel from 4:17 on alternates between discourses (five of them: Chaps. 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25) and action. Key theological issues involve Israel and the Gentiles, Christology, the fulfillment of Scripture, and discipleship and the church. The setting is an engagement with Jews and the synagogue from which this community has recently become severed, either in Antioch of Syria or somewhere in Palestine. He proposes a revision of earlier notes by Matthew into a Gospel, so that the testimony of Papias about Matthew being involved in a Hebrew version of the accounts of Jesus still has value (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.39.14–16). The Gospel's date is tied to the writing of Mark, which is itself debated. He prefers a date in a window from A.D. 58–69, arguing that claims that Matthew writes with knowledge of Jerusalem's destruction are not compelling. He sees the apostle Levi (Matthew) as the main source for the material. The commentary proper has a fresh translation and then proceeds unit by unit through the book. The handling of the text is not as detailed as other commentaries, but the key flow of Matthew's argument is kept before the reader as a result.

Another evangelical commentary on Matthew comes from Leon Morris.[9] The commentary section moves through the Gospel rather briskly, highlighting the key issues and themes. Often a paragraph covers a few verses at a time. Particularly valuable in this commentary is its short but judicious introduction of eighteen pages. Morris says a lot in a short space here. He notes how Matthew was the most popular of the Gospels in the early church but has tended to be superseded by the other Gospels more recently. Yet it is still a central source. The themes he notes are the Gospel's Jewishness, its focus on fulfillment, its awareness of the church as an emerging institution (but not yet developed beyond what one sees in Paul's epistles), an anti-Pharisaism, a focus on Gentiles, Jesus' teaching in general, and the kingdom. He notes one could make a case for seven discourses, not five as is commonly held (chs. 5–7, 10, 11, 13, 18, 23, 24–25). On the date, he suggests a case can be made for the period in the late fifties to early sixties, but acknowledges the date is disputed. For an early date, he notes the mention of paying the temple tax and the reference to Sadducees do not reflect a post-70 perspective. He notes that the late date is tied to the date of Mark and belief about evidence in Matthew that Jerusalem has been destroyed. He challenges the latter claim, but never

9 Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

treats the former issue directly. He prefers Antioch in Syria or perhaps Palestine as the locale of the Gospel, but observes there is no real way to be sure. He says Matthean authorship has more going for it than is commonly held. The idea that Matthew would not use other sources ignores the role of oral tradition and the possibility of many sources present in the church, as well as Peter's association with Mark. It is hard to explain the near unanimous tie of this Gospel to Matthew within fifty years of its writing unless there is good reason for this association especially given that otherwise Matthew is not that prominent an apostle. Morris argues that the church worked with more sources than the four-source theory suggests, referring to Luke's "many" (Luke 1:1) as support. He also stresses that when Matthew uses and incorporates a source, it means he accepts what the source has done, something he notes is often underappreciated in Gospel studies. So this commentary is rich in the suggestions it makes so concisely about Matthew.

R. T. France has produced another important evangelical commentary on Matthew.[10] This commentary moves through the material a verse or two at a time. It has the background of France's special study on Matthew's theology standing behind it.[11] It is a full exegetical treatment of the Gospel covering over a thousand pages. Text-critical, lexical, and theological issues are treated comprehensively and there is full but not overbearing reference to secondary literature. The introduction, however, is quite short with no mention of key theological themes because France saves that for his exegesis or refers to his earlier (already noted) study of Matthean theology. However, France does highlight the fact that one from Galilee making a strong religious claim in Jerusalem as Jesus did was walking very much uphill. France sees this outsider element as key to the events in Jerusalem at the end of Jesus' ministry. He argues Matthew accepted the Galilee-Jerusalem divide that Mark has and enhanced it. Matthew makes a point of Jesus being of Nazareth. He sees five discourses as key, marked out by the close "when Jesus had come to the end of his sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). He sees these discourses as anthologically collected materials from Jesus. He also has a short discussion on the fulfillment formula quotations. He simply affirms Matthean authorship, appealing to the work in his earlier study for support. He sees a community in tension between its Jewish roots and its new found Christian identity, a situation that can

10 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2007).
11 France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*.

fit anywhere in the latter half of the first century. He prefers a pre-70 date for Matthew in the sixties. The best argument for a later than A.D. 70 date is Matthew's dependence on Mark, but even this is not decisive for France, since he places Mark at A.D. 62. He sees Matthew aware of Mark but not a slavish copier of him. France is comfortable with use of a Q tradition in the most general sense, not necessarily as a specific document.

John Nolland's commentary is another full treatment of the Gospel, covering over twelve hundred pages.[12] It is a verse by verse treatment and is full of background discussion, reference to secondary literature, and almost one hundred pages of bibliography. The core introduction is forty-three pages. Nolland argues that Papias refers to a sayings collection Matthew is responsible for and notes that the sayings collection was in either Hebrew or Aramaic. This he distinguishes from reference to the Gospel and then discusses authorship without engaging where the authorship connection to the Gospel came from in any direct detail. Matthew used a combination of Mark, Q material, and a mix of other oral and written materials, including possibly a second Passion account. Matthew is a conservative editor of his sources, often abbreviating or rearranging the materials, but also using almost all he has. He rejects a later date for the Gospel, arguing the evidence brought forward about the Gospel being post A.D. 70 is not persuasive. He also regards the evidence of hostility to Judaism or the use of the term rabbi, or the sense of separation from Judaism as not distinctive enough to be able to argue for a late date. Rather Matthew 24:13–24 still reads as if the destruction of Jerusalem is yet to come and precludes a post 70 date. The lack of discussion of Jewish nationalism also fits this time frame. The Gospel promotes the presence of Gentiles to Jewish Christians. The provenance is unknown, though either Palestine or Syria are likely. The Gospel is like ancient biography and Old Testament accounts of the lives of great figures. It is a reflection of early Christian proclamation and serves as a manual for discipleship.

Donald Hagner sees Matthew as part of a community that is in the process of leaving Judaism but has not made it there yet.[13] This full commentary follows the Word commentary series format. This means there is some overlap in coverage but issues, bibliography and interaction with secondary literature is full. The introduction covers issues we have become familiar with in our survey. His introduction is thirty-nine pages. Hagner

[12] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
[13] Donald Hagner, *Matthew* (2 vols.; WBC 33AB; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995).

writes an unapologetically historical commentary, as opposed to a narrative reading. He sees Papias as referring to a collection of Jesus sayings and not the Gospel in the term *logia*. However, the word is also used clearly of Mark's Gospel according to Eusebius, so that Hagner's conclusion is less than clear. Matthew's sources are primarily Mark, Q, and some oral tradition, which often exhibits strong parallelism and rhythm in form. He sees an alteration of discourse and narrative in the Gospel as well as presenting a detailed section discussing Old Testament fulfillment formulae. He sees the genre as paralleling several forms: ancient biography, catechetical, corrective, and missionary concerns. Key themes include the fulfillment in the kingdom of Heaven, Christology, righteousness-discipleship, law-grace, the community of the church, eschatology, and salvation history. Written for Jewish Christians, Matthew has a tension between the focus on Israel in Jesus' ministry and his respect for the Law. The tension exists in light of a transfer of blessing to a new community and heightened hostility against many Jewish groups, especially the Pharisees. Not quite broken away from Judaism, but clearly in a new community, Matthew tries to keep Jewish Christians relating to both their past and the new members of their community from outside their ethnic roots. The polemic against Jews is not anti-Semitism, but a reflection of an intense inner dispute, an intramural Jewish polemic. One should not be dogmatic about the date of this Gospel, pre or post A.D. 70. The evidence usually brought forward for a late date is not so impressive and passages that seem to refer to the temple still being around do exist in the book (5:23–24; 17:24–27; 23:16–22; 24:20). The provenance is not clear, with Galilee and Syria, possibly Antioch, as candidates. On authorship, it is hard to know how Matthew's name became so firmly attached to this book, although one explanation might be that the core of the Gospel goes back to Matthew's material that was reworked by one of his disciples, likely a Hellenistic Jewish Christian.

An evangelical commentary that undertakes a full defense of the historicity of Matthew is from Donald Carson.[14] Issues tied to historical questions are discussed in the commentary proper. Over a third of his thirty-eight page introduction deals with issues tied to critical method and historicity tied to the Gospels as a whole. Carson challenges the common take that Matthew did not write this Gospel because he would not use a non-eyewitness's Gospel (Mark) or that the tension in Matthew reflects a

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[14] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

later situation. He rejects the idea that Matthew reflects a late-apostolic setting or that the Gospel has a flawed view of Jewish life. Matthew is aware that the Sadducees and Pharisees are distinct sects contrary to the claim about a flawed understanding of the Jews. The issue of the reference to Sadducees risks assuming what must be proven, that the work is post A.D. 70. On the other hand, Carson notes that no arguments for Matthean authorship are conclusive, while citing Robert Gundry's arguments for Matthew.[15] He prefers a date in the sixties and argues we do not know where the Gospel was sent.

David Turner notes his emphases in his introduction.[16] He reads without working on the assumption of Marcan priority, using a narrative approach. He places Matthew firmly in its Second Temple context. He balances analysis and synthesis. He writes from a progressive dispensational view. The commentary's translation reflects a dynamic equivalence approach. Turner also sees a narrative-discourse alternation in the structure. The likelihood the titles to the Gospels are very early, if not even original, makes the attribution to Matthew likely as well. There really is not a detailed argument for Matthean authorship or the preference for a dating in the sixties. Theological issues and background data dominate this treatment of the first Gospel.

A commentary that specializes in providing background and a full set of potential social setting references comes from Craig Keener.[17] The opening section of the commentary shows just how important background is to this commentary, as Keener has a special introductory section to Matthew and Greco-Roman rhetoric that runs twenty five pages before his seventy one page traditional introduction. In this first section Keener treats the sequence of Matthew's Gospel, the evangelist's rhetorical features and how they compare to Greco-Roman practice, even as he emphasizes that Jewish rhetoric is more important for understanding this Gospel. Ancient texts and secondary literature are fully cited in the exegesis. Application out of a relevant historical and social setting is the focus of this commentary. Part of his introduction covers Gospel issues, such as taking a common view of sources (Mark, Q, plus other materials). He argues Matthew is a conservative editor with his sources. He notes Matthew's tendency

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[15] Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 609–22.

[16] David Turner, *Matthe*w (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

[17] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (new ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

to "rejudaize" the Jesus tradition from Mark (e.g., more Semitic traces in Jesus' speech), even as Matthew sets forth a work that looks like ancient biography. This means virtues are highlighted, as are events over persons with a real focus on Jesus' teaching. Keener stresses the care of Jewish oral tradition and the core accuracy of the narrative. On authorship, Keener notes that the fact that Papias may get the language and order of the Gospels wrong may mean he does not know the identity of the author. On the other hand, the unanimous presence of the name Matthew in the tradition, which has early roots, is for his authorship. Matthew is not an obvious choice for an author selected out of a list of apostles. The possibility that Matthew is at the core of the Gospel with a disciple responsible for its final release is also possible. An apostolic connection is likely to explain the quick reception of this Gospel. Whatever one says about specific authorship, the writer of this Gospel was a Jewish believer. Evidence from Ignatius and the *Didache* favor a setting in Antioch. Other options are the Galilee or the Decapolis region. Keener favors a post A.D. 70 date. The focus on Pharisaism, a more rabbinic-like worldview, dependence on Mark, and Matthew's clear distinction between temple destruction and the return of Jesus point to this timing. Matthew defends Gentiles and a mission to them despite Jewish bitterness to them because of the fall of Jerusalem. Keener opts for the second half of the seventies as the date. Matthew writes in polemic with those who founded the rabbinic movement, but writes with an identity still contending to fit within Judaism as its rightful representative. The Gospel is a "handbook of Jesus' basic life and teaching", while being "relevant to a Jewish-Christian community engaged in Gentile mission" and "deadlocked in scriptural polemic with their local synagogue communities."[18]

A commentary more focused on the combination of application and exegesis comes from Michael Wilkins.[19] This is a full treatment of the Gospel, despite the fact that a large portion of it is dedicated to the move into application. The introduction is short, since this is not a technical commentary series. Wilkins argues the church tradition's unanimity for Matthew should be taken seriously since these earliest writers knew people close to the apostles or those close to them. He prefers a date in the sixties and sees Antioch as the likely setting. Discipleship and the varied

[18] Keener, *Matthew*, 51.
[19] Michael Wilkins, *Matthew* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

way Peter is portrayed positively and negatively are distinctive of Wilkins' tracing of Matthean themes.

Passing reference must be made to the two volume work of Dale Bruner.[20] He supplies no introduction to his study, but focuses on the structure and theology of the Gospel. The commentary is verse by verse and interacts with literature and the force of various translations in detail.

2. *Mark*

The common scholarly position that Mark is our earliest Gospel means that there has been an intensification of attention paid to this Gospel. It has resulted in several excellent commentaries, some of which I will discuss in groups for reasons of space. Since there are so many valuable treatments, our survey of commentaries on Mark will not review synoptic Gospel issues (such as Markan priority claims), but focus on questions tied to Mark's setting, date and authorship.

Vincent Taylor's classic commentary works faithfully through the Greek text.[21] It does not have a plethora of background discussion, since key Second Temple finds came after the bulk of his work. Still the commentary is a useful treatment of Mark with a full introduction of one hundred forty-nine pages. This introduction covers the history of the Gospel in the early church, in modern criticism, a careful look at the manuscripts behind the text, a look at vocabulary, syntax and style, the Semitic background of the Gospel, his sources, the Markan materials and its forms, its literary structure, its arrangement, theology, and historical value. On authorship, Taylor argues there can be no doubt the author was Mark, Peter's attendant. He argues that the external testimony to Mark is unanimous and that Mark is not a likely candidate to surface as author unless there was a reason to make the connection. He says the Gospel shows local knowledge of the region (places like Bethphage, Bethany, Gethsemene, and Golgotha). The Gospel dates to the decade of the sixties, with A.D. 65–67 likely. It was probably written for Rome as the Anti-Marcionite prologue, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria testify.

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[20] Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Vol 1: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12* (rev. ed.; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[21] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indexes* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1966). The first edition was published in 1952.

Another major commentary from a past generation is from C. E. B. Cranfield.[22] It also is focused on the Greek text and treats historicity questions unit by unit. The introduction is a crisp twenty-six pages. Like Taylor, Cranfield argues the authorship is not open to serious doubt. He responds to claims about uncertainty from Jerome and the lack of mention of many writers before him as assuming the identity as known. He challenges the idea that Mark has got the reference to the timing of Passover wrong as evidence against Markan authorship. Mark is to be dated between A.D. 65–70. Mark writes for Gentiles, since he explains Jewish customs (Mark 7:3–4; 15:42). Rome is the likely locale and its quick wide dissemination, as evidenced by its use in the other Gospels, also suggests the support of a key church. He sees Mark as an "extremely honest and conscientious compiler."[23] Mark had contact with Peter and used oral tradition. The fact that witnesses, both hostile and believing, were alive when he wrote limits the possibility of embellishment. Mark's willingness to publish embarrassing material also speaks to his general reliability.

Two more modest commentaries from the United Kingdom express uncertainly about the exact setting of Mark.[24] Both regard the only case for Mark being John Mark as the claims of tradition. They do not so much argue against Mark as argue there is no compelling evidence for him as the author. Hooker argues the identification may come from a deduction by Papias working with 1 Peter 5:13. Of course, Papias's claim, as reported in Eusebius, is that his knowledge of this link is from conversation in the context of his relationships, not from reading or hearing a text (through John the elder, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.7). The author writes to Gentiles explaining Semitic terms and Jewish customs. Hurtado argues the Gospel was written in a window from A.D. 50–75, while Hooker opts for a date right around (probably after) AD 70 somewhere between 65–75. Dating is related to two issues: how the Olivet Discourse is seen (give evidence of a post-destruction setting or not?) and how early to place it in light of dating of the other synoptics. The setting might be Rome, but neither commentator stakes much in the possibility. What both commentators do is discuss the debate that goes on about Mark between

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22 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959). Supplemental notes were last added in 1977.

23 Cranfield, *St Mark*, 16.

24 Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989); Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

historical roots and adaptation to the setting. Hooker argues that there is not creation of material *ex nihilo*, but there is adaptation of materials in arrangement, wording, and presentation. Both commentators stress the writing of the Gospel to present and defend the suffering of Jesus and the mystery of his messiahship as roots for a call to followers to be prepared to suffer in the journey of discipleship.

Two very full commentaries going different ways on the setting are by Rudolf Pesch and Robert Gundry.[25] Pesch's sixty-nine page introduction makes a case against accepting the traditional ascription of authorship to John Mark. As Hooker does, Pesch sees the connection as informed by an awareness of the 1 Peter link of Mark and Peter and uncertainty that John the elder (noted by Eusebius of Papias) knew of a relationship between Peter and Mark. A desire for apologetic strengthening of the Gospel has forged the link. The author may have been named Mark, but cannot be tied to John Mark and to Peter. The locale is likely not Rome, but a Gentile oriented community in the East (Galilee, Syria or the Decapolis). The date, because of the Olivet discourse and the dates of the Gospels that used Mark, is post A.D. 70. Gundry saves his introduction for the end of his commentary. It runs twenty nine detailed pages. He argues that the traditional ascription to Mark is old, reaching back to ca. A.D. 100, not 130 as many claim, and the conversation being passed on seems to belong to the late first century and involves only three steps (apostles, those who heard the apostles, Papias). The chronological order of discussion in Eusebius's *Chronicon* is for this conclusion. John the elder and John the apostle are not distinct figures as some argue, nor is Mark distinct from John Mark. This tradition is "as early and authoritative as one could wish."[26] Details against this Markan connection to authorship on claims of community forming (versus a singular author background), supposed errors in Palestinian and Syrian geography (especially as it relates to issues in the north), ignorance of Jewish customs, the Gospel's handling of Peter, and appeals to 1 Peter 5:13 are not substantive objections, as Gundry works through each category one at a time. His responses are to the point with perhaps the one exception tied to issues of geography, which if they were to have come through Peter would not involve someone unconnected to the north, as Gundry claims for Mark by seeing the evangelist as a Jerusalemite

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[25] R. Pesch, *Das Markusevanglium* (HTKNT; 2nd ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1984); R. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

[26] Gundry, *Mark*, 1034.

responsible for these discrepancies. Gundry dates the Gospel pre-70, likely before Peter died in the early sixties. He also contends for Rome as the locale as extensive Latinisms in the book suggest. Mark is an apologetic, defending the cross and Jesus' suffering as part of God's plan where the cross is a cause of glory. Such a theme would be very appropriate for this locale where Christians were facing rising persecution.

The Word commentary for Mark has been shared by two authors, Robert Guelich and Craig Evans, with the latter currently engaged in revising the work on Mark 1:1–8:26 so his treatment of the Gospel can be full.[27] This commentary is a very full treatment of issues and exegesis tied to Mark and follows the Word commentary format. Guelich's introduction is a mere twenty-four pages, but covers the key issues well. He defends the age of the authorship tradition and its roots. He argues there is no hard evidence for making a distinction between Mark and John Mark, calling it special pleading. He notes that Papias' explanation of Petrine roots for the material is oversimplified, given the evidence of the tradition in Mark being similar in form to what we see about Jesus elsewhere in the tradition. A question remaining for Guelich is the influence of someone like Peter on the traditions about Jesus that circulated broadly in the church. Guelich sees the remarks of Papias about Mark's lack of order as having less to do with chronology and more to do with rhetoric as fits a Greco-Roman context. He responds to geographical issues as Gundry did, noting the references are not as improbable as some claim. The locale of the Gospel is uncertain with Latinisms slightly favoring the traditional locale of Rome. He sees it as more likely the Gospel was written at the beginning of Rome's War with the Jews than after Jerusalem's fall, so A.D. 67–69. What this commentary on Mark shares between its two authors are full references to potential background from the Second Temple context, something Evans especially brings to his treatment of Mark.

Similar in approach to the setting is the work by Ben Witherington and his sixty-two page introduction.[28] For him, the Latinisms are the key evidence the work is rooted in Rome and not from a setting further east. Order is about rhetoric, not chronology, as the remarks of Papais are full of rhetorical technical terminology that Witherington traces in some detail. It

[27] Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas, Word, 1989); Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Nelson, 2001). Evans hopes to have the volume out in a few more years.

[28] Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

is hard to imagine someone making up a connection to Mark. Rather the tradition shows signs of being quite old and early. He also notes Mark's themes on suffering and servanthood also suggest a Pauline connection. Rome as the setting makes sense. The Gospel fits a post Neronian persecution context in which Mark is defending the need to persevere through persecution. A date in the latter period from A.D. 66–70 is likely.

A classic evangelical commentary on Mark comes from William Lane.[29] He sees Mark's task as "the projection of Christian faith in a context of suffering and martyrdom."[30] Twenty eight pages of introduction overview Gospel criticism as well as the background for the Gospel. The rise of persecution meant Roman Christians needed to see the parallel between their situation and that of Jesus. He places the Gospel in the aftermath of the Neronian persecution in the second half of the sixties, agreeing with the testimony from the Anti-Marcionite prologue and Irenaeus. The author is John Mark. Lane notes that Papias both sees a key role for Peter and yet recognizes the initiative and independence of Mark. The Roman setting fits the Latinisms and the use of a four watch method of reckoning time.

On the other hand, Eugene Boring produces a commentary that emphasizes Mark's theological creativity as an evangelist.[31] He argues in a consistent and thoroughgoing way for some distance between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. In fact, if one desires a handy source for how the argument can be made for Mark presenting an apocalyptic take on Jesus that incorporates the Messianic secret as well as the abiding tension between what he calls Kenosis Christology and Epiphany Christology, then this commentary is an excellent guide. The key statement that drives the commentary is that

> Whatever the first readers knew of the life-story of Jesus of Nazareth was subverted by the Markan story. They were not familiar with this plot: Jesus' presence in Galilee, his single journey to Jerusalem to be rejected, tried and crucified, the resurrection, and the surprising silence of the women. It saw the light of day for the first time when Mark invented it.[32]

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[29] William Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

[30] Lane, *Mark*, 15.

[31] Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

[32] Boring, *Mark*, 16.

What Boring later calls a two-level story with the contemporary needs of Mark's audience almost always trumping any historical concerns is a consistent theme of his treatment of Mark. Twenty-five pages of introduction introduce the setting. The Gospel was written somewhere between A.D. 65–75. The author is "a Christian teacher who writes not as a charismatic individual but as a member of the community."[33] He seeks to curb the "irresponsible excesses" of the Christian prophets. Mark's tie to Peter is part of a later theological legitimization by the second century church, given that the tradition is not consistent and is aimed at theological validity. The claim in defense of the tradition that the church would not make such a connection, given Mark's otherwise obscure role, is met with Boring's reply that such an argument is not used for non-canonical Gospels where apostolic names appear. However, the issue here involves both claimed authorship and reception, as well as a date that makes such an association even plausible. Mark has that combination, while the other Gospels Boring names (*Thomas, Judas, Matthias, Bartholomew*) do not, in part because there was doubt about the source of these other Gospels' materials. For Boring, the author may have been named Mark, but the material comes to him through community tradition versus through contact with eye-witnesses such as Peter. The Gospel lacks accuracy about Palestine or Palestinian Judaism in references we have noted elsewhere in our discussion of Mark. Mark likely wrote for Syria or Galilee. The message encourages discipleship in a threatening, confused and conflicted situation. It is a work designed to edify his readers in faith.

Another full presentation of the Gospel comes from Joel Marcus.[34] His introduction is sixty-two pages. Someone named Mark is the likely author, since the adoption of this name as a pseudonym is unlikely. More than that, the obscurity of this figure makes it likely that the name was attached for a reason. Against such a connection are the Gentile orientation of the Gospel and supposed issues tied to Jewish customs and Palestinian geography. Marcus argues the Gentile orientation does not make the author a non-Jew (e.g., Paul) but does see issues in the way what is said about handwashing in Mark 7, how the beginning of the day is reckoned in 14:12, and how the Law is handled in a kind of yes but not the details manner (1:40–45; 2:23–28; 7:1–23). In the end, Marcus has responses to each

33 Boring, *Mark*, 20.

34 Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1999); *Mark 8–16* (AB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

of these concerns, while noting positive evidence for John Mark is not overwhelming since Marcus regards the strong apologetic tone in Papias as rendering the testimony suspect. So in the end, Marcus argues we are likely dealing with a Mark, but not one with Petrine connections, although that connection cannot be entirely excluded. The case is "not proven."[35] My own view is in contrast to Marcus here. It seems difficult to accept the initial reception of this Gospel, if the Mark in question is an unknown or random Mark. Marcus argues that the setting more likely supposes a Syrian community and the Jewish War over a Roman context, even though there is no direct evidence of persecution of Christians in that war. Marcus argues such evidence does exist for the A.D. 132–35 war and that the same might have taken place earlier. The Gospel is written in the shadow of the Temple's destruction, between A.D. 69–74.

Adela Collins has produced a full commentary that carefully examines the social background to Mark's Gospel and is especially rich in Hellenistic sources.[36] Also full is her introduction, which comprises one hundred twenty-five pages. Mark is an eschatological sacred history written with an eye on Hellenistic historiography and biography. It is most like the didactic type of ancient biography, as well as the historical type of ancient biography. It also has parallels with how Jews related history about her key leaders like Moses, Elijah, Elisha and David, but with an eschatological focus that serves as a counterpoint to these biblical foundational histories. She notes the importance of giving titles to works when they go public in the ancient world on the model of Galen's testimony in *De libris propriis liber*. This is a way to argue that the tradition tying the Gospel to Mark would likely have been old once it circulated. Papias is critical of Mark's lack of order, but has come to terms with it in the end. She argues that had 1 Peter 5 driven the identification, Silvanus would have likely been named as the Gospel's author. She sees the author as Jewish, not a Gentile, challenging claims in this direction that argue that the handling of Passover, handwashing, and the reckoning of the day by sunrise cannot come from a Jewish author. In the end, she appears to hold to the author as John Mark, but never says so explicitly. Although the external evidence favors Rome as the setting, the internal evidence points to Syria. She notes the geographical description of the Decapolis region, often challenged, has parallels in Pliny the Elder's work in that

35 Marcus, *Mark*, 24.
36 Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

the area of Damascus is included (*Natural History* 5.16.74). The way coins are referenced also points to this setting.[37] She makes a plausible case for this setting, although Rome remains a possibility as well. A careful walk through Mark 13 leads her to conclude the Gospel is written in a window from A.D. 66 to 74. The slight differences between what is said and what took place in A.D. 70 cause her to prefer a date in A.D. 68–69. The Gospel is a historical work on the ancient model, articulated by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.4.13 1360A), Quintilian (*Institutio Oratorio* 2.4.2), and Polybius (39.1.4 and 1.2.8) where memorable deeds are recorded. She also traces how the Messiah for Mark is tied to the revelation of the hidden Son of Man at the end of Jesus' ministry, a theme that has conceptual parallels in the *Similitudes* of *1 Enoch*. This suffering is a model for the discipleship Mark also highlights.

Two commentaries focused on application are by David Garland and Darrell Bock.[38] Both accept John Mark as the author. Garland prefers a date that is pre-70 during the period of the War, an option Bock also regards as quite possible, while noting that an earlier date in the late fifties to early sixties is possible if one accepts a strand of tradition from Clement of Alexandria that argues Mark wrote before Peter died. Both accept a Roman setting for the Gospel. Garland's treatment spends much time in the movement toward application as do all the NIV Application commentaries. Bock's treatment of Mark is more concise moving quickly between notes on key points in the Gospel and commentary that summarizes the unit's argument in a brief space.

Robert Stein treats this Gospel for the Baker series.[39] His introduction is thirty-five pages. He also notes how the tradition surrounding Mark as the author is early. Stein notes how inventing a name for a Gospel involving a non-apostle would be unusual. He cites all the major witnesses to authorship from the tradition up to Jerome, thereby showing the early and widespread affirmation that Mark is the author. Stein argues for a Roman setting as he notes that the author knew Jewish practice and Aramaic but his audience did not, a point more likely for Rome than the Decapolis or Syria. He also deals with claims about supposed geographical, chronological and

[37] She follows the work of Gerd Theissen, *Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), for this position.

[38] David Garland, *Mark* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Darrell Bock, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew, The Gospel of Mark*, Vol. 11 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005).

[39] Robert Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008).

customs discrepancies along the lines already noted above. He argues that traces of perspective from within Syria and Palestine point to the roots of the Gospel tradition Mark works with rather than being an indication of Mark's setting. The reference to a "Syrophoenician" makes more sense for a Roman audience than a Syrian one, where Phoenician would have sufficed. Latinisms and the right of women to divorce also fit here. He rejects the attempt to date Mark early by appealing to the end of Acts as setting a limit to where Mark must fit. He argues that Luke has not given the Pauline imprisonment outcome because he writes before its resolution but because it rounds out the goal of Acts, to show how the message got to Rome. He traces the lack of evidence for a post A.D. 70 perspective in Mark 13 and prefers a date of A.D. 68–69. Mark's Christology points to a "more than human" status for Jesus. He challenges the idea that the motif of the messianic secret is a Marcan theological construction by noting its presence in primitive materials and the fact that a resurrection would not push one to make someone a messiah who was not already regarded as such. The secret makes historical sense because it averts direct challenge of Rome and was required to prevent misunderstanding about the type of suffering Jesus foresaw the Messiah possessing that the crowds did not anticipate. Stein also challenges the idea that Mark writes against the twelve when he depicts them as so slow to respond to Jesus. He notes especially how positively they are portrayed at the start and the end of the Gospel, where they are even commissioned to take the message out (16:7). I might add that Peter gives the key confession of the book at Caesarea Philippi, a point that hardly shows the apostles as rejected figures. In the end, Mark wrote to encourage disciples in the face of persecution, appealing to the example of Jesus' own suffering.

R. T. France has written a forty five-page introduction that spends more time setting up his commentary than engaging in detailed introductory discussion.[40] France says his commentary is about the exegesis of Mark and not a commentary on commentaries that gets lost in discussing theories of textual or tradition origin. Mark is modeled on Greco-Roman biography. France defends the external tradition about Mark, relying heavily on the work by Martin Hengel on the second Gospel.[41] Hengel argues the Gospels would not have circulated anonymously once there was more than one circulating in the church. This would make authorship identification

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[40] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).
[41] Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (ET; London: SCM, 1985).

a very early activity for the church. A setting in Rome also seems to fit far better than a Syrian context. Translation of Aramaic, the explanation of terms like two *lepta* or the *aulē* and the naming of the Syrophoenician woman point in this direction. France never explicitly discusses the date, but questions the tradition that argues Mark wrote after Peter's death while also noting Hengel's preference for a date in A.D. 69. He argues the fact that these Gospels were intended to circulate widely means that determining a specific setting is not so important. For this emphasis, he appeals to work by Richard Bauckham who argues the Gospels were composed for a broad audience.[42]

3. *Luke*

In many ways, Luke is the most wide-ranging of the Gospels. Fully half of his material is unique to his Gospel, including many parables that are at the core of what Jesus taught. For a long time it lacked good detailed commentary treatment. However, when Luke-Acts became a new source of attention for New Testament scholars in the middle of the twentieth century, that changed with many solid commentaries giving detailed treatment.

The first of these full treatments comes from Heinz Schürmann.[43] This is a full critical treatment of Luke with great detail on the many historical and critical discussions that swirl around the book. It is full of the various theories on how Luke came together and discussions on the roots of various passages—a traditional historical commentary. It is not for the faint of heart. Schürmann lacks a separate introduction so he does not treat the standard questions in the common way. He sees the Gospel as presenting the tradition of the church as something that can give certainty in the face of Hellenistic syncretism and the threat of false teaching as Luke attempts to unify the teaching of Jewish Christian and Hellenistic Christian tradition. This makes Luke not so much a historian as a theologian of salvation history. Beyond this, Schürmann says little about the circumstances in which the third evangelist writes.

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[42] R. J. Bauckham, ed., *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospels Audiences* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

[43] Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevanglium* (4th ed.; 2 vols.; HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1990–1993). The original commentary was published in 1966.

An interesting modest commentary comes from David Tiede.[44] His introduction is also short at eleven pages. It begins with a section on "The Problems of Introductions." He argues the issues of authorship and history get in the way of reading Luke, especially since the conclusions are so disputed. He argues that Luke and Acts are anonymous narratives. One must note, however, this has to do with how they are presented. Someone produced this work and its possible settings, as with all the Gospels, are important. This run to the narrative and away from history reflects a move common among some scholars today, especially in North America, who despair of the lack of consensus on such issues. However, our survey of the Synoptics has shown that the options are relatively limited. Despite this take on introductions, Tiede's work on Luke is a good crisp look at the narrative emphases in this Gospel. He sees Jesus presented in Luke as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. Luke is concerned to show the struggles of those faithful to Jesus from within Judaism. In other words, Luke highlights continuity with promise. It also is a theodicy. God has kept his promises. Historical memory is preserved in this account, but it is more complex than some think. So we do not get a specific setting or date from Tiede, just a discussion of Luke's narrative message.

Robert Stein has a solid medium sized commentary on the Gospel. His introduction is forty-one pages.[45] He defends Luke as the author on the basis of external evidence with references from P^{75}, the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus, the Anti-Marcionate Prologue, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome. He also argues that the "we sections" (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) are too randomly distributed and in many, non-crucial parts of the book to have been intentionally inserted to give an impression of an eyewitness. These sections are not tied enough to sea voyages to be considered only a literary convention introduced by the author. Luke is a companion but not a close protégé of Paul. The date of the Gospel is tied to the date of Mark and gives some evidence of reflection of a post-70 context, so the Gospel's date can be placed in the A.D. 70–90 range, also fitting a setting where Rome is not severely persecuting the church. The Gospel is written to Gentiles, as Stein gives nine points of detail to support this claim: avoidance of Semitic expressions, substituting non-Palestinian architecture, the term lawyer for scribe, the use of Judea, explaining

[44] David Tiede, *Luke* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augburg, 1988).
[45] Robert Stein, *Luke* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

Jewish customs, omission of many Jewish issues, extending the genealogy to Adam, reference to Jews in the third person, and the concern for Gentile mission. There is no clear setting in terms of to whom the Gospel is sent.

Another solid modest commentary comes from Craig Evans.[46] The sixteen page introduction notes how Luke wrote over a quarter of the New Testament. He also appeals to the depth of external evidence for authorship. He notes Luke was a Gentile but may also have attended synagogue, possibly from Syrian Antioch. Luke wrote to explain in part the significance of the fall of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–45) to a Gentile audience, explaining how they belonged in God's program.

Luke Timothy Johnson has another crisp introduction to the Gospel, running twenty-five pages.[47] This commentary's strength is its engagement with Greco-Roman background. His treatment of the setting is especially brief, but accepts the traditional attribution of authorship and dates the book in the A.D. 80–85 region. The specific setting for the Gospel is unclear. Luke-Acts is a form of Hellenistic history, placing Jesus in the context of world history. Luke is reasonably accurate by ancient standards but not without problems in spots. There are elements of ancient biography in the Gospel as well, but it is best considered the first piece of Christian apologetic literature, arguing the new movement is "philosophically enlightened, politically harmless, socially benevolent, and philanthropic fellowship."[48] In the main, it treats the uncertainty Gentiles Christians may have had about the movement and the Jewish rejection of it.

Michael Wolter has produced a full German commentary.[49] The introduction is thirty-three pages. Wolter walks through the dispute over authorship in some detail, noting the unified external tradition, but also noting how those who challenge this identification argue that both the theology and chronology of Acts do not fit with Paul and his letters. Wolter also notes the counter arguments to this challenge that argue Luke's theology is not as different from Paul's as some claim. In his summary, Wolter argues that a reference to Luke has more questions than answers and that each side has not made its case. The author grew up Jewish as his interest

[46] Craig Evans, *Luke* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990).

[47] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991).

[48] Johnson, *Luke*, 9.

[49] Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

in Israel shows. The Gospel was likely written in the eighties. We do not know the locale for the Gospel, although Rome is possible.

I. Howard Marshall produced a detailed commentary on Luke that features careful attention to the Greek text and to critical issues.[50] As full as the commentary is the introduction is short, comprising only seven pages. He appeals to the fact that a real introduction would need to appeal to Acts as well, that E. Earle Ellis has written a full introduction to the Gospels, and that his own monograph, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*,[51] took up these issues in detail. Marshall argues the external tradition is old and solid. He notes two challenges to this tradition: the work does not betray the work of a companion to Paul and appeal is made to an "early Catholic" perspective in the church that is said to reflect a later post-Pauline period. Marshall questions that the view of eschatology Luke has is really different from the rest of the early church. Luke has a hope of imminence but also sees that return may not be as soon as some hope (Luke 12:35–40; 17:20–37; 18:8; 21:5–36). The date, as he sees it, is tied ultimately to that of Mark and Acts. Either the early sixties or the eighties are possible. Since the fall of Jerusalem is not prominent, a date not far off of A.D. 70 is likely. The locale is unknown with Rome, Antioch, and Caesarea all possible.

Joel Green has produced the most thorough commentary asking questions dealing with Luke as a narrative.[52] His introduction is twenty-five pages, with much of it dealing with how to read Luke in this way. Luke is a piece of ancient historiography with the activity of God and the fulfillment of divine promises as key. Authorship is covered in a mere paragraph, stating that identifying the author is not so crucial to understanding the book. Nonetheless, Green sees the tradition that Luke is a companion of Paul as likely. So the author is important only to the extent he is the voice of the narrator of the narrative. Given this approach there is no focused discussion on date or locale.

On the other end of the introduction spectrum is the full two-volume commentary by Joseph Fitzmyer.[53] His introduction runs over two hundred pages including massive bibliographies. Fitzmyer details the external

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[50] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

[51] I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

[52] Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1997).

[53] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols.; AB; New York; Doubleday, 1981–1985).

evidence, working one source at a time. Fitzmyer regards dismissing the depth and consistency of the tradition as gratuitous. It is hard to simply infer from the second century data that Luke wrote this work. Luke is not prominent enough to have simply emerged as a named author. That tradition also suggests that Luke is likely a non-Jew from Antioch. The random nature of the "we sections" argues that Luke traveled at points with Paul but is not the close companion some in the tradition claimed, but a "sometime companion of Paul."[54] The differences in theology are not so great as to preclude the likelihood that Luke knew Paul. Dating is tied to the date of Mark. Fitzmyer sees Luke written after A.D. 70, because of some details he notes about how certain issues are presented, especially of the Roman siege of the city. However, that date is not in the second century as some claim. Rather, the date fits best somewhere between A.D. 80–85. The locale of composition cannot be determined, but it was not written in Palestine. Luke wrote for Gentile Christians under fire from Jews for Pauline controversies. Luke seeks to make clear their accepted status in relationship to Israel.

John Nolland gives us another major commentary full of detail on Luke that has a modest introduction.[55] His treatment of the Gospel is full of tradition historical, redactional and critical detail. His introduction is twenty-one pages. He says it reflects the importance these issues have for reading the Gospel, along with the uncertainty of the conclusions. Nolland sees Luke as a God-fearer concerned about Gentile identity for someone who also knows Judaism. He accepts traditional authorship, but says the case is not clear cut. Luke is not a longtime companion of Paul as Irenaeus claimed, but Luke did have contact with Paul. The difference between Luke and Paul on theological issues is often exaggerated. Jewish concerns, the focus on the city rather than the temple in terms of Jerusalem's destruction, the last event of Acts in A.D. 62, and the date of Mark point to a date in the late sixties to late seventies for the Gospel. The locale of the Gospel is uncertain, although tradition associates Luke with Antioch.

Another full commentary on the Gospel focusing on its message and issues tied to historicity and criticism comes from Darrell Bock.[56] His

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[54] Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:53.

[55] John Nolland, *Luke* (3 vols.; WBC 35ABC; Dallas: Word, 1989–1993).

[56] Darrell Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994–1996). For a more applicational focus on Luke, Bock has also written *Luke* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

introduction is forty-eight pages. The commentary surveys key issues unit by unit before looking at the unit verse by verse. Many background texts are also noted. Internal evidence shows the author is not an eyewitness to Jesus, but the "we sections" suggest he was a sometime companion with Paul. These sections appear too randomly to be a mere apologetic device. The external evidence is consistent in pointing to Luke, who possibly came from Antioch. The Gospel is written by a God fearer who is arguing that Gentiles do belong in God's new work, despite the predominant Jewish rejection of this originally Jewish movement. The date is related to the date of Mark and how one reads the discourse material tied to the fall of Jerusalem. The commentary opts for a date in the sixties, but the setting cannot be determined.

4. *Conclusion*

This survey of commentaries for the roots of the Gospels has shown several issues consistently to be keys to issues of authorship and date. In terms of authorship, how one assesses the consistency of the external tradition and the obscurity of the named authors versus internal factors helps to determine whether one accepts that tradition or not. It is hard to accept how one obscure apostle (Matthew) and two obscure companions (Mark, Luke) came to be so consistently named as authors unless there was something in the tradition to raise their names to prominence. None of them are obvious selections as proposed authors. In addition, their lack of inherent status means their selection as a means of boosting the status of these works is not transparent. Assessing internal arguments has a feel of subjectivism to it. Are the differences people argue for about differing theological viewpoints (Paul versus Luke, early Catholicism in Luke; theological development and the level of hostility towards Jews in Matthew) so great as to preclude the tradition's claims to authorship? Do the ways customs and geography are handled neutralize or nullify the tradition's claims (geography and Jewish customs for Mark; would Matthew use a non-apostolic Gospel of Mark?). Putting all of the reasons together we have surveyed, it appears explaining the tradition and its consistency is harder (and thus makes it more likely) than the internal explanations used to challenge that tradition.

Issues of dating are more complex. Key to this discussion are two factors: how one assesses the handling of the destruction of Jerusalem (is the perspective in a given Gospel pre or post Fall?) and how one dates Mark at the front of the sequence of the Gospels. Given Mark could fall anywhere in the sixties given its focus on persecution, it is hard to know if the other Gospels were written before or after the Fall of Jerusalem.[57]

When it comes to the locations of these Gospels, we generally know even less. Rome seems likely for Mark, but knowing the setting of Matthew and Luke is less clear, though Antioch (or northern Galilee) for Matthew seems likely.

One thing we can say. The array of commentaries on the Synoptics shows they are well served. Quality commentaries exist for each Gospel and from a variety of perspectives. The student of the Synoptics has a solid spectrum to choose from to get access to what these Gospels teach, as well as to the discussion these texts generate among interpreters. Commentaries make for good conversation partners. The student of the Synoptics can expect a rich and varied conversation to help one grasp what each Gospel teaches.

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[57] My view on dating has changed since writing on Luke in that I am much less certain about Mark's date and therefore what the dating sequence is. Placement just before or somewhat after the fall of Jerusalem seem almost equally likely, since I do not think Acts 28 tells us when Acts was written. I argued in my commentary on Acts that this ending was dictated by the gospel reaching Rome and not by the date of when Luke wrote (*Acts* [BECNT; Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2007], 25–27, 757–58). Mark can fit anywhere in the sixties once persecution comes. What no one knows is how quickly Mark came to be used by the other Gospels. It is also strange that if any of the Gospels were written in A.D. 70 or just after, how little is actually made of the fall given how traumatic an event it was. To me, this means the Synoptics either predate the fall or come several years after its impact.

COMMENTARIES ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Stanley E. Porter

1. *Introduction*

My interest in the book of Romans goes back to my educational years and has continued to the present. Along the way, I have authored a book that includes examination of Romans 5 (besides other passages), in some detail, written several journal articles on major passages in Romans, authored a number of chapters on portions and issues in Romans, authored works on theological topics in Romans, as well as publishing various pieces that address interpretive issues in the course of study of Romans.[1] I have also written on several of the major interpreters of Romans, such as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann.[2] On top of all of this, I have also authored most of

[1] These publications include: *Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature, with Reference to the Pauline Writings* (Estudios de Filología Neotestamentaria 5; Córdoba, Spain: Ediciones el Almendro, 1994); "Romans 13:1–7 as Pauline Political Rhetoric," *FN* 3 (6; 1990): 115–39; "The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?" *JBL* 110 (1991): 655–77; "A Newer Perspective on Paul: Romans 1–8 through the Eyes of Literary Analysis," in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (ed. M. Daniel Carroll R., David J. A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup 200; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 366–92; (with Matthew Brook O'Donnell) "Semantics and Patterns of Argumentation in the Book of Romans: Definitions, Proposals, Data and Experiments," in *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics* (ed. Porter; JSNTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 154–204; "The Rhetorical Scribe: Textual Variants in Romans and their Possible Rhetorical Purpose," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 403–19; "Paul's Concept of Reconciliation, Twice More," in *Paul and His Theology* (ed. Porter; Pauline Studies 3; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 131–52; "Reconciliation as the Heart of Paul's Missionary Theology," in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner; LNTS 420; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 179–89; "Peace, Reconciliation" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 695–99; "Peace," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Leicester and Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 682–83; "Versöhnung: IV. NT," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (4th Edition; eds. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 8:1054–55; ET "Reconciliation/Atonement. IV New Testament," in *RPP: Religion Past and Present* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 10:666–67.

[2] Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 214–44. As a result, I do not pretend that I have no opinions on the major issues in Romans.

a commentary on Romans, which, rather than offering a full-scale commentary that (unrealistically) attempts to give adequate treatment of all issues, focuses upon a major interpretive dimension of Romans, its dialogical nature. In the course of doing all of this research and writing, I have had the tremendous, yet also frustrating, opportunity to make use of a range of secondary literature on Romans, including commentaries in a number of languages, various reference tools, and monographs on interpretive issues in Romans, such as language, epistolary form, and rhetoric, among others. There is a wealth of material on the book of Romans, with some of the most important thinkers in the history of the Christian Church having written serious work on it. The amount of material continues to grow yearly, especially as commentary series continue to be produced and sold by publishers. Not all of the work that is produced is of equal merit, however, with an apparently (at least to me) increasing amount of work being produced at the lower level that adds nothing significant to interpretation of Romans. Within the scope of this array of literature about Romans, in this chapter I attempt to evaluate the nature of commentary writing on Romans. My goal is to review the history of commentary writing on Romans, especially commentaries written within the last one-hundred or so years, examine how they relate to the major interpretive issues that have arisen over this time, and then evaluate the contributions these commentaries make in relation to when they were written. I define a commentary on Romans as a work that uses the Greek text of the book of Romans—even if it does this through presentation of an English translation—as pertinent basis of contemporarily informed observations on the language, structure, and meaning, theological and otherwise, of the book.

2. *Issues Surrounding Writing and Evaluating a Commentary on Romans*

There are many issues that can be covered in the writing and evaluating of a commentary. The history of writing commentaries goes back to Origen, probably the earliest commentator on the book. Since then, there have been many important interpreters of Romans, coinciding with various periods in the history of interpretation and commentary writing. Richard Longenecker has provided a very useful survey of commentaries[3] on

[3] Richard N. Longenecker, "On the Writing of Biblical Commentaries, with Particular Reference to Commentaries on Romans," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays*

Romans from the patristic period (including the Alexandrian commentary tradition beginning with Origen and the Antiochene commentaries represented by John Chrysostom, as well as the Latin commentary tradition of Jerome), through the Reformation period with its commentaries by such figures as Melanchthon and others, to the modern critical period. Longenecker helpfully identifies two features of modern critical commentaries first expounded by F. C. Baur: historically-grounded exegesis and critical attention to relevant literary and related contemporary issues. He cites such scholars as J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, and F. J. A. Hort in English, M.-J. Lagrange in French, and Hans Lietzmann and Ernst Lohmeyer in German as the founders of the modern European commentary tradition.[4] The commentaries that I will review below are within these traditions. The resulting commentaries have, according to Longenecker, needed to avail themselves of advances in new data (such as new texts) and new methods. As a result, Longenecker concludes that "We are today, I believe, at the height of biblical commentary writing in the modern critical period of New Testament study, both numerically and quality-wise."[5] As the study below will indicate, I can certainly endorse the first part of his conclusion—we are excelling in numbers of commentaries produced—but I cannot endorse the second half, as I attempt to show.

The larger question, however, is how it is that one goes about evaluating and assessing commentaries on the book of Romans. There have been various proposals made regarding what constitutes a commentary, to say nothing of what is essential for being a "good" commentary. There are various resources that have taken it upon themselves to list and evaluate in various ways the commentaries available, sometimes by type and usually by quality. One differentiation is among technical/semi-technical and

in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald (ed. William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 74–92. A somewhat similar, though not finally as useful and detailed, survey of Gospel commentaries is found in Markus Bockmuehl, "The Making of Gospel Commentaries," in *The Written Gospel* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 274–95.

[4] For a contrasting approach, see Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), who chooses to summarize major commentators on twelve loci within the book. He surveys such pre-modern commentators as Origen, Augustine, Pelagius, Abelard, and Aquinas, such Reformation-era commentators as Luther, Erasmus, and Calvin, and the moderns Barth and post-Barthians under either the category of the New Perspective or narrative-based commentators. Clearly Reasoner has chosen a theologically driven approach to Romans (and in the course of things has missed some important viewpoints and treatments).

[5] Longenecker, "On the Writing of Biblical Commentaries," 2.

expositions, not counting those that are primarily geared toward preaching. Another is based solely upon (the authors' perception of) quality (such as highly recommended or also significant), while others are harder to follow.[6] There have also been various discussions of what it is that a commentary should focus upon as its major emphasis.[7] Most of these works take a synchronic view of commentary writing. That is, they evaluate all commentaries in relation to each other, as if they were all written for and available today. That is the way that most people probably look at commentaries. For example, John Glynn, referring to commentaries on Thessalonians says that "Newer isn't always better, but it usually is. After all, you're drawing on all of the wealth that came before you, including what used to be new!"[8] Unfortunately, as we shall see, this is far from true in commentaries on Romans. Some of the ideas that are presented in commentaries are statements about its language, the history of interpretation, the theology of the book, the relationship of the book to its surrounding world, and various minority viewpoints. One thing that is often missing from the set of expectations and the results regarding commentaries is new ideas. As Margaret MacDonald states about the commentary-writing process—after having written one—"[l]ike most biblical scholars, I do not generally turn to biblical commentaries for new ideas related to my own area of expertise . . . because the comments are usually too general and basic to address my specialized research needs."[9]

As a result, what I have chosen to do is to review many technical or semi-technical, and a select few expositional, commentaries on Romans by means of a diachronic perspective, tracing the development (or lack of it!) of commentaries on Romans as they especially treat Rom 5:1–11. I have chosen to review a number of the key features of these commentaries,

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[6] For example, see John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003); David R. Bauer, *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (5th ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). I am sure there are others, and that these have been further updated, but the approaches remain.

[7] See, for example, John Nolland, "The Purpose and Value of Commentaries," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 305–11; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "The Art of Commentary Writing: Reflections from Experience," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 313–21; and John Riches, "Why Write a Reception-Historical Commentary," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 323–32. Nolland's essay is essentially reprinted as part of R. T. France and John Nolland, "Reflections on the Writing of a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 270–89, esp. 270–82.

[8] Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey*, 161 note *.

[9] MacDonald, "Art of Commentary Writing," 316.

as features that virtually any commentary should include: treatment of the Greek language, whether as Greek or through translation; text-critical issues; theology; literary, epistolary, and rhetorical issues; relationship to audience, whether envisioned as the Greco-Roman or Jewish world, and availing itself of the appropriate methods; and matters of the history of interpretation.[10] Romans 5:1–11, a passage that I know well from previous research, provides all of the elements, including significant issues in Greek usage, a major text-critical problem, debate over the place of this section within the letter outline, and a major theological topic, reconciliation. To aid me in this investigation, I will analyze the commentaries in relation to the following brief chronological grids, not all of which reflect unadulterated progress in interpretation. Greek-language study has progressed from the rationalist period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from 1885 to 1961 in the comparative-historical period, to the modern linguistic period of post 1961.[11] Textual criticism reflects movement from use of the Majority text to the eclectic text (1881 to the present), with increased numbers of papyri discovered from the early twentieth century on.[12] Theological commentary moves from the systematic theological period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the modern period, with two major episodes within it: the Barthian period and the New Perspective period.[13] The treatment of the issues of epistolary literature move from the period of letter as theological treatise to, beginning with the work of Adolf Deissmann, differentiating Paul's letters as letters, and

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[10] See Adele Reinhartz, "Why Comment? Reflections on Bible Commentaries in General and Andrew Lincoln's *The Gospel According to Saint John* in Particular," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 333–42, esp. 334, 335.

[11] Those interested in tracing major figures in this development should examine my chapter on linguistic competence of commentaries. Though various grammatical features may be profitably discussed, and I include comments on a variety of features, I concentrate on the major grammatical topic of the last thirty years, verbal aspect. I believe that verbal aspect theory is incommensurable (see my paper on linguistic competence) with previous verbal analyses.

[12] The major work to note here is Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (2 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1881), one of the first so-called eclectic texts.

[13] The turning points are Karl Barth's commentary on Romans (see below) and E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). I realize that Reasoner treats the post-Barthian period with reference to the New Perspective and narrative-based approaches. To my mind the narrative-based approaches have offered little of significance. Richard Hays's effort is based upon an analytical foundation he now disavows (*The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], xxvi–xxvii) and N. T. Wright's has clearly not caught on, to his frustration (see review of his commentary below).

then, beginning with the work of Hans Dieter Betz and George Kennedy, treating the letters as forms of rhetoric.[14] Audience-related issues move through the Greco-Roman period up until World War II, then the Jewish period, and at least since the 1980s the social-scientific period.[15] History of interpretation is less about tracing the course of research, but noting how commentaries view Romans in relation to the history of interpretation.

3. *An Evaluation of Commentaries on Romans*

In order to treat the commentaries fairly and without overburdening the reader with endless repetition, I will categorize commentaries together roughly by decade. However, I wish to begin with John Albert Bengel's commentary (1742), or notes on the New Testament, including Romans—a landmark in New Testament commentary writing.[16] Based upon the Textus Receptus, Bengel treats commentating as akin to writing a classical commentary, so he is restricted to brief notes on the text. As a result, he takes a time-based view of the tense-forms, as when he describes ἐσχήκαμεν as "Praeteritum, in antitheto ad *habemus*," as one would expect of the rationalist period (549, ET 3:62), but knows nothing of the text-critical issue with the indicative (ἔχομεν) or subjunctive (ἔχωμεν) in Rom 5:1. Bengel recognizes the similarities and differences between classical Greek and Roman letters and Paul's letters (523, ET 3:1), and spends time with the style of the Greek text (note that he includes an index of technical, mostly rhetorical/stylistic, terms at the end of the commentary). Theology is confined to only that which immediately emerges from the Greek text (see comment on Rom 5:3–11 being summarized in "not only this, but indeed we boast in tribulations"; 550, ET 366), with definition of reconciliation confined to a single sentence as freedom from wrath (551; ET 367). This commentary—because of its textually-oriented approach—provides a suitable starting point for examining commentators on Romans, especially as it is in some ways quite different from those that follow.

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14 See Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, eds., *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Pauline Studies 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010); Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); and George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

15 See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

16 John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742; ed. M. Ernest Bengel and John Steudel; Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1864); ET *Gnomon of the New Testament* (ed. M. Ernest Bengel and J. C. F. Steudel; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1857–1858).

In the eighteenth century, a number of commentaries were produced, not all of them worthy of review here. Of the eight that I have examined, there are a surprising number of findings to note. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer's (1836)[17] goal was simply to write a commentary on the "purely historical sense of Scripture" (ET 1:xxxiii), by which he meant using the most advanced philological tools available. Whereas the English translator commends the work of Georg Winer in bringing order to Greek grammar (ET 1:vi–vii),[18] which grammar Meyer cites regularly, Meyer himself highly recommends that theologians (his term) avail themselves of the latest work in Greek grammar, which for him was Raphael Kühner's two volume grammar of 1869–1872 (ET 1:xxxviii–xxxix n. 1, German vii).[19] Meyer uses the latest texts available, including Karl Lachmann and Constantin Tischendorf (7th and 8th editions), but nevertheless, in Rom 5:1 despite the textual superiority (ℵ* A B* C D K L, minuscules, several versions, and Fathers) of the subjunctive over the indicative (ℵ^1 B^2 F G, most minuscules, Syriac Peshitta, and some Fathers), he argues that the subjunctive is "here utterly unsustainable" based upon the "writer now enters on a new and important *doctrinal topic*, and an exhortation at the very outset, especially regarding a subject not yet expressly spoken of, would at this stage be *out of place*" (ET 1:20, German 209). However, Meyer also entertains that καυχώμεθα in Rom 5:2 may be an indicative form. Nevertheless, Meyer does not actually provide an outline of the argument of the letter. However, he does offer a full treatment of the notion of reconciliation, grounding it in the passive use of the verb κατηλλάγημεν, and speaking of the doing away of enmity between God and humans (1:237, German 226). Several commentators have followed Meyer, including Charles Hodge (1864) and Frederic Louis Godet (1879–1880).[20] Both are

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17 Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Handbuch über den Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (KEKNT; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1872); ET *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (trans. John C. Moore; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: Clark, 1873).

18 Georg Benedict Winer, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms as sichere Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Exegese* (1822; 4th ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1836); ET *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek, Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis* (trans. W. F. Moulton; 3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882). Note the title of the grammar, and its appropriateness for the rationalist age.

19 Raphael Kühner and Bernhard Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache: Satzlehre* (2 vols.; 1897; 4th ed.; Leverkusen: Gottschalksche, 1955).

20 Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (rev. ed.; Edinburgh: Elliot/Thin, 1864) (a previous edition appeared in 1835); Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentaire sur l'épitre aux Romains* (2 vols.; Paris: Sandoz & Rischbacher, 1879–1880); ET *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (1883; repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977).

heavily theological, reflecting the theological tenor of the interpretive times. Hodge includes a section on doctrine and on further remarks (that are theological and applicational) after Rom 5:11 (141–42), and contends that all of the ἀλλάσσω verbs are interchangeable (139). Both also accept the indicative reading in Rom 5:1, on the supposed force of the argument, with Hodge going so far as to (inaccurately) state that "the authorities are nearly equally divided" (131). Godet reflects the rationalist view of the tenses (ET 187), but mislabels the subjunctive in 5:1 as an "imperative" (ET 187), an error that others will also make in more recent times (see below on Lightfoot and Wright).

Despite these treatments, there are other commentaries on Romans that are worth noting, several of them still valuable today. They are by C. J. Vaughan (1859), Joseph Agar Beet (1877), J. B. Lightfoot (1895), and William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam (1895). Vaughan's commentary is dedicated to his sixth form students at Harrow School, for whom it was written.[21] The commentary resembles a classical commentary with heavy attention given to Greek (and use of the Westcott and Hort edition once available, xiii–xvi, and accepting the subjunctive reading in Rom 5:1, 99), which is cited extensively throughout, in addition to other authors, even though the volume grew out of the author's preaching (xii). He also includes a prefatory article on Paul's doctrine of conversion (xxxi–xliv). The author consciously resists including an outline of the contents or much of an introduction (xxiii). In the preface to his second edition, Beet styles his work as "a contribution to Systematic Theology" (v; note three dissertations on doctrinal results, 381–401).[22] Nevertheless, he makes use of the latest text-critical work by assessing Westcott and Hort's 1881 edition of the Greek New Testament and including an appendix on it (402–8; he uses Lachmann, Samuel Tregelles, and Tischendorf for his text). On the textual variant in Rom 5:1, Beet argues for the subjunctive on both internal and external grounds: "If we looked only at documentary evidence, we should at once decide that Paul wrote, *Let us have peace*." He then argues contextually for the subjunctive, and concludes that arguments for the indicative, especially based on a copyist's error, are "simple desperation" (149). Even though writing during the rationalist period of Greek grammar, Beet shows a rare sensitivity to the syntax and semantics of Greek.

21 C. J. Vaughn, *St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (1859; 5th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1880), v.

22 Joseph Agar Beet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (1877; 7th ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890).

This includes his treatment of the aorist participle, δικαιωθέντες, in relation to the main verb, ἔχωμεν: "The participle implies only that the act of justification precedes the state of peace with God; and leaves the context to determine whether justification is looked upon as actual and as a reason for having peace with God, or is mentioned as the means by which we must have peace with God. The latter is the use of the aorist participle in all the other innumerable passages in the New Testament in which it precedes a subjunctive or imperative" (150).

In some ways, it is unfair to cite Lightfoot's commentary, as he never actually finished it.[23] Nevertheless, Lightfoot pays attention to the Greek text, still taking a rationalist approach that equates tense-form and time (288). He calls the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 "unquestionably the right reading" on the basis of external evidence, and explicates that understanding, though he later calls it an "imperative" (284). He also knows of the οὐ μόνον δέ phrase in Rom 5:3, though he does not appear to think this is a problem for the readings in Rom 5:2 (where he reads the participle, καυχώμενοι, over the indicative, καυχώμεθα) (284–85). Lightfoot also provides an outline of Romans based upon epistolary form, seeing the doctrinal section extend from 1:16–11:36, before beginning the practical exhortation (12:1–15:13); this reflects a four-part epistolary form (239–43). Lightfoot's theological statements, though brief, are to the point, especially regarding reconciliation, where he appreciates the use of καταλλάσειν rather than διαλάσσειν, because the latter indicates "mutual concession after mutual hostility," an idea foreign to the New Testament and Paul (288).[24] The commentary by Sanday and Headlam excels in most areas, including their provision of an extensive introduction that still rewards reading.[25] They are the first in their treatment of Greek to reflect the newly emergent comparative-historical analysis, when they characterize the perfect tense-form in Rom 5:2, ἐσχήκαμεν, as "aor. and perf. in one" (121; see also the same page on ἑστήκαμεν). They accept the subjunctive ἔχωμεν in Rom 5:1, with the best explanation of both internal and external evidence to date, concluding that the subjunctive means "keep" or "enjoy peace" (120). They also treat the conjunction οὐ μόνον δέ, along with the non-indicative readings

[23] J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 239–305 (ending in chapter 7).

[24] Some readers will be encouraged to note that Lightfoot was, apparently, a dispensationalist. See his comments on Rom 5:11 and νῦν (288).

[25] William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans* (1895; 5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902).

surrounding it. Besides following a close approximation of Lightfoot's outline of Romans, reflecting a four-part epistolary structure, Sanday and Headlam also deal straightforwardly with the theology of reconciliation in its original and contemporary context. This includes a section on reconciliation and atonement (129–30) and a response to the liberal theologian Albrecht Ritschl on individual or societal justification, where they argue for justification only through the Church and baptism (122–24). They are also acutely aware of the history of interpretation of Romans, from Origen to their present (xcviii–cix). There is much of abiding value in these four commentaries, when one considers that they are written in the compass of one moderate sized volume each (Lightfoot's only one small part of a volume), especially those of Beet and Sanday and Headlam.

The first two decades of the twentieth century also produced several important commentaries on Romans, culminating in the commentary by Barth in 1922. These commentators include James Denney (1901), Hans Lietzmann (1906), M.-J. Lagrange (1916), and Barth (1922).[26] Denney's commentary,[27] while briefer due to the nature of the series and hence not including as thorough an introduction or an outline, provides important insights into the Greek language at various points (including reference to Ernest DeWitt Burton).[28] Denney admits (twice) that the use of the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 is "overwhelming" (623), but rejects it on the basis of the argument of the book and Greek grammar, including an important discussion of οὐ μόνον δέ tied directly to the issue (623).[29] Despite brevity, he is theologically (and linguistically) astute and treats κατηλλάγημεν in Rom 5:10 as "a real passive" (626), arguing that "to represent κατηλλάγημεν

[26] Karl Barth published a shorter commentary in 1956, based upon lectures delivered in 1940–1941, when he was (strangely) "determined to continue 'as if nothing had happened' " (7). Barth refers the reader to his earlier commentary or his *Church Dogmatics* (5 vols.; 1932–1970; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al.; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) if desiring more on Romans. I think that says sufficient about the type of commentary this is. See Karl Barth, *Kurze Erklärung des Römerbriefes* (Munich: Kaiser, 1956); ET *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (trans. D. H. van Daalen; London: SCM, 1959).

[27] James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; 1901; vol. 2; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 555–725.

[28] Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892).

[29] Contra Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "The Grammatical Internal Evidence for ἔχομεν in Romans 5:1," *JETS* 54.3 (2011): 559–72, who fails completely to note Denney's discussion of the bearing of οὐ μόνον δὲ on the issue, as well as my discussion, first found in "The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?" *JBL* 110.4 (1991): 655–77, esp. 662–64; and reprinted in my *Studies in the Greek New Testament* (SBG 6; New York: Lang, 1996), 222–23.

by an active form, *e.g.*, 'we laid aside our hostility to God,' or by what is virtually one, *e.g.*, 'we were won to lay aside our hostility,' is to miss the point of the whole passage" (626). After an extensive discussion of the textual history of Romans, and a discursive outline of its contents, Lietzmann provides notes mostly on the argument of the letter.[30] His Greek grammatical comments are minimal, and sometimes questionable (e.g. he argues that "ἐσχήκαμεν = ἔχομεν hellenistisch oft," 58, on the basis of Ludwig Radermacher's *Grammatik*, 153),[31] as is his adoption of the indicative in Rom 5:1. Even though he notes the minimal textual basis for the indicative (and argues that the subjunctive is an "unsinnige Lesart," 58), he engages in apologetic gymnastics for it on the basis of supposed confusion of omicron and omega by Paul and Tertius (a now tired view that has persisted to the present), concluding that "ἔχομεν gibt allein den echten paulinischen Sinn" (58). Of course, this is predicated upon Lietzmann's sense of the course of the argument. He sees reconciliation in Rom 5:10–11 as having a different sense than in 2 Cor 5:20. Lagrange,[32] after an introduction comparable to Sanday and Headlam's but no outline of the book's argument, utilizes the latest in comparative-historical grammatical work (e.g. J. H. Moulton's *Prolegomena*),[33] arguing along with *Aktionsart* theory for ἐσχήκαμεν in Rom 5:2 as "un parfait, mais équivalent à un aor." (101). He argues for the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 on the basis of both textual and argumentative evidence, noting with Sanday and Headlam that the present subjunctive is not equivalent to the aorist tense-form (101). He provides a brief treatment of reconciliation as the overcoming of God's hostility. Barth's commentary clearly is not exegesis of the Greek text as seen in previous (or many subsequent) commentaries.[34] Barth on Romans is virtually devoid of meaningful comments upon the Greek text, and is instead Kierkegaardian-inspired dialectical theology, using Romans as a starting point. Barth speaks with the boldness and defensiveness of a modern mega-church pastor, knowing that he has been revealed for what he is. This is seen in his comments in the preface to the second edition, where he admits that the volume "does not claim to be more than fragments

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30 Hans Lietzmann, *An die Römer* (HNT 8; 1906; 4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933).

31 Ludwig Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik* (HNT 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1911).

32 M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul épître aux Romains* (1916; EB; corr. ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1950).

33 J. H. Moulton *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (1906; 3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908).

34 Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (1922; repr. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1940); ET *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

of a conversation between theologians" (ET 4, German VIII) and defends himself against the charges of being an "enemy of historical criticism" (6, X) in comparison with other commentators (such as Lietzmann) and a "Biblicist" (11, XV). His defense is his dialectical, Kierkegaardian theology (10, XIII–XV). One of the few places where he expresses an opinion on the Greek text, the reading in Rom 5:1, he notes that the subjunctive is "well attested, but not satisfactory: it is peculiarly unsuitable here," citing then Lietzmann's suggestion regarding Tertius getting confused in the dictation (149 n. 1, 125*). Denney's is clearly the leading commentary on the text of Romans of this time (as opposed to being a commentary on its time), followed by Lagrange.

The 1930s and 1940s produced a number of commentaries that tend to reflect the issues already established by previous commentaries. In the 1930s, we have commentaries by C. H. Dodd (1932), Paul Althaus (1932), and Adolf Schlatter (1935). The commentary by Dodd[35] has aroused much controversy through the years because of his view of the wrath of God, and his desire to see love as overriding any sense of personal divine anger (Rom 1:18) (20–24), as well as his view that Romans 9–11 is perhaps an independent Pauline sermon (xxx–xxxi, 148–50). Dodd reflects the comparative-historical approach to Greek (e.g. 20), although Greek comments are at a minimum in this clearly written yet mostly expositional treatment (note the short introduction and non-epistolary outline, ix–xxxv). Because he sees salvation as "eschatological" and "ethical" (71), Dodd accepts the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 without comment. Althaus's commentary appears in Das Neue Testament Deutsch series.[36] As a result, the commentary is abbreviated. Nevertheless, Althaus's comments reveal his dependence on a rationalist approach to grammar of equating tense-form and time (40, 42) and he accepts the indicative reading in Rom 5:1 on the basis of epistolary argument over manuscript evidence, without stating what that evidence is (40). He concludes discussion of Rom 5:1–11 with a paragraph devoted to justification and reconciliation (42), where he notes their two different spheres (law and personal relations) but their essential similarity in meaning. Schlatter is also clearly a theologian,[37] but at least one who

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[35] C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932).

[36] Paul Althaus, "Der Brief an die Römer," in *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*. II. *Apostelgeschichte und Briefe des Apostels Paulus* (1932; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1938), 161–286.

[37] Adolf Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935; 6th ed. 1991); ET *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. Siegfried S. Schatz-

attempts to ground his theology in the Greek text and its argument. His commentary lacks an introduction but places Romans in relation to the other Pauline letters.[38] His Greek comments seem to reflect both the rationalist (German 175, ET 119, where he refers to the future tense and future time, and apparently the aorist and past time; and 183, ET 125) and the *Aktionsart* of the comparative historical approach (176, ET 120, where the perfect ἐσχήκαμεν represents "ein einmaliges Erlebnis, aber ein bleibend wirksames"), although at times he appears simply to be confused (176, ET 120, on προσαγωγή). Schlatter accepts the indicative over the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 on the basis of the sequence of ideas, but he does not discuss the textual evidence at all (176, ET 119).

The 1940s also produced three commentaries worth noting, by Otto Kuss (1940), Anders Nygren (1944), and R. C. H. Lenski (1945). Kuss's commentary appears in the Regensburger Neues Testament, and hence is brief.[39] Nevertheless, he provides an introduction to Paul's letters (11–14) and to Romans (15–20), as well as an outline that combines epistolary and theological features (7–8). Kuss seems to accept a time-oriented view of the Greek tense-forms (51, 52), although this is difficult to determine as there is no reference to the Greek text. His translation accepts the indicative reading in Rom 5:1, but he parenthetically admits that the manuscripts endorse the subjunctive and it has the preferred sense of "lasst uns Frieden halten" (51). Lenski's lengthy commentary[40] provides a relatively short introduction, and notes that most divide the letter into "two parts, doctrinal and hortatory," which he calls "merely formal" (22). Taking Romans 5 with 6–8, Lenski accepts the subjunctive reading in Rom 5:1 on the basis of external and internal evidence. Lenski rightly responds to those who argue for the indicative on the basis of the sense of the

mann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); Schlatter also had an earlier more expositional commentary: *Der Brief an die Römer* (Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament 5; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1921; 9th ed. 1936).

38 The English translation has confused the structure of the book, so that chapter/section I in the translation includes both the relationship of Romans to the Corinthian letters and the first section of commentary on 1:1–17. In the German edition, these are two distinctly separate chapters.

39 Otto Kuss, *Die Briefe an die Römer, Korinther und Galater* (Das Neue Testament; Regensburg: Pustet, 1940), 11–111. Kuss also produced a larger commentary but never finished it: *Der Römerbrief* (3 vols. [Rom 1:1–11:36]; Regensburg: Pustet, 1957–1978). So far as I can tell, he (sadly) did not have a significantly different perspective in the later commentary in so far as the issues treated here are concerned.

40 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1945).

epistle that "the letter [omicron or omega] alone conveys the sense, and *we* change the sense when we alter the letter" (333). He finds the subjunctive entirely appropriate: "hortation is fully in place at this point because these verses introduce the entire section regarding the great effects of justification by faith" (334). Lenski's comments on the Greek text are detailed and serial, although he accepts the rationalist perspective that equates time and tense-form for the verbs ("aorist, hence by a past," 332; 334), despite his citing of Blass and Debrunner's and Robertson's grammars in his abbreviations,[41] while also making use of comparative-historical information on such topics as prepositions (345) and other syntactical issues (355). His theological discussion of reconciliation emphasizes that it is not God who changes but humans who are required to be changed through the death of Christ. Nygren,[42] after a theological introduction to the letter, including discussion of the two aeons of death and life and a theologically oriented outline of the letter (somewhat reflecting four-part epistolary structure), engages in theological exegesis of the letter. Even though he takes Romans 5 with 6–8, his emphasis is so clearly upon justification by faith as reflecting the aeon of life (as one might expect a Lutheran, or evangelical as it is called in the translation) that he is perhaps affected in his other judgments. He rejects a "subjective theory of the atonement," in which God remains unchanged, and seems to equate the subjective with the subjunctive in Rom 5:1 (193). He admits the manuscript evidence favors the subjunctive, but the context the indicative. He goes further, however, introducing an apparently new (and questionable) argument: "even if we overlook the difficulty of fitting such a translation ['let us have peace with God,' etc.] into the context ('quite meaningless, in this context,' says Lietzmann), grammar itself excludes it. For εἰρήνην ἔχειν is quite another thing from εἰρήνην φυλάσσειν. But even if it could be shown that the letter originally said ἔχωμεν, that would not prove that Paul meant it this way" (193–94). Here he simply recites Lietzmann's argument regarding confusing omicron and omega by Tertius, cited above. It is difficult to know what to do with such a gross misunderstanding of the Greek text and linguistic evidence, and it casts light on all of the author's later

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[41] Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913); A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; Nashville: Broadman, 1934).

[42] Anders Nygren, *Romarbrevet* (Stockholm: SKDB, 1944); ET *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Carl C. Rasmussen; London: SCM, 1952).

theological statements based upon such reasoning. The 1930s and 1940s were not a high point in Romans commentary writing.

In the 1950s and 1960s, seven commentaries were produced that I treat here, even if some of them quite briefly. They are by John Knox (1954), Otto Michel (1955), C. K. Barrett (1957), Franz Leenhardt (1957), John Murray (1959–1965), F. F. Bruce (1963/1985), and Ernest Best (1967). Knox's commentary in the Interpreter's Bible[43] (see below on the New Interpreter's Bible) is the exegesis, whereas the exposition is by Gerald Cragg. Knox's introduction, with its biggest section on text, reflects Knox's particular views of Pauline chronology.[44] More importantly, however, as already seen in some of the previous commentaries, but now especially in Knox, we have reached a stage where, in the interplay of language and thought, language is now subordinated to thought, a trend that I fear has persisted in many if not most commentaries since. Knox works from the standpoint of the rationalist and comparative-historical approaches to language, for the most part equating time and tense-form (e.g. 451, 459). Such a perspective becomes a clear scheme for (illegitimate) theology: "we are *now* **justified**; it is *now* **that we are reconciled**; but *salvation* is still in the future: we shall **be saved by him from the wrath of God**" (459). However, Knox also reflects an *Aktionsart* perspective (452, 453). The culmination of this comes in his discussion of the variant in Rom 5:1. Knox realizes that the better manuscript evidence is for the subjunctive, but notes and discusses how commentators have been divided. He concludes from this analysis that "there is universal [!] recognition that the *sense* is indicative, whether Paul wrote it so or not" (452), and then he invokes his form of Lietzmann's now tired argument about early confusion (451–52). Of course, there is no such universal recognition, besides Knox's confusion of the issue of form and meaning in the Greek moods. Similar theologically driven understanding is seen in his discussion of reconciliation. He notes that Sanday and Headlam identify peace and reconciliation in Rom 5:1–11, "in the sense in which the term is used in this passage. Speaking generally [but with no evidence, of course], it is fair to say that 'peace' is the richer, more inclusive term" (461). Such a statement makes one wonder what it means for Knox to exegete Romans. Michel's

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[43] John Knox, "The Epistle to the Romans" (Introduction and Exegesis), in *The Interpreter's Bible* (ed. George Arthur Buttrick; vol. 11 of 12 vols.; New York: Abingdon, 1954), 355–668.

[44] See John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (New York: Abingdon, 1950), 13–88.

commentary,[45] a successor in Meyer's series,[46] offers a relatively brief (for such a series) introduction to the letter (with a very disappointing section on language and style, although it recognizes the elements of diatribe, reflecting sermonic or lecture style, 13–14), and an outline that conforms to the standard topical divisions (somewhat reflective of four-part epistolary structure), along with reference to the major commentaries organized by time-period. Michel takes Romans 5–8 together. He reflects the comparative-historical grammatical perspective (though comments are surprisingly few) and dismisses the text-critical issue in Rom 5:1 fairly quickly, invoking the sense of "having" as determinative for the argument and Lietzmann's confusion of omega and omicron (114). Michel's contribution is his attentiveness to the interpretive tradition, at least as found in the Lutheran line of thought, and attention to style (e.g. 120 on the doxological style of Rom 5:11), as well as incorporating reference to rabbinic and Semitic issues (e.g. 114 n. 3, 115). Barrett's commentary[47] has a short introduction that deals with chronology, thought, and textual problems, including his admission to be dependent upon Luther, Calvin, and Barth, the acknowledgment of a dependence that we will see again. Even though Barrett is aware of ancient letter-writing conventions (15), he does not offer his outline of the letter. Barrett, despite knowing grammarians of the comparative-historical period (e.g. Moule and Moulton), seems to equate time and tense-form (e.g. 103). That we are proceeding further down the road of grammatical and textual confusion is well illustrated by Barrett's treatment of the text-critical issue in Rom 5:1. Recognizing the manuscript issues, he then characterizes the argument for defense of the subjunctive reading, citing Moule's opinion that the verb ἔχειν "carries a perfect meaning, viz. *I enjoy the possession of something already obtained*,"[48] with the subjunctive being a brachylogy or condensed form for "Since we have been justified we have peace; let us therefore enjoy it" (102). Barrett rightly rejects such a proposal—which well shows the problem with the *Aktionsart*

[45] Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (1955; KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957).

[46] I have not treated an earlier successor, Bernhard Weiss, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1881), nor do I treat a later successor, Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[47] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A.&C. Black, 1957).

[48] C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (1953; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 15, with italics in Moule, but not in Barrett's citation of it. Moule also cites Moulton, *Prolegomena*, 110, as does Barrett.

view of the tense-forms in Greek. However, Barrett himself then goes on to say that the "context is not hortatory, but indicative" (102; see also 103, where it is repeated), confusing form and function. He also rests his defense on what appears to be an equation of tense-form with time, so that indicative verbs indicate a secure past and present. Nevertheless, Barrett's treatment of reconciliation is one of the most illuminating, when he notes the two different metaphors of justification and reconciliation, and how Rom 5:9 and 10, when outlined, display their similarities and differences (107–108). Leenhardt[49] has little concern for the outline of Romans or the history of interpretation (he refers the reader to Michel's commentary, 29–30). He divides Romans 5 into two parts, with vv. 1–11 completing the preceding part. Leenhardt's view of the Greek language is difficult to ascertain, as one of his few comments is that ἐσχήκαμεν in Rom 5:2 "is equivalent to an aorist (Hellenistic peculiarity)" (132)—indeed a peculiarity of Leenhardt, continued in the latest French edition (77 n. 4). Thus, it is hard to take seriously Leenhardt's comments on the textual variant in Rom 5:1, where he says "it is impossible to adopt" the subjunctive, with Leenhardt appealing to Lietzmann's argument, again (132, French 77 n. 2). He takes reconciliation as "the inner living personal aspect" of justification (138, French 81), a view with little basis in the text.

As we move to the 1960s, commentaries show little sign of improvement. Murray's commentary is by a systematic theologian.[50] After a very short introduction and content-based outline, Murray attempts a clearly theological interpretation of Romans. Lacking serious comment on the Greek of Romans, Murray does, however, engage in a thorough discussion of the variant in Rom 5:1. Even though he adopts the indicative reading, he offers an explanation of the subjunctive: "if we were to adopt the hortatory reading, we need not suppose that the indicative, expressed by the other reading ἔχομεν, is thereby ruled out. May not the exhortation here, as in other cases, presuppose the indicative (*cf.* 6:12 with 6:14)? And the thought would be: 'since we have peace with God, let us take full advantage of this status'. Paradoxically stated, it would mean: 'since we have it, let us have it' " (159 n. 1). Murray seems to be further confused in his discussion of καυχώμεθα in Rom 5:2, when he says that coordination with

[49] Franz J. Leenhardt, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Romains* (1957; 3rd ed.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995); ET *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Harold Knight; London: Lutterworth, 1961).

[50] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959–1965).

ἔχομεν or ἔχωμεν means “it can be taken as hortatory” (161 n. 5), and Rom 5:3, when he says that καυχώμεθα “can be regarded as hortative here likewise” (163 n. 6). I would have thought exactly the opposite, unless I am missing something important here. On reconciliation, Murray is fulsome, treating each phrase, and establishing that we were God’s enemies and his alienation was removed from us (172). Bruce’s commentary[51] offers one of the best introductions to the letter to date, including discussion of the law (50–56) and influence of the book (56–58), and he follows a form of outline that resembles the four-part letter structure. Even though the revision was written after E. P. Sanders introduced the New Perspective, Bruce shows no engagement with him. He does, however, introduce a new form of the contextual argument for the indicative in Rom 5:1: “Such variations are common because, with the strong stress accent on the antepenultimate syllable (as in Byzantine and Modern Greek), the distinction between the long and the short vowel in the penultimate syllable disappears in pronunciation” (116). Best adds little to the commentary literature,[52] apparently equating time with tense-form, simply invoking context for Rom 5:1, and seeing justification and reconciliation as “two aspects of God’s loving action in Christ” (58).

By contrast to the relatively lean previous decades, the 1970s saw one commentary written nearly every year of the decade. Few seem to be aware of the major issues that perhaps merited a place in their commentaries. The major commentators are Matthew Black (1973), Ernst Käsemann (1973), J. C. O’Neill (1975), C. E. B. Cranfield (1975–1979),[53] Everett Harrison (1976), Heinrich Schlier (1977), Ulrich Wilckens (1978–1982), and John A. T. Robinson (1979). Black[54] offers a short introduction (that includes discussion of style), but no outline. His comments on Greek are at best confusing, and linked to his comments on the textual variant in Rom 5:1. Recognizing the overwhelming evidence for the subjunctive, Black says that “On the other hand, ‘let us have peace’ seems to imply that a man who has been justified may thereafter choose whether or not he will be at peace with God, and this seems un-Pauline. The indicatives in the context also favour the present tense,” but where he then cites verbs

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[51] F. F. Bruce, *Romans* (1963; TNTC; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

[52] Ernest Best, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

[53] Cranfield also has a shorter commentary on Romans and a commentary on Romans 12–13. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Commentary on Romans 12–13* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965); *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985).

[54] Matthew Black, *Romans* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973).

in the perfect tense-form in v. 2 and aorist tense-form in vv. 10–11 (81). He then states, "We could render: 'let us enjoy our state of peace with God', without introducing any un-Pauline thought; this is a meaning well attested for ἔχω (= 'possess, enjoy'), and this may be the force of the subjunctive. On the whole, however, ἔχομεν, the present tense, is preferable" (82). Though he recognizes the possible rendering of the present subjunctive, Black confuses tense with mood. Theological insights are virtually non-existent (see 84 on v. 10). It is hard to believe that a modern commentary in a modern critical series could be written without an introduction, but so it has in Käsemann's successor to Lietzmann.[55] Käsemann does not pay much attention to the Greek language, but is instead concerned with the flow and style of the argument, making appeal to such features as chiasm (German 124, ET 132), baptismal references (127, ET 135), liturgical and eucharistic language (129, ET 137), and liturgical tradition (130, ET 138). As for the textual variant in Rom 5:1, Käsemann notes that the "well-attested and ancient (Lietzmann)" (132, German 124) variant in the subjunctive is well and widely defended, but he still opts for the indicative on the basis of "the content with its indicatives and the general thrust of the section" (133, German 124). As might be expected, Käsemann downplays the significance of reconciliation even in Romans (130, ET 138).[56] O'Neill's slight volume[57] is notorious for his textual emendations (e.g. Rom 5:3–5). It is therefore interesting that he accepts the indicative reading in Rom 5:1, claiming that the subjunctive "can hardly be right: Paul is clearly drawing conclusions rather than mounting an exhortation" (92). O'Neill can see what others cannot. His theories will be revived later (see Waetjen below). Cranfield's two volume commentary[58] (the first complete multi-volume commentary in some time; Kuss never completed his), and the supposed replacement for Sanday and Headlam, in some ways marks a new episode in commentary writing, although not in all ways. His introduction is substantial, dealing with the standard questions, including language and style, the history of exegesis (the most detailed I have come across in a commentary), and structure (where he opts for a confusing

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55 Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer* (1973; HNT 8a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974); ET *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

56 See Ernst Käsemann, "Some Thoughts on the Theme 'The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament,'" in *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. James M. Robinson; London: SCM, 1971), 49–64.

57 J. C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

58 C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979).

mix of epistolary and content analysis). This is supplemented by two further essays in the second volume on Paul's purpose and the theology of Romans. Cranfield has more language and structure comments than most recent commentators, such as observing that Rom 5:1–11 is in the first person plural (1:257), although fewer than the earliest commentators. Unfortunately, he still seems to be closely tied to the time and tense-form model of the rationalists (1:265). He also knows of more recent *Aktionsart* theory when he states of ἐσχήκαμεν that it "is perhaps to be explained as a perfect used for the aorist, but can be taken as a true perfect (see BDF, § 43 [2])" (1:259)—although it is not entirely clear what he means by this. As for the textual variant in Rom 5:1, Cranfield opts for the indicative, though far less well attested, "on the ground of intrinsic probability" (1.257). He thinks the subjunctive can be made sense of but is unlikely "in such a carefully argued writing as this" (1:257 n. 1), at which point he devolves into the endless cycle of positing whether the indicative or subjunctive came first, especially in light of pronunciation possibilities. Cranfield's understanding of reconciliation seems to be driven by his theological understanding of justification, which is influenced by major thinkers like Calvin and Barth (1:260 and elsewhere), so that "*God's* justification involves reconciliation because God is what He is" (1:258), a very Barthian nonsensical kind of statement (whether it is Pauline is another question). Harrison's commentary[59] is fairly slight in several ways, including its introduction, attention to previous scholarship, and Greek language and argument. However, he is the earliest of the commentaries I have found to introduce the significance of manuscript 0220 for the text-critical reading in Rom 5:1 (58 n. 1—perhaps also because he is one of the first in some time to actually cite the manuscript evidence in a thorough way). He notes that this late third-century fragment, first published in 1952,[60] follows the text of the fourth-century codex Vaticanus for thirty verses, except in Rom 5:1, where it reads the indicative, rather than the subjunctive. W. H. P. Hatch attributes the indicative to being a pre-Hesychian reading, thus strengthening the support for the indicative, which Harrison also accepts based upon context (although he also uses the arguments regarding pronunciation,

[59] Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (vol. 10; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 1–171. This commentary has now been updated by Donald A. Hagner, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.; vol. 11; ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 19–237.

[60] W. H. P. Hatch, "A Recently Discovered Fragment of the Epistle to the Romans," *HTR* 45 (1952): 81–85.

including Frederick Field's hypothesis that the indicative was changed to subjunctive to conform with καυχώμεθα in 5:2 (56).[61] Schlier,[62] after a relatively short introduction that includes treatment of the letter as a letter ("Der Römerbrief ist ein echter Brief" [8]), outlines it according to the three-part Greco-Roman letter structure, with an introduction, body of the letter (Der Brieftext), and letter conclusion (IX–X). Schlier's commentary is probably the most exegetically detailed to this point. His understanding of Greek reflects the time and tense-form approach of the rationalists, along with the *Aktionsart* perspective of the comparative-historical grammarians, such as Blass and Debrunner whom he cites frequently (five times in Rom 5:1–11, along with Winer, Moule and Thrall once each).[63] Thus, he argues that the future-time reference of δικαιωθήσεται in Rom 2:13 and 3:20, in Rom 5:1 gives way to either a "zeitlosen Präsens oder gnomischen Futur allgemein und prinzipiell vom δικαιοῦσθαι" (139), and he sees the perfect tense-form ἐσχήκαμεν in Rom 5:2 as "wohl echte Perfekte, die die Dauer des Geschehenen ausdrücken" (142). However, in some instances Schlier perhaps tries too hard, such as when he identifies οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλά in Rom 5:3 as " 'gut griechisch' (Lietzmann), aber auch semitisch (Delitzsch, Römerbrief, 81)" (146 n. 11).[64] Resembling the analysis of Barrett (but whom he does not cite on this point), Schlier sees reconciliation and justification as parallel in Rom 5:9–10 around the means by which they are enacted (155). Wilckens in his three-volume commentary[65] (the longest complete one to date) has an odd introduction that concentrates on matters of textual integrity, and says virtually nothing about many of the major issues of interpretation such as language and style and history of interpretation. He is more detailed in the commentary, although not breaking out of many traditional molds (e.g. he recognizes the "we" style, noticed earlier by Cranfield, 1:288). He retains the good Germanic tradition of equating tense-form with time (1:290 on Rom 5:3), while also getting misled on issues of Semitic influence. In his

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[61] See Frederick Field, *Notes on the Translating of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 155. This is a strange argument, as the form for the indicative and subjunctive is the same, so the argument, like so many of them used, can cut both ways.

[62] Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Herders 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1977).

[63] Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (NTTS; Leiden: Brill, 1962).

[64] Franz Delitzsch, *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1870).

[65] Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (3 vols.; EKK; Cologne: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978–1982).

discussion of peace in Rom 5:1, he equates "peace" with Hebrew *shalom*, but without explaining how such a correlation is to be made (1:288). Simply juxtaposing a German word and a Hebrew word is far from sufficient. On the text-critical variant in Rom 5:1, while recognizing the superiority of the subjunctive in the Egyptian, Syrian and Western textual traditions, Wilckens nevertheless opts for the indicative on solely contextual grounds, while also noting possible ways the readings were confused during dictation (1:288–89). He takes the aorist passive verb κατηλλάγημεν as a "passivum divinum" (1–299), a category that of course does not exist in Greek grammar (only in theologians' minds). Wilckens concludes with a lengthy theological exposition of Rom 5:1–11. The 1970s conclude with Robinson's[66] short but provocative (as Robinson often was, though usually unrecognized) non-commentary on Romans (see his preface for his vow to never write a biblical commentary, vii). His short introduction outlines Romans in a completely different way, with Rom 8:1–39 as the high point (9). Despite his using the NEB with the subjunctive in Rom 5:1, Robinson argues for the indicative. However, he turns the argumentation on its head: "We always assume that the original manuscript, if we could but establish it, would be without slip. But this is not true of any letter of any length that I have ever written. I am inclined to think that the autograph may well have had the subjunctive … but that Paul would have been the first to amend it" (57). Robinson also sees justification and reconciliation as two metaphors "for stating the fact of a lost status restored, access re-opened" (59).

By the 1980s, one should expect the influence of modern linguistics, the New Perspective, and rhetorical criticism to have made some impact on commentaries on Romans. There are six commentaries that are worth examining, by William Hendriksen (1980–1981), J. P. Louw (1987), James D. G. Dunn (1988), Leon Morris (1988), Peter Stuhlmacher (1989), and John Ziesler (1989). Hendrickson's two volumes[67] in some ways represent a throwback to the nineteenth century and almost pre-critical commentaries. There are few new insights, but plenty of practical and theological observations. As a result there are minimal considerations of the Greek language, apart from discussions of textual variants as in Rom 5:1, where Hendrickson opts for the indicative on the basis of context and confusion of omicron and omega (there is no citation of the manuscript evidence)

66 John A. T. Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).
67 William Hendriksen, *Romans* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980–1981).

(1:168). Overall, this commentary is a disappointment when so much has gone before. Louw's is the most unconventional of all of the commentaries discussed,[68] because he has the narrow goal of providing a semantic discourse analysis of Romans, following the South African model of colon analysis that he pioneered. Volume 1 consists of the Greek text displayed by colons—according to the "syntactic relationships of the constituent units" (2:1)—with interrelations indicated. He then offers a detailed theoretical discussion, before briefly treating each of the 43 pericopes of Romans. Utilizing what is recognizably similar to Eugene Nida's kernel analysis and, even more importantly, Noam Chomsky's phrase-structure analysis,[69] and while retaining the sentence and paragraph as basic units, Louw shows that discourse analysis is based upon sentence types derived from a basic Noun-Verb structure. From this, various extensions can be created, with these extensions related back to their basic either nominal or verbal element. A paragraph is a series of semantically related colons, with varying possible thematic structures. There are twelve colons in Rom 5:1–11, with peace as the result of justification by faith (colon 1). A second result is rejoicing (colon 2). Colons 5–8 are the proof of God's love. Whereas colon 1 stands on its own at the head of the paragraph, colons 2–12 form three subsequent structures. Reconciliation is seen as "very close in semantic space" to righteousness, "since both involve two parties having broken off relations and now re-establishing the original harmonious relationship" (2:61). No doubt there will be many disappointed users of this commentary as it not only does not address the questions usually expected (but that can be said of many of the commentaries examined here), it answers questions that only it has raised. Nevertheless, this commentary stands out as not simply conforming to the rest. Dunn's commentary in two volumes[70] is lengthy and attempts to treat, either bibliographically or exegetically, virtually every issue in Romans (much of the bulk is unnecessarily created by the redundant explanation sections, which if removed would leave a modest sized commentary). It only partially succeeds. One of the marks of Dunn's commentary is his addressing the issue of the New Perspective (1:lxiii–lxxii), in his case as a supporter and developer of it.

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[68] J. P. Louw, *A Semantic Discourse Analysis of Romans* (2 vols.; Pretoria: Department of Greek, 1987). See also his *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

[69] Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 66–69; Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957).

[70] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (2 vols.; WBC 38AB; Waco, TX: Word, 1988).

The New Perspective is one of the five sections of his otherwise fairly traditional introduction (although I see no discussion of language or style). The outline of the letter is content driven, not epistolary. Whereas Dunn may be on the cutting edge theologically and sociologically with his treatment of the New Perspective, the same cannot be said of his treatment of the Greek language. Dunn does not know of developments in Greek language theory, clearly endorsing a time and tense-form analysis. His treatment of δικαιωθέντες states: "The tense here certainly indicates an act of God in the past," although he follows this with a perplexing statement: "but that should not be allowed to dominate the doctrine of justification drawn from Paul to the extent that it has, or to overwhelm the force of the other tenses" (1:246). We have not witnessed such a domination or overwhelming—but the solution may well rest readily with another theory of tense-form meaning, such as aspectual theory (K. L. McKay's work was available).[71] Further, Dunn recognizes ἐσχήκαμεν as a "perfect tense," but says it "could be a stylistic variation, but probably is intended to denote both the initial entrance into God's presence ('having been justified') and its continuing availability and outworking ('we have peace with God')" (1:248). This is asking a lot of a single tense-form. Again, he says that the "addition of the νῦν to the aorist [in Rom 5:9], followed by the future, heightens the eschatological tension of the whole train of thought" (1:257). Finally, in Rom 5:11, Dunn says the use of the participle "has the force of the indicative (BDF §468:1 ...), the present tense indicating that this boasting is a continuous feature for the believer, even in the period between reconciliation and salvation, characterized by suffering" (1:261), an overly theologized assessment of the present tense-form. However, it is also evident, as one of the statements above makes clear, that theology can override grammar when convenient. On Rom 5:9, Dunn writes of the aorist, present and future forms of ἐσχήκαμεν and σῴζω, "what is in view is the establishment and development of a relationship which ends in final vindication. And since the process of salvation is yet incomplete, it also means that the believer is not yet delivered from the outworking of wrath in the present ... or from the necessity of being judged in the last day" (1:258). On the textual variant in Rom 5:1, Dunn introduces some new considerations. He claims that, against the "greater weight of MS evidence,

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[71] Among many works, those that could have been used with profit include: K. L. McKay, "Syntax in Exegesis," *TynBul* 23 (1972): 39–57; "Aspect in Imperatival Constructions in New Testament Greek," *NovT* 27 (1985): 201–26; "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in New Testament Greek," *NovT* 23 (1981): 289–329.

most now accept . . . that on grounds of intrinsic probability ἔχομεν must have been intended" (1:245). We have moved from contextual arguments to intentionality arguments in one swift move—one that I have not observed previously. Secondly, Dunn states that, "If an exhortation was intended ποιήσωμεν (as in Isa 27:5) would have been the more obvious choice" (1:245), a choice to my knowledge not previously argued for. However, he rejects these on the basis of context and scribes mishearing vowels. Concerning reconciliation, Dunn's statements tend to be vague, in which he wishes to bring to bear a number of semantic domains so as to claim to show that reconciliation and justification are closely related, to the point that the reconciliation of warring parties is similar to righteousness (1:259). One of the faults of his treatment may have been his failure to use I. Howard Marshall's important article.[72] Thus, for every step forward, Dunn seems to take several back, devolving to unsubstantiated theologizing. Morris too appears to be a throwback to a previous era of commentary writing.[73] Unlike Dunn, he does not include the New Perspective in his introduction, or anywhere else that I could find except one place, where he cites an article by James Dunn to disagree with him (171 n. 89a).[74] Morris is unfortunately no better in matters of language, his commentary being riddled with equations of tense-form and time (e.g. 219, 221), and invoking of *Aktionsarten*, and sometimes both in contradictory ways (e.g. when he says a perfect tense-form in Rom 5:2 is "used in the sense of the present, and with the thought of a continuing attitude," 219). He also mistakes first-class conditionals as implying their factuality (225). On the text-critical variant of Rom 5:1, Morris is content to cite the opposed opinions of earlier scholars, including some of the old chestnuts noted above (218 n. 2). On reconciliation, Morris appeals to his work on *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, a fine work, but neglects to cite anything significant after that, such as Martin's or Marshall's work (225).[75] Stuhlmacher's commentary, a new edition in Das Neue Testament

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72 I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of 'Reconciliation,' " in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 117–32.

73 Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

74 The article is J. D. G. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3.10–14)," *NTS* 31 (1985): 523–42, here 528. The issue is not the disagreement—as Morris is, to my mind, no doubt correct and Dunn wrong, not only on this particular point, but his entire focus, in which theology becomes simply sociology.

75 L. L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3rd ed.; London: Tyndale, 1965). See also Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

Deutsch,[76] is bold and to the point. Even though he quickly surveys previous commentaries on Romans, he does not address the New Perspective. In fact, he argues diametrically against it, contending that the major problem confronted in Romans is "Judaistic doctrine," against which Romans is a polemic, as Carl Weizsäcker so ably stated.[77] Instead of focusing upon the Greek of Romans, Stuhlmacher addresses such issues as the "rhetorical chain of syllogisms" and the "we" style (78, 79), although he does fall victim to equating "peace" with *shalom* (79). On the text-critical issue of Rom 5:1, Stuhlmacher takes an independent line, arguing against the manuscript evidence that "the indicative is closer in content to Paul's thought and at the same time is the bolder version" (79). He concentrates upon the Greek background of reconciliation, noting that it is primarily treaty language between warring peoples. He concludes with a short discussion on justification and reconciliation (82–83). At the end of a wearying decade of Roman commentaries, Ziesler's commentary is the first to incorporate the New Perspective by someone who is not necessarily a supporter of it.[78] He notes his appreciation for the insights it has supposedly brought (2), but feels free in the introduction on law (39–51) and throughout the commentary to go his own way, as the citations of Sanders, Dunn, and others indicate. Ziesler's introduction has other valuable elements as well, including his discussion of the typical Greco-Roman letter form and how Romans conforms to it (33–36) and a section on power language (51–52). The commentary itself, however, seems to retreat to the early twentieth century. The author equates time with tense-form (e.g. "We were reconciled; we are now in a state of having been reconciled; we shall be saved," 142; cf. also 143), and does not have a linguistically informed view of the Koine language when he states that the preposition ἐν "had become so flexible" that arguments on the basis of its usage cannot be made (141). Ziesler also appears to follow the biblical theology movement, when he theologizes the Hebrew concept of "peace" (he refers to *shalom* and its many connotations, including reconciliation, 136).

Even as the century came to a close, the book of Romans continued to invigorate writers of commentaries. The 1990s produced a number of

[76] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Das Neue Testament Deutsch; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); ET *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Scott J. Hafemann; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

[77] Carl Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church* (trans. James Millar; 2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1907–1912 [1886]), 2:99.

[78] John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989).

commentaries, by such scholars as Joseph Fitzmyer (1992), Brendan Byrne (1996), Douglas Moo (1996),[79] Luke Timothy Johnson (1997), Kenneth Grayston (1997), and Thomas Schreiner (1998). Fitzmyer[80] has an extensive introduction, including sections on language and style and Pauline teaching. Therefore, it comes as a grave disappointment to find only a single work of modern linguistics in the bibliography on language and style (and Fitzmyer includes bibliographies with items that are not cited elsewhere in the commentary), the work by Aída Spencer on style.[81] However, he has older works by Eduard Norden on ancient artistic prose and Joachim Jeremias (and others) on chiasm.[82] Such foreboding is borne out in the commentary itself. Fitzmyer also mentions ancient rhetoric, contending that Paul drew upon popular rhetoricians, wrote diatribe, and had a more oral than written style (90, 91, 92). Fitzmyer outlines the letter as essentially following a four-part epistolary form. Though Fitzmyer clearly knows of the work of the New Perspective, much of it goes un-cited and unrecognized at key places in the commentary. The commentary itself, though learned, is also disappointing. Fitzmyer's understanding of Greek is confined to a previous era, as when he notes that justification in Rom 5:1 is "expressed by the aor. Pass. Ptc., which connotes the once-for-all action of Christ Jesus on behalf of humanity" (395). Such a view has been highly suspect since long before modern linguistics was brought to bear on Greek language study.[83] Lexical study is also stunted, when on προσαγωγή Fitzmyer cites Käsemann on the term being cultic, but Dunn on it not being cultic, nor "its verbal counterpart προσάγειν has any such connotation in the LXX" (396), without clarifying how this has bearing. Fitzmyer opts for the indicative over the subjunctive in Rom 5:1, claiming that "most modern commentators prefer" the subjunctive reading, on the basis of confusion of vowel sounds. Unfortunately, he goes on to state that use of the indicative means that "Paul's utterance is a statement of fact expressing an effect of justification" (395), showing that Fitzmyer is not

[79] I can see nothing of significance added to the commentary literature by Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans: A Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

[80] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993).

[81] Aída Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16–12:13, Romans 8:9–39, and Philippians 3:2–4:13* (ETSMS; Jackson, MI: Evangelical Theological Society, 1984).

[82] Eduard Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1898); Joachim Jeremias, "Chiasmus in den Paulusbriefen," *ZNW* 49 (1958): 145–56.

[83] E.g. Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *JBL* 91 (1972): 222–31, not in Fitzmyer's bibliography.

attune to recent (or even otherwise) study of the moods in Greek. However, he then seems to opt for the subjunctive in Rom 5:3, "let us boast …" (397). Concerning reconciliation, Fitzmyer discounts reference to either death or blood as indicating "anything sacrificial or cultic," but instead "death connotes the giving up of one's life, and blood refers to that" (401). He concludes that Paul sees justification as a step toward reconciliation, which is a social concept, not sacrificial or cultic (401), although he does not say where he gets the idea that reconciliation is distinctly social (it is not). Byrne's commentary[84] appropriates a mix of three methods: literary analysis of the implied author and reader; the New Rhetoric's concern for exigence, audience, and constraints on situation; and sociology of knowledge (as opposed to theology) (3–8). He also uses the ancient three-part letter form to outline Romans (27–28). Even though he adopts a social-scientific and rhetorical approach, Byrne is guarded about the New Perspective on Paul (120–21). In several areas, Byrne shows an appreciation for modern advances in New Testament scholarship. However, such is not the case in Greek language study (I can find no reference to a major figure in the index). His comment that the two perfect tense-form verbs in Rom 5:2 indicate "an abiding state of affairs" (170) reflects the *Aktionsart* terminology of the comparative-historical period. His statement on Rom 5:5 that καταισχύνει is a future tense-form reflects an equation of tense-form with time, especially when he accents the verb that way so that "It is only the future … that will show whether or not the present hope has been well grounded" (170; cf. also 171). His lexical study is also dubious, when he notes that the Greek καιρός "can have the connotation of the propitious or eschatological moment" (171), the very claim disputed by James Barr in his *Biblical Words for Time*.[85] On reconciliation, Byrne recognizes that the term was not widely used in a religious sense, but that it is a usage from diplomacy, even though he does not appear to know of the most thorough study of καταλλάσσω.[86] Moo's commentary,[87] which replaces Murray's, begins with a shortish standard introduction, although it does not include any discussion of the language or style of Romans, including rhetoric (a treatment of style would perhaps have saved him

[84] Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP; Minneapolis: Liturgical, 1996).
[85] James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (1962; SBT 33; rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1969), 21–85, arguing against, among others, Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. Floyd V. Filson; London: SCM, 1951).
[86] Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*. But he does know Cilliers Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: Ein Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (WMANT 60; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989).
[87] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

from the chiastic analysis of Romans 5–8 [see 294]). He structures the book as a "theological tractate" within a letter opening and closing (32), thus reflecting a three-part structure. He also believes the theme is "the gospel" (29–30), which I would have thought is a subject, not a theme. Rather than in the introduction, at Rom 3:20 Moo devotes an excursus to the issue of Paul and "works of the law" (211–17). He argues against Sanders and Dunn, and with Stephen Westerholm,[88] that Paul rejects any attempt to gain favor with God through works of the law, Jew and Gentile alike. This is consistent with Moo's Reformed position taken in the commentary, although the commentary is less theological than exegetical, and is to be commended for that. Moo is clearly aware of recent issues in Greek language study, and reflects an understanding or at least a use of verbal aspect theory on numerous occasions. Thus he notes on tense-forms in Rom 5:1 and 2: "there is good reason for thinking that the Greek perfect usually connotes a state of affairs. Both ἔχομεν in v. 1 and ἐσχήκαμεν here, then, refer to present time, but the latter puts more emphasis on the continuing situation of the believer" (300 n. 31)—indicating understanding of the temporal relativity of the tense-forms and their relative aspectual values. He also includes recent research on syntax, when he observes on Rom 5:1 that "the aorist participle, when it precedes the verb it modifies, is usually past-referring" (298 n. 26). This does not save Moo from a number of regrettable comments, however, such as his observation on the perfect ἐσχήκαμεν in Rom 5:2 that it "is used for the present tense" (301 n. 36) and differentiating between καιρός and χρόνος with the former indicating "a more specific or definite meaning: 'point in time' or 'appropriate season' " (307 n. 67), the very kind of mistake that Barr fought against. On the text-critical variant in Rom 5:1, after a tortuous discussion, in which he recognizes the strength of the external manuscript evidence, Moo finally adopts the indicative reading on the basis of context, along the way noting Lietzmann's opinion one more time (but not noting the significance of manuscript 0220) (295–96 n. 17). His analysis of reconciliation resembles the parallelisms recognized by Barrett, though he does not cite him at this point (the graphic display in the earlier version of the commentary is more explicit and helpful at this point).[89] Due to the date of composition

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[88] Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), revised and expanded as *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[89] Douglas Moo, *Romans 1–8* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 318.

of this section, the latest work on reconciliation is not cited, which would have added strength to Moo's comments on its nature and means.

Johnson's commentary[90] is deemed a literary and theological one, by which he means to emphasize theological interpretation, a recent trend in New Testament studies (even if difficult to define), with Romans being a real letter, diatribal in nature, and midrashic (11–14). The commentary itself is clearly outdated, reflecting a number of linguistic shortcomings. These include reference to the aorist participle as being "in the aorist tense, which signifies that the action has already happened" (78) to the fallacy of including the Hebrew background of *shalom* in understanding peace (79). Johnson fairs little better with the text-critical issue of Rom 5:1, where he claims "the manuscript evidence itself is evenly divided" (79), which will come as a surprise to virtually all textual critics (even Lietzmann!). On reconciliation, Johnson sees the image as shifting from judicial (justification) to diplomatic language (85), although his most recent source for discussion is the article by Friedrich Büchsel in *TDNT* (85).[91] This attempt at a commentary in recent methodological garb cannot be sustained. Grayston has little to offer,[92] apart from an introduction that pronounces (much like this chapter!) on the best commentaries (I won't give his conclusions, but you can compare his and mine if you wish) and, surprisingly in light of all that has been cited above, states that "let us be at peace with God, instead of being resentful and hostile" is what Paul means (33). Whereas Moo was more exegetical than theological (though still theological!), Schreiner's commentary is just the opposite.[93] Schreiner, like Moo, confuses subject with theme, and asserts that "the glory of God is the central theme" of the letter (xiii). His introduction is short, focusing mostly on the purpose of the letter, and he outlines the letter completely according to theological topics (25–27), without reference to epistolary or rhetorical structure. Discussion of the New Perspective on Paul is concentrated on Rom 3:20, where Schreiner rejects it and endorses a more traditional Reformed view (169–74). The entire commentary is organized as theological comments on passages of text, rather than on individual verses, which helps the flow of the argument. Linguistically, Schreiner still reflects the

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90 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

91 Friedrich Büchsel, "ἀλλάσσω κτλ." *TDNT* 1 (1964): 251–59, originally published in German in 1933!

92 Kenneth Grayston, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Epworth, 1997).

93 Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

comparative-historical *Aktionsart* approach, and hence says the perfect tense-form verbs in Rom. 5:2 "are not to be construed as equivalent to aorists. The emphasis lies on the existing result and present state that obtains as a result of a past action (contra Moo 1991: 308)" (254). The first part of Schreiner's comment is adequate as it goes. However, the comment he rejects from Moo is the one cited above, in which Moo shows a (correct) contemporary linguistic understanding of Greek verbal tense-form meaning (contra Schreiner). Schreiner's comment here is equivalent to saying "The world is flat (contra those who have shown it is round)." Denying it does not make it less so. He has many more such statements, such as on the perfect in Rom 5:5, where he both uses *Aktionsart* and theologizes: "The perfect ἐκκέχυται glances back to the conversion of believers—when they first experienced God's love—and emphasizes the ongoing reality of his love in their hearts" (257), while in a footnote he cites an aorist participle as "point[ing] back to conversion" (257 n. 4). Similarly he says that "the aorist tense of the participle [in Rom 5:9] and the adverb νῦν (*nyn*, now) indicate that righteousness is an accomplished reality" (263), showing that two wrongs do not make a right. Of Rom 5:9, he says the "salvation mentioned here is doubtless eschatological, as the future tense shows" (263), doubtlessly equating tense-form and time (reflecting the even earlier rationalist period), essentially repeated for Rom 5:10 (264). Other linguistically dubious comments include his invoking as the "major motif" of a paragraph a statement simply because it introduces what he sees as the theme of the book (God's glory), rather than establishing this on the basis of the text (254), and interpreting the conjunction γάρ in Rom 5:10 as indicating that the verse "functions as a restatement" of v. 9, but without offering any supporting argumentation for this (263). On the text-critical issue in Rom 5:1, Schreiner argues against the external evidence and for the internal argumentation (citing 0220 for the indicative reading, as well as for the first time in a commentary citing my 1991 argument for the subjunctive), while introducing the new, highly questionable argument that the indicative is further supported by the use of the participle καυχώμενοι in v. 11, as the "parallelism of verse 11 with verse 3 suggests that the verb has the same force in both verses" (258; see also his comment on Rom 5:11 on 265, where he says the participle "functions as a finite verb"). Schreiner's theological exposition of reconciliation is clearly designed to defend Reformation thinking, when he accuses Ralph Martin of "veer[ing] off course in asserting that reconciliation is a step up from justification because it involves personal relations" (263). He opts instead for justification and reconciliation being "two different metaphors for describing what God has done for us in Christ" (263). The 1990s were clearly a mixed era for commentaries on Romans as the century came to an end, and in fact did not end nearly as well as it seems to have begun.

The new century continued the production of commentaries on Romans, although many were not serious improvements over those that had gone before and, in fact, seemed to revert to an earlier, less well-informed era. Writers include N. T. Wright (2002), Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt (2004), Robert Jewett (2007), Craig Keener (2009), Arland Hultgren (2011), and Herman Waetjen (2011), along with an extensive introduction by Richard Longenecker (2011). Wright's commentary,[94] a replacement for Knox's, has a brief introduction as one might expect. He identifies a clear theme for the book: "God's gospel unveils God's righteousness" (397), which indeed is a theme (whether it is *the* theme of Romans is immaterial here). Wright identifies four commentaries as his major conversation partners: Fitzmyer, Byrne, Dunn, and Moo (396), which (see comments above) may account for some of the major problems of Wright's commentary, although he manages some unaccountable problems on his own. Wright's outline is completely theological (410–12), not reflecting either epistolary or rhetorical categories. As readers of Wright have come to expect, he argues that "although the Babylonian exile had obviously come to a literal end some centuries before, the promises made at the time—promises of a glorious restoration of the nation, the Temple, and the whole Jewish way of life—were widely regarded as still awaiting complete fulfillment" (398). Then Wright includes a strange footnote, in which he states of the above: "This is still controversial, in my view needlessly," but he then provides perhaps the clearest explanation of why this is: "Even if it is not accepted that most of his contemporaries would have agreed, I would still contend that this is demonstrably Paul's own point of view" (398 n. 3). Wright returns to another of his "grand narratives" in the preliminary comments to Romans 5–8 (New Exodus), where he gets defensive about his finding this theme, offers an unnecessary lesson in reasoning, and recognizes that he is protesting too much (510, all in one page). Wright's linguistic abilities are disappointing. Not since Lightfoot have we seen someone identify the subjunctive ἔχωμεν in Rom 5:1 as an "imperative" (515), as does Wright, never apparently recognizing or calling it a subjunctive. He equates tense-form with time when he says

[94] N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 10; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 393–770.

that the "result of past justification and the present status of grace is the future hope" (516; cf. the enigmatic statement on the future on 519). Wright also gives an example of the root fallacy,[95] when he explains the use of the word "access" in Rom 5:2, even noting his interpretation is based upon the "root" (516). Wright's argumentative powers sometimes elude me. On Rom 5:6 he argues for the phrase "the love of God" to be the so-called objective genitive, "our love for God," using this as one reason: "Why would Paul suggest that God's love for us was poured out into, and thus thereafter located in, our *hearts*?" (517). He offers a footnote with further perplexing reasoning: "This was first put to me by the late G. B. Caird, and was the point that convinced him to change his mind to the objective genitive" (517 n. 188). Besides the note not providing anything but a happy memory, I am unclear what Wright's question proves. Would it make better sense if our love for God were poured out in our own hearts? Where else would God's love for us be poured out, except in our hearts? Perhaps I have missed something, or Wright has. On the text-critical issue in Rom 5:1, Wright opts for the indicative over the subjunctive (his so-called imperative), on the basis of confusion of vowels, the contextual argument regarding peace and reconciliation, and a third confusing argument: "the two main verbs of the second verse are in the indicative (the second could be either, but the first seems determinative)" (515). According to both translations that Wright cites (NIV and NRSV, as well as the Greek text), there is only one main verb in the verse (or there are three), and it is the ambiguous καυχώμεθα. Reconciliation is essentially subsumed to justification and salvation. Witherington,[96] one of the primary applicants of a socio-rhetorical method of interpretation, in his short introduction argues for Romans as a form of ambassadorial letter that is deliberative in nature (16). He outlines the letter as an ancient Greek oration, with an epistolary opening/greeting/wish-prayer and epistolary closing elements (21–22). He includes a section on Paul's language, style, and intertextuality, but does not cite a single grammarian (no modern linguist is cited in the index, either), instead arguing for Pauline orality (23). Witherington equates tense-form and time, as in Rom 5:9 when he says "Salvation is viewed here as future" and "Both the tense of 'will be saved' and the eschatological context here make evident Paul is not talking about some spiritual

[95] Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 100–106, 114–16.

[96] Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

experience in the present" (138). On Rom 5:1 and its text-critical issue, Witherington admits the subjunctive has "superior external support," but opts for the indicative "since Paul is stating facts rather than exhorting here" (133 n. 7). He also says the indicative has "good manuscript support," but without stating what that is. Witherington also notes that the "hortatory section of this discourse does not begin until 12.1" (133 n. 7), but his rhetorical outline of the letter (the only one he provides) does not indicate hortatory material, but another refutatio. He also cites the confusion of vowel pronunciation. Reconciliation is subsumed under justification, with anticipation of salvation. Jewett[97] provides the largest rhetorical commentary on Romans to date, within the confines of the historical-critical method (1), thus a socio-historical and rhetorical commentary (3). The introduction contains major discussions of textual criticism, rhetoric, style (mostly rhetorical tropes), social issues, along with standard issues. The outline of the letter is virtually entirely rhetorical. Despite his attention to rhetoric, Jewett still exegetes using now questionable language models. In Rom 5:2, he cites the two perfect tense-form verbs as indicating "a status gained by believers in the past and continued in the present" (350, with a note to the commentaries by Godet, Schlier, and Murray!). He seems to equate tense-form and time when he refers to "the unqualified future verb and its modifying phrase" in Rom 5:9, and that "the future tense is all the more heightened by the emphatic position of νῦν ('now')" (363, although I do not understand his statement regarding the function of the adverb here; see also 364). In discussing Rom 5:2 and καυχώμεθα, Jewett wishes to stress the "uniqueness of this admonition," citing the fact that a search of the TLG database revealed that "the first person plural imperative form of καυχάομαι is unparalleled in Greek literature until patristic writers cite this verse" (352 n. 70). This is a strange statement, as the form is a first person plural subjunctive. If such a search were conducted (for the first person plural imperative), the results would be few indeed, making it difficult to account even for the patristic citations! Jewett also relies upon the supposed origins of the Greek article in the demonstrative pronoun (354 n. 88), a theory that demands re-examination. On the text-critical issue in Rom 5:1, Jewett cites the evidence extensively (he cites Hatch's article on 0220 as providing "[a]dditional support," even

[97] Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). See also his "Romans," in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91–104, for a similar rhetorical analysis.

though he has already cited 0220, 344), and finds Stanley Porter "has made a compelling case for the subjunctive" (344). This is despite the argument by some that "the context favors the indicative, particularly with the indicative ἐσχήκαμεν in the second half of the sentence (5:2)" (344, see comments above). He also notes those who have referred to confusion of vowel sounds. After citing the major works on reconciliation, Jewett evaluates its theological significance within the shame and boasting context of Rom 5:1–11, finding support from especially Martin. Keener's commentary[98] is in what is supposed to be a text-based series. His brief introduction includes recognition of a popular form of rhetoric in Paul's letters and a more substantial section on the New Perspective. Keener is clearly given to hyperbole (and, I think, unfortunate error) when he states that "Sanders's primary thesis, the prevalence of grace in Judaism (and perhaps especially rabbinic Judaism, where it was often least appreciated), won the day, and there is little likelihood, barring a nuclear holocaust or other cataclysmic event that wipes out the current generation of scholars and our work, that the bulk of NT scholarship will backtrack on that point" (6). A potential problem is that Keener says he has, with a few exceptions (Barrett, Cranfield, and Käsemann), "omitted some older [!] works" (17). Keener's outline includes a greeting and thanksgiving (and in this sense is close to the five-part epistolary form), but otherwise follows a content analysis (ix–x). Comments on the actual language of the text are virtually non-existent. On Rom 5:2, Keener states that "the perfect tense of 'stand' suggests that believers remain in this grace" (70), probably a use of *Aktionsart* theory (abiding results of an action, though this is not entirely clear). On Rom 5:5, unlike Wright, Keener finds the phrase "God's love for them" (subjective genitive) entirely appropriate (71). There are very few other grammatical comments (and no grammarians that I can determine—recent or otherwise—listed for their work in the author index). On Rom 5:1, Keener goes with the majority of commentators over manuscript evidence, citing the confusion over vowels (70). Keener is known for his mining extra-biblical literature for resources, so it comes as a complete shock that he seems almost completely unaware of the rich examples in various authors, including papyri and inscriptions, on καταλλάσσω.

[98] Craig S. Keener, *Romans* (New Covenant Commentary Series; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

Representing this decade, Hultgren,[99] a well-known Lutheran scholar, includes a brief introduction on standard major topics, here avoiding any extended discussion of rhetoric, the New Perspective, or language and style. Instead, he saves comments on some important topics for the commentary itself or for a number of appendixes. He notes Sanders's contribution but does not ultimately accept the New Perspective, affirming the role of "works of the law" in Judaism (169–72). His outline of the letter includes the epistolary greeting and thanksgiving, and then a content-based analysis, with some recognition of rhetorical (he includes one propositio) and epistolary features (23–25). Hultgren's grammatical comments are confined to the rationalist period (over one-hundred years earlier!) of equating tense-form and time, clearly in order to argue for a particular theological position. On Rom 5:9, he refers to "the tenses of salvation (past, present, and future)" (212), citing an earlier programmatic discussion at 1:16. There he states: "Paul can speak of salvation as both future (Rom 5:9–10; 10:9; 13:11; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thess 5:9) and present (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15; 6:2). Once he speaks of it as past (using an aorist passive verb, ἐσώθημεν)" (74). At one point, he gets completely confused on tense-term terminology and meaning: "If it is possible for reconciliation to have happened (κατηλλάγημεν, past tense [aorist passive indicative], 'we were reconciled') even when humanity was hostile to God, now that reconciliation has taken place (καταλλαγέντες, past tense [aorist passive participle], 'having been reconciled'), it is self-evident that salvation will follow (future tense, σωθησόμεθα, 'we shall be saved')" (212–13). Nothing could be less self-evident, since Greek does not have a "past tense" and there is nothing clear about a future form being future referring. Hultgren's comments belong in the nineteenth century or before. Hultgren devotes an entire appendix to the text-critical issue of Rom 5:1, the most detailed such discussion in any commentary surveyed. After citing the manuscript evidence and showing the "greater support" (676) for the subjunctive, and noting the standard argument regarding confusion of vowel sounds, he makes an observation upheld by the previous discussion: "[o]ne can get the impression, based on the work of major interpreters and the major English versions in use today, that the issue is all but settled in favor of the indicative, but that is actually not so" (677). He discusses three syntactical arguments (of varying worth) and concludes for the subjunctive: "Paul

[99] Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

calls upon his readers: 'let us have peace in reference to God' or 'let us be at peace with God.' The problem is not with God (who is at peace with us), but with us! Since we are justified by faith (and have nothing to fear from God), let us be at peace with God. The hortatory subjunctive calls upon the hearer or reader 'to possess what is; it does not call into question what is' " (679).[100] Hultgren rejects the idea that there is a *center* to Paul's theology, especially justification, but also wishes strongly to affirm that "its place in his *theology* is another matter" (204), even if it is not at the center. He sees symmetry in Rom 5:9–10, on the basis of which justification and reconciliation are very similar, even if reconciliation is more appropriate to this context (213–14). Waetjen's commentary[101] purports to be a postmodern venture grounded in the work of the Continental philosophers Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek, and Alain Badiou.[102] After a conventional introduction, Waetjen follows a rough five-part epistolary form for his commentary. At many places, there is certainly nothing postmodern about this commentary. On Rom 5:1, Waetjen correctly analyzes the syntax of the aorist participle preceding the main verb to argue that the participle's action "is relative to the main verb . . . and expresses an action that is antecedent to that of the main verb" (134), even though he cites Blass and Debrunner and Moule in support of this. He also interprets the aorist passive participle καταλλαγέντες as indicating "a present ongoing reality" (140), even if he takes salvation as "realized into the future" (141), though not specifically stating that this is on the basis of the tense-form. However, he does fall victim to seeing καιρός as "the divinely appointed season" (139),

[100] He is citing Porter, "Argument of Romans 5," 664. I find it intriguing—if not outright distressing—that Hultgren clearly finds my argument regarding the subjunctive convincing—which is based upon my linguistic approach to the moods and tenses in Greek—but he shows otherwise no knowledge of such a linguistic approach elsewhere in his treatment of Greek. Hultgren also includes a lengthy appendix on the *Pistis Christou* debate, ultimately concluding for the objective genitive (623–61). His argument would have been helped by reference to Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "πίστις with a Preposition and Genitive Modifier: Lexical, Semantic, and Syntactic Considerations in the πίστις Χριστοῦ Discussion," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2009), 33–53.

[101] Herman C. Waetjen, *The Letter to the Romans: Salvation as Justice and the Deconstruction of Law* (NTM 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011).

[102] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (trans. Davis Wills; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) (or at least Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul: On Justice* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006]), Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute—or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), and Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (trans. Ray Brassier; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

as Barr warned against. On Rom 5:1, Waetjen accepts the indicative on contextual grounds. On God's love of humanity, Waetjen draws in Žižek's insights on love as deriving from human weakness as an expression of God's perfection (138–39). On reconciliation, he incorporates Badiou's insight into the difference between reconciliation as concerned with death and salvation with resurrection (141). Unfortunately, in comments reminiscent of O'Neill, Waetjen takes Rom 5:3–4 and 11 as later interpolations, even though he admits there is no textual evidence but only contextual for doing so (137 and n. 9 and 143 and n. 24). I conclude with Longenecker's introduction to Romans[103]—though not a commentary, but an introduction to his forthcoming commentary. Part one is concerned with what he calls uncontested matters such as authorship, integrity, and occasion and date; part two is so-called pivotal issues regarding addressees and purpose. Part three introduces Longenecker's proposals regarding combining orality, rhetorical conventions, and epistolary theory, as well as the use of Jewish texts and themes. He does not respond directly to serious criticism of his rhetorical approach, used earlier in his commentary on Galatians.[104] Part four concerns textual and interpretational issues. In his endorsement of the Alands' advocacy of using papyri,[105] Longenecker seems unaware of recent criticism of their approach, including the grade inflation of textual ratings.[106] His discussion of interpretational issues often seems outdated and tired, including treatment of *Pistis Christou*, where the most recent work cited is nearly fifteen years old and now superseded (318), and he commits the fallacy of equating Hebrew and Greek to solve the problem of "faith" or "faithfulness" (319–20). He has a brief and qualified acceptance of the New Perspective, but his discussion of "reconciliation" and "peace" seems to commit the root fallacy (338) and the fallacy of equating Hebrew and Greek (339), as well as not reflecting some of the most important recent literature. Part five concerns the focus, structure, and argument of Romans, where he presents a four-part epistolary structure with opening, thanksgiving, body, and closing. There are clearly, despite the nearly five hundred pages, some major topics and areas missing in

[103] Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
[104] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990).
[105] Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).
[106] Kent D. Clarke, *Textual Optimism: A Critique of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (JSNTSup 138; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

this introduction, not least Greek grammar and linguistics for a commentary that purports to be on the Greek text, even if it were to be treated under what the author might contend are uncontested matters. Overall, the introduction seems to represent scholarship of about thirty years ago, apart from a few areas that are perhaps somewhat more recent.

4. *Conclusion*

This review of commentaries—and a number of commentaries have not been treated—clearly shows that newer is certainly not necessarily better. What I have tried to do is to evaluate each commentary in light of its context of writing and the issues current at the time. As a result, I believe it is possible to identify some commentaries that stand out—both good and bad—in respect to their time period. It is unnecessary to identify the particularly bad commentaries, but my evaluations above should provide sufficient evidence for such judgment. They are typified by an unreflective invocation of previous modes of thought regarding such things as the Greek language, the invocation of tired arguments regarding the meaning and understanding of the text, the utilization of often outdated and even unhelpful secondary sources, and the failure to engage the text and its theology. Rather than dwell upon these commentaries, however, I wish instead to note those commentaries that I believe stand out for their particular strengths, both at the time of their writing and in their (potential) enduring value. These commentaries include Sanday and Headlam, to this day still a more important and reliable guide to the Greek text of Romans than many if not most commentaries written since (especially if such commentaries reflect the same linguistic framework), including the supposed replacement volume in the ICC series by Cranfield, which unfortunately falls short by not availing itself of the latest in research and by following some unnecessary theological tangents (such as Barth). Only slightly behind Sanday and Headlam is the commentary of Beet, surprising as that may seem (and unknown as it now is).[107] Even though he writes as a systematic theologian, without focusing primarily on the Greek text, he does a commendable job of providing a theological interpretation of the text of Romans and an astonishingly adept view of its language. Schlier's

[107] Beet is not cited, so far as I can tell, in the major reference commentaries by Dunn, Moo, Schreiner, Jewett, Hultgren, or in Longenecker's introduction. It is cited by Fitzmyer in his bibliography.

commentary is to be commended for offering what is probably the most detailed and text-centered comments on the Greek text. Even though he is not quite as up-to-date on linguistic matters as he might be, he draws upon the most reliable widely available resources, and pays attention to the text, including offering comments that are theologically insightful. Louw's commentary, though not a commentary in the traditional mode—and perhaps the better for it—paves its own way, by utilizing a thoroughly linguistic approach to gain insight into both the argument and the theology of Romans. I believe that we need far more commentaries like those of Louw, that is, commentaries that do not try to be all things to all people and usually end up being very little of anything for anyone, but one that takes a particular approach and pursues it rigorously. Even if his colon analysis is not the last word in discourse analysis, Louw's method forces us to think of the text in new ways. Moo's commentary stands as a commendable example of a commentary that combines use of a modern linguistic approach and a clear theological understanding. Moo's is the first of the traditional commentaries to show clear understanding of advances in language study (although with a few glaring lexical errors), rather than simply utilizing the work of a previous and now dated generation, but he also allows the text to speak in a clear way with the linguistic work undergirding such theological observations. Finally, the commentary by Waetjen is worth considering (his view on interpolations notwithstanding) because he not only shows excellent sensitivity to the use of the Greek in the text, but he, like Louw, does not hesitate to chart a new path by drawing upon the insights of several major continental postmodern thinkers. Whether his commentary is truly postmodern or not is beside the point here, but that he knows of and draws upon such contemporary thinkers pushes insight forward, rather than simply drawing upon the work of previous generations. Despite the number of commentaries available on the book of Romans, there is clearly room for more of them—so long as they make use of significant methodological advances to enhance understanding of the text of this, Paul's most significant letter.

JAMES AND HIS COMMENTARIES

Scot McKnight

Grant Osborne first taught me the Gospel of Matthew and inspired in me a desire to do my dissertation in Matthean studies. By a stroke of fate, I became his graduate assistant for several years, during which time I observed more carefully how his mind operated, how his writing career was maintained, and how his own teaching and preaching ministries absorbed his calling. (Not to mention how disorganized his bookshelves were, so I promptly put them in Dewey Decimal order and ensured that each book lined up perfectly with the outer rim of the book shelf!) Then I became Grant's colleague as a professor where we worked as a team in not only teaching exegesis but as two of the few voices at Trinity that were Arminian or (in my case) inclined toward that theological orientation, though I was more Anabaptist than anything else. We also teamed up in supporting women in ministry. I have to confess that Grant had a stronger voice in that period than I did, though I would like to think I have followed in my teacher's and colleague's steps. It is an honor for me to write this short piece on commentaries on James because in many ways my own career as a commentator builds on his.

While many quote *Qohelet*'s famous line that in the making of books there is no end, I shall contend the opposite when it comes to commentaries: *there are never enough!* But I close that with a quick restriction: there are never enough good commentaries that approach the letter of James independently. What applies to James applies elsewhere even more, especially to Romans and the Gospel of John. If everyone is using the same method and if everyone is asking the same questions—how does this text connect to the Dead Sea Scrolls, what does this text say about soteriology?—and if everyone is restricted by the historical-critical method, then we have had enough. But what we do need is independent and fertile and careful minds to do serious work on the books of the Bible, to write commentaries, and to permit the users of commentaries to listen, reflect, borrow, and then appropriate such commentaries. James has had its share of fine independent commentaries.

In what follows I will hone in on Jas 1:27 as an entrée into the commentaries on James, and I will limit myself to some of the commentaries because the length of this piece would increase significantly were I to treat each commentary fairly.[1] I quote the text and then offer my own translation:

> θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν, πισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου
>
> Translation: *Pure and undefiled religion before the one God and Father is this: to care for the parent-less* (*or fatherless*) *and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself spotless from the world.*

This text illustrates what might be called the "problem of James," namely his evidently non-Pauline (some would say anti-Pauline) focus on works (cf. 2:14–26), a focus that irritated Martin Luther and the many Protestants and evangelicals who have held high *sola fidei*,[2] while James has more or less been defended as a straight and honest arrow by Roman Catholics, some Anabaptists and some Wesleyans, who have sought to hold together and in balance salvation by faith and the necessity of works.[3] This discussion of the relation of James has both garnered too much attention and distracted from the many other texts in James that simply are not part of that discussion, which is why it is important to work through the entire text and not just sort out that difficult matter.

Birger Pearson, more than two decades ago, summarized the various consensuses around James in the following categories: it has a Jewish-Christian character; its literary genre is paraenesis; its intention was to call Christians to live the Christian life; its language is good Koine Greek; its relation to Paul was not against Paul but against an extreme form of Paulinism; it is dependent on the Jesus traditions, especially Matthew; it probably stems from a postapostolic author and date, but there is no consensus on the place of origin.[4] To be sure, while each of these can be contested—and Dale Allison's forthcoming ICC commentary on James will for instance challenge the "Christian" nature of this letter—that set of

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[1] For the larger context, see Eldon J. Epp and George W. MacRae, eds., *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (The Bible and its Modern Interpreters 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 371–76 (Birger Pearson); Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne, eds., *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 251–262 (B. D. Chilton).

[2] P. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 191–94.

[3] I have myself ventured into a commentary on James, and so should the reader care what I have said about the matters under discussion, here is the reference: S. McKnight, *The Letter of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

[4] Epp and MacRae, eds., *New Testament*, 376.

conclusions is not far off from today's state of play, as long as one permits the newer and fresher concerns, not the least of which is the use of rhetorical criticism to examine various moves made by James.[5]

1. *Historical-Critical Commentaries*

Commentaries on James in the historical-critical sense became full-blown with the work of Martin Dibelius,[6] who, on Jas 1:25–27, accurately observed that many would see this text in one of two ways:

> In the mouth of a Jew it [v. 27] would mean: to keep the Jewish laws or ritual purity; in the mouth of a strict Jewish-Christian: to observe them precisely in dealings with Gentile-Christians.

But Dibelius contended these two options were inadequate; the text breathes a moral generality instead of a Jewish particularity, and neither does this text support what we know about James from Gal 2:12. So, Dibelius contends this text reflects a kind of Christianity already free from the "Jewish Law." As such, and on this Dibelius has the lion's share of the argument, it is a perfect commentary on the "law of freedom" in Jas 1:25. This law-free approach to the Christian life, Dibelius further contended, connects easily and traditionally to Jesus' own teachings and praxis by a "kinship in intuition," a moral intuition shared in James' day with other philosophers that James absorbed through the Jewish tradition, and through the tradition of Jesus' sayings (and here Dibelius assumes James the Just is not the author of the paraenesis). So Dibelius can give us a summary for which his commentary became both a landmark and famous:

> And so precisely upon the basis of this unpretentious saying in 1:27 can one delineate the characteristics of the peculiar position of Jas within the history of religions: his words breathe the spirit of the gospel as well as of Jewish didactic Wisdom. They betray nothing of the break with Judaism, and nevertheless they stand so far outside of Jewish ritualism that in terms of content they are in accord with practical slogans such as those which the popular philosophy of the period was able to coin.

[5] An example of which is B. Witherington, III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

[6] M. Dibelius, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1996), 121–23. Pagination in the notes for the commentaries is from pages quoted or referred to.

Dibelius's contribution to James scholarship is incalculable, and whether later scholars agreed with this "Jewish didactic Wisdom" orientation of James or not (and many didn't), to cross the threshold and sit at the table required testing one's ideas over against that orientation.

To be sure, one cannot forget this forebears, like J. B. Mayor,[7] whose near encyclopedic citation of ancient sources, not to mention a more than two-hundred page detailed introduction, served Dibelius's own probing of ancient sources. Mayor's eye was on Greek grammar, ancient Greek and Latin parallels, but especially New Testament parallels (often cited in Greek and without translation because those where the days when pastors read Greek with ease, or they did not use Mayor!), sharp but demanding comments and much less on the historical context or the history of religions sweep one finds in Dibelius. Mayor's nose is down, he is concerned with James in his exegetical context, and has no reason to make comments in the Comments on James and Paul or James and Judaism or James and Christianity, but one can chase down theological and ecclesial reflection in his Notes, one of which was on "Faith" in which he excoriated the "fetish of orthodoxy" while not minimizing the importance of thinking clearly (p. 217). He further contended that it was the mission of each man, Paul to the Gentiles and James to the Jews, that led them to see the Torah from two angles, one for which it was not to be in the way, while for the other it led to its completion in the gospel (pp. 218–19).

Nor dare one forget James Hardy Ropes, whose focus was exegesis and history and the larger theological and historical context, not the least of which concerns was the influence of Greek diatribe on James, and from whom many later commentaries mined parallel textual references.[8] His opening line on Jas 1:27, echoing the words of John Calvin, illustrates that his orientation is for the Christian or at least a religious person: "This is not a definition of religion, but a statement (by an oxymoron) of what is better than external acts of worship. James had no idea of reducing religion to a negative purity of conduct supplemented by charity-visiting." In this, James is not the brother of Jesus, he is thoroughly Jewish but used the Septuagint, and he is evidently at odds with the apostle Paul. Ropes paved the way for scholars to explore James in a more Greco-Roman world, even if still connected to Judaism.

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[7] J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Comments* (repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954 [1913]).

[8] J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1948), 182.

The scholar or pastor who does not read German will not be privy to the treasures of German scholarship, which in this author's estimation, often provides, if not the best commentary, at least one or two of the best. When Dibelius's 1964 edition appeared, so also did the (routinely updated) commentary of the Roman Catholic scholar Franz Mussner—surely one of the finest commentaries ever written on James, not the least because it necessarily undertakes interaction with the Lutheran tradition that struggled so mightily with how this book's theology challenges that original reaction of Martin Luther.[9] So Mussner opens with this: "Für Jak ist wahre Frömmigkeit ein Christentum der Tat" (For James true piety is a Christianity of deed). In contrast to some scholars who favor either a form-critical speculation about supposed early Christian issues or a mirror-reading approach, Mussner thinks there is no polemic against the Jerusalem cultus in "pure and undefiled" because the context of Jas 1:27 is the "alltägliche Umsetzung des Wortes in die Tat" (the daily realization of the Word in the deed). Furthermore, Mussner's fine-tooth comb reading of Jas 1:27's focus is the antithesis of the wordiness of 1:26. Thus, Mussner confirms Dibelius's essential approach: this is about a Torah-free Christianity. James, thus, offers here an Old Testament rooted set of exhortations that deal with the moral life, particularly care for the distressed (he sees widows and orphans as types and not simply a specific set of two) and distance from the world. The exhortations emerge from the "besten Traditionen des Judentums" (the best traditions of Judaism) and the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.

Following the exceptional studies of Mussner and Dibelius, it was in the 1970s when James commentaries were given a notable boost from years of less than serious interest on the part of English-writing scholarly works. Dibelius and Mussner were more or less "it," until the quiet but continual publication of more on James. I begin with perhaps the least known, that of James Adamson.[10] His commentary's focus on the exposition of the message of James makes it perhaps more fit for the section below on "ecclesial commentaries." The oddity of the commentary is its mixture of solid historical information, some Greek exegesis, theological

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[9] F. Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HTKNT XIII/1; 5th ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1987), 42–47, 110–14. I have chosen to translate "Christentum" with "Christianity" instead of "Christendom," since I am unpersuaded that the German implicates the Christendom of modern scholarship.

[10] J. B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976). In some ways, his later work rectified the commentary: J. B. Adamson, *James: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

probing along with citation of unusual sources (in Jas 1: 27 he quotes P. G. Wodehouse, Richard Collier's *The General Next to God*, Kierkegaard, et al.), and all along provides stimulating ideas for those who are preaching the text. But it transcends the historical-critical method often enough that it was widely neglected.

Four years later, in 1980, Sophie Laws, in the Harper's New Testament Commentary series, wrote what has turned out to be an independent-minded and permanent contribution to the study of James.[11] Her versatility in ancient sources, with particular contributions from attentiveness to early Christian history and a special mining of the early Christian (non-canonical) as well as Greco-Roman sources makes her work innovative and useful. So, as an example, she does not simply refer to the Old Testament texts about orphans and widows, but notes their vulnerability and care among early Christians (e.g., 1 Tim. 5:3–16) as well as in texts like Hermas, Justin, and Ignatius. Laws thinks concretely: the "distress" is not just a general idea; it is poverty dipped in the messianic woe tradition. But she guards from an assumptive reading of everything in light of the Jewish tradition and routinely pushes back against that assumption. Nearly everyone observes that the words in this text, like "undefiled" and "spotless," are Jewish; Laws cautions that these texts are also used elsewhere. Better to prove than assume is a notable lesson readers of Laws acquire.

Not all were convinced, none less so than Peter Davids[12] who in 1982 wrote the first major commentary on James after Dibelius with a distinct emphasis on the Jewish context of the letter. Writing also in the heyday of redaction criticism, and taking suggestions many had made to the table for careful inspection, Davids argued James was a redaction of original shorter pieces by the brother of Jesus. Nothing was left without suggestion. Davids also found a rather convoluted structure at work in James, wherein James 1 anticipates all that comes after, and he defended his theory with sophistication. But what is perhaps the lasting legacy for Davids is his thorough exegesis, attention to detail, interaction with the best of scholarship, and the baptism of James in all things Jewish and historical. For instance, while many think "father" in James 1:27 is a tip off for a Christian perception of God, Davids thinks not—it is as Jewish as it is Christian. He is constrained to play the historian's game of explaining the

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[11] S. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (HNTC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 88–92.

[12] P. H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 102–104.

text in its diverse historical contexts and he plays this game well—so well that finding the historical insights for the text requires wading through innumerable intra-textual references.

Building on the finest commentaries and a wide-ranging use of both the ancient evidence and scholarship, in 1988 Ralph Martin,[13] in the Word Biblical Commentary series, laid on the table a fresh detailed commentary that remains one of the finest commentaries to date on James. The Word commentaries are meant to be academic, detailed, and interactive with scholarship, and Martin is a master of nuance. For instance, in χαλιναγωγεῖν Martin finds a particular, refined sense: "the use of the tongue when it utters merely formal religious platitudes that have no substance evidenced by practical deeds" (p. 52). This nuance is at odds with many who think the bridling of the tongue has to do with violence and anger at least as much, if not more, than the lack of practical deeds for the one making confessions. Martin, of course, is banking on Jas 2:15, 18. He sides with Mussner that "pure and undefiled" are moral and not cultic. A development in both New Testament scholarship, and in James studies as well, was the intensified interest in all things eschatological, but not understood in the sense of Christian theology. Instead, the focus has been to probe what early Jewish and non-Jewish Christians believed and how much of their emerging eschatology was shaped by imminency, a focus that owes its origins in the nineteenth-century German scholarship of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. The Greek term (θλίψει) of James 1:27, where it seems to suggest common and ordinary "distress," has been given a work over in James scholarship, and Martin represents the trend: it "may anticipate the eschatological woes preceding the endtime" (p. 53).

When it comes to New Testament scholars, one of the bright lights is surely Luke Timothy Johnson, so James scholars were more than pleased to receive a new contribution to the Anchor Bible series by Johnson.[14] I have to admit that this commentary at times reads as if he opened up the classical dictionary of Greek by Liddell and Scott and sorted out the

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13 R. P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 51–55. The Word Biblical Commentary has a final section that focuses on explaining the text's significance, and Martin's approach is not the more common approach of simply summarizing what one has already said. Instead, Martin here explores what the term "religion" might mean—and pushes against the Barthian diatribe against the term. Then he creatively explores four features of the "body" in James: tongue, ears, eyes, and the helping hand.

14 L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 210–14.

references, jotted down a few observations, and moved on to the next word and next verse. I emphasize "at times" because at other times there are synthetic observations and textual suggestions that are genuinely scintillating, not the least of which is his discovery of the role Leviticus 19 plays in James. If one reads his commentary alongside his studies on James,[15] one has a full-orbed perception of James; if one relies only on the commentary, one has less. He has one of the most thorough introductions to James imaginable, and it focuses on the literature to which James can be compared, offers a fresh restatement of a traditional author (James, brother of Jesus), and then a useful history of interpretation. In his customary manner, on James 1:26–27 Johnson mostly trots from one word to the next but then has this at 1:27: "James here makes it [a customarily *divine* act of visiting] a covenantal obligation of *humans* toward each other." This democratizing of divine action receives no further development, but it is a breath-taking observation deserving of reflection. His commonsensical approach flattens the discovery of eschatology in "distress."

There is no commentary on James like that of Robert W. Wall.[16] It combines theology, rhetorical criticism, narrative study and canon in a mixture that forms a study of James that thinks outside the box and contributes greatly to James scholarship. As if standing on a modern day Areopagus, Wall lays this down: "The principal property of the biblical text is neither historical nor literary but theological." And again, its placement in the canon, at the head of a second collection of Christian letters, ought to be given a careful hearing when one begins to read James. That is, it is the first response to the Pauline collection, and it is a response of "checks and balances." But it is not as if Wall has ignored the value of extra-textual factors. As an example, he opens his study of Jas 1:26–27 by appealing to the Mary Douglas-shaped theory of purity as mediated through J. H. Elliott about "purity and pollution" in a community context. Like Martin, Wall connects the speech of 1:26 to the problems of 2:14–26 more than to the violent words of James 1, and this is but one example of how carefully Wall reads each passage of James within the context of the whole letter. In contrast to Johnson, who moves quickly from detailed references to word

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[15] L. T. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[16] R. W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 23, 25–26, 98–102. Of course, few have chased that canonical orientation of Wall down as he has done, but this kind of independent thought—yet in some ways profoundly conservative—is why Wall's book provides a valuable contribution to James scholarship today.

after word, Wall develops words he chooses to examine: in our passage, he focuses on "empty" (*mataios*) and "religion" (*threskeia*). For each he is focused on how the community, and not just an individual, conforms to the divine intent.

I rate Wiard Popkes as the most complete, exhaustive (and exhausting!), and painstaking study of the Letter of James available today.[17] It emerges out of a history of German commentaries that focus on minute examination of terms in their historical and biblical contexts, it routinely pauses for detailed excurses, it is fully convinced of the capacity of form- and tradition-critical methods to accomplish sure results, it explores intertextuality with finesse, and it cannot be surpassed in attention to historical context or exegetical detail.[18] Popkes famously explores unintended tensions in the text, and he observes in 1:26–27 both the incompleteness of the definitions of "religion" at work here but the seeming tension between the three ideas: control of tongue, compassion, and being unstained by the world. Popkes, though, also contends these three themes beg for further clarification, some of which is given the rest of the letter. He thinks any "Kult-Kritik" (criticism of the cultus in Jerusalem) is subdued in spite of the cultic derivation of "pure and undefiled." Instead, "er kritisiert das subjektive Sicherheitgefühl, die äußerliche 'religious correctness' sei ausreichend" (He criticizes the subjective feeling of security that external religious correctness thinks is sufficient). This commentary deserves to be translated into English even if it is now slightly over a decade old.

Few have dedicated careers to one book so much as has Patrick Hartin, whose commentary on James brings to mature fruition a history of publications on James and provides a classic, clear exposition of the book.[19] Hartin's own approach to James, though traditional in some ways since he

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[17] W. Popkes, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (THKNT 14; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 146–51. See also his earlier W. Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes* (SBS 125/126; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986). I am skipping comments on Hubert Frankemölle's two-volume commentary: *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Gütersloh / Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlag / Echter, 1994), a supposedly brief commentary that transcended the limits of the typical commentary in the series, no doubt in part because it explores the tradition-critical themes of scholarship at length.

[18] As I write this, Dale Allison is finishing the ICC commentary on James, and I suspect it will be indeed the most complete and detailed critical study ever on James. He will do for us on James what he (and W. D. Davies) did on Matthew.

[19] P. J. Hartin, *James* (SP 14; Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical, 2003), 108–10; cf. P. J. Hartin, *James and the 'Q' Sayings of Jesus* (JSNTSup 47; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), P. J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999).

is a careful exegete of the Greek text, is focused on the tradition-critical relationship of James to the sayings of Jesus, i.e., to Q or what form of the Jesus traditions James owes its background. But Hartin stands alongside Johnson in arguing once again that James of Jerusalem, or the brother of Jesus, is the author of this letter. Hartin thinks Jas 1:25–27 express the heart of James' theological concerns for the believers in Jewish ghettoes throughout the Roman world and, like others, thinks Jas 1:26–27 is part of James' exposition of 1:19 ("let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger"). Hartin has perspective. What James shows here is that religion is about God the Father, it is about care for the vulnerable, and religion embraces a way of life that remains faithful to purity laws for a community. James' purity language is about boundary maintenance between the community and the world. But Torah is now understood as God's "fundamental option for the poor" and not just as ritual observance. But this same Torah provides instruction for the community so that it is unlike the world—the community seeks God's will not in social values but in Torah.

Dan McCartney's commentary elicits a story.[20] I was originally slated to write this commentary, but when the deadlines began to draw near, my progress nearly non-existent, my guilt rising to the surface for not meeting the deadline, and the demands on my schedule from other directions, I asked the then editor Moisés Silva to be released. The oddity of this story is that a few years later my schedule changed and I did write a commentary, and Dan's and mine appeared within a year of one another. Mine had been submitted when Dan's arrived on my desk so I did not interact with Dan's. This is an exceptionally lucid and theologically sensitive commentary, and of course one would expect such from a Reformed New Testament scholar (or he would not be Reformed!). McCartney joins Johnson and Hartin (and, if I may, me) in concluding that evidence favors James, brother of Jesus, as the author—or, at the least, the arguments against that traditional attribution don't outweigh the evidence in its favor. We are not surprised that McCartney wants true religion to have a prior establishment in grace: thus, McCartney grounds control of tongue, care for the poor, and holiness in the Father's gracious covenant work through the implanted word. In that soil of grace, genuine religion can flourish, and only out of that fertile soil can it flourish. Yet, pushing against the individualism of American culture, McCartney observes that piety in the

[20] D. McCartney, *James* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 127–31.

world of James is more a communal than a personal practice. McCartney's exegesis is careful and avoids being overly technical. His view of "distress" is economic and social, and so he does not follow those of the previous decades who were more impressed by the eschatological flavor of "distress." Again, McCartney's orientation is clear: "Both personal holiness and social responsibility are manifestations of the character transformation that genuine faith effects."

What does one say about one's own commentary?[21] My attempt was to write a commentary on the text of James as I read it instead of a commentary on the commentaries and comments of scholars on James as they read it. In some ways I had to shortchange interaction in order to keep a focus on an independent reading of the text. My own focus was to read each passage in James in light of the whole of James and to connect James to the Jewish, Greco-Roman and early Christian worlds only after careful attention to a text in its context was given. While it is hard to prove James the brother of Jesus wrote this book, I lean in that direction, and I also think James is writing to Jewish messianists. This explains, so I think, his concern with Torah, even if at times James expresses Torah as Logos or in the words of his older brother, Jesus, as the love command (cf. Jas 1:12; 2:8–10; depending on Mark 12:29–31 pars.). My commentary contends that the moral vs. cultic perception of "pure and undefiled" is overdrawn: a group of Jewish messianists could believe both in the cultus and use purity terms morally. I argue that "orphan" has been underdetermined in much of scholarship and so I suggest, leaning on others, that the word means "parentless" and not just "fatherless," and this gives added benefit to addressing God as Father in this context. If James is the brother of Jesus, attention to "widows" probably derived from personal experience. I side with others that "distress" is social and probably not eschatological.

2. *Ecclesial Commentaries*

Some commentaries, or better yet the commentators who write them, care more about the church and the pulpit than they do about forging new ground at the historical-critical method. Grant Osborne never tired of teaching his students how to preach a text better and with more accuracy, and so I want to give some attention to expository treatments of James.

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[21] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 162–72.

As such they often use exacting scholarship and exegesis in helping the preacher expound the text. One such commentary, sometimes neglected, is that of the Methodist C. L. Mitton, a former editor of *Expository Times*. He overtly observes for his readers that his commentary is aimed at helping Christians see the value of the letter for the Christian life and to show how the letter fits into New Testament theology.[22] Thus, he observes, 1:27 moves from James having rebuked one grave fault to two positive qualities "which should mark the life of a truly religious man." Like Dibelius, Mitton saw the word "pure" to be pointing at love of God and love of neighbor, and he is not alone in pointing to the use of the term "Father" for God to be a distinctive (though not uniquely so) feature of Jesus and the Christian understanding of God. His concern is to show that care for orphans and widows, or those who "suffer distress," is part of the Christian calling.

It has been said that commentaries today are gobbled up more by evangelical scholars and pastors than among any other branch of the Christian world, in part because the expository sermon is highly valued, and this *sola scriptura* tradition, while it has always favored those most committed to Scripture as the source for preaching, has led to a number of fine evangelical commentaries on James. One of the notable ones of the last century was the slender but packed volume of the former University of London professor R. V. G. Tasker,[23] an early contribution to the Tyndale Commentary series, a pocket-size set of commentaries eminently useful to university study groups as well as to pastors preparing sermons. Echoing Ropes's well-known comment cited above, Tasker also argues that the ritual element of the faith is to be tied to the compassionate. As a schoolboy who had recently lost his father, Tasker heard a sermon on James 1:27 and from that date he was captured by the letter and the need for Christians to care for the fatherless. Tasker sought to get beyond the theological debates about Paul and James and the Reformation to show, as was the concern of Mitton, how significant the letter was for the Christian life. In particular, Tasker believed the letter was valuable for the second stage in the pilgrim's progress, the stage concerned with becoming holy.

That evangelical tradition was sustained when Douglas Moo replaced Tasker's volume, but Moo's replacement volume was then updated when

[22] C. L. Mitton, *The Epistle of James* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 7, 77–79.
[23] R. V. G. Tasker, *The General Epistle of James: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 9, 11, 54–55.

he wrote yet another exposition of James for the Pillar series.[24] Moo's second volume successfully expounds the Letter of James through the category of "spiritual wholeness," his translation of the Greek term *teleioi*. His is a solid exposition, rooted in careful attention to the Greek syntax, to theological concerns as well as to scholarly debates. But mostly Moo provides for preachers and serious Bible readers a clear exposition of what he thinks the text says in its world. Instead of quoting Ropes (or Tasker), Moo takes us back to Calvin's original comment that James is not defining religion. Notice the shift from historical description to personal inclusion: "One test of pure religion, therefore, is the degree to which *we* extend aid to the 'helpless' in our world—whether they be widows and orphans, immigrants trying to adjust to a new life, impoverished third-world dwellers, the handicapped, or the homeless." Moo's exegesis is not without its own theological approach, and in this he joins the Reformation's emphasis on grace and regeneration as the center from which all obedience emerges: "Christians who have ended that estrangement [from the creator] by accepting the reconciling work of God in Christ must constantly work to distance themselves from the way of life that surrounds us on every side."

With a broader lens and more in touch with the Greco-Roman tradition and one of the few commentaries sensitive to gender issues, but still directly focused on how the text of James can flourish in the pulpit and personal settings, David Nystrom's commentary on James is perhaps the most complete commentary today available for the expositor of Scripture.[25] Nystrom observes what many observe, namely that care for the marginalized has a deep scriptural resonance, but Nystrom's "In short, we are to be like God" is both stunning and insightful for both personal and pastoral concerns. Nystrom belongs to a series of commentaries noted for moving from the text to the modern world, and so he explores, more than any other modern commentary series, how to bridge the contexts (to echo words used often in hermeneutics) in order to sort out how to apply the text to modern life before God. His wide-ranging exploration provides an exceptional example of how to do such things.

Similar to Nystrom in drawing with a wider net than many, William F. Brosend's commentary on James is pastorally sensitive and at the same

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24 D. J. Moo, *The Letter of James: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); D. J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

25 D. P. Nystrom, *James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 97.

time exegetically serious.[26] Its succinctness almost masks its quality of comments. Brosend knows the texts, provides the most important of parallels without bogging the reader down in countless references, but the distinction of this commentary series—The New Cambridge Bible Commentary edited by Ben Witherington III—is its attention to sociocultural and ideological textures (here, the meaning of "word"), to sacred and homiletical textures (here, that James really does think bridling the tongue is fundamental to religion) as well as to bridging the horizons (here Brosend provides an exceptional example from Buechner's Beecher Lectures).

Another example, still illustrating the significance of expository shaped commentaries for evangelical Christians, Daniel Doriani's contribution to the Reformed Expository Commentary is a theologically robust exposition of James.[27] Doriani illustrates the expositor's knack for connection: three signs of true religion (tongue, visiting the marginalized, being unstained from the world). Like Nystrom, Doriani sees kindness to the defenseless to be God-like and in Reformation fashion also ties such actions to the grace of salvation. Again, building on the comments of others, but saying this more forcefully, Doriani makes a point that the separation in mind in James is not departure from the world but holiness within the world.

Of all the expositions of James I can think of no better commentary more useful, in an evangelical context, for the serious expository preacher than Craig Blomberg and Mariam Kamell's commentary,[28] and in this Mariam becomes one of the very few women who have written commentaries on James. (I know of only one other, that of Sophie Laws, mentioned above.) This commentary expands on all previous attempts to provide help for the expositor because of its unique arrangement. Each passage's comments include a section on literary context, main idea, translation, structure (which includes a detailed Greek-based structural outline that focuses on logical, rhetorical movement), an exegetical outline, and only then a verse by verse commentary. Blomberg is a well-known bibliophile but teamed with Kamell, who did her dissertation on James, this commentary's brevity hides its bibliographical versatility. The focus everywhere is the intention of James in his context, but the authors often slide into subtle and important suggestions for life today.

[26] W. F. Brosend, *James and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 52–55.

[27] D. M. Doriani, *James* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007), 58–59.

[28] C. L. Blomberg and M. J. Kamell, *James* (ZECNT 16; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

I observed that alongside Mariam Kamell I knew of only one other female-authored commentary on James, but I should mention the stimulating, even radical, study of James by Elsa Tamez,[29] who vividly and relentlessly reminds her patient readers that this letter has been neglected in part because its message is angled against the rich, among whom are most of those who both write on this book—and she pokes in the eye both Dibelius and Davids—and who listen to it, but who would prefer not to. No text is more central to her concern than Jas 1:27, and in it we—you and I—are challenged to rip ourselves from accommodation to the world and to orient ourselves toward the needy among us. It's God-like and this letter calls us to be friends to God. That summons summarizes the career of my teacher and friend, Grant Osborne.

[29] E. Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead* (New York: Crossroad, 2002).

COMMENTARIES ON REVELATION

Lois K. Fuller Dow

1. *History of Writing Revelation Commentaries*

Christianity inherited a belief in the end of the age from first-century Judaism, a belief that was confirmed by sayings of Jesus (e.g., Matt 24, 25) and the understandings of the New Testament writers that the last days had come (e.g., Acts 2:16–17; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2). As Weinrich comments, "It is not surprising, therefore, that the Revelation of John . . . was from a very early time one of the most systematically read and used books of the New Testament."[1]

The book of Revelation has many characteristics of the apocalyptic genre. Bernard McGinn points out that apocalyptic is an attempt to understand the meaning of history and especially of the present moment,[2] and as such, must be related to the contemporary situation again and again. McGinn lists three great shifts of circumstances that affected apocalyptic ideas in the first fifteen centuries of Christianity. They were the conversion of the Roman Empire, the rise of Islam, and the exaltation of the papacy.[3] The last, of course, largely contributed to the Reformation. These shifts are reflected in commentaries written on the book of Revelation.[4]

The earliest references we have to Revelation in Christian writing are not commentaries per se, but interpretations of certain parts of it in the writings of the Church Fathers. Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165),[5] Irenaeus

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1 William C. Weinrich, "Introduction to the Revelation of John," in *Revelation* (ed. William C. Weinrich; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 12; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), xvii–xxxi (xvii). For a good technical history of the interpretation of Revelation, see Gerhard Maier, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche* (WUNT 25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981).

2 Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 29–32.

3 Ibid., 33, 41.

4 As John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 1, notes, "Some methods of interpretation [of Revelation] . . . have moved in and out of fashion in a way that is not unrelated to the history and internal politics of the Christian Church."

5 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 80–81.

(ca. 130–200),[6] Tertullian (ca. 160–225),[7] Hippolytus (ca. 170–230),[8] Lactantius (ca. 240–320),[9] Methodius of Olympus (d. 311),[10] and Commodianus (third to fifth century?),[11] among others, penned opinions on the book or its contents. All appear to have been chiliasts, i.e. they believed in a future literal one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth after his return. This was part of an understanding of Revelation that saw Babylon as imperial Rome[12] and expected Jesus to return soon, destroy the power of Rome, and set up his capital at Jerusalem where the saints would reign with him over a peaceful and prosperous earth for one thousand years. After this would come the general resurrection, the last judgment and the eternal state.

Victorinus of Pettau (d. 303/304) is the first writer from whom we have a full commentary on the book of Revelation.[13] He is the only pre-Constantine writer whose commentary on the book has survived.[14] He too was a chiliast, but he believed that events in Revelation are typological. Things that happened in the Old Testament would happen again in his time, and again in the future, and finally at the end of the age.[15] He is the first we know of to use the *Nero redivivus* legend to say that Nero was a manifestation of the antichrist.[16]

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[6] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4–5.

[7] Tertullian, *Marc.* 3:24.

[8] Hippolytus, *On the Apocalypse*, now lost, is mentioned by Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61. Fragments of the commentary have been preserved in commentaries of the seventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. Hippolytus also wrote other works featuring eschatology, including *On the Antichrist* and *On the Resurrection*.

[9] Lactantius, *Inst.* 7:15–26.

[10] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 83, says one of Methodius's works was *On the Resurrection*.

[11] Commodianus, *Instructiones*, 42, 44, 45.

[12] E.g., Hippolytus, *Antichr.* 36 cf. 32.

[13] Victorinus's commentary is available in English in the Ante-Nicene Fathers series, vol. 7.

[14] We have some notes by Origen (d. 253) on Revelation, but not a full commentary. Origen apparently intended to write a Revelation commentary (*Comm. Matt.* 49) but probably never did. Jerome says Victorinus imitated Origen and paraphrased him (Weinrich, "Introduction," xxi). For details of publications of Origen's notes, see Francis X. Gumerlock, "Ancient Commentaries on the Book of Revelation: A Bibliographical Guide," (a paper presented at the Southeastern Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, March 2003), p. 7. Online http://www.tren.com, and Weinrich, "Introduction," xxi. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4:26.2) says that Melito of Sardis (d. 180) wrote a Revelation commentary, but nothing of it survives.

[15] Victorinus's view is described in C. Rowland, "The Book of Revelation," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 12:533; and Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:369–70. Court, *Myth and History*, 6, argues that Irenaeus was the real originator of this recapitulation theory.

[16] Weinrich, "Introduction," xxii.

As time passed, it began to appear that the chiliast interpretation of Revelation was somewhat flawed and even dangerous.[17] Rome did not fall; instead in A.D. 313 the emperor embraced the faith and persecution stopped. Christ had not come nor set up any kingdom in Jerusalem, and the Montanists were using literal interpretations of the millennium to foment heresy. Beckwith thinks that the perceived irrelevance of the Apocalypse in the new circumstances even contributed to doubt about the canonicity of Revelation in the Eastern church at this time.[18] In the West, however, respect for and comment on Revelation continued unabated, but with a new emphasis.[19]

The first major post-Constantine commentary on Revelation was by Tyconius, who lived in the late 300s. It is now lost, but from Tyconius's surviving work, *The Book of Rules*, and from the many citations of his Apocalypse commentary in other writers, we know that he believed that the millennium is symbolic of the entire church age. He said that people are grouped into two camps, which he called the city of the devil and the city of God. The church contains members of both, who will only be distinguished at the coming of Christ.[20]

Although Tyconius did not adopt the chiliasm of Victorinus, he did incorporate his idea of recapitulation into his rules for interpreting Scripture. And, as Weinrich comments, "Tyconius's conversion of millennialist calculations to commentary on the universal and unitary time of the church became common to Western interpretation of the Revelation primarily through the massive influence of Augustine of Hippo (d. 430)."[21] Augustine did not write a Revelation commentary, but he did expound Tyconius's seven rules in *On Christian Doctrine*, and followed Tyconius's

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[17] Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 33; cf. Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1919; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 320. Kannengiesser, *Handbook*, 1:369, says that Eusebius's hesitation to fully accept the book of Revelation "may be due to his rejection of chiliasm.... Such a futuristic, earthly, regal eschatology... was unacceptable to his vision of Constantine's present Christian empire."

[18] Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 342. Victorinus, Tyconius, and Jerome wrote in Latin. The first surviving commentaries we have in Greek are by Oecumenius of Tricca and Andrew of Cappadocian Caesarea in the sixth century.

[19] H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1907), ccx, comments: "Tyconius was enabled to pass lightly over the references to Rome and the persecuting Emperors, which since the conversion of the Empire had ceased to be of special interest."

[20] See William S. Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), xi–xii.

[21] Weinrich, "Introduction," xxiv.

ideas about the millennium in his comments on Rev 20:1–6 in Book 20 of *The City of God*. Around the same time[22] Jerome (d. 420) rewrote Victorinus's commentary, changing the chiliast interpretations to make the church age the millennium, and editing the other material.[23] Weinrich comments: "The Tyconian tradition through Jerome and Augustine and the Victorine tradition through Jerome governed commentary on the Revelation well into the Middle Ages."[24]

This way of interpreting Revelation was the accepted Western view until around 1200 and even beyond. Commentators on Revelation such as Caesarius of Arles (d. 543),[25] Primasius of Hadrumetum in North Africa (d. after 553), Apringius of Beja (wrote between 531 and 548),[26] Cassiodorus (d. 580),[27] Bede (pre 716), Ambrosius Autpertus (d. 781), Beatus of Liebana (d. 798), Alcuin (d. 804), Haimo of Auxerre (d. 875), and others[28] used the work of Tyconius, Augustine, Jerome, and the other commentators before them, and continued this tradition.

In the Eastern church (writing in Greek), Oecumenius (c. 510),[29] Andrew of Cappadocian Caesarea (c. 515), and Arethas of Cappadocian Caesarea (d. 940) followed Origen's similar spiritualizing and somewhat allegorical interpretation.[30] These authors did not identify historical persons and

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22 Gumerlock, "Ancient Commentaries," 10, thinks Jerome probably did his recension of Victorinus before 400.

23 Weinrich, "Introduction," xxiv–xxv; Kannengiesser, *Handbook*, 1:369. Kannengiesser says that Jerome was "one of several recensions of Victorinus's literal, chiliastic commentary" (1:370).

24 Weinrich, "Introduction," xxv.

25 Caesarius's work is 19 homilies on Revelation. The dates in this list for Caesarius, Primasius, Apringius, Autpertus, Beatus, Oecumenius, and Andrew are from Weinrich, "Introduction," xxv–xxvii. Dates for Cassiodorus, Alcuin, and Haimo are from Gumerlock, "Ancient Commentaries," 17, 19.

26 The extant manuscript of Apringius had his comments on Rev 1:1–5:7 and 18:6–22:21, the rest being Jerome's (Kannengiesser, *Handbook*, 1:370).

27 Cassiodorus wrote *Complexiones in Apocalypsin* (Brief Explanations on the Apocalypse). See Gumerlock, "Ancient Commentaries," 13.

28 Gumerlock "Ancient Commentaries," lists 30 commentaries on Revelation for which at least fragments are extant from before A.D. 1000. Swete, *Apocalypse*, cciv, mentions also Berengaudus and Walafrid Strabo before 1000. He notes that Berengaudus combined the mystical and historical interpretations (ccxi–ccxii).

29 A description of Oecumenius's commentary is found in Kassengiesser, *Handbook*, 1:371.

30 Though they did not agree with Origen in all details. Oecumenius interprets the visions as about a future return of Christ. Andrew interprets more allegorically to promote virtuous life (Weinrich, "Interpretation," xxvii–xxviii). Weinrich comments about the tradition in Greek: "After Arethas no significant commentary on the Revelation has been written. Indeed, that of Andrew of Caesarea became the standard commentary on the book for the later Byzantine tradition" (xxix). Gumerlock, "Ancient Commentaries,"

contemporary events with the images in Revelation, although events of vast import were going on around them.[31]

What Tyconius was to the interpretation of Revelation from A.D. 400 to 1200, Joachim of Fiore was for the next three or four hundred years.[32] Despite popular speculation about the impending end of the world, the years 1000 and 1033 passed without eschatological events. Whether or not the idea that this further delay of the Parousia was what caused the church to relax into an unacceptable level of corruption is correct,[33] reform movements became more pronounced. One monk looking for a holier church was Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202).[34] He had prophetic visions, and eventually became an advisor to the popes on apocalyptic matters.

Joachim wrote three major works[35] and over a dozen minor ones, in which eschatology figured prominently. He believed Scripture referred to specific events in the present and future as well as the past. There were three overlapping ages or states corresponding to the persons of the Trinity. The third age of the Spirit was dawning, toward the end of the world. In it, the monks would lead and the papacy be superseded. Joachim believed that the transition to the fullness of the third age would involve the founding of two new monastic orders, a massive attack by the Muslims (the beast's sixth head), and the rise of a Western king (the

21–22, includes in his list the earliest Georgian commentary on Revelation (Euthymus the Athonite, tenth century) and earliest Syriac (unknown author, ninth to tenth century) as well as a Nestorian commentary that was probably first written in Greek, then translated into Latin, thence to Arabic, thence to Syriac. He indicates that at least one early Coptic commentary, and many in Latin and Arabic, exist today in manuscript collections but have not been read or analyzed (ibid. 23).

[31] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 41, 43.

[32] Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 329, quotes Bousset approvingly in a similar opinion.

[33] Ibid., 327; see also R. H. Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913), 14–15, 25–26. This is probably too simple an explanation of a long process, but was likely a contributing factor.

[34] The following account of Joachim's work is taken from McGinn, *Visions*, 126–30, and excerpts from Joachim's writings in the same book, 130–41. Marjorie Reeves, "The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes," in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (ed. C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 51–52, states that Joachim, like many of his contemporaries, expected two antichrists, one secular and one ecclesial. Swete, *Apocalypse*, ccxii, says that for Joachim "Babylon is Rome, no longer pagan but worldly and vice-ridden nevertheless," and "of Joachim's personal loyalty to the Roman Church there can be no doubt." "Rome" here appears to mean the political city, not the Catholic Church.

[35] Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (Exposition of the Apocalypse), *Liber concordiae novi ac veteris Testamenti* (Book of the Concord of the New and Old Testaments) and *Liber Psalterii decem chordarum* (Book of the Ten-stringed Psaltry).

seventh head) who would be Antichrist and join forces with the Muslims. After his destruction, there would be a period of peace, the Jews would be converted and millennium-type conditions prevail. Satan would be bound until his release, and a final Antichrist manifestation would persecute the church before the end of the world.

Joachim's views caused much interest. The Dominicans and especially the Franciscans, which were founded soon after his death, believed they were the two orders he had predicted. After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 condemned Joachim's views on the Trinity, a number of new writings appeared, purportedly written by Joachim, identifying the Emperor Frederick II as the Antichrist, predicting the arrival of the third age in 1260 and condemning the Roman Church as siding with evil. Peter Olivi (1248–98) wrote a Revelation commentary identifying the Church with the whore Babylon.[36] Beguins, Waldensians, Hus, Wycliffe, and other dissidents thought likewise. Beckwith says, "With the followers of Joachim and with all who set themselves against the corruption of the Church and the hierarchy it became an axiom that the Pope was the Beast, the Antichrist, and that papal Rome, or the Roman Church, was the woman sitting on the scarlet-coloured beast."[37] Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers continued this identification.[38] Luther espoused an interpretation of Revelation that saw all church history down to his own day depicted in the book. This affected a number of Lutheran commentators, some of whom even identified Luther as the angel with the eternal gospel in Rev 14:6.[39]

The view that Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church was first popularized in English by the commentary of John Bale, published 1541–60.

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[36] Rowland, "Revelation," 536. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 58, relates that in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante (1265–1321) Joachim is in Paradise and Pope Nicholas III in hell, and the papacy is identified with the harlot and the beast (*Paradisio* 12:139–41; *Inferno* 19:31–84, 106–11). Olivi's commentary was burned by the Church but fragments survive. Other notable commentators on the Apocalypse in the thirteenth century listed by Swete, *Apocalypse*, cciv, are Albertus Magnus, Hugo de S. Caro, and Pseudo-Aquinas. He also mentions Nicolas de Gorham, and Nicolas of Lyra in the fourteenth century (who saw Revelation as a prediction of history from Domitian to his own time; ibid. ccxiii), and Dionysius Carthusianus in the fifteenth.

[37] Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 329. See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, ccxiii.

[38] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 59–61, and Jaroslav Pelikan, "Some Uses of Apocalypse in the Magisterial Reformers," in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (ed. C. A. Patrides and J. Wittreich; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 85–87.

[39] Charles, *Studies*, 28. Charles here notes that Luther's views can be found in his 1534 preface to his translation of Revelation. For more details, see Maier, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 267–300.

In Bale, Augustine's doctrine of the two cities became the doctrine of two churches (false and true).[40] This became the standard interpretation in English Protestantism. Anglicans used it to justify their break with Rome[41] and separatists their exit from the Anglican Church. Many Protestant commentators up into the 1800s continued to make this identification.[42] J. N. Darby, the father of the dispensational interpretation, believed that Babylon as whore is "the Roman or Papal system."[43] Some popular interpreters today still say that the Roman Catholic Church is identical with or at least closely linked to Babylon in the book of Revelation.[44]

As the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries progressed, there were a number of tensions in this interpretation of Revelation. Treating it as a book predicting the history of the church had been fruitful for reform movements both inside and outside the Catholic Church. But it was difficult to make all Revelation's details fit the history of Europe and the church up to the Reformation. As Michael Murrin, commenting on the labors of two seventeenth-century exegetes, says, "The seeming evident equation of the Whore and Beast with Papal Rome made it difficult to understand the rest."[45]

The second problem was continuing disappointment of millennial expectations. If the millennium was already over, as Luther thought, where was the New Jerusalem?[46] If the millennium was imminent, people had

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[40] Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 15.

[41] Ibid., 13.

[42] E.g., John Cumming, *Apocalyptic Sketches or Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, 1853), who sees Babylon as established state churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, and T. W. Christie, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1892), to whom Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church.

[43] J. N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.* V. *Colossians—The Revelation* (new ed. rev.; London: Morrish, n.d.), 549. Darby probably started writing his notes on Revelation in the 1840s.

[44] E.g., Paul B. Smith, *The Revelation: The Story of the Antichrist's War against the People of God* (Burlington: Welch, 1986) 184, speculates that the Roman Catholic Church may be the Babylon that some people need to leave, though he sees it as wider than that. Robert E. D. Clark, *Tomorrow's World: A Scientist Looks at the Book of Revelation* (Croydon, UK: Victoria Institute, 1989), 232–38, sees Babylon as corrupt religion of which the present day manifestation is the Roman Catholic Church. These are popular rather than scholarly treatments.

[45] Michael Murrin, "Revelation and Two Seventeenth Century Commentators," in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (ed. C. A. Patrides and J. Wittreich; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 129.

[46] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 13, says, "many early Protestants . . . argued that the millennium ended at a time of papal corruption and the rise of the Turks."

been hailing its advent for years in reforms that turned out to be illusory.[47] The pope, the supposed Antichrist, showed no signs of being overthrown. The third problem, felt most acutely by the Catholics, was the indignity of having the pope called the Antichrist.[48] The fourth factor was the ascendancy of enlightenment ideas, with scientific research of ancient texts creating an interest in taking a new approach to the study of the Bible. This new method, combined with the pressures toward change, contributed to the rise of the historical-critical method of interpreting Revelation.

The historical-critical method looks for the meaning of an ancient text in the context of its original composition.[49] The Catholic scholar John Hentennuis (1547) was the pioneer of this method for the book of Revelation, and Luis de Alcasar (1554–1613) developed it more fully. Alcasar saw in Revelation 4–11 Jewish persecution of Christians followed by the overthrow of Jerusalem, and in Revelation 12–19 the start of the church, fall of paganism, and conversion of the Roman Empire.[50]

Another sixteenth-century Catholic solution to the problem was to interpret almost all of Revelation as referring to the future. This approach was adopted by Francisco Ribera (1537–91). He said that the first five seals happened up to the time of Trajan, but everything else in Revelation is reserved for the last days. He predicted a future Roman secular power to be the Beast.[51] Ribera and the Jesuit scholars who followed him saw themselves as returning to the interpretation of the early fathers.[52]

The historical-critical method was soon adopted by some Protestant interpreters as well. The Dutchman Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was followed by the Englishman Henry Hammond (1605–60), each of whom wrote biblical "annotations" that paid attention to matters of textual criticism and New Testament background.[53] They agreed that Revelation was

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[47] Not only that, Charles, *Studies*, 30–31, notes that both the Augsburg and Helvetic Confessions called chiliasm a heresy, which meant that Lutheran and Reformed scholars were forbidden to take this view if they wished to stay in communion with their churches.

[48] Charles, *Studies*, 33, and Court, *Myth and History*, 9, note that the Jesuits were the ones to take up this challenge on behalf of the Roman church.

[49] Charles, *Studies*, 56, explains, "in seeking to interpret the Apocalypse we are seeking to discover what the Apocalypse meant to its writer and its earliest readers, who were in touch with him."

[50] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 63; Court, *Myth and History*, 11–12.

[51] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 61–62.

[52] Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 331–32; Swete, *Apocalypse*, ccxiii–ccxiv. This is how Charles, *Studies*, 34, also sees them.

[53] Grotius, *Annotations in Vetus et Novum Testamentum* (1642); Hammond, *A Paraphrase and Annotations upon all the Books of the New Testament* (1653). See discussion in

primarily about events surrounding the early church. Grotius was the first Protestant writer to deny that the pope figured among Revelation's evil characters.[54]

With the invention of printing, Revelation commentaries multiplied exponentially. Swete listed 73 he thought were important that appeared between 1500 and 1908, including those mentioned above and others by such notables as Erasmus, J. Foxe, Isaac Newton, J. A. Bengel, Henry Alford, Theodore Zahn, and F. J. A. Hort, and one by R. H. Charles soon expected (the ICC volume).[55]

A number of interpreters worked with the historical interpretation, trying to fit world events from the time of John to their own day into the visions of Revelation (e.g., Mede, Newton, Whiston, Vitringa, Bengel).[56] But as new and momentous events (such as the French revolution) continued to unfold in history, their systems had to be continually revised.[57] This led others to look more to either a futurist or preterist (i.e., primarily first-century reference) interpretation,[58] and others to view Revelation as an apocalypse of only antiquarian interest.[59] By the beginning of the twentieth century, Swete proclaimed his interest in an interpretation that recognized first-century apocalyptic conventions and the first-century historical setting but also expected the book to contain illustrations of things that happen throughout history and to be a prophecy of future events

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John William Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism 1643–1660 with special Reference to Henry Hammond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), 88–89.

[54] Charles, *Studies*, 40–42; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 333.

[55] D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 145, notes "the Puritans . . . produced far more commentaries on Revelation than on any other book, most of them eminently forgettable and mercifully forgotten."

[56] Bengel's work was translated into English at the request of John Wesley, giving this type of view ascendancy on a popular level in Britain at the time (Charles, *Studies*, 43).

[57] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 19, notes that few scholars (perhaps as opposed to popular interpreters) today use an approach that finds world or historical events in Revelation because of "its identification only with Western church history, the inherent speculation involved in the parallels with world history, the fact that it must be reworked with each new period in world history, [and] the total absence of any relevance for John or his original readers." See also G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 46.

[58] Charles, *Studies*, 45, names a number of commentators from 1732–1840 who kept the contents of Revelation so entirely in the past as to see the prophecies as entirely about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Others applied them to both the overthrow of Judaism and of the Roman Empire (ibid. 46).

[59] Swete, *Apocalypse*, ccxiv–ccxv.

at the close of the age, thus combining several interpretation methods,[60] a procedure that is still popular.[61]

2. *Revelation Commentaries Today*

The great majority of scholarly Bible commentaries, including those on Revelation, are written for the use of the church in preaching and teaching.[62] Like Swete, who said, "I have had in view the wants of the English clergy,"[63] most writers of Revelation commentaries and their editors have had the Christian community in mind as their intended readers. One needs only to look over the prefaces to commentary series to see their aims.[64] Thus, application to the church of today is never far from most commentators' minds, and the writers use their scholarly skills to produce an accurate interpretation that becomes available for application. Some commentaries include application[65] while others give only what the first-century interpretation would be.

The scholarly consensus today is that the historical-critical method gives the most accurate interpretation of the text of Revelation. This

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[60] Ibid., ccxvi–ccxix

[61] Osborne, *Revelation*, 21, lists Morris, Johnson, Giesen, Mounce, and Beale, along with himself, as adopting this solution, although Osborne sees more prophecy of future events than some of these do. See Beale, *Revelation*, 48–49, who says his commentary is most like those of Caird, Johnson, Sweet, Hendriksen, and Wilcox.

[62] Academically oriented commentaries aimed at exegetes such as scholars, students, and well-educated preachers are usually longer, with extensive bibliographies, interact with the Greek text, and have substantial introduction followed by verse-by-verse exposition of the text. More popular commentaries are usually briefer and give section-by-section exposition and less interaction with the literature and the Greek. The focus of this essay is on scholarly commentaries.

[63] Swete, *Apocalypse*, x.

[64] For example, the NIGTC has: "The supreme aim of this series is to serve those who are engaged in the ministry of the Word of God" (I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, Foreword in Beale, *Revelation*, xvii–xviii [xviii]); BECNT: "a major purpose is to address the needs of pastors and others involved in the preaching and exposition of the Scriptures as the uniquely inspired Word of God" (Moisés Silva, Series Preface in Osborne, *Revelation*, ix–x [ix]); Word Biblical Commentary, "useful to the fledgling student, the working minister, and colleagues in the guild of professional scholars and teachers" (David Hubbard et al., Editorial Preface in Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, x).

[65] Some commentaries have "Application" in the title of the commentary or series, such as the NIV Application Commentary (Keener on Revelation). Osborne's *Revelation* commentary has at the end of each section a "Summary and Contextualization" that includes application, and John R. Yeatts, *Revelation* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Scottdale: Herald, 2003), focuses on themes of martyrdom, suffering, service, hope, triumph in Christ, and the church's witness.

means giving attention to the first-century historical, literary, and linguistic background, and expecting the meaning to be found in the intention of the author and the likely understandings of the first readers.[66] As Caird puts it, "The purpose of this commentary is to carry the reader back to the end of the first century A.D. to hear what the Spirit was then saying to the churches, so that, returning to the present, he may be the better able to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches of our own day."[67]

Some resistance to the historical-critical method for understanding Revelation has always existed. Some commentators, fearing that too much attention to the historical background produces commentaries that give little spiritual nurture to the church, have written commentaries that go more directly to theology and application. For example, the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible has this aim, and its Revelation volume by Joseph Mangina addresses issues of ecclesiology and geo-politics arising from the text.[68] Other commentators find the historical-critical approach too dry for the evocative artistic effects in Revelation. A recent example is James Resseguie's narrative commentary, which aims to help the reader experience Revelation as a work of art and to feel the triumph of God by watching the drama of the story.[69]

When commentators write for the church, there is often the assumption that the book of Revelation, as part of the church's canon, is authoritative Scripture. Swete made it one of his principles of interpretation that the author of Revelation was an inspired prophet like the Old Testament prophets.[70] Commentators who see the same divine mind inspiring all the canonical writings tend to look for theological links and consistency between Revelation and other parts of the canon. This puts some boundaries on what could be considered valid interpretations. For example,

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66 Many commentaries and introductions still start by outlining the four major interpretive approaches: church-historical, preterist, futurist, and idealist. See, for example, the discussion in Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 14; Osborne, *Revelation*, 18–22; Beale, *Revelation*, 44–49, and so on.

67 G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Harper's New Testament Commentaries; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), v.

68 See longer description below.

69 See longer description below.

70 Swete, *Apocalypse*, ccxvi. Swete says that his work "maintains, against the majority of recent continental scholars, the essential unity of the book and its prophetic inspiration" (p. ccxviii). He maintains that Old Testament prophesy does not predict persons and actions in the remote future, give visions in chronological order, or accurately depict the length of time before fulfillment, but rather reveals "the secrets of God's general purpose … greater forces which are at work in human life … issues towards which history tends."

a canonical viewpoint would have trouble with the interpretations of Malina and Pilch[71] because their astrological interpretations of John's visions have so little in common with the theology of other biblical books or of the church,[72] or of Margaret Barker, who maintains that Revelation was compiled from the secret teaching of Jesus and others in an underground priestly sect who expected Jerusalem to be destroyed for abandoning the old temple's worship of a "Daughter of Zion" goddess.[73] These interpretations have chosen some aspect of what they consider to be the first-century background as the major interpreting frame,[74] but most commentators would think that these aspects are not the primary ones for Revelation.

All commentators do not take the same view of how the first-century background relates to the various images in the visions of Revelation. A relatively small group of commentators takes Revelation to have been written before A.D. 70, predicting the fall of Jerusalem (the "Babylon" of Revelation) and judgment on the Jewish persecutors of the church.[75]

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[71] Bruce Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000). This commentary is not about sociological structures, as one might expect by the title, but interprets Revelation's visions using first-century astrological beliefs about the signs of the zodiac, etc.

[72] Charles, *Studies*, 50–54, discusses earlier commentators (Dupuis, 1795; Jäger and Hommel, 1909; Lepsius and Ramsay, 1911; Morosow and Drews, 1907) who tried to explain the Apocalypse by linking the visions to astrological conventions. Charles concludes (p. 54), "That behind several of the figures and conception in the Apocalypse lay astronomical ideas he [i.e., one acquainted with Jewish and Christian apocalyptic] will be the first to acknowledge, but he will at the same time be convinced that to the Seer the astronomical origin of these conceptions was in most cases wholly unknown."

[73] Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000). Malina and Pilch's commentary, and Barker's work, could be examples of works meant primarily for the academy rather than the church.

[74] Cf. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 12–22, who identified the "John" who wrote the book as John the Baptist and his school. According to Gilbert Desrosiers, *An Introduction to Revelation* (London: Continuum, 2000), 115, Ford has now abandoned this theory.

[75] These commentators include D. C. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Fort Worth: Dominion, 1987); and K. L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989). See Beale, *Revelation*, 44–45. Beale notes that this interpretation transfers much of what looks like prophecy of the end of the age and judgment of all people to just the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and so limits the book's reference to the end of the world. Many of those who espouse this view also espouse a postmillennial view of the return of Christ, which does not look for an imminent end of the age nor expect to see that prophesied in Revelation. Another view espousing an early date for Revelation is Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Good News Studies 5; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), who writes that Revelation describes salvation history from the creation of the angels only to the resurrection of Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem was a kind of

Another group sees the prediction of the fall of Babylon to be a prediction of the fall of the Roman Empire to be followed by universal judgment. Since it did not actually happen like that in history, some commentators say that John was just wrong.[76] Most commentators, however, take the first-century understanding as a pattern that can be applied by the church in any age facing its own oppressors and fears.

Each commentary has its own strengths. Writing in 1986, D. A. Carson[77] discussed 22 commentaries and specialist books on Revelation. He recommended the commentaries of Caird and Beasley-Murray for recognizing the apocalyptic affinities of Revelation, Morris and Ladd for emphasizing the prophetic links, Mounce for his attention to secondary literature, Sweet for his insights and his discussion on the degree of persecution under Diocletian, and Minear's *I Saw a New Earth* for "drawing on sound biblical scholarship to show the relevance of Revelation to the present day."[78] He also recommended Swete, Barclay, Moffatt, Johnson, and, for an excellent popular treatment, Wilcock's *I Saw Heaven Opened*. He saw Charles (ICC) as very scholarly but too technical to be of much value for preaching. Overall, he recommended Mounce as the best commentary to buy on Revelation.[79]

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vindicating postscript to what was accomplished at the cross, namely its spiritual destruction, the last judgment, and the descent of the New Jerusalem.

[76] For example, Alan J. P. Garrow, *Revelation* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[77] D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 75–79.

[78] Carson, *Commentary Survey* (1986), 76. He was referring to Caird, *Revelation*; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NBC; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979); Swete, *Apocalypse*; William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (2 vols.; Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959); James Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. R. Nicoll; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 5:297–494; Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *Expositors Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gabaelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:397–603; Paul Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus, 1968); Michael Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened: The Message of Revelation* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975); R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation to St. John* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920).

[79] Carson, *Commentary Survey* (1986), 78, comments, "There are scores of slim or popular expositions, some of them reliable but too thin to be useful to the preacher, many of them fanciful." Carson's book is aimed at advising theological students and ministers on the best commentaries to buy and use (ibid. 7). Other notable evaluations of Revelation commentaries include A. Feuillet, *L'Apocalypse: État de la question* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963); *Apocalypse* (trans. Thomas E. Crane; Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1964)

Much has been written on Revelation since 1986. In the sixth edition (2007) of his commentary survey, Carson says, "Of the writing of books on Revelation there is no end: most generations produce far too many."[80] In the 2007 edition, he discusses 69 works, most of them commentaries. He is still recommending those he liked in 1986, including revisions of Mounce (1997), Caird (1993), and Morris (1987) but adds Witherington and Keener.[81] For those with more scholarly training, he recommends Beale and Aune's works for background depth, though he thinks Aune's source theory (see below) improbable, and Beale's exposition of John's intentions better.[82] He also recommends Smalley as competent, and Osborne for "laying out what the options are" of various interpretations.[83]

John Glynn's commentary survey (2007)[84] prefers Beale, Osborne, and Mounce in the line of technical commentaries and also recommends Smalley, Keener, and A. Johnson, and for laypeople, D. Johnson. Glynn's work is aimed at pastors so he recommends most highly works of use to the preacher. He categorizes many commentaries by their eschatological stance, labeling Aune, Beale, Boxall, D. Johnson, Kistemaker, and Morris as amillennial, Mounce as posttribulational, Walvoord and Thomas as dispensational, and Beasley-Murray, Keener, A. Johnson, Ladd, and Wilcock as premillennial.

I recently compiled a list of Revelation commentaries published in English from 1986 to 2010 (the past 25 years),[85] and came up with a (certainly incomplete) list of over eighty books. More are being written in other

(a survey of mainly French and German works from 1920 to 1963), and E. Lohmeyer, "Die Offenbarung des Johannes 1920–1934," *ThR* 6 (1934): 269–314; 7 (1935): 2–62.

[80] Carson, *Commentary Survey* (2007), 145.

[81] Ibid. Carson is referring to Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See below for more on Keener.

[82] In the 2007 edition (pp. 145–51), Carson also favorably discusses Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); idem, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); L. Thompson, *Revelation* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); J. R. Michaels, *Revelation* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997); R. L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*; *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992, 1995); Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); and D. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001).

[83] Carson, *Commentary Survey* (2007), 146.

[84] John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources* (10th ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007). The section on Revelation commentaries is on pp. 197–201.

[85] To make the list I consulted bibliographies in recent commentaries and Amazon listings.

languages, mainly German and French. An essay like this cannot review them all. But there are a number of things to consider in any Revelation commentary. These would include (1) commentary size: How long and detailed a treatment is given? (2) Its evaluation of Revelation's genre: Part of what goes into deciding how the events in the book's visions relate to history is a commentator's view of the book's genre. Proposed genres have included prophecy and apocalyptic, or prophetic-apocalyptic, with an epistolary frame,[86] as well as drama, though some have suggested astrological analysis. (3) The date of Revelation's composition: For most interpreters who see Revelation as referring largely to events and persons in the historical context of its writing, the date of composition is important. (4) How to interpret the symbolism: What guides interpretation of the many visionary images in Revelation?[87] (5) Revelation's outline: There is no clear consensus on how Revelation should be outlined. (6) Commentator's ideological stance: Does the author see Revelation as normative and divinely inspired? A positive answer leads to theological discussions and produces a work that might be considered more useful by the church. Or does the author take a primarily historical interest in Revelation, doing a study in the history of religions and ideas? This stance may produce a work more useful to historians.[88] Some writers take a particular viewpoint, such as evangelical, dispensational, liberation, feminist, post-colonial, narrative-critical, or social science as their most important consideration in interpreting the book. (7) The commentary's application strategy: How much application is made to the church and to life today?

[86] Bauckham begins *Climax* with an essay entitled "Reading the Book of Revelation." He defends Revelation's affinities to all three genres and explains how this affects interpretation. He also argues that the images in Revelation are not timeless symbols, but symbols that are contextually relevant to the readers in Roman Asia.

[87] Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 14, gives a list of symbols that divide commentators, such as the four horsemen, the 144,000, the multitude in heaven, the army of 200 million, the various angels, the two witnesses, the beasts, Babylon, Armageddon, and the location of the New Jerusalem (and he has not named them all). Two important images are the Great Tribulation (Rev 7:14) and the Millennium (Rev 20:1–10). The interpretation of these has traditionally divided interpreters into pre-, mid- and post-tribulation rapture and pre-, post- and amillennial camps.

[88] Of course, good commentaries for the church take historical research into account, and good historians include a study of the theology reflected in the text. But Court, *Myth and History*, 12, cites Ernest Renan, *L'Antéchrist* (Paris: Claye, 1871) as an example of a rationalistic commentator who uses a historical-critical method "to exclude from consideration supernatural and prophetic elements."

3. *Sample Commentaries*

I close this essay with comments on seven recent commentaries, bearing in mind the list above. For each I also note how the commentary treats Revelation 7 (the 144,000 and the great tribulation) and Revelation 20 (the millennium), passages whose interpretation often reveals much about an author's approach. These works illustrate some of the diversity of modern scholarly commentary on Revelation.

David E. Aune, Revelation (WBC 52; 3 vols.; Dallas: Word 1997–1998).

Aune's work in three volumes, a total of 1,664 pages, is the longest Revelation commentary in English. It has extensive general and sectional bibliographies, exhaustive up to 1994. Over two hundred pages of introduction go into minute detail on authorship, date, genre, structure, sources, text, syntax, and vocabulary of Revelation. Aune has impressive command of extra-biblical sources and parallels.

Something that makes this commentary distinct is Aune's elaborate source critical theory. He argues that the author (John) composed the work in stages, combining previously written pieces into a first and later a second (final) edition. Thus parts of the work date from before A.D. 70 and others are closer to A.D. 90. He also sees the first edition as being mainly apocalyptic in genre, while the second edition added sections that were more prophetic, making the final product a "prophetic apocalypse."[89]

The WBC series describes itself as "broadly evangelical" but at least one evangelical reviewer found that Aune's commentary has little that is *distinctively* evangelical about it.[90] Aune does not give much attention to application for the church or the "end times" ideas of most Christians. This is a technical commentary for scholars, though each section does end with an "Explanation" that summarizes the gist of the section in non-technical language.

The images and symbols are interpreted by literary parallels and historical events in John's first-century environment. Aune's outline labels Rev 4:1–22:9 "The disclosure of God's eschatological plan."[91] He interprets the symbolism by careful exegesis of the text and comparison with

[89] Aune, *Revelation*, 1:lxxxix.

[90] A. Boyd Luter, review of David E. Aune, *Revelation*, in *JETS* 43 (2000), 558. Some of the observations about Aune's work here are taken from Luter's review.

[91] Aune, *Revelation*, 1:c.

contemporary Jewish and other sources. For example, he says Revelation 7 depicts the 144,000 as a particular group of Christians protected by God just before the final persecution. They survive and keep up a witness to the truth throughout the tribulation, similar to something that happens with a Jewish remnant in *2 Baruch*.[92] Aune also says that Revelation 20 envisions a transitional millennial kingdom between this age and the age to come,[93] but no effort is made to discuss how this might affect the beliefs and actions of believers in the twenty-first century.

G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Beale's is another mammoth work, 1,309 pages, all in one volume. He too has extensive bibliography and impressive use of ancient sources. One of the stated aims of the NIGTC is to provide a "theological understanding of the text."[94] Beale says he saw a need to do a better study of the Old Testament allusions in Revelation than had been done before, including how the Jews interpreted the same passages used by the author of Revelation. He also wanted to trace the exegetical argument in Revelation in detail, and to interact with all the secondary literature since Charles and Swete.[95]

Beale has 178 pages of Introduction, dealing with the date, historical background, authorship, genre, major interpretive approaches, interpreting the symbolism, the Greek text, use of the Old Testament in Revelation, the Greek grammar of the book, the structure of the book, the significance of Rev 1:9 for interpretation, and main theological themes. He spends most time on the date, symbolism, use of the Old Testament, and structure because "such issues have the most significant bearing on interpretative concerns."[96] Beale sees the structure of Revelation as characterized primarily by "synchronous recapitulation": the same themes or events of judgment, persecution, and salvation are presented in more and more intense forms to heighten the lessons that the readers need to take to heart.[97] He interprets the symbols by reference to the book's immediate context, and prior use of the symbols in the Old Testament, early Judaism,

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92 Aune, *Revelation*, 2:443.
93 Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1104.
94 Marshall and Hagner, "Forward," in Beale, Revelation, ix.
95 Beale says, however, that he was unable to interact with most of what was written after 1995, including Aune's commentary (Beale, *Revelation*, xix, 3).
96 Ibid., 3.
97 Ibid., 144.

the New Testament, and the Greco-Roman world. He sees symbols as metaphors for spiritual realities.[98]

The fact that Beale takes time to discuss Rev 1:9 shows that he thinks it worthwhile to dialogue, at least in part, with the futuristic view of Revelation common in many North American churches today. And in other parts of the commentary too, such as his discussion of the "Great Tribulation"[99] and "Is 'One Thousand Years' Literal or Figurative?"[100] it is evident that Beale is conscious of speaking to such an audience in order to debunk some popular ideas that he thinks cannot be supported from the text. Nevertheless, Beale does not attempt much specific application to readers of today.

Craig S. Keener, The Book of Revelation (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

Keener's work belongs to a series that has "Application" in its name. The Introduction to the series says "Most commentaries help us make the journey from our world back to the world of the Bible . . . they only offer a one-way ticket. . . . The primary goal of the NIV Application Commentary Series is to help you with the difficult but vital task of bringing an ancient message into a modern context."[101] The Series aims to give both application and a scholarly exegesis attentive to the first-century background.

This commentary is 576 pages. The Bibliography is much briefer than those of Aune and Beale, but it is annotated.[102] The book seems aimed at a less academic audience than the two commentaries above, though the author is probably just as academically competent.

Keener begins with the story of his own initial interaction with "prophecy" teaching and the book of Revelation.[103] He found that eventually he had to disagree with prophecy teachers who were in the tradition of C. I. Scofield[104] and uses several pages to argue that the book must be

[98] Ibid., 68–69.
[99] Ibid., 433–35. Beale concludes that the Great Tribulation began with the sufferings of Jesus and goes on throughout the church age, increasing in intensity at the very end.
[100] Ibid., 1017–21. Beale interacts with the views of Walvoord and Buchanan, and concludes that the thousand years is symbolic of the church age.
[101] Series Introduction in Keener, *Revelation*, 9.
[102] Keener, *Revelation*, 16. Keener notes, "Due to space constraints, I had to omit some of my material and much of my documentation."
[103] Ibid., 15–16.
[104] Ibid., 21.

interpreted in a way that would make sense in the first century.[105] Interpreters must then re-contextualize the message for the contemporary generation.[106]

To Keener, the prophetic-apocalyptic genre means that the images in Revelation should be taken as symbolic, not literal, and interpreted by their previous use in the Old Testament and the surrounding culture, but adapted for the Christian message. Keener takes the 144,000 as the end-time army of remnant Israel, which turns out to be the same thing as the countless multitude from all nations who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.[107] The millennium of Revelation 20 is after the tribulation of this age, an intermediate messianic kingdom between the two ages.[108] But he admits that he may have not fully understood how the end will be.

Keener defends the view that the book was written around Domitian's time. His applications include global social/political and economic issues, as well as issues of personal integrity, courage, and faith.

Grant R. Osborne, Revelation (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Baker 2002).

At 889 pages, Osborne's is one of the larger Revelation commentaries. Although the series aims to provide everything from meat for the scholar to milk for the interested layperson,[109] Osborne reveals one of his interests when he states that he often gives long lists of names of scholars who take various sides on many of the debated issues in Revelation to guide students.[110]

Osborne says that his primary approach is futurist (Revelation predicts what will happen at the end of the age) with preterist interpretation being used secondarily (the meaning of the symbols and initial typological fulfillments come from the first century). He says, "My study of ancient apocalyptic and of the Book of Revelation has led me to believe that John's visions (esp. chs. 4–22) were primarily intended to describe the events

[105] Ibid., 21–27, takes on those who misinterpret the *sensus literalis* of the reformers, and Jehovah's Witnesses and all who try to date the end-time with precision.

[106] Ibid., 29. Keener states that the modern contexts with which he is familiar are "some parts of North American Evangelicalism, African-American churches, messianic Jewish circles, and elsewhere" and recognizes that this does not cover all that exist. He hopes that "readers will find useful models for drawing analogies between issues the biblical text addresses and today's issues" (p. 40).

[107] Ibid., 230–32.

[108] Ibid., 464–65.

[109] Silva, Series Preface, ix.

[110] Osborne, *Revelation*, xi.

that will end world history."[111] This is relevant to John's first readers (and modern ones) because they are asked to "identify with the people at the end of history and gain perspective for their present suffering."[112] Though Osborne thinks the events described in Revelation's visions are symbolic of real future events (foreshadowed by events taking place in the first century and successive events right up into our own time), this does not mean that he believes they can be identified precisely with events taking place in our world today. He says, "It is likely that God has chosen esoteric symbols from the common store of apocalyptic symbols in the first century in order to turn the reader away from exactly what he is going to do and toward the theological meaning of how he is going to do it."[113]

Osborne thinks that the reign of Domitian is the most likely setting for the writing of Revelation. The crisis for the churches was real because of the strong social pressure to participate in the imperial cult and other forms of idolatry, even if there was not much official persecution. He gives an outline of Revelation, but realizes that it is not definitive. He says, "no single structural scheme for the book will suffice because the sections relate at more than one level."[114] The main theological themes of Revelation are summarized in the commentary introduction: God, Satan, Christ, cosmic war, theodicy, the perseverance of the saints, and worship. Each section of commentary ends with a "Summary and Contextualization" that shows how the section fits into Revelation's overall argument, points out the theology, and makes applications.

In Revelation 7, Osborne sees the 144,000 as all the persevering saints, where both the original readers and believers today may find themselves. The countless multitude is the same group, now seen in heaven.[115] The great tribulation includes all tribulation the church is called upon to go through, but especially "that final war against the saints waged by the dragon."[116] Of the millennium of Revelation 20, Osborne takes a premillennial view (there will be a reign of Christ and his saints on earth after Christ's return but before the final consummation) but he says, "I . . . recognize the viability of the other two [amillennial, postmillennial] positions. The issue will not be solved until the events take place."[117] More

[111] Ibid., 22.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., 16.
[114] Ibid., 29.
[115] Ibid., 315–16.
[116] Ibid., 324.
[117] Ibid., 697.

important, that passage functions to highlight that the saints will be vindicated, Satan will be defeated, and the final rebellion of the earth-dwellers will demonstrate that eternal punishment is necessary and just. The millennium functions as a counter to the Roman imperial doctrine of the Roman "golden age."[118]

Stephen S. Smalley, The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

Smalley (650 pages, 9 of them bibliography) states his contribution to be his "perception of the nature of John's community, which caused the publication of the Johannine corpus, beginning with Revelation" and his "sensitivity to the literary shape of the Apocalypse," which he views as "a creative and coherent drama."[119] He believes the book was written just before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and that it was the first of John's writings, coming before the Gospel and Epistles. John's community (intended readers) lived in Asia Minor, and included Jewish Christians tempted to go back to Judaism and deny the divinity of Jesus, Hellenistic Christians tempted to go into a docetic view of Jesus that denied his humanity, and balanced Christians who saw Jesus as equally divine and human. Friction was rising between the Judaistic and Hellenistic groups, and came to a head in the open hostilities evident in the Epistles. The churches were also struggling with "idolatry . . . social, political, ecclesiastical or economic."[120]

Smalley attempts a literary and theological as well as critical and historical commentary. Each section includes comments on the theology and the literary setting. Revelation is a "drama about God's salvation through his judgment."[121] The two acts of the drama are "Creation, and Salvation through Judgment" (1:9–11:19) and "Salvation through Judgment, and New Creation" (12:1–22:17).[122] These acts are literary creations (requiring the comments on the "Literary Setting"). The reality of judgment depicted in the drama is meant to be an encouragement to those who stay true to God.

Smalley believes it is a mistake to take the symbols of Revelation literally, but it is also wrong to see them as purely spiritual with no earthly or

118 Ibid., 698.
119 Smalley, *Revelation*, ix.
120 Ibid., 6.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., 11, 21–22.

physical counterparts. They refer to both present and future realities, yet none can be identified with only one earthly referent.[123] He says, "Revelation is a symbolic portrayal of the timeless conflict between the forces of good and evil, God and Satan. But this involves a final consummation in judgement and salvation, even if that finality is not depicted in terms which are precisely chronological."[124]

Smalley believes that an important part of commenting on Revelation is finding application and relevance for the church. The book was obviously meant to be of practical relevance to the first readers, but also addresses all God's servants (Rev 1:1–2). The topics Smalley expounds for relevancy are: a balanced and high Christology as an antidote to idolatrous tendencies; eschatological realities in the present as a call to obedience in the realms of church, society, nation, and globe; the corporate nature of the church as a call to church unity and ecumenicism; the value of creation as a call to enjoy and care for it; a theology of power as encouragement to the oppressed and a call to use power with justice and love; and the hope of resurrection as encouragement to persevere, giving hope for the human race as a whole.[125]

In Revelation 7, both the 144,000 and the countless multitude represent the entire church, as seen from earth and heaven.[126] The "great tribulation" is both the ongoing trials of believers in this world, and their culmination in great tribulation at the end of the age.[127] In Revelation 20, the millennium is "a symbol for the timeless reign of God in Christ, in heaven and on earth."[128]

Joseph L. Mangina, Revelation (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

The introduction to the BTC series says, "what makes modern study of the Bible modern is the consensus that classical Christian doctrine distorts interpretative understanding."[129] The series editor turns away from this "consensus," claiming, "This series of biblical commentaries was born out of the conviction that dogma clarifies rather than obscures. . . . [It] advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its

123 Ibid., 14–15.
124 Ibid., 16.
125 Ibid., 16–19.
126 Ibid., 184–88.
127 Ibid., 196.
128 Ibid., 504.
129 R. R. Reno, Series Preface, in Mangina, *Revelation*, 10.

diversity and controversy, provides the proper basis of the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture."[130] As a result, the editors chose theologians rather than conventional biblical scholars as authors of the series volumes.

Mangina's commentary is a slim 271 pages, and his bibliography contains only 13 items. He says in his introduction: "In my own reading I try to take seriously the idea that the Apocalypse is actually about the God of the gospel, the God who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that just so it seeks to transform our lives in unpredictable and uncomfortable ways."[131] The commentary, like the book of Revelation, should be read in sequence since Revelation is "a remarkable organic unity, and how we respond to images in the later portions may well depend on the way in which earlier episodes have affected us."[132] He says, "As a theologian, the particular lens I bring to reading Revelation is the desire to clarify what the Christian community confesses concerning God and to uncover the practical implications involved in living the Christian life—in short, doctrine and ethics."[133] Solving the puzzles of the referents of the various images is not very important compared to recognizing "the Apocalypse as a witness to *God's* action on behalf of his world, as the revelation of *Jesus Christ*, and as an instrument of the *Holy Spirit* in opening our minds and hearts to the things that God has done and is doing in our midst."[134] We also need to read Revelation as sharing "the apostolic tradition of the early church" found in the rest of the New Testament, with hearts prepared to submit to the authority of Revelation's teaching.

Mangina sees a structure of recapitulation in Revelation, but in a spiral shape, and, following David Barr, proceeding in three stories: John receiving letters on Patmos, the worship of the Lamb in heaven (including the seals), and the cosmic battle between the Lamb and evil. Mangina likes this organization because each "story" has a distinct picture of Jesus Christ. He is depicted first as prophet, then as priest, and finally as king.[135] Mangina adds a fourth story and image: Jesus as bridegroom in the coming of the New Jerusalem. Mangina makes brief comments about the common

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130 Ibid., 11–12. See a critique of this approach in Mark J. Boda, "Theological Commentary: A Review and Reflective Essay," *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 11 (2009–2010): 139–50.

131 Mangina, *Revelation*, 22.

132 Ibid., 22.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 29, italics original.

135 Ibid., 30.

views of authorship and date, but concludes, "the book's concern is not with the circumstances of its own composition but with the sovereign, life-giving action of God."[136]

Mangina's treatment of Revelation 7 identifies the tribulation as "the distress of God's people . . . their passage from death into life." The 144,000 represent the church on earth sealed by God, and the great multitude is a picture of members of the church of all ages that have passed through death and are in heaven. All are "martyrs" whether by being killed for their faith or by participating in the martyr death of Jesus Christ. This leads to exhortation for Christians today to stand in solidarity with those being martyred in our own time.[137] In Revelation 20, Mangina recounts the views of Irenaeus (chiliast), Origen and Augustine (church age as millennium), and Jonathan Edwards (postmillennial), and notes that each view emphasizes some truth, and in all of these, the millennium is a time when binding Satan "creates a space where human life may flourish."[138] However, the real focus of the passage is that the martyrs will somehow be publicly vindicated and God's justice will prevail. This gives us great courage and hope in suffering and struggle now.

James L. Resseguie, The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

This is a shorter commentary at 287 pages, but with eleven pages of bibliography. Treating Revelation as a narrative, the work comments particularly on the rhetorical devices (e.g., chiasm, *inclusio*, two-step progression, verbal threads), character development, use of images, narrator's viewpoint, and plot development. It also notes the style, use of Greek grammar and syntax, cultural and historical assumptions, and intertextual allusions. Resseguie has tried to make his commentary read like a novel, and to make the Introduction a primer in narrative analysis.[139] His intended audience includes "upper-level undergraduate students, entry-level seminary and graduate students, and pastors and lay persons who want to read Revelation once again as a compelling story of intrigue."[140] Part of his approach to the text is revealed in his statement, "John's bizarre characters are not thin disguises for historical personages of the first century; they are char-

136 Ibid., 34.
137 Ibid., 109–16.
138 Ibid., 228–31.
139 Resseguie, *Revelation*, 11.
140 Ibid., 12.

acters in their own right with archetypical characteristics that reveal the nature of good and evil in our world."[141]

Resseguie's commentary does not begin with the customary discussions of date and author. Instead, he treats the author's point of view and identity as a character within the story/text.[142] As regards the structure, Resseguie discusses the attractiveness of the recapitulation theory in some detail, but opts in the end for a linear progression of events. There are partial judgments as a warning before the final ones. This is a literary rather than a literal progression, developing the plot up to the denouement.[143]

In Revelation 7, Resseguie sees the 144,000 and the uncountable multitude as being the same group, represented by two images. Theologically, they are the complete number of God's Israel, literally they are all believers from every nation. All believers pass through the "great ordeal" of the church age.[144] The millennium in Revelation 20 is part of the story's denouement, where "everyone and everything is put into their proper place."[145] Satan goes to the lake of fire, the dead are judged and assigned their fate. The millennium is a feature of "John's narrative world" where it occurs after the return of Christ, and shows the saints' victory and vindication, but the release of Satan shows the resilience of evil until the end.[146] Resseguie does not speculate about the existence of a "millennium" outside the narrative world created by the author for the purposes of the story. The story finishes with total resolution: God's people happy forever with him in the New Jerusalem.

Brian K. Blount, Revelation: A Commentary (New Testament Library; Westminster John Knox, 2009).

Blount reads as an African American, and sees the book of Revelation as a call to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as resistance in an oppressive situation. He believes that Revelation's message that Jesus Christ is Lord "has powerful implications for the construction and maintenance of social and political life."[147]

Blount holds to a late date for Revelation, and agrees there was no systematic persecution of Christians at that time. However, Christians

141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 42–44, 71–74.
143 Ibid., 59.
144 Ibid., 136–39.
145 Ibid., 243.
146 Ibid., 244–47.
147 Blount, *Revelation*, x.

were persecuted if reported to the authorities for refusing to make the token worship to the gods of Rome. In writing Revelation, John is urging Christians not to hide their allegiance, but to suffer if necessary and allow God to vindicate them (which he will, as the judgments portrayed in the book show). They should use their witness as nonviolent resistance. "For modern readers, the book of Revelation remains a call to nonviolent arms against any and every human person or people who would position themselves as lord over the destinies of others . . . [Readers] should not expect to find a blueprint for constructing a spiritual escape hatch to heaven . . . Revelation is about resistance."[148] It is up to God to perform the necessary violence to bring about justice.[149]

The book is 488 pages and includes 8 pages of bibliography. The introduction begins with a justification of the view that God uses violence to bring justice, and continues with matters of authorship, date, social setting (mainly the imperial cult, which John is asking his readers to openly resist), genre (Christian apocalyptic), outline, and brief comments on the manuscript evidence. Blount outlines Rev 4:1 to 22:9 as "A series of visions," which he divides into Introductory Cycle (chs. 4–11), Flashback (chs. 12–14) and Concluding Cycle (chs. 15–22), followed by an epilogue. He sees each series of seven as being another way of looking at the same judgmental events. Introduction of the Beast is kept to the middle of the Apocalypse so as to emphasize the required ethical action described at the beginning and end of the work.[150]

In Revelation 7, Blount sees the 144,000 as the believers who are sealed so as to survive persecution on earth, while the vast multitude in heaven are the faithful believers who did not have the seal, and so were killed on earth for their testimony. However, they stand in heaven.[151] The "great tribulation" is a time of tribulation before "God's Day of Judgment and Salvation," brought on by faithful witness.[152]

In Revelation 20, John depicts victory over Satan "to offer a presentation of the future that decreases present fear . . . and therefore reinvigorates the ethic of resistant witness."[153] The "thousand years" is "a symbolic time that is lengthy though still transient—nothing more,"[154] and shows that God

[148] Ibid., xi.
[149] Ibid., 2–5.
[150] Ibid., 21.
[151] Ibid., 140.
[152] Ibid., 154.
[153] Ibid., 359.
[154] Ibid., 361.

will vindicate his persecuted people even within history. However, the millennium is not a big issue in Revelation. Blount speculates, “Many contemporary churches probably spin their interpretive wheels on millennial definitions and strategies because social and political resistance too often is still too dangerous a course to undertake.”[155]

Throughout his exegesis, Blount is sensitive to liberation themes. For example, when talking about Babylon (Rome) as harlot, he tackles what he perceives as misogyny in the text: “In Revelation the patriarchal mean streak implicit in ancient Israelite and John’s contemporary Christian whore metaphors becomes a misogynistic fault line capable of devouring the self-image of any woman thrown up against it.”[156] According to Blount, the metaphor has been erroneously used to justify violence against women perceived as evil, and is regrettable. Blount’s solution is, “If I were preaching from this text, I would struggle to find another image that ... does not disparage the feminine.”[157] The point of the image, however, is to deter God’s people from compromising their faith and witness due to “social fear or economic lust.”[158] Blount displays sensitivity to contemporary concerns about the image, but does not go into application to the level of saying how Christians today could avoid compromise with “Babylon.”

4. *Conclusion*

The historical survey at the beginning of this essay revealed how much influence the historical context of the interpreter has had on interpretations of the book of Revelation. This is so for the interpretation of any piece of literature, but especially for a work like Revelation that is full of symbolism and believed to be normative for readers of every era. Constant re-interpretation to uncover the relevance of the book to ever-changing circumstances has resulted in a wide spectrum of interpretive streams. The main controlling factor for much comment on Revelation through the centuries, however, has been the belief that it is part of the Christian canon, and thus must have a message compatible with the message of the Old Testament and the rest of the New Testament.

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155 Ibid., 367.
156 Ibid., 309.
157 Ibid., 310.
158 Ibid., 309.

The recent commentators described above are not any more immune to the influence of their own age than the commentators of previous centuries. Most are sensitive to the scientific orientation of the modern age (which continues still on many fronts) that fostered the historical-critical movement. But some have also launched into the post-modern age, with greater concern for more subjective sensitivities to art, emotion, and relationships. The post-modern trend to give a high value to diversity is likely to lead to the appearance of more comment that diverges from the scholarly consensus of the twentieth century.[159] The lesson to be learned is that understanding the context of a commentator is always appropriate for users of commentaries on Revelation.

[159] It will be interesting to see whether the apparent increase in the magnitude of natural disasters in the world today will lead to more attempts to relate them to the plagues described in the book of Revelation.

PART FIVE

COMMENTARIES AND PUBLISHERS

COMMENTARIES AND COMMENTATORS FROM A PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Daniel G. Reid

Behind every contemporary Bible commentary and commentary series stands a publisher, with its editors and marketers, and probably an editorial champion for the cause. But outside a small circle, their story is rarely told. This essay will attempt to break open that circle and look at aspects of commentary publishing from a publisher's perspective.

1. *Why Publish Commentaries?*

What are the publisher's interests in commentaries? Of all the options open for publishing in the religious context, why publish biblical commentaries? A simple and pragmatic answer would be that biblical scholars like to write them and people like to buy them in quantities that make them economically viable.

But not everyone does like commentaries. The singer Johnny Cash, after exploring numerous commentaries on Paul's letters, quipped: "Tons of material has been written . . . but I discovered that the Bible can shed a lot of light on commentaries."[1]

In his own inimitable way, Søren Kierkegaard was even more critical of the commentator's enterprise:

> Today's mass of Bible interpreters have damaged, more than they have helped, our understanding of the Bible. . . . The commentator has indeed become a most hazardous meddler. . . . With God's help we can understand the Bible all right. Every commentary detracts, and he who sits with ten open commentaries and reads the Scriptures—well he is probably writing the eleventh. He is certainly not dealing with the Scriptures.[2]

Kierkegaard (who also had harsh words for editors and publishers) points to a deep irony in the Protestant claim of the perspicuity, or clarity, of

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[1] Johnny Cash, *Man in White* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), xvi.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* (ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), Vol. 1, A–E: 85.

Scripture, for there is much in the Bible that compels interpreters to take up the pen to illuminate, clarify and debate its meaning. In the Christian tradition one of the significant ways of doing so is to write and publish commentaries. Within the church commentaries fulfill a need to teach and to learn, to express our discoveries and to enter into the discoveries of others, to inscribe our voice into a textual legacy and to listen to those who have gone before us.

Historically speaking, the commentary has been the traditional vehicle for clarifying the meaning of the text. In the West it follows on the ancient tradition of commentaries on classical texts, such as Homer. And it did not take the church long to begin commenting on the text of Scripture in a deliberate manner. Viewing the history of biblical commentary in its broadest terms, it is surely one of the great uncelebrated undertakings of Western intellectual history. And publishers of one sort or another have been involved from the beginning.

Ministers in early America held commentaries in high regard. Harry S. Stout describes the place of the minister's study and library in the highly literate but—apart from the Bible—nearly bookless society of early New England:

> No matter how rustic the settlement, here were found most of the relevant texts bearing on the great and significant questions raised by the printed Word. On the minister's shelves lay the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible, commentaries in Latin and English indexed by chapter and verse, concordances of key words and metaphors in the original languages and in English, comprehensive systems of divinity from the church fathers to the English Puritans. . . . As the inhabitants struggled to carve out a living from rock-strewn soil, the ministers were called to the equally arduous task of tilling the pages of Holy Writ and sacred commentary so that on sabbath day they could plant in the hearts of their listeners seeds of eternity that would transform the untamed wilderness of the soul into the "Lord's garden."[3]

We gain further perspective on the place of commentaries in these libraries from the inventory of the young Puritan minister John Harvard's (1607–1638) library, which formed the foundation of the original library of Harvard College. Of the 400 volumes (representing 329 titles) of his library, "nearly three-quarters of the collection is theological. About half

[3] Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 32–33.

of these consist of biblical commentary, about equally divided between Old and New Testaments, and mainly in Latin."[4]

Certain Christian traditions, such as the Presbyterian and Reformed, have long valued the learned pastor.[5] And to one degree or another this ideal continues to hold, instilled as it is by seminary training. A good number of Christian pastors collect theological books—commentaries having pride of place—both because they know they should strive for the ideal of responsibly preparing for their sermons and teaching, and in order to give the impression that they do. In this they contribute to the material culture that supports commentary publishing.[6]

2. *What Kinds of Publishers Produce Commentaries?*

A publisher of commentaries generally has an interest in publishing theological scholarship, and to do so within the publishing house that is best backed up with at least one editor who is properly trained in biblical studies. In fact, some academic publishers of theology have an editorial staff with the training and competency of a small seminary faculty.

This tradition of the learned editor goes back centuries, and it is well illustrated by the Reformation era printer Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus), who was part of a book publishing aristocracy on the Paris book scene. A scholar in his own right, while in Paris Estienne carefully prepared and published a critical edition of the Latin Bible. This put him at odds with the clergy of the Sorbonne and eventuated in his moving to Geneva in 1550. The boon to the reform cause was not lost on Calvin, who commented to Farel, "*Robertus Stephanus nunc totus est noster.*" Geneva had its own academic publisher, and a highly regarded one. And in Geneva, Estienne would publish Calvin's commentaries as well as his *Institutes*.[7]

But there is another feature that distinguishes publishers of commentaries, and it is something that outsiders often do not perceive. Publishers make a general distinction between "front list" publishers and "back list"

[4] Alfred Claghorn Potter, "Catalogue of John Harvard's Library," *Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Transactions* 21 (1919): 192.

[5] Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 40–41.

[6] See Updike's rhapsody over books and their physical nature in John Updike, *Due Considerations: Essays and Criticism* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 68–70.

[7] See Elizabeth Armstrong, *Robert Estienne, Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

publishers. The front list refers to what is new in any given season or year. The business model of a front-list publisher counts on new books that make a big splash, the high-profile author backed by a heavy marketing campaign. A back-list publisher does not expect to have stellar sales on any given new book, but it does expect its new books to have a long and steady sales history as they move into the back list (i.e., the back of the publisher's catalog).

Academic publishing, and certainly commentary publishing, is all about the back list. The profitability of these books lies in their longevity. The back list is like the deep keel of a sailboat, not apparent at the water line but designed to keep the boat upright during the seasonal storms of publishing. If an appropriately priced academic book is only selling a few hundred copies a year—and does so steadily—it is regarded as money in the bank for a back-list publisher (as it should be for the author).

Commentaries are classic backlist books. While the publisher hopes for, and will likely see, the strongest sales in the initial year or two, their true economic value for the publisher lies in their slow but steady sales, year after year, and their requiring only modest care and upkeep. Perhaps in ten or fifteen years they will receive new covers, and there might be a revision program twenty years out.

But the mentality and business model of a front-list publisher is just not geared to this reality. It is dominated by the hottest new thing, the present publishing opportunities that must be seized. So it is generally inadvisable for someone with a new idea for a serious commentary series to approach a front-list publisher. And if a front-list publisher declares a new found interest in starting a commentary series and approaches a prospective series editor, it is prudent to ask probing questions. It is not an impossible proposition, but it is entirely likely that the publisher does not understand the enterprise and the amount of time and effort required to develop a commentary series. There is a risk that they will cancel the series when the wave of reality breaks on them—or a new CEO is in place.

Even among publishers that have a track record of producing commentaries, there are at least two distinctions that can be made. There are those that publish for a broader constituency, who expect to market their commentaries to individuals, and there are those who publish primarily for the library market and a handful of specialists. The distinction is easily observed in their pricing structures. The former sells its commentaries at a price reasonably afforded by an individual, whereas the latter prices its books much higher and has a much shorter print run. It is not the cost of paper or printing or binding that is driving the distinction, it is the targeted library market and budgets that can afford and must acquire the best research tools at whatever price. In fact, the library market tends to suspect lower priced reference books as being potentially lesser quality.

3. *The Variety of Commentaries*

By any account, we live in the age of commentary publishing. Biblical commentaries today come in a dazzling variety of formats, lengths, readerships, technical depths, and methodological approaches. The plethora of commentaries currently being published is stunning even to the professional, and for the novice it must be daunting. And when a new series is introduced, we often hear the exclamation, "Not another commentary series!"

Some commentaries epitomize an era or a scholarly trend. Some are very traditional and some are groundbreaking. Some are accessible to any educated person, while others are technical and assume a baseline knowledge of the biblical languages and of scholarly issues. Some are devotional and some are practical. Some are geared to the layperson's needs and others to the demands of the pulpit. Some are modern and critical while others draw on and promote ancient Christian interpretation. Some critically eschew theology while others intentionally pursue theological interpretation.

Some commentaries reflect the characteristics of their publishers and their broader agendas, though not necessarily. Frequently a publisher will want to have commentaries available at various registers of readership—say, laypeople, students and scholars. But if the publisher has specific theological commitments or parameters, then one can expect its commentaries to fall within the bounds of that perspective. This may or may not apply to a denominationally affiliated publishing house. A commentary from Augsburg Fortress or Westminster John Knox will not be identifiable by its theological stance, while The New Beacon Commentary from the Nazarene Beacon Hill Press is intentionally Wesleyan in its perspective.

With the variety of commentaries already on the market, a publisher looking to produce a new commentary series may go prospecting for a new vein of interest to tap into. They may seek new market niches to define and cultivate, or new ways to bend the genre of commentary. How can the traditional commentary be recast for a different audience or given some "value added" features? If a new trend in interpretation has opened up, this may provide an opportunity—whether it be socio-rhetorical criticism, theological interpretation or *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Or one might focus a series on a particular corpus of the Bible. The Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms is an example of this, highlighting its significance for interpreters and bringing able expertise to bear on it. One appeal of this approach is that it capitalizes on specialization and invites readers to explore its designated corpus.

The rise of biblical criticism fostered a new type of commentary, the critical commentary. Now in addition to the theological meaning of the text—and just as often supplanting it entirely—there was a stringent investigation of textual and philological questions, the historicity of events, the identity of the original author(s), the original audience(s), the sources, the redaction of the sources and related questions. Perhaps the classic example of this in the English language, since its legacy is still with us and is being renewed, is the International Critical Commentary on Scripture, which first started to appear in the late nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that the ICC did not originally commit to volumes on each book of the Bible.[8]

A one- or two-volume commentary is a staple feature of many publishers. A publisher who invests in producing a new English Bible translation will often want to develop an array of Bible study tools keyed to that translation, and a compact commentary will probably be high on the list of priorities. This form of biblical commentary is an attractive bargain for people starting to build a theological library. A great deal of information can be packed into one of these commentaries. With reduced type, double columns and large format, a million words can be fit between its covers. But despite this fact, the limitations are evident. Much that one finds is basic information that a beginning student surely needs to know, but this leaves limited space for proprietary perspective—that is, the new insights offered by a particular interpreter or approach to Scripture.

One approach to a one- or two-volume commentary is to move it to the next level: assume that the reader already has a traditional commentary on hand, and then supplement it with a new perspective or angle on the biblical text. Such was the idea of the industrious young scholar who came up with the idea for a one-volume commentary on the New Testament that would explore only the relevant cultural, historical or literary background for each pericope. Craig S. Keener had compiled tens of thousands of index cards with notations on Jewish, Greek and Roman

[8] John A. H. Dempster, *The T. & T. Clark Story: A Victorian Publisher and the New Theology* (Durham: Pentland Press, 1992), 139.

background of the New Testament text. His proposed commentary would take the cream off the surface of this work and present it for a general readership in commentary form. It was an enormous success, and was followed in turn by an Old Testament volume.[9] A simple principle was followed: if the information was something that could be gleaned from a careful, attentive reading of the text itself, it would not be included in the commentary; but if one had to appeal to outside sources—e.g., archeology or ancient Near Eastern texts—for this knowledge, it was a candidate for inclusion in the commentary. This concept was then developed into two multivolume illustrated commentaries from Zondervan.[10]

4. *Why a Series?*

It does not take a keen observer to conclude that publishers prefer their commentaries in a series. Any experienced editor will attest to having turned down a number of one-off commentary manuscripts and proposals because they did not fit into a series. But from a publisher's standpoint, why is a series so important? Much of it has to do with the visibility that a series brings to a commentary.

Obviously, each of the sixty-six books of the Bible is not equally popular. This is most apparent in the Old Testament, where the most popular books are Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah. And while certain Christian traditions emphasize the preaching of "the whole counsel of God," it takes encouragement to buy commentaries on the whole canon. A one-off commentary on Numbers or Judges or Ecclesiastes is likely to fall off the radar screen of the commentary market, unless perhaps it is written by an outstanding scholar who is blessed with a platform and a following.

So a commentary series helps float an entire fleet of commentaries. A series also appeals to the ideals of Bible students, offering an entire library written to a certain standard and often from a particular perspective. The success of individual commentaries (whether by virtue of the popularity of the biblical book or the commentator) within a series buoys up the

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[9] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[10] John Walton, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Clinton Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

others. When new volumes are released and advertised, there is opportunity to promote the other volumes in the series. The marketing channels and promotional efforts that are developed for the sale of the series profits each individual volume in a natural synergy.

Continuity programs—marketing directly to customers on a subscription basis—is particularly effective for a series, and it is a marketing specialty in itself. But a continuity program puts pressure back on the in-house editor and the series editor to produce volumes in a timely manner. For in order to keep the program going, ideally four volumes a year, or one a quarter, will be required. Consequently, for the launch of a series it is best to have at least a couple of volumes ready for publication and the assurance of more to follow in timely succession. Thus a publisher will often not release early submitted manuscripts until an even flow of publication can be assured.

In recent years publishers have used the term "platform" to speak of that metaphorical place where an author stands to be seen by a large crowd—their name recognition, their associated institutions, their networks of influential people, the opinion shapers who will endorse and promote their book. Outside the academy, the need for an author to have platform has become an assumed condition for successful trade publishing. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is now influencing perceptions of academic authors who seek to reach an audience beyond a small circle of experts. An academic teaching in an institution of higher learning already has a certain degree of platform. But publishers like to see authors who are leveraging that platform into broader exposure. But it should be recalled that in the late nineteenth century T&T Clark, in developing the ICC, maintained that contributors having a "name carrying weight, and confidence" was "imperative for this Series."[11] So platform is not new.

For commentators, the invitation to write for a commentary series enhances their platform far above publishing an isolated commentary. In addition, the prestige of the general editor, the publisher and fellow contributors adds further luster to the platform. The publisher brings part of that platform. The series editor brings their part. The individual contributors offer their timber. With enough leading names, lesser known—often young—commentators can profit from the platform of others. In fact,

[11] Dempster, *T. & T. Clark Story*, 22.

a series editor might seek young and promising talent to take on a less popular biblical book.

But there is always the "problem" volume in a series that is first assigned to one and then to another writer and possibly to yet another for various reasons, including nonperformance, a falling out over policy, a career change, or death. There are examples of volumes that have been so difficult to acquire that they have held up the completion of a series for decades.

5. *The Genesis and Exodus of Commentary Series*

How do commentary series originate? Often it is at the publisher's own initiative. The publisher sees the need for a series in their own line or sees an opportunity in a level or type of commentary that is not available or out of date. The publisher may develop the idea initially and then enter into conversation with a prospective series editor and further refine it. In other cases a scholar or a minister may come to the publisher with an idea for a commentary series and things will develop from there. Sometimes a series is proposed to a publisher, but the publisher does not think the would-be editor has the platform or the chops to carry it off and attract an audience, so it is declined. And if it is an attractive idea, the publisher faces the ethical challenge of refraining from developing it on its own.

An interesting example is the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS), the idea for which originated with Thomas C. Oden and his personal rediscovery of and enthusiasm for patristic exegesis. The story goes that years earlier Oden had responded to a publisher's mailer inviting him to purchase a patristic commentary series. Oden sent in his money, but the project turned out to be a scam. There was no such commentary. Oden lost his money, but he had gained an idea![12] And he saw it through to the completion of the twenty-nine volume ACCS.[13] In fact, Oden's seminal idea for a patristic commentary spawned two patristic commentary series because of a disagreement between Oden and Robert Wilken over how to proceed. Oden believed the commentary could be developed along the

12 The story of the ACCS is told in Andrew T. Le Peau and Linda Doll, *Heart. Soul. Mind. Strength: An Anecdotal History of InterVarsity Press, 1947–2007* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 138.

13 Thomas C. Oden, ed., *The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 29 volumes (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998–2010).

lines of the ancient catena tradition, with brief extracts keyed to pericopes of Scripture, and Wilken believed that more extensive texts would be necessary. When it no longer seemed that they could reconcile their ideals in one series, they peacefully parted ways and the world of commentaries is richer for it, with Wilken editing The Church's Bible (Eerdmans).[14] Ironically, the ACCS later gave birth to the Ancient Christian Texts series, which now presents full patristic commentaries that were not previously available in English translation (some of which were translated in preparing the ACCS).

A series that has made a significant contribution over its life constitutes a legacy, and prudent publishers regard it as a trust. This often means timely revisions. European publishers seem to have a culture of calling successive printings, with perhaps minor corrections, "editions." In North America a new edition is expected to have some discernible "value added," that is, updated or enlarged or significantly revised. (Purchasers of a new edition are rightly annoyed when they discover that the new edition they bought is 99% the same as the one they already have.)

A quirk of publishing commentary series is that over time they can leave one publisher and migrate to another. Perhaps most commonly one publishing company is acquired by another, and so the Word Biblical Commentary comes under the care of Thomas Nelson. Or the Anchor Bible is originally published by Doubleday, which then takes up residence under the roof of Random House (1998), and subsequently the series is acquired by Yale University Press (2007).

6. *Following the Trends*

From a publisher's perspective there are many considerations to negotiate in publishing a commentary series. For instance, a publisher wants to be reasonably confident that the prolonged commitment to expending editorial, production and marketing talent, time and capital is going to be worthwhile as compared with other publishing opportunities that beckon for attention. And the commissioning editor can feel like his or her credibility is on the line. A commentary series is a very big project that often extends over many years. The pressure to succeed is great. The publisher

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[14] The first volume was Robert C. Wilken, trans. and ed., *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* (The Church's Bible; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

is being called on to invest real dollars (in royalty advances, editorial salaries, production and printing and marketing costs, and so forth) over several years with the hope of an eventual return after perhaps several more years of sales.

But publishers also want to catch the crest of a breaking wave if they can. They hate being left behind, and not solely in a competitive "business" sense. No, the kinds of publishers and their editors that publish commentaries are often those that want to be part of the critical conversations of their day. So they watch not just for the profitable but for the strategic moment to enter into or even shape a broader discussion taking place within the academy or the church. In conceiving and refining a commentary series, they are prepared to do some solid background work and planning. But there is always the apprehension that a novel approach will be viewed as a child of its decade and not have the legs it needs for the long run.

7. *The Long and the Short of It*

One problem is the commentary that tries to do too much. The aspiration of such a project can be attractive to a publisher. It might appear to be the nuclear option of commentaries, one that will blow the competitors off the map (yes, publishers can fall into this way of thinking). But this can be a hazardous course. After much investment and labor, an editor does not want to open up a book such as Ralph Martin's *New Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher* and find this comment (on the original *Interpreter's Bible*): "The result is a rather nebulous product, which to call a hodgepodge would be uncharitable, but somewhere near the mark."[15] Publishers and commentators need to recognize the limitations of the genre and do a few things well.

Of course it is easy to make sport of the mega-commentary. One recalls the true story of a commentary manuscript arriving in a sizable box at the publisher's office. The editor was impressed by its length. Then the next day an equal-sized box arrived with the rest of the manuscript! Had the manuscript for Cotton Mather's *Biblia Americana* ever arrived at a London publisher's doorstep, it would have been the stuff of legend among London printers: six folio volumes covering the entire Bible! But as it turned

[15] Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 49.

out, Mather never found a publisher, despite his personal attempts to marshal subscribers to his project. And there was competition in the form of Mathew Henry's commentary, which was already in process of publication. But now, 280 years on, Mohr Siebeck and Baker Academic are publishing it in ten volumes. Volume One, which at a length of 1,400 pages and a price of $250, will be a library item and a subject of fascinating research and comment in itself. Today's editors of Mather comment that in his encyclopedic impulse to comment on all fronts, "Mather more than lives up to his old adage that to be 'entertaining,' all useful scholarship should be 'stuck with as many Jewels, as the Gown of a Russian Embassador.' "[16] Mather was attempting to boil the ocean, to make his commentary a reservoir of all relevant knowledge for interpreting the Bible. It is a reminder that in publishing one can attempt too grand a thing.

And yet there are some commentaries that are luxuriously long, and each lover of commentaries has their own favorite. This is not the commentary that is simply longwinded or tries to do too much, but one that is rich in detail and insight. These are the grand estates of the commentary world, inviting readers to wander down their corridors, to dwell in their chambers and meditate in their courts. They are to be enjoyed in repeated visits and forays, over months and years. Wise publishers recognize and make room for these rare commentaries, marketing them not just for their utilitarian value but for their longevity, enjoyment and the serendipitous surprises that await readers in unexpected nooks and corners.

But on the other end of the spectrum is the pithy and concise commentary. One wonders if their day is past. Has the computer changed the nature of commentaries so they are inevitably longer? Or have we simply lost the art of writing concisely? One thinks of a commentary like C. F. D. Moule on *Colossians, Philemon* in the Cambridge Greek Testament Commentaries—a commentary on the Greek text in about 180 pages, and yet full of salient insights.[17] Or there was Derek Kidner, the master of the concise format of the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary.[18] Or there is the commentary that shows literary flair in the midst of its technical discussions. For nearly thirty years I have remembered J. B. Lightfoot's comment on Colossians 2:15: "The paradox of the crucifixion is thus placed

[16] "Cotton Mather *Biblia Americana*," The Project/Introduction, accessed January 1, 2011, http://www.bibliaamericana.gsu.edu.

[17] C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

[18] E.g., Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967).

in the strongest light—triumph in helplessness and glory in shame—the convict's gibbet is the victor's car."[19] Perhaps some scholars need to slow down and scale back in their commentary writing, aspiring to write one or two excellent commentaries in a career. The marvel of concision and economy, the lapidary turn of phrase, is sadly rare today.

8. *Commentators and Their Editors*

The world of commentary publishing is not a large one. It is more a village than a city. And over the course of their careers, editors and marketers often move around from shop to shop, publisher to publisher. Friendships are developed, professional networks are enlarged, confidences are shared, and trade secrets migrate. A sidelight is that some authors become well known among editors for their quirks, or notorious for their behavior. Notes are compared. Inquiries are made. Bad actors are avoided—regardless of their scholarly acumen—or if need be, the relational cost will be weighed against the benefits. And stellar writers and series editors become hot properties.

Space does not permit going into other foibles of commentators: the over-published, or the one with no rear-view mirror, who will not revise, or the one with little interest in tending to details, or the one who seems unreasonably persnickety over details, or the high-maintenance commentator. Needless to say, commentators come in nearly as many varieties as there are personality types. And a good editor learns to work with a wide variety of them to reach a common goal. But it is also true that some bad habits are "enabled" by editors flexing with authorial shortcomings or demands, doing whatever it takes to get the manuscript in hand. Of course, this works in reverse too, with commentators having their own store of anecdotes about publishers and their editors!

In-house acquiring editors can and do exercise quite a lot of influence on how a commentary series is conceived and shaped. We have already mentioned that academic publishing houses have long employed editors trained to a high level in the subject matter they edit, who can work with authors on a peer level. But the ideal academic editor also brings solid experience in the publishing world and an understanding of how books are most effectively positioned and marketed. Thus the seasoned

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[19] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1879), 192.

academic editor can offer helpful advice and guidance to the general editors of a series and negotiate between editorial ideals and publishing realities. Some ideals wildly overestimate the capacities of most readers. Some ideals underestimate the amount of work and financial investment required. And some ideas are based on misunderstanding of how commentaries are most effectively marketed.

Every general editor of a series comes with a different set of skills and abilities. But presumably they each bring something outstanding to the project, otherwise they would not be chosen or accepted as an editor. An experienced in-house editor recognizes that the general editor's skill set must be discerned and any deficiencies compensated for. The general editor most likely brings prestige and a network of connections—and probably a vision—to the task, but he or she may be an abominable administrator and little inclined to enforce the schedule and ride herd on the details. A good in-house editor is flexible enough to adapt to reality, developing strategies for augmenting out-of-house weaknesses with in-house strengths.

But even within the publishing house there is often a low-grade fear that something might be going wrong even while everything appears to be going right. This is founded on experience. By nature editors hate error, but by vocation they are called to deal with it daily. And painfully enough, it is sometimes their own. It is no surprise to find that the kinds of incidents that have plagued publishing over the centuries were cropping up in Estienne's Genevan enterprise. Calvin's second and expanded edition of his commentary on Romans (1556) contains numerous errors, and apparently they were not all the fault of the publisher. As T. H. L. Parker tells us, "The blame must probably be laid on careless handwriting by the author and on his manner of revising. It would seem that for this edition he adopted the method that caused his brother Antoine and Nocolas Colladon so much trouble with the 1560 edition of the French *Institution*; that is, he wrote (or scribbled!) corrections and additions in the margin of a copy of the 1551 edition and also on detached sheets of paper."[20] In fact, some of Calvin's corrections were made by hand *after* publication, and Parker offers the opinion that "if someone in Robert Estienne's office had the dull job of correcting all the copies by hand, it would seem that he

[20] T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (2nd ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 37–38.

was not a very vigilant proof-reader."[21] Yet those in publishing today can sympathize with this unfortunate editorial assistant who, perhaps wearied by boring repetition and in need of a caffeine boost, struggled to focus.

The world of commentary publishing also has its gallery of unseen heroes who operate outside the publishing house. There is the spouse or daughter or son-in-law who works many years behind the scenes, assisting the general editor in all sorts of ways, including grooming manuscripts for submission to the publisher. Or there is the relay team of graduate students who assist a general editor over many years, or work for a center at Drew University, funded by a foundation, to provide much of the patristic raw material needed for making the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture a reality. There are the highly competent freelance copyeditors with Ph.D.s in biblical studies, able to deal with the biblical languages, and familiar with the biblical text as well as the secondary literature. They bring great value to the enterprise with their gimlet eye and informed queries. One learns to look for these folks on the acknowledgements page and hopes to find their efforts duly praised.

9. *Commentaries by Design*

The design of a commentary may seem inconsequential compared with its content. But most publishers put a lot of care and thought into designing the interior and the cover of a commentary. With the cover, the first step is communicating to the designer the nature of the commentary—its audience, character and features. There is an unspoken "code" and a "feel" that needs to be transmitted to the buyer (including the distributor and bookstore buyers) in the language of symbol, type and art. Getting this right takes experience and often employs editorial and marketing perspectives. If it is for a series, the cover will need to have a long life and should not be tied to a current fad in design. It is important to ask, "How will this look in seven or eight years?" After a period of ten or fifteen years, the series may well be given new covers, and this will be an opportunity for marketers to give the series a renewed boost in advertising.

For interior design of an innovative commentary series, with a complex page layout, the prudent publisher will take the long view and project how much effort, time and money will be absorbed by the project when

[21] Ibid.

a simpler format would require less toil, frustration and cost, and yet be sufficiently attractive. It's tempting to envision a commentary series that reflects the fine book craft of the Steinsaltz edition of the Talmud, but who is going to pay for such a series?[22] Publishing is where ideas and ideals meet the marketplace, where real money is exchanged and real business must be transacted for profit (as thin as it may be) or loss. And if the interior includes layout complexities—perhaps text boxes or sidebars, care will need to be exercised regarding length of these features. These strictures of design will work their way back into the writing of the commentary itself, perhaps curbing the commentator's penchant for being thorough. In other words, a layout that employs more features than running text and footnotes inevitably imposes further restrictions back onto the commentator (e.g., perhaps the text box must not exceed one page, so it must be restricted to 350 words regardless of the complexity of the topic). Features that seem attractive in the abstract may be unwelcome encumbrances in practice. And it is important for both publisher and series editor to understand what is entailed in these decisions.

10. *Of Marketing and Selling*

Marketing concerns intersect with editorial concerns. Publishers (at least those that are not subsidized) need to operate as a business. They must consider whether there is a clearly defined market for their commentaries, whether they can capitalize on their already existing marketing channels or whether they can develop the marketing channels that will reach that market.

As we have already mentioned, direct marketing continuity programs can be a significant means of taking a commentary series to its readers.[23] Direct marketing programs are increasingly an important means for publishers to outflank large online booksellers that exercise their power over publishers by demanding larger discounts. From the consumer's end, this is seen in the packaged brochure that arrives in the mailbox with an introductory letter, an illustrated description of the commentary series extolling its features and benefits, an introductory offer (usually including

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[22] Perhaps the finest example of book craft in a modern English-language commentary is the Hermeneia series, which has been admirably executed.

[23] For further discussion of continuity programs, see Le Peau and Doll, *Heart. Soul. Mind. Strength*, 140.

something free, a so-called premium) and a subscription response form. The maintenance of these programs is often outsourced to a third party specializing in direct-marketing. These programs can be very effective. But much of their success depends on having a "product" that connects with the felt needs of a substantial readership.

The idea of a publisher going directly to targeted readers is an old one. In late eighteenth century America the Irishman Mathew Carey, who in 1784 started what would become a thriving publishing enterprise in Philadelphia, had a salesman by the name of "Parson" Mason L. Weems (1759–1825). Carey was the first American to print a Bible (a Douay-Rheims version for Catholics), and Weems blazed a trail of direct marketing to rural Virginians. Weems apparently struck a mother lode of religious book consumption and reported back to Carey, "I tell you this is the very season and age of the Bible. Bible Dictionaries, Bible tales, Bible stories—Bibles plain or paraphrased, Carey's Bibles, Collins Bibles, Clarke's Bibles, Kimptor's Bibles, no matter what or whose, all, all, will go down—so wide is the crater of public appetite at this time."[24] Many of these Bibles would have included commentary and other study aids. In our own day religious publishers in North America (in contrast with Europe) still find that Bibles and commentaries "will go down" into the crater of pastoral and public appetite. Even if that crater is not as demographically broad as in earlier days, it can be deep.

Even earlier than Carey and Weems, Cotton Mather tried to find subscribers to the future publication of his *Biblia Americana* by advertising in his published works, hoping "for more than one hundred setts of the Work; to be paid in upon their Arrival here [Boston]; if [publishers] will run the Risque thereof." Then as now, publishers are interested in any means that will minimize "the Risque thereof." So serious thought, planning and economic forecasting goes into the launching of a commentary series. And this includes input from the marketing and sales department. They, after all, work face to face with key distributors and book chains and have a real-time understanding of what will go down and what might not.

But despite marketing efforts, some commentaries prosper not because they are better than others but because they have market momentum, having attained the status of being the most commonly recommended book for a certain readership. Over years and decades, this can have a viral

24 Quoted in Mark A. Noll, "Bible and American Culture," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (ed. Daniel G. Reid et al.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 132.

effect on sales. To illustrate this phenomenon, it is easiest to step outside the strict genre of commentary and consider *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Is it the best resource of its type on the market? Surely not. But trying to dislodge it from the public mind is futile.

11. *What Is the Future of the Biblical Commentary?*

At this writing the enthusiasm for e-books has reached such a peak that there are predictions that the traditional book will be dead in five years. This of course is nonsense. In 2010 the vaunted claims for e-books sales compared to traditional books had to do mostly with trade fiction. Academic use of e-books trailed far behind. And while it is true that reference books have been the best sellers in the now eclipsed CD-ROM market, this has not yet overshadowed the pulp-book market for reference books. For various reasons, the most sensible prediction would be that print commentaries will be with us for some time.

But e-commentaries—interactive, with various visual features and study tools—will no doubt be attractive competitors. In fact the e-commentary, with its hyperlinking ability, might overcome the problem of having to repeat the "basics" in commentary after commentary. So a new commentary in electronic format might conceivably be able to bring more "value added." Without set page restrictions and with the ability to click down into deeper levels of discussion, more flexibility might be possible. Thus it is easily conceivable that e-commentaries will soon come with visual content such as links to film clips of archeological sites, actual biblical manuscripts, artifacts of reception history and bibliographic items.

But then what will that do to the commentary as it has traditionally been conceived and produced? Will scholars eventually be viewed as paid-for-hire content providers for market-driven, multi-sourced and packaged e-commentaries? Will they find their material being set side by side (without the protective barrier of a book cover) with perspectives they find contradictory or even abhorrent—and presented to readers as equally valid options? And how will further reader preferences feed back into the tailoring of the commentary itself?

We will soon be forced to think more deeply about how the material culture of the commentary affects our perception of the Bible. Publishers, in their act of publishing material commentaries in various formats, have contributed significantly to guiding the public's perception, reading and interpretation of Scripture in tangible and intangible ways. Will the people of the Book continue to value the material nature of the Bible over an ephemeral text, and will the natural complement to the Bible be the physical or the electronic commentary? In its rejection of text in material form the e-book carries a gnostic odor. It is worth meditating theologically on John Updike's comment that, "a book is beautiful in its relation to the human hand, to the human eye, to the human brain, and to the human spirit."[25]

[25] John Updike, "Remarks Upon Receiving the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters Award, 1998," National Book Foundation, National Book Awards Acceptance Speeches, accessed January 1, 2011, http://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_jupdike_dcal.html.

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