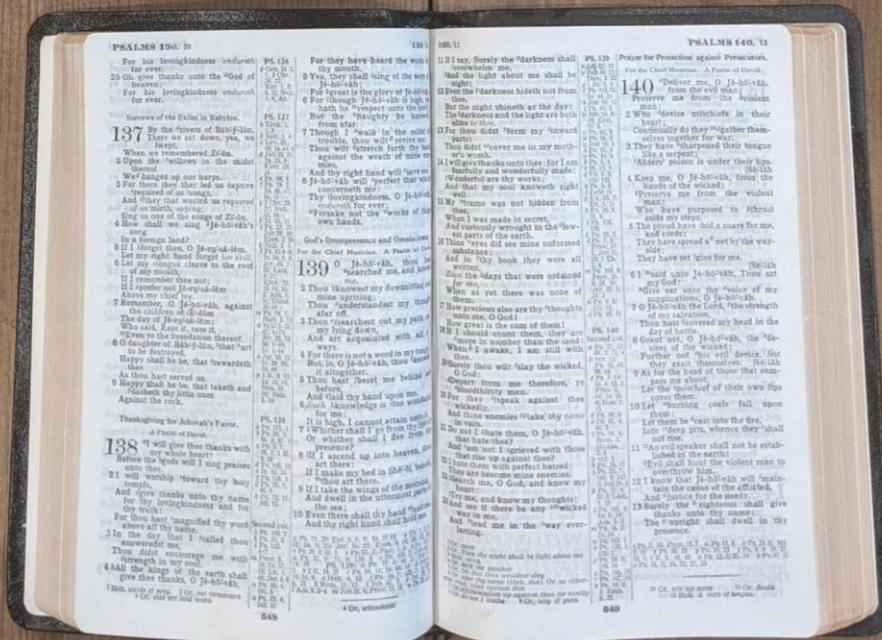


Lectures on Hermeneutics



Dr. Greg Bahnsen

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By Dr. Greg Bahnsen

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Notes

1. The text has been kept predominantly (99.9%) “as is” from the typewritten pages with minor formatting changes such as breaking out quotes to conform to the standard formatting usage in other works published at ComprehensiveChristianity.com. Other minor changes have been made to correct minor typos and things like making words such as “socalled” corrected to “so-called”. When lists occur as one paragraph, the lists have been presented in a bullet point breakout for ease of reading and reference.

2. Unfortunately, the footnotes to this document were never published as part of this content. However, there is a recommended reading list available to go with the audio lectures on hermeneutics by Greg Bahnsen. These audio files have been put through an improvement process by the fine folks over at [The Bahnsen Institute](https://www.bahnseninstitute.com/) (https://www.bahnseninstitute.com/).

Here is a direct link to those 17 audio lectures: [Hermeneutics](#):

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?sourceOnly=true&currSection=sermonsource&keyword=thebahnsenproject&subscat=series&subsetitem=Hermeneutics>

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I. Introduction

1. The Discipline of Hermeneutics

1.1. The Definition of Hermeneutics

Traditionally the term “hermeneutics” is defined as the science and art of interpretation. As science it is assigned the task of developing the theory of interpretation in terms of principles, methods and rules. As art it is assigned the task of displaying the skill of interpretation in terms of the application of the principles, methods and rules.

Interpretation is a common, ordinary, everyday affair. It is at the same time quite comprehensive. Whatever man encounters, stands in need of interpretation and will be interpreted. This is especially the case in the area of verbal communication. Usually the interpretative process runs such a natural course that it receives little or no attention. Misinterpretations, and consequent misunderstandings, of course, do occur quite regularly. But when the lines of communication are open, further clarification generally serves as a sufficient corrective. In short, the interpretative process does not regularly require any special theoretical reflection or any special practical skill.

However, bodies of literature came into existence that were regarded as vitally important, or even acknowledged as authoritative, both in and beyond their own language boundaries, cultural framework and historical setting. Cases in point are classical literature, legal codes and biblical writings. Then the science and art of interpretation became a necessity. First, there were difficulties to overcome that are peculiar to all writings. Some of them are connected with the profundity of the subject matter. Others are linked with the complexity of the argument. Again others arise from the intricacies of language, as figures of speech and literary forms. Second, there are gaps to be bridged that are peculiar to ancient writings. Some of them are connected with the original language. Others flow forth from the cultural framework. Again, others result from the historical setting.

The difficulties must be overcome and the gaps must be bridged, if a clear grasp of the meaning and significance of the original text is to be attained. This became the twofold task of the science and art of interpretation. Upon the revival of interest in the Greek language, this also came to be known as “hermeneutics.” Hermeneutics and the science and art of interpretation became practically interchangeable.

The question, however, must be raised whether this interchangeable use is acceptable. To be sure, already Plato refers to hermeneutics as a science and art -- (he) *hermeneutike* (techno) -- but this does not settle the issue. The issue is whether the act of *hermeneuein*, the verb from which the adjective *hermeneutike* is derived, and the act of interpreting are coterminous. It appears not. An examination of the meaning and usage of the verbs “*hermeneuein*” and “to interpret” discloses that the former is both more restrictive and more extensive than the latter. This gives on the one hand a refinement of focus to hermeneutics, that the notion of interpretation traditionally does not possess, and on the other hand a breadth of scope, that goes beyond the customary area of interpretation.

First, the verb “to interpret” has basically three meanings that are relevant in this context.

1. “To explain the meaning of.” What is not clear, is clarified. What is not obvious, is brought out. What is implicit, is made explicit. What is present, is expounded.
2. “To construe the meaning of.” A meaning is attached to, or imposed upon, one or more words, actions or objects from the perspective of an individual belief or subjective judgment.
3. “To translate.” A word is changed into another language while retaining its sense. Or, the sense of a word is given in another language.

Second, the verb) “*hermeneuein*” has basically three meanings as well.

1. “To speak,” or “to express one’s thoughts in words.” This meaning is implied in Acts 14:12. When Paul and Barnabas visit Lystra, the former commands a crippled man to stand up. His consequent healing suggests to the bystanders that the gods have come down among them. They proceed to equate Barnabas with Zeus and Paul with Hermes, because Paul “did all the speaking.” According to Greek mythology Hermes was the messenger of the gods whose function it was to express their thoughts into words, to proclaim and explain the message and to ascertain that it came across. Extra-biblical Greek is familiar with this usage as well. Philo defines a prophet as an *hermeneus*, that is a “spokesman” of God. This covers the total range from Moses, the greatest prophet of the OT, to Balaam, prophet against his will. When God takes a prophet into His service, the Spirit takes control of his organs of speech and prompts him from within what he should say, so that he expresses the thoughts of God. Consequently, no prophet may claim any of his pronouncements as his own, but must acknowledge them as God’s words revealed through him. In one instance Philo introduces a “spokesman” of a “spokesman.” Aaron is said to be the “mouth,” the “spokesman” (*hermeneus*) of Moses - who is himself the “spokesman” of God - in view of Ex. 4:16. The thoughts of Moses, in Philo’s opinion, are expressed in the words of Aaron. In Plato a similar usage is found. He refers to the poets as “the spokesmen (*hermenes*) of the gods.” They are inspired, and therefore their poems are not human or the work of men, but divine and the work of the gods. Furthermore, the poets have their own spokesman, namely the *rhapsodes*. They are designated as “the spokesmen of spokesmen.” To function as such they are divinely possessed as well. Thus it appears that the thoughts of the gods themselves are expressed to the audience, be it through a twofold intermediary.
2. “To interpret,” in the sense of explaining the meaning of, or to expound. To illustrate. In 1 Cor. 12:30; 14:5,13 and 27 the verb *dihermeneuein* is translated as “to interpret” and in Luke 24:27 as “to explain.” In 1 Cor. 12:10 and 14:26 the noun *hermeneia* means “interpretation,” while *dihermeneutes* in 1 Cor. 14:29 is translated as “interpreter.” It ought to be noted that the interpretation in 1 Cor. 12 and 14 is not a theoretical science, nor a practical skill. It is a spiritual gift, a *charisma*. The original message is couched in unintelligible, ecstatic, utterances. The ability to speak such utterances is a gift from the Spirit of

God. However, for the message to be understood and, ultimately, to edify the congregation, a second gift is needed, namely the ability to interpret the utterances. This gift insures the intelligible, disciplined, verbal, communication of the message. In other words, the interpreter, by virtue of a gift from the Spirit, functions as a channel through which the message arrives at its destination of comprehension and edification.

3. "To translate." The verb *hermeneuein* means "to translate" in Ezra 4:7 (LXX), John 1:38,42; 9:7 and Heb. 7:2, the verb *diermeneuein* in Acts 9:36 and the verb *methermeneuein* in Matt. 1:23, Mark 5:41, 15:22,34, Acts 4:36 and 13:8, while the noun *hermeneutes* means "translator" in Gen. 42:23 (LXX). This use of the verb *hermeneuein* and its derivatives also occurs in extra-biblical Greek. One instance is especially telling. Plato refers to love as belonging to the spiritual realm between the divine and the mortal. As such it has the power of "transmitting (*hermeneuein*) and ferrying across human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above, being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one." The verb *hermeneuein* is clearly used in a metaphorical way. It is concerned with bridging gaps and getting its subject matter, not necessarily restricted to lingual meanings, across so that unity results. Papias' use of the noun *hermeneutes* points in the same direction. The Gospel writer Mark is introduced by Papias as the *hermeneutes* of Peter. That is, as "the middleman who transmits the contents of the preaching of the apostle."

These three basic meanings of the verb *hermeneuein* and its derivatives give a perspective upon what should comprise the discipline of hermeneutics. The activity of *hermeneuein* covers the broad range of speaking, interpreting / explaining and translating, in the sense of getting the message across. Accordingly, the *hermeneutes* or *hermeneus* is a spokesman, an interpreter / expositor, a translator. It must be emphasized, however, that what is to be spoken, interpreted / explained, translated, does not originate with the spokesman, interpreter / expositor, translator, nor does it end with him. He must always remember that it has been entrusted to him and may not forget that it must be understood. It is his privilege to have received it. It is his task to deliver it.

All this indicates, on the one hand, that *hermeneuein* is more restricted than the act of interpretation in the full dictionary sense of the word. Under no circumstances and at no occasion may the hermeneut "construe" the meaning of a word or passage, or attach a sense to it from the perspective of a subjective conviction. He may only "recognize" its meaning and pass on its sense. In short, he does not creatively construct. He receptively recognizes. He is not an originator. He is an intermediary. He is not a critic. He is a discerner. He is not a judge. He receives a verdict. He is not in control of the passage. The passage controls him. He is not its master. He is its servant. He does not assume an independent stance toward the text. He is bound by its contents. He is not in authority. The text has the first and final word.

It indicates, on the other hand, that *hermeneuein* is more extensive than the act of interpreting. The hermeneut must go beyond explaining the sense of a passage. When it is his business as spokesman and intermediary to get the message across, it is also his concern to ascertain that this message reaches its goal. This means that it must be understood and implemented. This is

not to say that the full responsibility for the message reaching its goal rests on the hermeneut. This will be understood when it is recognized that in the hermeneutical process it is not as much the hermeneut who addresses the hearers about the text, but the text that addresses the hearers through the hermeneut. Accordingly, it is not the hermeneut who effects the understanding and implementation of the text, but the text that aims at understanding and implementation through the hermeneut.

Now that the meaning of the verb *hermeneuein* and its derivatives, specifically in relationship to the notion of interpretation, has been determined, we can proceed with the task of defining hermeneutics, specifically as a biblical discipline.

A proper definition must reflect three basic concerns.

First, it must account for the starting point in the hermeneutical process. What is it that ought to be interpreted and understood? This is the text of Scripture as the product of God's "spokesmen." However, since one's view of the text determines the direction of the hermeneutical process as well as its final outcome, great care must be taken to set forth its attributes, its nature and its structure. In many handbooks of hermeneutics this is done in an introductory chapter, and then rather sketchily. But this does not seem to be commensurate to its importance.

Second, it must deal with the activity in the hermeneutical process. How should the text, of Scripture, be presented so that it can be understood? This constitutes the interpretation of Scripture. The focus is upon the language, the cultural setting and the historical background of Scripture, as well as upon the principles, methods, rules and techniques required by the various literary genres to determine the meaning of the text. Most handbooks on hermeneutics concentrate on this area.

Third, it must give attention to the aim in the hermeneutical process. What is the goal of the interpretation of the text? This is the understanding of Scripture. Both the nature of understanding ought to be determined and the conditions that make understanding possible delineated. Almost no handbooks on hermeneutics ever touch upon this subject.

Biblical hermeneutics, then, establishes the text of Scripture as its point of departure and outlines its characteristics, develops the interpretation of Scripture as a means to an end and identifies its tools, and defines the understanding of Scripture as its aim and sets forth the conditions that make it possible. In the process it ought to seek an ever increasing commitment to the text, to promote the skills in the interpretive activity and to further proper understanding.

To assign these three areas of concern to the discipline of hermeneutics is not due simply to etymological considerations with regard to the verb *hermeneuein* and its derivatives. The necessity of preoccupation with these areas is embedded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. According to Neh. 8:7-8, "The Levites read from the book, from the law of God (1), and gave the meaning (2), so that the people could understand (3) what was being read." According to Acts 8:30-31:

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone

guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:30-31

2. The History of Hermeneutics

2.1. A Survey of the History of Hermeneutics

The history of hermeneutics is not easy to assess. Most handbooks on hermeneutics present a more or less elaborate chronological survey and bring out the more salient points, principles, or approaches of every period. Since such survey will assist the student of hermeneutics to get acquainted with the discipline, this procedure will be followed in these notes as well.

Critical scholars hold that the rise of the historical-critical method was the great watershed in the history of hermeneutics. All that preceded it was only introductory and could claim little, if any, significance.

It must be readily admitted that the difference in the hermeneutical approach between the pre-critical and the critical period is vast. If a boundary line is to be drawn, however, between two types of hermeneutics, it is preferable to do so between a hermeneutics that wishes to receive its principles from Scripture alone and a hermeneutics that is rooted in synthesis thinking. It is not only the critical period that has fallen victim to such thinking.

In this section a survey will be given that covers the precritical and noncritical hermeneutics. In the following section the background of the history of hermeneutics will be sketched. It is hoped that it will become clear at that point that also in the precritical and noncritical types of hermeneutics synthesis thinking has been influential.

The survey in the present section will cover the precritical and noncritical hermeneutics of the Jews, the early church, the medieval church and the modern church.

2.1.1. Jewish Hermeneutics

Jewish hermeneutics has not only been influential in the Christian church, but there are also so many parallels between Jewish and Christian interpretation that a quick survey of the former will prove to be quite illuminating.

Already in the OT time period were the Scriptures interpreted. In Nehemiah 8:7-8 the Levites under the leadership of Ezra the scribe read the book of the Law in translation, and explained the sense so that the people could understand it.

Toward the end of the Old Testament time period the Hebrew text was translated into the Greek language (Septuagint) and given an interpretive translation into the Aramaic (The Babylonian and Palestinian Targums).

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, furthermore there was the Rabbinic interpretation. The following characteristics may be mentioned.

- a. There were two literary forms, the Midrash, which was exegetical and formed a running commentary, and the Mishna, which comprised a more topical treatment. In the latter practically no biblical references occur. It was a kind of systematic treatment of topics.
- b. There were two types of contents, the Halakah, which treats the legal material and focuses on behavior, and the Haggadah, which gives the theological and devotional interpretation of non-legal material.
- c. There were two Talmuds, the Babylonian (the larger one) and the Palestinian (the smaller one). A Talmud is a Mishna upon the Mishna.
- d. There were four methods of interpretation. The first one is the Feshat, which means to strip off or to plane. Originally it stood for the interpretation that would immediately come to the mind of the Jew as he read a passage. It was the acceptable, the “normal” interpretation. Later, however, it came to stand for the more literal interpretation. An extreme case is found in a commentary on Deuteronomy 21:18ff. When a father has no hands, according to this interpretation, a son can never be rebellious. After all, the text requires the father to take a hold of a rebellious son and to bring him to the judge. How could a father without hands succeed in doing this?

The second method is the Darash. The text is not only explained, but its meaning extended and the implications drawn out in an applicatory way. It is more homiletic in nature. Note that not until the Babylonian Talmud was a distinction made between the two methods. For the seven rules of Hillel that are used in this method, see A.B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*¹ and L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*².

The third method is the Peshet. It occurs mainly in the Qumran community, known as a result of the Dead Sea scrolls. In it Scripture is quoted and a commentary is added. Characteristic of this interpretation is that the Scripture is regarded as meant for the Qumran community as the community of the new covenant. To illustrate. When Habakkuk announces the invasion by the Chaldeans, Qumran reads that as Kittim and equates them with the Romans who invaded their territory. The exegesis, therefore, will invariably explain the text in a way that its focus is the Qumran community, not only by implication or in application, but in the original intention of the writer. This exegesis is produced by the so-called Teacher of Righteousness, a priest who claimed to replace the high priest of Jerusalem because of his pagan thoughts and practices. It appeared that this Teacher was killed, but was expected to return. This Teacher, therefore, was a revelatory source who furnished the meaning of the text.

The fourth method was the allegorical one. Especially Philo, who was deeply influenced by Platonic philosophy, used this method. By means of this method he removed everything from Scripture that was unsuitable to God (e.g. anthropomorphisms, such as re-

penance on God's part), everything in creation that was nonsensical, too material (Paradise and the trees stood for the soul and its virtues. Eden meant joy, etc.), everything in the legal sections that was reprehensible, and everything that was trivial in history (Cain's building of a city when there are only three families on the earth). A German scholar regards Philo's work as one great psychology and ethics.

It has been mentioned already that there are many parallels between the Jewish and the Christian interpretation. The four basic methods have emerged repeatedly in the history of the church. It has shown literalism to the point of absurdity, especially in the interpretation of apocalyptic literature. It has shown homiletic and applicatory interpretation throughout the centuries. It has shown interpretation that was self-serving. It has shown interpretation that managed to remove "obstacles" from the text or "unpalatable" aspects, or that was psychologizing and moralizing. There is nothing new under the sun.

2.1.2. The Early Church

Turning now to the early church, our first attention is drawn to the patristic literature written soon after the departure of the apostles. Allegorical interpretation is in evidence. Barnabas holds that the laws of Moses were already symbolical in Old Testament times and therefore did not have to be kept already before the coming of Christ. This approach has apologetic overtones. He fights Judaism by means of allegory. The Old Testament says one thing, but means another, namely the "Christian thing." This brings us to the recognition that the motivation for allegorical interpretation is often acceptable. Judaism as well as Judaistic tendencies ought to be exposed. This, however, does not justify the means. Clemens is somewhat less sophisticated. He is more historical and less allegorical in his writings. He uses the Old Testament, however, as research has shown, as a "book of ethical models," a "picture gallery," in which some are used as good examples and others as bad ones. One ought to pattern himself after the former and not the latter. In recent days the method that Clemens uses has been called the "exemplary" method.

In the centuries that followed the patristic literature basically three schools of interpretation emerged, the Alexandrian, the Antiochian and the Western school. The Alexandrian school is heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy. Its main representatives, Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, place a premium on the allegorical method of interpretation. In line with Greek philosophy they hold to a trichotomy in anthropology. Man consists of body, soul and spirit. Accordingly, the Bible has a literal sense, a moral sense and a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense is understood by the allegorical method, the moral sense by moralizing, while the literal sense is reserved for the layman. The literal sense all by itself, however, would only lead to Judaism. Hence, the spiritual sense is an absolute necessity in order to acknowledge the Old Testament as a Christian document. The New Testament is hidden in the Old - there is continuity between the two Testaments in as much as the Old Testament is the preparation for the New, but it takes the allegorical method to extricate the New from the Old. It is interesting, to note that Von Harnack called this type of interpretation "biblical alchemy."

It should be recognized that Origen addresses an issue that ought to be dealt with, namely the relationship between the Old and New Testament. Again, his motivation may have been admirable, but that does not justify his methodology. One scholar, in view of his motivation, or more precisely, his fundamental principle that the New is hidden in the Old, wishes to shy away from characterizing Origen as an allegorist. He prefers to call him a typologist. The difference between these two terms will be explained later.

The Antiochian school, more influenced by Aristotle, rejects the allegorical method so characteristic of the Alexandrians. Its main representatives, Diodorus and Theodorus, insist upon the grammatico-historical interpretation. They reject symbols, shadows, etc. Job is not regarded as real by some and therefore not allowed into the canon. At times their exegesis is too flat. One of them only saw in four Psalms a reference to Christ. All others pointed to Zerubbabel and Hezekiah. If a Psalm is Messianic, it is Messianic as well. The first interpretation is always historical. Further, both the historical and Messianic purpose is intended by the author. One problem with this school was that the secondary authors received exclusive attention. The divine author was not taken into account. This comes out in their view of the Messianic character of the Psalms. If there was a reference to Christ, it had to be intended by the human author. Here the problem of the so-called *sensus plenior*³ emerges. Is it possible that Old Testament passages meant more than an honest interpreter in Old Testament times could recognize? Or from a different perspective, is it possible that New Testament authors are able to glean a meaning from an Old Testament passage that is legitimate, but could not have been recognized apart from illumination by the divine author? Further, if the answer to the latter question is affirmative, can interpreters in the New Testament time period also recognize “deeper meanings” using the secondary authors of the New Testament as their models? The Alexandrian school answered all three questions affirmatively. This justified their usage of the allegorical and / or typological method. The Antiochian school answered the latter two questions negatively. Further development of this issue is necessary.

All in all, on the one hand the realistic-rational method of the Antiochians, as one historian put it, was a much needed corrective to the speculative-allegorical approach of the Alexandrians. On the other hand, the rational had a tendency to become rationalistic. The wisdom literature was not regarded to be inspired inasmuch as it appeared to have too many parallels in contemporary culture and did not seem to reflect enough of the Christian message. Also, Arius who denied the deity of Christ, came out of this school and the Syrian Nestorians who denied the real union of the two natures in Christ and stressed His human nature appealed to one of the Antiochian writers in support of their views.

Generally speaking, Chrysostom, the practical devotional preacher, Jerome, the learned language scholar and Augustine, the penetrating systematic theologian, are also regarded to belong to the Antiochian tradition. They espoused the grammatico-historical method, although they did not totally exclude the allegorical approach.

Augustine developed the following hermeneutical principles.

1. The correct understanding of the Scripture is not simply a matter of the intellect. The heart is vitally involved. When the heart is involved, however, a walk with God will result. Says Augustine,

“Whoever seems to have understood the divine Scriptures or any part thereof in such a way that he through that understanding does not build up the twofold love to God and the neighbor, then he has not yet understood.”

Augustine

2. The goal of interpretation is to understand and to explain the thoughts of the authors and thus of God.
3. No word may be disconnected from its context.
4. One should recognize that words do not always mean the same in a variety of places.
5. More obscure passages are explained by less obscure or clear passages.
6. Usually the meaning of a passage can become clear by paying attention to the context, the circumstances, the language, or even to other interpreters.
7. Humility is needed for the correct understanding.
8. The authority of Scripture must be an acknowledged fact. In this context Augustine affirms the inerrancy of Scripture.

“I have learned to show to Scripture such honor and respect that I believe very firmly that no one of its authors has erred in any regard in his writing.”

Augustine

9. Fundamental is the fear of God.
10. Knowledge of languages, etc. is needed.
11. Interpretation should be done carefully.
12. Difficulties that still remain will not be related to what is necessary for salvation.

The Western school does not differ in principle from the Alexandrians. Adherents of the former, however, are more temperate in their usage of the allegorical method. Furthermore, they heavily stressed the principle of the rule of faith. The rule of faith is that which the catholic, in the sense of universal, tradition has formulated as the truth of the Scriptures. This emphasis was undoubtedly due to the apologetic stance that was required of them. Two of the most important adherents, Irenaeus and Tertullian, constantly had to stave off attacks on the part of the Gnostics and heretics like Marcion. The emphasis upon the universal tradition can be understood when we recognize that Marcion proposed a canon which was only a small part of the 66 books that were eventually acknowledged as canonical. Over against Marcion's canon, Irenaeus held that the universal church became more and more solidified in their recognition of the Scriptures as we

have them at the present time.

2.1.3. The Medieval Church

In the middle ages there is an interest in ethical and spiritual enrichment as well as in orthodox faith. Basically four senses of Scripture are distinguished. The historical sense disclose the things that are done. The allegorical sense implies that one thing is said and another meant and understood. The tropological sense emphasizes the moral aspect. The anagogical sense opens up a window upon the heavenly realities.

Those under influence of Platonic philosophy stressed the allegorical sense. Bede interprets the prodigal son as worldly philosophy that pines away and hungers after the truth and will not be satisfied until it returns to the church. Alcuin sees in the four wheels of Ezekiel the law, the prophets, the Gospels and the Acts.

Others emphasized the moral sense. The foundation of the house of hermeneutics was history, the walls were allegory, but the roof tropology, pointing to morality.

Thomas states that primarily the words signify things. Thus the historical sense becomes clear. Secondarily, however, things signify other things. This justifies the spiritual sense. This latter sense is to be divided in three parts:

- a. The old law must be allegorically interpreted in the new law.
- b. Matters of Christ and obligations must be interpreted morally.
- c. Other elements must be interpreted anagogically or celestially.

Thomas thus honors history. In fact, he explicitly states that the literal sense is fundamental. Only on that basis the allegorical is allowed. E.g. Jerusalem stands literally for the city of Jerusalem, allegorically for the church, tropologically for the human soul and analogically for the celestial city.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, especially under the influence of the Jewish scholar Rashi, who was a literalist, Nicholas von Lyra emphasizes the need for a grammatico-historical exegesis. In his footsteps follow notable scholars as Laurentius Valla, the philologist and grammarian, as well as Reuchlin and Erasmus, a Hebrew and Greek scholar, respectively.

It has been said that “if Lyra had not played the lyre, Luther would not have danced.” In other words, one of the roots of the Reformation can be traced back to the revival of grammatico-historical exegesis. A word of warning is in place, however. It may well be asked why Thomas Aquinas, with his emphasis upon the foundational nature of the literal sense of the Bible solidified a system of doctrine that made the Reformation an utter necessity. This goes to say that an emphasis upon the historical exegesis of the Scripture is not a guarantee for the proper interpretation and understanding of the Scripture. In Thomas’ case, as has been seen, he was in the grip of the medieval dialectic of nature and grace and adopted in the nature pole the philosophy of Aristotle. In this dialectic we encounter Thomas’ heart commitment. As Aristotle’s influence made Thomas quite open for the more literal interpretation of the Scripture in a formal way, the

substance of that influence prevented him from coming to grips with the biblical message. As far as Lyra and his followers are concerned, they may have contributed to a climate in which the Reformation could flourish. But to the extent that their scholarship was rooted in an autonomous scientific approach, not subjected to any alien authority, it could only be on a collision course with the Reformation and fail to interpret and understand the Scriptures in a God-honoring manner. A wrong hermeneutical approach may be easily detected, but a formally correct approach does not necessarily meet the conditions for an acceptable interpretation of the Word of God.

2.1.4. The Modern Church

Turning first to the Reformation period, Martin Luther became a champion for the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture. In his struggle with the Roman church he threw off any and every ecclesiastical authority. He still at times succumbed to allegorical interpretations. E.g. the ark was compared to a human being, as it was six times as long as it was wide. But this is not central in his hermeneutics. The central governing factor in his hermeneutics is Christ as the “mathematical point of the Bible.” Every interpretation must promote Christ. This was an outflow of what has been called the material principle of the Reformation, namely the doctrine of justification by faith. Justification was not on the basis of the righteousness of man’s own works, but on the basis of the righteousness of Christ. A secondary determining principle is the analogy of faith. In case a difficult passage was interpreted, the interpretation had to be in harmony with the general teaching of Scripture. This was a safeguard that was already introduced by the Western school in the early church. But the primary principle was the presence of Christ. On the basis of this principle, interesting to note, Luther called James a letter of straw compared to the rest of the New Testament and placed this book at the very close of his printed edition of that Testament.

John Calvin developed the formal principle of the Reformation in his labors, namely the principle of *sola Scriptura*. He does from time to time speak about types. Canaan is a type of heaven. But he rejects the allegorical method. The four horses in Zech. 6:1-3 can not be explained as the four Gospels. Calvin avoids the non-literal meaning. He is clear, brief and accurate in the exposition of the text. His commentaries have been called the most consistent expressions of a grammatical, historical, contextual approach anywhere. At the same time they are profound. Calvin would readily agree that interpretation is the art of teaching the real sentiment contained in any form of words or effecting that another may derive from them the same ideas that the writer intended to convey to the readers. The following principles are honored by Calvin.

1. Scripture is the Word of God.
2. Scripture is to be believed for its own sake.
3. Scripture will be believed through the testimony of the Spirit. He opens the eyes.
4. The Word of God is the final judge.
5. The Word is necessary, perfect, sufficient and transparent.

6. Emphasis is laid upon the literal, grammatical, syntactical meaning.
7. Cultural and historical setting ought to be kept in mind.
8. No ecclesiastical authority may be held final.
9. No allegorizing is allowed. No apocalyptic dreams are permitted.
10. One must remember the analogy of faith.
11. The fear of God is needed.
12. The more difficult passages ought to be explained in the light of the less difficult ones.
13. The purpose of Scripture both of its primary Author and of its secondary authors ought to be understood.
14. Deduction from Scripture ought to be regarded as having the authority of Scripture.
15. The three sources of knowledge of the Roman church, tradition, scripture, including the apocrypha, in the Vulgate as the authoritative version, and the church, speaking in the person of the pope, ought to be rejected. Only the Scriptures, as they come to us in the original languages, are authoritative.

While the hermeneutical principles of Luther and Calvin are head and shoulders above the principles of the Roman church, nevertheless a word of caution is in place. It appears that the material principle espoused by Luther is too narrow. The very fact that James is viewed with a jaundiced eye points to this. It seems to be somewhat restrictive to hold that Scripture is Christocentric. In one way this is certainly true, but in another way it is preferable to say that it is Trinitarian. More about this will follow at a later point in this syllabus. But it may already be stressed that the Person and work of God the Father and the Person and work of God the Spirit are just as indispensable as the Person and work of God the Son, although it is true that God the Son is the Mediator between God and man. It appears, furthermore, that the formal principle, espoused by Calvin, is not “substantial” enough. It is not a sufficiently determinative principle for the interpretation of Scripture. A comparison may illustrate this. It is difficult to find fault with the pronouncement of the council of Trent with regard to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. In this regard there is a commonness between Rome and the Reformation. Their hermeneutics, however, are widely divergent. In the same manner there is a commonness in terms of the *sola Scriptura* among adherents to the Reformation tradition. The hermeneutics of, for example, dispensationalist thinkers and covenant theologians, are widely divergent. This points out the necessity of determining in a more detailed fashion the nature and scope of the Scriptures. This, it seems, Calvin did not do in a systematic way. In conclusion, it appears to be the task of a biblical and reformed hermeneutics to begin with a careful delineation of the nature and scope of Scripture. It is anticipated that in this way a set of hermeneutical principles can and will emerge that will reflect the totality of Scripture. In reflecting the totality of Scripture it will be broader than the material principle of the Christological (Luther). In reflecting the totality of Scripture it will be more determinative than the formal principle of the *sola Scriptura* (Calvin). In fact the

material-formal polarity will be transcended. Without going into details in this context, it will be shown that in the Scriptures the trinitarian covenant God speaks in history. This implies that interpretation of Scripture must be:

1. God honoring and God centered.
2. Trinitarian.
3. Covenantal.
4. “Lingual”.
5. Historical.

Returning now to the history of hermeneutics, in the post-reformation time period a variety of interpretational methods developed, which were rooted in the Reformation and still, in one way or another, went beyond it.

1. The dogmatist interpretation. Scripture was searched with a view to finding proof-texts that supported the theological position laid down in one’s creeds. Exegesis, accordingly, functioned jealously to guard such a position. The Dutch theologian Voetius is a prime example.
2. The puritan interpretation. This interpretation is grammatically thorough, textually exhaustive, doctrinally profound and experientially penetrating. The experiential aspect of their interpretation has given rise to the charge that Puritans succumb to an other worldliness in as much as they are “only” interested in the religion of the “soul,” while disregarding the claims of Christ for all of life. Although it should not be denied that some may have fallen victim to an other worldliness, the charge as such is spurious. Efforts to establish a society “under God’s law,” which has been a hallmark of Puritanism, help explode the myth of other worldliness. At the same time it is true, however, that their interest in the experiential has prompted Puritans to an allegorical exegesis. Commentaries on the Song of Solomon are prime examples. To the extent an allegorical exegesis prevailed, the historical vanished in the background. The historical may have been the weakest point of the Puritans. John Owen and Matthew Henry are worthy representatives of the Puritan tradition.
3. The pietist interpretation. This interpretation was thoroughly grammatical with a goal to promote personal piety. On the basis of 2 Tim. 3:16 the most edifying interpretation was regarded the most preferable. The pietist influence was felt as far as the writings of Hengstenborg. His exegesis was grammatical, thorough, somewhat dogmatic at times, militant, but in the final analysis, when two equally acceptable interpretations presented themselves, the most edifying one was chosen.
4. The dispensationalist interpretation. On the basis of the KJV of 2 Tim. 2:15 the dispensationalist holds that history should be divided in seven dispensations.

Thus the Word of God is “rightly divided.” Presently, according to dispensationalism, the dispensation of grace obtains. This dispensation began at the day of Pentecost and will end at the rapture. It is somewhat of an afterthought of God. The previous dispensation, that of the law, was scheduled to culminate in a physical kingdom under King Jesus. This did not materialize at the first coming of Christ. The cross prevented it. The physical kingdom, however, was not completely aborted. It was merely postponed. The clock of prophecy, which in the dispensation of the law announced that kingdom, came to a standstill at the cross. But it will start up again following the rapture. Then, in the millennium, the physical kingdom will emerge. In the meantime the dispensation of grace, also called the dispensation of the church, will run its course as a kind of interim situation, an intermezzo. The problem with this approach is that history is divided in seven more or less water tight compartments, inasmuch as it is not allowed to “take truth that belongs to a past dispensation and bring it up to the present,” or “take truth from a future dispensation and try to apply it to the present” (Hartill, 16). For all practical purposes in each dispensation man has a different approach to God. Because of these views the dispensationalist values the typological interpretation highly. A type is a person, event or thing that prefigures something future. It never teaches a doctrine, but always illustrates a doctrine elsewhere explicitly taught (Hartill, 48). An earlier dispensation, therefore, is shown to illustrate a teaching, a part of the truth, characteristic of a later dispensation. Thus typologizing honors the dispensations as more or less water tight compartments. It is easy to see how the dispensational principle of interpretation has far reaching implications. The question rises how the doctrine of predestination can be maintained on this view. This doctrine presents any time period to be a kind of afterthought. Furthermore, it appears that the doctrine of the so-called “carnal Christian” is a natural outflow of dispensationalism. Law and grace are said to be dispensationally inimical. Often Rom. 6:14 is quoted to support this contention. Accordingly one can be justified (grace), without yet being sanctified (law). Christ is thus savior without yet being king. It is difficult to see how this can be maintained in the light of so much Scripture that attests to the contrary and can be propagated without much spiritual harm. After all **without holiness no one can see the Lord** (Heb. 12:14).

In addition to the typologizing trend in dispensationalism, however, there is also the consistently literal trend. This comes into view in the interpretation of prophetic literature. One of the proponents of dispensationalism, Charles Ryrie, describes the literal interpretation as normal interpretation. This does not deny the use of figures or symbols in prophecy. It does not deny that spiritual truths are taught. It means that the plain meaning is not rejected. Ryrie freely admits that the non-dispensationalist may very well be committed to the grammatico-historical, literal method of interpretation. But he is not consistent. He spiritualizes and allegorizes. This applies to the non-dispensationalist premillennialist, and even more so to the amillennialist.

It is not hard to see how the consistently literal interpretation and the typological interpretation are two sides of one coin. The former requires that the church age is inserted between Old Testament prophecy and its final fulfillment. The reason is simple. The church age does not qualify as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy with regard to the future of Israel. Once the church

age presented itself, to be viewed as an insertion and characterized by its own “truth,” there was no other choice than to interpret the previous dispensation(s) typologically. After all, the content of faith, as Ryrie openly admits, is different in the various dispensations. Hence, the contents of faith in the church age, or the dispensation of grace, must be read into the Mosaic economy or the dispensation of the law. See Ch. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*⁴.

Attempting now to assess these four types of interpretation, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The Scripture contains doctrine. Hence, the first type has a legitimate concern. Calvin’s focus, however, has been considerably narrowed. And so has Luther’s.

Scripture is doctrinal, practical and experiential. Hence, the second type has made a considerable contribution. Calvin, however, may have had a greater insight in the historical aspect of Scripture, which was reflected in his exegesis. In the practical and experiential aspect, at the same time, the Puritans advanced substantially beyond Calvin.

Scripture aims at edification. The third type recognized this. Again, however, the scope was narrower than that of Calvin.

Scripture is historical. The fourth type emphasized this. The way in which this is emphasized, however, promoted the disunity, rather than the unity of history, and tended to truncate doctrines that were dear to Calvin’s heart. Under no circumstances would he have endorsed dispensationalism. In the final analysis it constitutes a regression in terms of Calvin’s accomplishments. This will be further substantiated when the nature of history and the principle of literalism will be discussed. It will be shown that dispensationalism fails to understand the foundational view of history and is neither consistent in its literalism (typology), nor really “normal” in its interpretation of language. One should not arbitrarily deviate from the plain dictionary sense of words. But a dictionary is not the ultimate “norm.” The ultimate norm is the Scripture itself. And when in this Scripture the Lord Jesus is recorded as saying, **My Kingdom is not of this world**, then prophecy may not be so interpreted that Christ came to set up a national, physical, kingdom, only to be thwarted by the opposition of the Jews. Further, when the book of Revelation teaches Christ’s kingship at the time that John receives the message from God (Rev. 1:23ff.), then no interpreter may conclude that Christ’s kingdom does not start until a future millennium. The age old adage *Scriptura sui interores* acknowledges the Scripture as final reference point and ultimate norm.

In conclusion, it appears that all four types overlook, neglect or misconstrue the importance of the historical aspect. This leads us to the final observations that will cover all three sections of the history of hermeneutics, the early church, the medieval church and the modern church.

It seems that the student of hermeneutics encounters in its history, a near universal, be it conscious or not, failure to give the historical its rightful place in the interpretation of Scripture.

Indicative of this is a nearly uninterrupted stream of psychologizing, spiritualizing, moralizing and typologizing interpretation. Recently this type of interpretation has been characterized as the “exemplary” method. Adherents to this method approach the Scriptures as a book of models,

a gallery of examples, some bad, some good. The heart of this method is the utilization of a superficial historical equation mark, “then is now.” Centuries lapse instantaneously. What is overlooked in the utilization of this historical equation mark is the locus of a passage in the wider context of Scripture and the scope of this passage in its more immediate context. The first mistake produces fragmentation or isolation from the historical context. The second mistake produces atomism or isolation from the central thrust of the text.

An illustration of psychologizing is the doubt of John the Baptist in prison and that of Thomas following the crucifixion. It will be shown that the hermeneutist’s focus on doubt both disregards the historical aspect of the text as well as the scope of the message in the context. As to John, posing the question to the Lord Jesus, whether he was indeed the Christ, was not prompted by his situation, languishing in the prison of Herod. Therefore it was not indicative of doubt. He simply compared his mandate, announce someone who is about to apply the axe to the root of the tree, with the activity of Jesus, healing and raising people from the dead. The two did not correspond. His question did not arise from personal discomfort, but from his official function as an ambassador of God. This shows his greatness. He is not man-centered, but God-centered in the midst of his awful predicament. In response to his question Christ continues his activity and quotes Isaiah to show that he was the fulfillment of prophecy, announced by God himself. This does not mean that the axe is totally absent. On the contrary, the axe first cut Himself down. He was the great substitute for His people. But second, those who listened to Him and rejected Him will receive the axe themselves. They were exalted to heaven, now they will be cast down to hell. There is no trace of doubt in Matt. 11!

As to Thomas, rather than doubt there is absolute certainty. Christ did not rise from the dead. In order to do that, he had to be God. Earlier he already had said, **Let us go up to Jerusalem and die there with him.** He was fiercely loyal to his Master and Lord, but did not believe in his deity. Death would be inevitable and ultimate. Upon seeing the Savior, he exclaimed, **My Lord and my God.** Now he acknowledged the deity of Christ. The foundation of apostles was without a crack. No disputed message would go forth from them into the world. Christ is God! And as such He is Savior. Again, doubt does not come into the picture in John 20. To recognize this, however, knowledge of both the locus and the scope of the passage and its context is mandatory.

An illustration of spiritualizing is the red cord hanging from the window of Rahab’s home (Joshua 2) or the storm on the lake (John 6). It is not good interpretation to inquire into a person’s interest in Christ in terms of a red cord in his life, or to talk about a person’s storm of life. The historical context and the thrust of the passage is overlooked.

An illustration of moralizing is the exaltation of friendship and hospitality in the case of Mary’s visit with Elizabeth (Luke 1).

An illustration of typology is the shittim wood of which the Old Testament tabernacle is built. This wood resists the effect of the weather and attacks insects. It is called “incorruptible.” Thus it stands for Christ’s humanity. When other aspects of the Old Testament are also pronounced to be types of the person and work of Christ, the problem arises, as someone put it, “of dissolving

the lines of history into points of typology.” It has been contended that only historical events, persons or things can be used as types. Thus, it was concluded, typology does not nullify history. But in this contention and conclusion the issue is not joined. Of course, the shittim wood is an historical “thing.” But is the historical locus and the contextual scope of the passage, in which it occurs, given its due? The answer to that question must be negative. The problem of typology will have to be discussed again in another context. So further discussion is postponed until that time. For now it must be concluded that the psychologizing, spiritualizing, moralizing and typologizing interpretation do not do justice to the historical and contextual aspects of the text. Hence, they are unacceptable. In addition to what has been already said, this type of interpretation does not really need the Scripture. The Scripture becomes optional. For a sermon on the death of Christ as well as his resurrection, Exodus 26:23, which speaks about two boards, one typologically representing the death and the second the resurrection of Christ (Hartill, 61) is in the final analysis not necessary. One can use just as easy the “death” and “revitalization” of nature as “text” to be interpreted typologically. This leads us to the deepest reason for the rejection of this type of interpretation. Scripture is not seen as foundational, but rather illustrative. But what then is still the difference between a conservative scholar and a liberal like Driver, who states that the significance of the narratives of Scriptures “lies in the types of character which they exhibit and in the moral and spiritual lessons which, whether they are strictly historical or not, may be deduced from them?” If the Bible believing scholar is distinguishable from the unbeliever in his view of Scripture, he also must be distinguishable in his interpretation of Scripture. Otherwise the difference between them is practically negligible.

2.2. The Background of the History of Hermeneutics

Following this survey the deeper roots of the various approaches to hermeneutics will now be exposed. Hermeneutics is not a neutral enterprise. It reflects the deeper heart commitment of the hermeneutist. This will now further be developed, specifically with regard to the synthesis thinking that has been so prevalent throughout the history of hermeneutics.

The present section will cover the background of the hermeneutics of the early church, the medieval church and the modern church, specifically in connection with synthesis thinking. In such thinking the biblical scholar adopts, often unconsciously, unbiblical patterns and allows them to influence, control and determine his approach. Synthesis thinking always has compromise at its core and invariably leads men astray.

In each one of the three major time periods a central, unbiblical pattern has emerged which is dialectic in nature and determines the direction of the synthesis thinking of that period. In the early church period the Greek form-matter dialectic was dominant and did not fail to influence the church. In the medieval church period the scholastic nature-grace dialectic prevailed in the church. In the modern church period the nature-freedom dialectic emerged and exercised strong influence in the church. All three dialectics, it must be added, can be traced back to a common root.

What is this root and what is the nature of these dialectics arising from it? This question must be answered first.

When man rebels against God and declares the throne of the universe vacant, he principally ends up with a world that is uncontrolled, contingent, chaotic and threatening. After all, the God of the Bible who controls and determines the direction of everything that comes to pass is replaced by chance. To counterbalance the principal lack of order and all that this entails rebel man must provide control, necessity, order and safety. As he is responsible for the lack of order, he now must introduce a principle of order. First, God is replaced by chance. Now chance must be checked by man. However, when the order becomes stifling, a search is made for decontrol. This can only be done by the removing of the existing order, which once again introduces the contingent and the chaotic. At this point the cycle is completed and is ready to start all over again. This is at the heart of the dialectic. It is constituted by two poles that mutually exclude and presuppose one another. Order excludes disorder and vice versa. At the same time order presupposes disorder and vice versa. When order enters, disorder exits and vice versa. At the same time, disorder must be present for order to enter and vice versa.

The history of human thought and action appears to be in the grip of this dialectic. The pendulum swings constantly from the one pole to the other. A perfect balance can not be found. The mutual exclusion of the two poles accounts for that. The effort, however, is made again and again. For those in the grip of the dialectic “the other pole” always constitutes the only answer for either the threatening disorder or the stifling order.

The root of this dialectic has already been indicated. It is apostasy from the living and sovereign God who alone is able to provide total control and perfect freedom in a way that the one does not impinge upon the other. Since the dialectic keeps all of sinful mankind in bondage, it is not surprising that its influence has also extended itself to hermeneutic methodologies. Since the Scriptures are designed to break that bondage and return man under the total control of God and thus will give him perfect freedom, it is not surprising either that the influence of this dialectic upon the hermeneutic methodology is extremely grave in nature. To the extent the dialectic exercises its influence, to that extent will the Scriptures be rendered impotent to break down its prison walls. The influence upon hermeneutics is a veritable fifth column. The description of the threefold dialectic that now follows, is designed to expose it so that its influence upon the hermeneutical process can be resisted and Scripture can be used effectively against it.

2.2.1. Ancient Thought

In Greek philosophy the matter pole in the form-matter dialectic brings to expression the principal lack of order found in the universe. The form pole represents the order that is imposed upon the chaos. The form that orders matter is produced by human reason. In Greek philosophy the form pole has the primacy. After all, it spells order, predictability, certainty and safety. The matter pole is quite clearly inferior.

In the philosophy of Plato the matter pole is represented by the “this-worldly,” the “lower story,” while the form pole is represented by the “other worldly,” the “upper story.” The lower story is the realm of the phenomena, the empirical, faith. The upper story is the realm of the noumena, the rational, knowledge. In this philosophy there is a clear cut dualism in which the material world is quite inferior. It is interesting to note how this dualism produced a method of

interpretation, that has kept biblical hermeneutists in its grip for centuries and has not yet vanished from the earth. This method is the allegorical method. The term allegorical is derived from a Greek verb that means, “to say one thing and to mean another.” To illustrate. The poetry of Homer reflects the “this-worldly” and is therefore in the eyes of those influenced by Plato quite inferior, indeed even detrimental for a wholesome development of the populace. Hence, there were only two alternatives. This and similar poetry is either banned or reinterpreted. The latter course was taken. Literally and actually the poetry conveyed a message from the realm of matter. Allegorically it ended up conveying a reinterpreted message from the realm of the forms. In fact, it was claimed that that was the message originally intended.

In the philosophy of Aristotle the fundamental dialectic continues to be present. But the relationship the poles sustain to one another changes. The form-pole retains the primacy, but the forms are no longer transcendent (“other worldly”), but immanent. A form is matter for a higher form. Matter is a form for lower matter. As has been stated, this hierarchy of being assigns the primacy still to form. But matter loses its pointed inferiority. The empirical gains in stature in Aristotle. It stands to reason that with the ascendancy of the thought of Aristotle the literal interpretation of the text gains in importance and proportionally the allegorical interpretation begins to decline. The primacy of the form pole, however, will guarantee that the latter will not disappear.

2.2.2. Medieval Thought

In the medieval church, as has been mentioned, the nature-grace dialectic prevailed. Initially medieval thinkers were most influenced by Platonic philosophy. The grace pole, replacing the form pole, sustained a relationship to nature as superior to inferior. It is hardly surprising that the allegorical interpretation blossomed. Through Thomas Aquinas the philosophy of Aristotle became the dominating influence in the medieval church. This had implications for hermeneutics. The literal interpretation became foundational. Only on the basis of literal interpretation was the allegorical interpretation allowed. While the literal interpretation, however, was thought to be mandatory, the allegorical interpretation by no means vanished.

2.2.3. Modern Thought

The synthesis thinking of the modern time period is characterized by the influence of the nature-freedom dialectic. Toward the close of the Middle Ages the scientific enterprise started to wrest itself away from the domination of the Church. This had a profound impact upon hermeneutics. The Bible was subjected to the same kind of linguistic and historic scholarship to which every other book was subjected. Eventually Spinoza’s rationalism, which was skeptical about miracles and regarded prophecies as products of a fertile imagination, concluded to literary incoherence and historical contradictions in Scripture. At the same time Locke’s empiricism, which claimed the right to investigate autonomously the historical beginnings of Christianity, produced in the long run materialism and unbelief. Under the onslaught of rationalism and empiricism not only Christianity, but also freedom in general, seemed to succumb. The rationalistic approach represented man’s age old effort - ever since he rebelled against God and declared the throne of the universe vacant -, to create order in a world of chance and chaos. Of course, this

approach could not allow the Bible to retain its God-given function. Also, it ordered the world with such an “iron consistency” that human freedom disappears. Today, many people hold that the modern technocratic society is a direct result of this stifling rationalism. Total control crushes the humanity of man. Empiricism has not provided an acceptable alternative. On the contrary, it resulted in skepticism with regard to the Bible and did not secure man’s freedom.

It ought to be noted at this juncture that since ancient philosophy the tables are turned. Greek philosophy wrestled with the establishment of order in a threatening chaos. Modern philosophy will now wrestle with establishing freedom in the face of a stifling order. In ancient times the order pole provides predictability and certainty and safety. In modern times the freedom pole provides escape from regimentation and oppressive control. With this effort to secure freedom the name of Immanuel Kant is indissolubly connected.

Kant distinguished sharply between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom. The former is the area where science is in control. Although science is limited to this realm, it has total autonomy over it. Everything in this realm can be exposed to the acids of its investigation. The realm of freedom is that of religion, or more precise, that of morality. While the two realms are mutually dependent upon one another, they may not encroach upon one another’s territory. Thus in establishing the realm of nature Kant wishes both to provide a foundation for Newtonian science against the scepticism of Humian empiricism, as well as place a limitation upon science, in order to make place for faith. Kant’s philosophy has a formal resemblance to the philosophy of Plato in that a dualism emerges in which the realm of freedom is transcendent and has the primacy.

Hegel was not content with the sharp delineation between the two realms. In his estimation the two poles of the dialectic do not sustain the relationship to each other as Kant pictures it. Freedom is not a transcendent territory, but an immanent as well as all penetrating reality. Order, certainty and predictability on the one hand, and freedom from oppressive control, on the other hand, merge in the all encompassing movement of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

Kierkegaard opposes the stifling rationalism that in his estimation has the final word in the movement from thesis and antithesis to synthesis. Freedom, he holds, is still not safeguarded. Hence, he introduces the notion of human existence as transcending the realm of nature. In this transcendence it is truly free.

In the philosophy of Heidegger, modern thought reaches a culmination point. Driven by the dialectic of nature and freedom, he nevertheless holds that his predecessors have failed to give an adequate account of the relationship between nature and freedom. By means of an hermeneutic of human existence (an interpretive analytic) he hopes to arrive at Being as the transcendental condition for both nature and freedom.

Without further entering into the merits or demerits of the philosophies that have been mentioned it is nearly uncanny to note how profound the influence of modern thought has been upon the history of hermeneutics.

The combination of rationalism and empiricism produced a very critical approach of the Bible, both in the literary and historical area. The inerrancy of Scripture was soon denied and the empirical investigation in the authorship, date, etc. of the several Bible books led to destructive results. R. Simon, held that the Bible ought to be approached as any other book. J. Astruc introduced a documentary hypothesis according to which the book of Genesis was compiled from two main sources and two secondary sources.

The philosophy of Kant influenced Schleiermacher. To the extent that the Bible belonged to the realm of nature it had to face scientific criticisms. In Schleiermacher's opinion the Bible was neither unique as a book nor acceptable as a final authority. As to the life of Jesus, it had to be severely truncated. The data in the New Testament could not be regarded as reliable. In Schleiermacher's footsteps Strauss states that Jesus is a wise man and that Mark receives the contents of his book from an original source, which he called Q. Renan writes a life of Jesus from a psychological and historical point of view. The biblical picture again is severely truncated. To the extent, however, that the Bible's subject matter belongs to the realm of freedom or religion Schleiermacher wishes to honor that. Contact with that realm is made by means of feeling in the soul. Hence, he was called a conscious theologian. The scholars, who followed in his footsteps, formed the liberal tradition. This was characterized by a critical-historical method, in which an effort was made to separate the kernel from the husk of the Scriptures. The husk was that aspect of the Scripture that was dispensable for one reason or another. The kernel was the substance of the Scripture. The culmination point of the liberal tradition or consciousness theory was reached in Von Harnack. To him the kernel of the Scriptures was the relationship of God and the soul. God is the universal Father and the soul has eternal value. It is clear how much of the Scriptures must have been regarded as the dispensable husk that had to be removed in order to lay bare the kernel.

The philosophy of Hegel influenced Baur. He construes the biblical story in terms of thesis (=Jewish Christianity), antithesis (=Pagan Christianity) and synthesis (=Catholic Christianity). Wellhausen applies this evolutionistic approach to the Old Testament. According to Scripture the law of Moses is followed by the Psalms and then by the Prophets. Wellhausen changed the order to Prophets, Law, Psalms. The Old Testament religion developed from a nomadic to a rural to a prophetic religion. The prophets, however, were the first ones who put their thoughts in writing. To account for the present Old Testament he develops the documentary hypothesis. The Old Testament is compiled by a final editor from four sources. The first one is the J (Jahwist) source, the second one is the E (Elohist) source, the third one is the D (Deuteronomist) source, and the fourth one is the P (Priestly) source. They are dated 850 B.C., 750 B.C., 600 B.C. and 450 B.C., respectively. It is clear that the law (Deuteronomist) is quite late, according to this hypothesis. At a later date Gunkel supplemented this documentary hypothesis with his form criticism. He held that behind the J, E, D and P. sources was an oral tradition. All kinds of categories, genres, etc. of literature existed in a variety of centers or pockets of the population. These genres, as paradigms, sayings, miracles, legends, myths, Psalms, etc. met the needs of these centers or pockets as they were found in the early community. To give one example, many Psalms were royal songs celebrating the highlights of the life of the King. The determination of the nature of the centers or pockets was regarded to be eminently helpful in the interpretation of

the several genres.

It appears that the critical-historical method that exposed the Scriptures, as has been said, “to the acids of modernity,” did not leave much left as the substance of Scripture. In fact, A. Schweitzer, who started his career as a theologian, came to the conclusion that this method leaves us without much knowledge about the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Most of the data about his life were shown to be unsubstantiated claims on the part of the early congregation. On the basis of Schweitzer’s conclusion Bultmann stated that we know next to nothing about the life of the historical Jesus. At this point when the liberal tradition is at the pinnacle of its success, it appeared also most vulnerable. Its triumph created a vacuum. Nothing substantial was left after the acids of modernity had done their work. In this vacuum neo-orthodoxy exploded. Eventually this would lead to what has been called the “new hermeneutic.”

Neo-orthodoxy exploded on the scene through Karl Barth. He recognized that scientific and historical theology could never provide the ground for faith. In fact, it did not merely fail to provide this ground - the liberal tradition proved this -, it seemed to destroy Christianity. In the footsteps of Martin Kahler, who distinguished between the historical Jesus (the realm of nature) and the “historic” Christ (the realm of freedom or grace), Barth removed the facts that formed the basis of Christianity from the realm of the historically verifiable and placed them in the “upper story” of historicness. The term “historical” refers to ordinary history. The term “historic” to the realm that is beyond ordinary history. The first one is objectifiable. The second escapes objectification. The solution to the problems of the liberal tradition, however, evokes more problems than it solves. He promotes, in a way of speaking, the facts of Christianity to a higher realm to remove them from the acids of modernity. But the price is high. Scripture as such, belonging to the realm of nature, can not be regarded as infallible and inerrant. It can be no more than an echo of the real subject matter of the Bible located in the upper realm. Or as Barth expresses himself, the Word (subject matter) is reflected in the words (Scripture). Scripture is not God’s revelation, it is a witness to God’s revelation. No human words, whether in the Bible or in later theologies, including his own, ever can grasp or verbalize God’s revelation. Only God can grasp man. Barth anticipates that God will grasp man’s word and transform it in a momentary event into the Word. This momentary event, however, never “stretches itself out” in linear time. Then man could grasp it. And that is by definition impossible. Now we understand why the Bible is called the echo of the Word. The Word is already gone, but the echo still lingers. In his extensive works Barth, therefore, focuses his attention upon the echo. After all, the original “bound” is beyond his reach. When one reads his systematic treatment of the contents of the echo - approximately 9,000 pages -, one is often struck by the traditional terminology. But one should not let his guard down. Barth believes in a resurrection (in the upper story), but this is not to be identified with the actual, physical rising of a dead man who never saw corruption, and who miraculously started to function again. That would make a fact of nature the ground of faith. And the acids of the critical-historical method have proved that such a rising is a scientific impossibility.

Bultmann goes beyond Barth. He chides him for his naive biblicism, in which he maintains so many terms that sound orthodox, but which already have been disqualified by the scientific method. He drops the language garment of the Scripture. He does not focus upon the words as

echo of the Word to which man responds in faith, but rather upon the man who responds in faith to the Word that comes through the words. These words, according to Bultmann, are mythical in character. They never intended to be literal. On the contrary, they intended to disclose human self-understanding or authentic existing. The interpretation of Scripture, that is true to the intent of Scripture, must strip away the language garment of the myths without any reservation in order to explore and arrive at the possibility of authentic existence. Hence, his type of interpretation is called existential interpretation. It negatively demythologizes the words. Positively it serves human self-understanding. The act of understanding or human, authentic, existence, results from the act of God in the Christ event. According to Barth man finds himself between the remembrance of the revelation or occurrence of the Word in the words and the anticipation of such revelation or occurrence. According to Bultmann, man is facing the act of God in the Christ event, defined as “future.” In fact God himself is described as “futuraity.” This term implies that the act of God in the Christ event that produces human understanding or authentic existence is beyond man’s grasp. Bultmann’s pupils have asked the question, whether the words God and Christ are still to be maintained? Are they not equally mythical? Braun, finally, calls God a kind of co-humanity. Herewith the existential interpretation has run its course.

It is understandable that other pupils of Bultmann have not simply asked which terms can be used any longer to bring the inexpressible (upper story) to expression, but under which conditions language as such is possible. Here the new hermeneutic emerges. Under the influence of the philosophy of Heidegger, language is said to reveal itself. This revelation, it is said, takes place in the language event. Language is not to be identified with a written book (the Bible), nor with the act of oral speaking (proclamation). Language makes the written as well as the spoken word possible, but language itself is both prior and beyond them. The language event is a gift, but it will never be received as something that can be objectified. It is according to Gadamer, “like a flash of lightning that strikes.” More can be said, however. The Gospels quite clearly include the historical Jesus in the proclamation. This recognition produces among the proponents of the new hermeneutic a “new quest for the historical Jesus.” The old, liberal quest, by means of the critical-historical method, produced next to no results. The new quest takes a different direction. It does not inquire into what Jesus spoke or did not speak, where the account was historically correct and where it was not. No, that would be the old quest that failed. The new quest stresses the fact that Jesus spoke. He moved in the sphere of the word. His word required decision “here and now.” His voice was the voice of love against death and for life. As such He was God’s word. In and through Him the mocking voice of death is answered, “Love is victor!” That is why the language event and the historical Jesus are indissolubly linked together. Once again, this interest in the new quest is not a repetition of the old one. The new quest has three main criteria to gain information about the historical Jesus. The first one is the criterion of dissimilarity. A saying of Jesus is thought to be authentic if it is different from contemporary Judaism and from the post-Easter faith of the church. The second one is the criterion of coherence. Once certain sayings have been accepted as authentic, other material that resembles them are also authentic. The third one is the criterion of multiple attestation. When a theme occurs in more than one Gospel it is more likely to be authentic.

Both the scope of the course in hermeneutics and time does not allow to evaluate the background, goal and failure of the neoorthodox and new hermeneutic movement any further. Suffice it to say that the message of the Scripture is emasculated beyond recognition. To the extent that the Scripture belongs to the nature pole of the dialectic, the critical-historical method is allowed, indeed encouraged to do its destructive work. Section upon section of Scripture is said to be inauthentic. Teaching upon teaching is said to be unacceptable, starting with the miracles. To the extent the substance of Scripture, the subject matter of Scripture, whether it is called the Word, the act of God or the language event, belongs to the realm of the “beyond,” the “upper story,” or the realm of freedom, it escapes human conceptualization and grasp. Not much is left of the message of the Scriptures in which the self-attesting trinitarian God reveals Himself in His covenant which unfolds itself historically from its inception in Genesis to its consummation in Revelation. The dialectic of synthesis thinking is a lethal enemy of the biblical linear development from creation and fall through redemption to the return of Christ and the judgment of God. Apostate dialectic and biblical covenant history are radically and totally antithetical to each other.

It can not be denied that in recent years there has been a backlash against the radical conclusions of the critical-historical method as well as against the reductionism of consistent neo-orthodoxy and the new hermeneutic. The historical reliability of the Scriptures, not in the least as a result of archeological discoveries, is increasingly recognized. The theological intention of the writers of Scripture in dealing with the issues of salvation, grace and sin is more and more acknowledged. The term biblical theology, which points to an integrated message of the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as a basic unity between the two Testaments, is more and more often used. The linear nature of the history of created reality is emphasized from time to time. The question is, however, whether this backlash results from a real heart’s identification with the cause of God and truth, or whether it was produced by new developments in archeology or philosophy. Inasmuch as the historic Christian faith has not been presented as the only alternative, it must be feared that a new or different type of synthesis thinking emerged.

There is no opportunity to deal at length with the most recent development, spearheaded by Pannenberg, Moltmann, etc., but it must be clear by now that synthesis thinking is a dead-end street, also in hermeneutics. The message of Scripture is molded and shredded by a dialectic that results from an apostate heart. As has been mentioned, dialectic and Scripture stand in an antithetical relationship to one another. A very important issue is that the dialectic by definition will fail to do justice to the historical character of the Scriptures. The development of God’s covenantal dealings with His people is implicitly or explicitly denied or misread. But the most fundamental problem is that the dialectic insists that the issue in life is to bring about order in a threatening chaos (Greek philosophy) or to establish freedom in a stifling regimentation. This is a dilemma rooted in the apostasy of a man’s heart. Scripture diagnoses the issue as one of rebellion against the living God and His word. The dialectic principally shifts the attention away from this. The antithesis now must have become clear. It is fundamentally a matter of life and death. Either the dialectic destroys the message of Scripture and death follows. Or Scripture destroys the message of the dialectic and life results.

II. The Starting Point of Hermeneutics

3. The Text of Scripture

The discipline of biblical hermeneutics takes its point of departure in the text of Scripture. This sentence, however simple it may appear, raises a variety of fundamental questions. The answer to these questions, in turn, have profound implications and far reaching consequences.

The questions pertain to the origin, the formation, the end product, the attributes, the recognition, the preservation and the fixation of the text.

3.1. The Origin of the Text

Scripture teaches univocally that the origin of the text of Scripture is divine. The classical passages in this regard are 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The former states that “every Scripture” is *theopneustos*. The latter predicates of “every prophecy of Scripture” that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The term *theopneustos* does not denote “inspiration,” but rather “expiration.” This implies that Scripture is not a human product breathed into the human writers by God, but rather a divine product “breathed out” by God through the human writers. In addition to the divine origination and the human instrumentality 2 Pet. 1:21 mentions the agency of the Holy Spirit. The rest of Scripture echoes this unreservedly. The Scriptures are called “the oracles of God” (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:12; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:11). Further, Scripture passages of the Old Testament, which are quoted, referred to, or alluded to in the New Testament are introduced as spoken by God, explicitly and implicitly, or by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 19:4ff.; Mark 10:5ff.; Acts 1:6, 13:34ff.; Rom. 15:9ff.; 1 Cor. 6:16; 2 Cor. 6:2; Gal. 3:16; Eph. 4:8, 5:14, Heb. 1:5ff., 3:7, 8:8, 9:8). Finally, formulae as “God says” and “The Spirit says” are stated in the present tense, indicating that the Bible is the living Word of God here and now (Acts 13:35; Rom. 15:10; Heb. 7:1-10, 3:7). Technically speaking, this evidence only pertains to the Old Testament. But the New Testament writers regard the New Testament books on a par with the Old Testament (2 Pet. 3:16). Further, they quote the Old Testament and the New Testament in the same context and as having the same authority (1 Tim. 5:18). Finally, they attest that their words are the words of God (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 4:2,15).

3.2. The Formation of the Text

Scripture displays on every page that God employs the full-orbed humanity of the biblical writers. One can encounter everything that is typically human in the Scriptures. No human being is an isolated entity. Accordingly, the writers receive information from written sources. They gather data from oral tradition. They interview witnesses to obtain the facts. All of this serves the purpose of getting the task accomplished. Further, every human being is a unique individual. Accordingly, the writers display a variety of gifts. Some write in poetry, others in prose. They possess their own style. Some write with great complexity, others with amazing simplicity. They reflect their own personality. Some picture a situation with bold strokes, others address it with great sensitivity. Finally, all human beings have their own framework. Accordingly, the

writers express themselves in a particular language. They utilize forms peculiar to their times. They use concepts corresponding to their historical situation. They display features characteristic of their cultural setting. They reflect the living experience of their own specific daily environment. All this and more accounts for the rich and full-orbed humanity that is on display in the biblical writings.

3.3. The End Product of the Text

Scripture teaches that it is both God's word and man's word. It is simultaneously divine, the utterance of God and human, the free product of man's efforts.

“The divine and human factors... flow confluent and harmoniously to the production of a common product.”

B.B. Warfield

This means, on the one hand, that the divine and human elements do not compete with one another or exclude one another. The divine factor does not supersede, suppress or eliminate the human factor. Neither does the human element supersede, suppress or eliminate the divine element. This is not to say that the two factors are equally ultimate. God is and remains the origin of the text of Scripture. The Holy Spirit superintended, guided and sustained the human writers. But it is to say that the human writers did not function as implements or pens. The mechanical theory of Scripture production in which inspiration is essentially dictation is not tenable. To secure both the full divine superintendence and the full human involvement, the inspiration of the Bible writers by the Spirit has been defined as “organic.” The problem with this term is that the noun *organon*, from which it is derived, usually indicates a lifeless instrument. Since, however, it is questionable that a term can be found that will adequately bring to expression what is basically a mystery, the phrase “organic inspiration” may be as good as any as long as it is correctly understood. Negatively it wishes to convey that the process of inspiration is not mechanical. Positively it wishes to stress that the Holy Spirit takes human beings in His service in a way that their full humanity is retained and that the product of their writing, while it has the unmistakable imprint of divinity upon it, nevertheless displays an unimpeded humanity.

The fact of the *concursum* of the divine and human factor means, on the other hand, that every word of Scripture is both God's word and man's word. All the qualities of both the divine and the human are to be found in every word, portion and element of Scripture. Conversely, no quality, inconsistent with either humanity or divinity, can be found in any word, portion or element of Scripture. Both the divine and the human elements form the inseparable constituent elements of one un-compounded product, in which both the human coloration and variety as well as the divine perfection and infallibility are safeguarded. The divine authorship and the plenary, verbal, inspiration determine that Scripture is inerrant in all that it asserts. The human writers and the unimpeded humanity of their involvement gives to Scripture a quality that makes it meet the full human predicament.

3.4. The Attributes of the Text

Scripture teaches the authority, the necessity, the perspicuity and the sufficiency of the Bible. It is authoritative because it originates from God and is the abiding Word of God. It has the ultimate say in all that it asserts. It carries historical authority in all it describes and normative authority in all it requires. Scripture presents itself as such and claims it for every portion of Scripture it quotes or to which it alludes.

Its necessity is bound up with the sinfulness of man. Even before the fall man was in need of God's Word. This was sharpened after the fall. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the divinely appointed, necessary means to salvation, consisting of regeneration, justification as well as sanctification.

Its clarity is asserted by Christ (John 5:45-47). The fact that the sinner is blind does not remove the essential clarity of Scripture. This does not mean that there are no difficult passages in Scripture. Peter testifies to that (2 Pet. 3:16). But it is to say that the message of Scripture is clear enough so that it can be understood by all. The Reformation emphasized the perspicuity of Scripture to contest the view of Roman Catholicism as to the need of an interpreting clergy as intermediary between God and man. The Scriptures deny this (1 John 2:20-21). Thus the Reformers denied this. They acknowledged gratefully God's gifts to the church in terms of pastors and teachers. But they rejected the Roman Catholic notion of clericalism (Acts 17:11).

Its sufficiency is also asserted by Christ (Luke 16:31). There is no need for any additional information. All that is necessary to know and all that is necessary to understand is to be found in Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture is usually emphasized against sectarians who claim the need of additional information or of an authoritative interpretation.

The four attributes flow forth from the character of Scripture as a divine-human book.

3.5. The Extent of the Text

Scripture does not make any pronouncement with regard to its own quantitative limits. What, then, determines the limits of the canon? Is the church the determining factor? This is held by Roman Catholicism. But this leads to an authority that is not only extra-biblical, but also above Scripture, inasmuch as it passes judgment upon it. Is it the formulation of the contents of Scripture? Luther takes this approach. Only what promotes Christ, is worthy of being Scripture. But this is equally unacceptable. For who determines the formulation of the contents? Further, the danger of construing a hierarchy in which some books are regarded as more essential and others more peripheral is far from imaginary. Luther fell victim to this in his evaluation of the Epistle of James and the book of Revelation. Practically, this may lead to a "canon within the canon," or even the exclusion of certain books from the canon. Is it, then, the response of faith? This is characteristic of a variety of movements that emphasize the experiential aspect of Christianity. However, the morass of subjectivism is inescapable upon this approach. Is it the truth of facts and reason that is spread throughout Scripture? This is the view of liberalism. But who will determine the difference between the kernels of truth and the husk of its wrappings, and what method is to be employed to separate the two? Is it the "Word of God in the word of man"? This

is proposed by neo-orthodoxy. But since this “Word of God” is not at man’s disposal, there is not even a ground for claiming that this “Word of God” will only reveal itself in the “word of man,” known today as “Scripture.”

The solution will not be found unless what has already been established with regard to the origin, the formation and the end product of the text of Scripture is brought to bear upon this issue.

God is the origin of Scripture. This implies that in a real sense He is the only and ultimate canon. He determines what is His Word as He enjoins His spokesmen, both in the Old and New Testament time period, to proclaim His message. The superintendence of the Spirit of God insures that God’s spokesmen only convey God’s message. Here both the qualitative and quantitative limits of the canon are established. What God originates and the Spirit superintends is God’s Word, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

God uses human beings in the formation of Scripture. He enjoins His servants to speak as well as to write. Kline argues that the framework in which God reveals Himself requires written documents. This framework is the covenant. It appears that the covenant form, utilized for example in the book of Deuteronomy, is identical to the form of the treaties between Hittite kings and their vassals. The events that led up to these treaties, the stipulations that were imposed by the suzerains, as well as other items connected with the treaties, were laid down in treaty documents. They were essential to the proper administration of the treaties, had to be carefully safeguarded and were unalterable. In the same way, says Kline, God’s covenant dealings and promulgations were quickly committed to writing. It should not be contested that the Bible is covenantal. The terms Old and New Testament already indicate this. At the same time one should refrain from regarding the Bible as formally resembling a treaty document. At decisive points God’s covenant document, the Old and New Testament, does break through, and as a matter of fact, must break through the limiting forms of the treaty documents. However, Kline’s point is generally well taken. Covenant dealings and covenant promulgations lead inevitably to covenant documents. The ongoing activity of God, the ongoing life of His people and the ongoing interaction between God and His people are progressively deposited in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. This explains the process of canon formation. It is bound to the history of the covenant as it progressively develops in all its constituent elements. In the canon formation the authority of God and the superintendence of the Spirit are the determining factors. Spokesmen as well as writers receive their mandate and supervision from above. This mandate and this supervision determine the limits of the canon. This is, first of all, evident with regard to the Old Testament. God chooses His spokesmen. They consequently present themselves as speaking God’s Word. The Spirit superintends them as well as the writers who produce the covenant documents. Repeatedly, the Old Testament is quoted as the word of the Spirit. This is, secondly, evident with regard to the New Testament. Christ appoints His apostles as the foundation of the church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20). He sends them out to speak His word (Matt. 10:40, 16:19; Mark 3:14). This word would be the key to the Kingdom of God. It would both open and close this Kingdom (Matt. 16:19; John 20:23). In order to do so the Lord Christ promises and gives them the Spirit to lead them into all the truth (John 16:13-15, 20:22). The spoken words of the apostles became a living “tradition.” This tradition was at first oral in nature (1 Cor. 11:23, 15:3;

1 Pet. 1:12; 2 Pet. 3:2; Jude 3). Later, it was written down (2 Pet. 2:15-16). The oral and written tradition were both authoritative (2 Thess. 2:15). The written tradition, furthermore, was accepted as on a par with the Old Testament Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16). It was simply the apostolic deposit committed to writing by men guided by the Holy Spirit. These men were not necessarily apostles, but the contents of their writings remained within the parameters of that which was received by the apostles from the Lord himself (Gal. 1:12; 1 John 1:1-4) and passed on to the church under the supervision of the Spirit (Luke 1:1-4). Since the leading into the infallible truth of Jesus, which is at the same time the Word of God, is promised only to the apostles as they are both eyewitnesses and filled with the Spirit, the written canon must by definition be a closed one. With the decease of the apostles as the guardians and executives of the apostolic deposit, the canon could no longer be extended. The limits of the promise were reached and there-with the limits of the canon. The divine-human product is completed, when the men who are taken in God's service to produce the canon are gone.

The end product of the process that originates in God and culminates in the written canon is a divine-human book, in which the qualities of divinity and humanity are both present. The divine-human nature of Scripture determines it as canon. This at the same time determines its limits. Only that which is divine-human is canon; all that does not meet this qualification must be excluded.

3.6. The Recognition of the Text

This leads us to the inevitable question of the recognition of the canon. Just with its own limits, Scripture makes no pronouncement about its own recognition. Historically the recognition appeared to spring up spontaneously. Scripture was not made to meet formal, *a posteriori*, criteria as the pronouncement of the church, the consensus of the people, the nature of its doctrine, etc. It did not go through a reflective process of recognition in which first a standard was set and subsequently the question was asked whether Scripture complied with that standard. This, in the final analysis, would have come down to a canon above the canon. It is quite evident that any canon above the canon vitiates the canon. Neither is it correct to say that when Marcion introduced his truncated canon, in which he rejected the Old Testament and any book of the New Testament that he accused of having Judaistic tendencies, the church countered with its canon. Rather, when Marcion set forth his views, he truncated the canon that was already there. The groundswell and backlash against his proposals were swift, decisive and impressive. His rejection by the church was instantaneous, immediate, radical and total. He and his views did not stand a chance of being considered, let alone accepted. The recognition of the canon of the Old and New Testament was already firmly embedded in the fabric of the church. To destroy the canon was to destroy the church.

It seems that this leaves us with somewhat of a puzzling picture. What accounts for that spontaneous, firmly entrenched recognition of the canon? What was and is the determining factor in this recognition? The Reformation held that the ground for the recognition of the canon was the canon itself and that the fact of the recognition came about through the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of God's people. Theologically, this is undoubtedly correct. But it immediately calls for a reflection upon the nature and contents of the testimony of the Spirit. Usually it

is maintained that this testimony is not a separate revelation, but takes place through and along with the proclamation of the Word. This is still somewhat wooden. It is preferable to approach this matter historically. Wherever the Spirit of God, through the divine-human canon, produced the church, there the recognition was instantaneous and unwavering. The church gratefully acknowledged what brought about its (re)birth. It recognized its life line and under no circumstances would it allow anyone to cut that lifeline or even tamper with it. Here the solution is to be found. Whenever and wherever the divine-human authoritative, necessary, perspicuous and sufficient canon as an instrument of the Spirit carves its way through the rocky soil of the human heart and extends the Kingdom, there the canon is gladly acknowledged. How can a child deny its womb and a river its own wellsprings? That is the reason why the recognition sprung up spontaneously. That is why the backlash against Marcion was swift and merciless. That is why pockets of disagreement have been mopped up throughout the history of the church. In the true church of Christ the recognition of the canon never was an issue, is not an issue, and never will be an issue. The children of the canon in a sense instinctively will defend their mother. Attack upon the canon as canon will be recognized as indicative of a false methodology or of an unregenerate heart. *Tertium non datur!*

3.7. The Preservation of the Text

It is generally acknowledged that the original manuscripts have not been preserved, that the process of copying throughout the centuries has not been flawless, and that the manuscripts can be classified in terms of traditions and families. The question is how to arrive at a trustworthy text. The problem is not as acute for the Old Testament text as it is for the New Testament text. Hebrew scholarship in the so-called Masoretic school has established a text that is generally recognized as the best one available. Hence, it forms the foundation for the various translations. It is different with the Greek text. Until the middle of the 19th century things were quite uncomplicated. By far and away the majority of the manuscripts that were known and trusted came from the Byzantine tradition. Still, approximately 90% of the known manuscripts can be traced back to this tradition. Against the backdrop of these manuscripts a *textus receptus* emerged that formed the basis of the translations up till that point in time, including the King James Version. However, the discovery of manuscripts from what became known as the Egyptian tradition, notably the Codex Sinaiticus, brought about a dramatic change. Modern translations are invariably based upon the text of the Egyptian tradition. This text is found in the Westcott-Hort and Nestle editions, to mention only these two. Which text ought to be favored? Those who promote the Byzantine text point out that the church has preserved this text for 1,500 years and more, that the church fathers were known for their opposition against any proposed change, and that the peculiar script of the Byzantine text - mostly minuscules - resulted from a change-over from majuscules (capital letters) to minuscules. The majuscules that were not regarded as important were not changed over, but rather eliminated. The main argument, however, is that the preservation of the text by the church, rather than rational decisions by neutral science pertaining to the text type to be favored, ought to be the decisive factor.

Those who favor the Egyptian text - the vast majority of today's scholars - point to the greater antiquity of the manuscripts of this tradition as well as the fact that the church fathers in their quotations did not follow the Byzantine text! The apparent changes in the Codex Sinaiticus and

Vaticanus, which is in the same tradition, are regarded to be improvements, rather than indications of the poor quality of the original transcription.

The hermeneutist will do well to look into this matter, but may be comforted by the fact that the differences do not determine major issues in doctrine or life.

3.8. The Fixation of the Text

Usually, this area is assigned to a branch of scholarship called “textual criticism,” also called “lower criticism” in distinction from “higher criticism,” which does not equate Scripture with the Word of God. The designation “textual criticism” is less fortunate. It is preferable to speak of “textual fixation” or some formulation like it. The apparent errors in transcription can to a great extent be corrected. Some of the errors are so common in all transcription efforts that they can easily be traced. Other errors are more difficult to spot. One of the rules is that the more difficult reading must be preferred. It seems to come natural to transcribers to simplify the text when they do not understand it. Not all errors, however, can be removed. This should be acknowledged realistically. At the same time it should never fail to astonish the Bible scholar and Bible reader how well preserved the text appears to be. The more significant differences in the manuscripts cover no more than a page to a page and a half. Further, none of these determine any issue in doctrine or life.

4. The Nature of Scripture

The nature of Scripture can be defined as covenantal. This term is chosen to indicate the substance, unity, continuity and progress of Scripture. Its choice can be justified by the centrality of the concept of the covenant in the totality of Scripture. In successive order Scripture speaks of the covenant with Noah, prediluvian (Gen. 6:18ff.) and postdiluvian (Gen. 9:9ff.), with Abraham (Gen. 15:18ff., 17:1ff.) as well as Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 2:24, 6:4), with Israel, on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:5, 24:7ff., 31:16, 34:10ff., 27-28; Deut. 4:13ff., 23ff., 5:2-3, 9:9) and in Transjordan (Deut. 29:1ff, 12ff.), with David (2 Sam. 7:5ff.; 1 Chr. 17:4ff.; Psalms. 89:3ff., 7ff., 123:1ff., 10ff.) and, finally, it speaks of the new covenant, embodied in Christ (Is. 42:6, 49:8; Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 11:25), made with Israel (Is. 59:21; Jer. 31:31ff.; Ezek. 36:24ff.), but encompassing Gentiles as well (Is. 42:6; Heb. 8:8ff., 10:15ff.). In addition to this the history of Israel records a variety of covenant renewals, in times of transition of leadership to insure continuation of adherence to covenant obligations (Deut. 29 - Josh. 1; Josh. 23-24; 1 Sam. 12; 2 Ki. 11; 1 Chron. 22-29), or following times of serious covenant disobedience (Ex. 34; 1 Sam. 12; Ezra 9-10; Neh. 9-10; Dan. 9; 2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chron. 15).

The repeated mention of the term covenant, specifically in connection with the relationship between the old and the new covenant, is undoubtedly responsible for the designation of the two major parts of Scripture as Old and New Testament. It must have been commonly accepted by the early church that the concept of covenant overarched the totality of Scripture. However, this acceptance is no more than a bare starting point. Questions multiply themselves, questions that must be answered. What is the meaning of covenant? What is the relationship the several covenants sustain to one another? What are the implications for the hermeneutical process to designate Scripture as covenantal?

An attempt to answer these questions should begin with a survey of several views that have been espoused. Historically, Reformed Theology has given concentrated attention to the Scripture teachings on the covenant. This was in sharp contrast to Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. It has been surmised that Roman Catholicism neglected this doctrine because of its semi-pelagianism, and Lutheranism because of its interest in the doctrine of justification by faith. Whether this is correct or not, the preoccupation with the covenant was strong in Reformed circles. Until the last few decades, in fact, Reformed Theology had a nearly exclusive stake in this area. In the mid-1950's this changed dramatically. The field literally exploded upon a publication from the hand of Mendenhall who pointed out the parallels between Hittite suzerainty treaties and Biblical covenants. The stream of literature that followed this publication was phenomenal and shows no sign of abating. In the survey, therefore, both the views of Reformed Theology and the achievements of recent research have to be taken into account.

Following this survey the biblical data will be assessed.

Finally, the implications for hermeneutics will be drawn out.

4.1. A Historical Survey

4.1.1. *Reformed Theology*

It appears that Zwingli was the first to pay attention to the covenant as an overarching principle as a result of his controversy with the Anabaptists. The unity of the covenant served for him as a ground for infant baptism. The theme of the unity of the covenant was picked up by Bullinger and, then, by Calvin. Bullinger wrote the first major treatise on the subject. Its title is telling. *Brief Exposition Concerning the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*. His treatment of the biblical data is remarkably full-orbed. But his focal point is the unity of the covenant, both polemically - the status of infants - , and thetically - the unfolding of the truth. The covenant is one and eternal, and starts with Abraham. It can be summarized in the words of Gen. 17:1, **I am God Almighty, walk before me and be perfect**. According to Bullinger, the further development of the covenant unfolds who God is in His person and His work as well as what is required of man. In other words, the covenant in the bud becomes progressively the covenant in full bloom. Hence, the later covenants are called covenant renewals. This applies also to the covenant of Mount Sinai. The covenant, which is called a contract, is made between God on the one hand and Abraham and his children, on the other hand. Furthermore, it contains both promises and conditions or stipulations. Bullinger explicitly states that also in the New Testament children of believers are members of the covenant. They are such by virtue of the promise. But they may be excluded when they do not meet the conditions. When he is faced with the question how he can maintain the unity of the covenant in view of Jer. 31 and Gal. 4 which seem to indicate that there are at least two covenants, his answer is as follows. The substance of the covenant remains the same. This determines its unity. This substance is the promise and the grace of the remission of sins. However, there is a progression of the external forms in the one covenant history. This determines that there are two administrations.

Calvin's views are virtually identical to those of Bullinger. He also emphasizes the unity of the covenant. Says Calvin,

“God has never made another covenant, than that which He made formerly with Abraham and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses.”⁵

J. Calvin

The unity is rooted in its substance, which is Christ foreshadowed in the old and having come in the new covenant. The difference between the old and new covenant is a matter of the form and mode of administration. The term abrogation with regard to the old covenant pertains to the latter. The law as a perpetual prescription for a holy life and a perpetual condemnation of sin is not abolished. But the law as ceremonial and the old covenant economy as preparatory to the full glory of Christ was abolished, when the substance that was promised finally came. If there was a distinction between Bullinger and Calvin it is in the usage of the term contract. Bullinger does utilize it. Calvin by and large prefers to speak about the covenant of gracious adoption. This has a different flavor, as will be discussed later.

It seems that the covenant was resorted to by both Bullinger and Calvin in the controversy with the Anabaptists. It functioned, therefore, to establish the essential unity of the Old and New Testament economies and so served for all practical purposes as the basis for infant baptism. However, the expositions of Bullinger and Calvin were important for another reason. They both held that the covenant was made with believers and their children and was ultimately designed to promote holiness of life to the glory of God. God made Himself known to Abraham and immediately required of him to display a holy conduct. This conduct had to be implemented in the children of Abraham as well, since they were part of the covenant family. This was displayed in the sign of the covenant, namely circumcision. It was given to make visible to them that God was God, who entered into a covenant with them as well and required them to please Him. This covenant was placed before Abraham's children on a grander scale and in an enlarged fashion on Mount Sinai. The self manifestation of God as the God of Israel was ever so much more impressive, and the demands made on Israel were ever so much more detailed. By the time Israel camped at the border of Canaan for the second time a further chapter in the covenant of God with His people had been written. God had shown Himself as God in all His attributes, His power, His grace, His love, His justice and His holiness. At the same time the legislation that would accompany Israel throughout its history had been completed with the book of Deuteronomy. In these expositions, it seems, the heart of Bullinger's and Calvin's covenant theology is encountered. An echo of this can also be heard in the views of Olevian, as he speaks of justification and sanctification as the two benefits that accrue from the covenant.

Regrettably, however, as covenant theology continues to be developed, strands begin to appear and become soon solidified that seem more imposed upon Scripture than gleaned from it.

It soon became the majority opinion that the covenant was made with the elect and that, therefore, it is unconditional. Faith through which the benefits of the covenant are received is a gift itself, and can therefore never function as a condition. Against this backdrop the covenant is defined as a mutual pact between God and the elect sinner, in which God promises to be his God as well as forgiveness in Christ, while He demands faith through which the sinner obtains God's

favor and obedience by which he conforms to the wishes of God. The demands are called obligations and in no way impinge upon the gratuitous, unconditional, character of the covenant of grace.

In addition to this development the concept of the covenant of works was introduced. God promises eternal life to Adam before the fall upon the condition of good works. When man fails to meet the condition, the covenant of grace takes its place, in which eternal life is promised upon faith on the part of the sinner. When faith, a “condition,” is emphatically added, that it is a gratuitous condition. The good works envisioned in the covenant of works are identical to the sum and substance of the ten commandments, at that time written on the heart. Some covenant theologians hold that this covenant of works is repeated within the framework of the covenant of grace in terms of the promulgation of the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai. Facing the impossibility of keeping the commandments, the sinner would recognize that the covenant of works is no longer a possible avenue to God and turns to the covenant of grace. The Mosaic covenant is not altogether construed as a repetition of the covenant of works, however. There are also features that are characteristic of the covenant of grace. Some, however, do equate the Mosaic covenant with the covenant of works. Note that Olevian and Zanchius stressed that the covenant was made with the elect and therefore had to be unconditional, while Olevian and Rollock set forth the concept of the covenant of works.

Eventually the concept of the covenant of redemption, also called the *pactum salutis*, was added to the lists of covenants. This was a pact between the Father and the Son, fully two-sided, in which the Father gave the elect to the Son, and the Son promised to secure their eternal salvation. It is an intertrinitarian pact that lies back of the covenant of grace. The name of Coccejus is connected with this teaching. When the covenant of redemption was adopted by the majority of the covenant theologians, the definition of the covenant of grace began to show this. Ursin writes,

“(God’s covenant) is a mutual pact between God and man, by which God assures men that He will be favorable to them, will remit sins, bestow new righteousness, the Holy Spirit and life eternal through and because of the Son the Mediator. In turn men bind themselves to God to believe and to repent, i.e. to receive with true faith this sublime benefit and to afford God true obedience.”

Ursin

Witsius, however states,

“The covenant of grace is an agreement between God and the elect sinner, God declaring His free good pleasure as to the free giving of eternal salvation and all the covenanted blessings pertaining thereto, through and because of Christ the Mediator, man moreover falling in with the decree in question by sheer faith.”

H. Witsius

The covenant of grace becomes the means to implement the covenant of redemption.

It is interesting to note that the development of the theology of the covenant is reflected in the creeds of the Reformed churches. The early creed, notably the Heidelberg Catechism and those

of that time period - the 1550's -, mention the covenant sparingly, generally to give a basis for infant baptism. The covenant was one of the many doctrines that were adhered to. The later creeds, culminating in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms show a different picture. At that juncture the covenant had become somewhat like the organizing principle of all of the Scripture teachings. The covenant of redemption, the covenant of works as well as the covenant of grace (made with the elect) are taught. Rather than the polemic framework - infant baptism -, the systematic framework is prominent. In a sense it over-arches and embraces all of the teachings of Scripture. It is also interesting to notice that the function or "use," as it has been called, of the covenant of grace shifts. The main use, according to one writer, of the covenant of grace is to cement assurance of salvation. One belonged to the elect, when one belonged to the covenant of grace. Thus the question whether one was one of the elect was reformulated. Now the question became, whether one belonged to the covenant of grace. The answer was affirmative when repentance and faith as well as the accompanying holiness of life were present. Belonging thus to the covenant of grace provided one with certainty that one belonged to the number of the elect. William Guthrie's, *The Christian's Great Interest* was written against the backdrop of this approach.

Noteworthy in this context are yet some of the views of Turretine. He defines the covenant in terms of contract or pact, which was usual, but he cautions the Bible reader that God and man were not equals, that God was not obliged to enter into the covenant relationship, and that there are covenants, as the covenant with Noah, that were not dipleuric (mutual), but monopleuric (one-sided). The promise did not have any condition whatsoever. He is not altogether opposed to the word "condition" in the covenant of grace, as long it is understood clearly, that it may only be used with regard to the end and not with regard to the means to the end. To explain, the promise of salvation is made upon condition - not meritorious, but instrumental cause - of faith and repentance. But the promise with respect to the means, faith and repentance, is unconditional. As to the benefits of the covenant, Turretine mentions reconciliation and communion with God, conformity to the image of Christ and the eternal possessions of the blessings imparted. The very conditions appear to turn into benefits, something that will receive further attention at a later point.

Following this summary of Reformed covenant theology in the 16th and 17th century, the views of three Reformed theologians in the 20th century will now pass in review.

The first one to be discussed is Herman Bavinck. His exposition of the covenant of grace is helpful. Whether the Hebrew *berith* is a two-sided covenant or a one-sided disposition is not determined by the term, but rather by the parties that are involved. The more one of the parties plays a subservient role, the more the notion of disposition becomes central. For example, when a king makes a covenant with a conquered nation, or with his own subjects, or when a covenant is made with inanimate objects, the one-sided aspect of the covenant, at least in its origination, must be recognized. Also, when God enters in a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:8ff., the monopleuric character ought to be recognized. In fact, whenever God covenants with man at any time, it should be acknowledged. In Gen. 15, according to Bavinck, one does not encounter a pact, as much as a promise. The stipulations in God's covenant dealings with man, he does not want to describe as conditions for entering the covenant, but as the proper way of life, once man

was adopted into the covenant. When man transgressed the stipulations again and again, the question became increasingly urgent. Would the covenant of grace have to be dissolved? The answer was decidedly in the negative. God can not and may not terminate His covenant. He had sworn to that effect with an oath. His own name and honor was at stake. The covenant, therefore, was in principle unbreakable from God's side. Hence, according to Bavinck, the Greek translation *diatheke* for the Hebrew *berith*. *Diatheke* may mean testament as well as covenant. It indicates the one-sided origin and also the inviolability of the covenant. Bavinck emphasizes that it is rooted in the mercies of God.

Just as the early church fought for the unity of the covenant (against Gnosticism, which separated the Old Testament from the New Testament) as well as for the diversity of the covenant economies (against Judaism, which rejected the new covenant), so Bavinck wishes to maintain its unity because of its one substance as well as its diversity because of its two administrations.

He also maintains, in spite of the deficient form in which it is presented, that the so-called covenant of redemption or *pactum salutis*. It is based on the biblical thought of the intertrinitarian planning for the salvation of sinners in eternity and forms, in turn, the basis for the covenant of grace made with man in time.

The covenant of grace, that was established with Abraham, was prepared by the universal promise in Genesis 3:15 and by the covenant of common grace with Noah, was continued on Mt. Sinai. The benefits, both temporal, the land, etc. and spiritual, justification, adoption and sanctification, are the same, be it presented in a more elaborate form. The obligations are also the same, be it again more fully disclosed. Just as Bullinger, Bavinck sees the promulgation of the law on Mt. Sinai as an elaboration of the second part of Genesis 17:1. The law of Moses, he emphatically states, is not opposed to grace, but subservient to it. At the same time he adds, the covenant of grace takes the law into its service in a different manner. It must make the sinner conscious of his state before God to strengthen the expectation of an even greater outpouring of the grace of God. Paul addresses this aspect when he calls the law a schoolmaster unto Christ (Rom. 10.4; Gal. 2.23ff, 4:1ff.). In short, it serves the purposes of a higher, better, economy of the covenant of grace. When that economy arrives, it was regarded as a continuation of the same covenant of grace with the same Mediator and the same benefits, as well as a definite change from the earlier economy. After all, the shadow is replaced by the substance.

Since the law is subservient to the purposes of the covenant of grace, Bavinck refuses to construe the covenant of Mt. Sinai as a repetition of the covenant of works. He does believe that God entered into a covenant of works with Adam in his unfallen state when He promised him eternal life upon obedience to God's stipulations. However, that covenant was broken and can never reach its contemplated end. To replace this law covenant, God introduced His Gospel covenant. Because it is rooted in the good pleasure of the Father, the work of the Mediator and in the operation of the Spirit, it is not dependent upon a condition on the part of man, does not remunerate merit and does not wait for man's obedience to the law, it is inviolable and unbreakable. At the same time, Bavinck holds that the covenant of grace fulfills the covenant of works. The issue of obedience to God remains, while it is complicated by the issue of punishment upon committed sins. These issues are squarely faced by the second Adam. He took the punishment

upon Himself and kept the law perfectly in both His passive and active obedience. Bavinck points to Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:22,45-49.

Obedience to the law, therefore, is basic to the covenant of grace. This leads Bavinck to the conclusion that the covenant of redemption or *pactum salutis* is essentially a covenant of works, be it made with Christ, the second Adam. Thus, the covenant of works, made with the first Adam, failed, but the covenant of works, made with the second Adam, succeeded. The temporal covenant of works was replaced by the covenant of grace, which is lasting because it is based upon the eternal covenant of works, or the *pactum salutis*, or the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace as promoted by Rollock, Preston and the Larger Catechism. The covenant of redemption concerns itself with the acquisition of salvation, the covenant of grace with the application of salvation. The former is eternal and has no history, the second one is temporal and has various economies. Quite clearly, he senses a difference. He explains this difference also in terms of the function of Christ. In the covenant of redemption He is the head, in the covenant of grace the Mediator. He is not free from vacillation in this regard, however. In practically the same breath he pronounces Christ the head of the covenant of grace. Against that backdrop he states that it is a matter of indifference, whether the *pactum salutis* and the covenant of grace are regarded as one or two. The same vacillation occurs in his views about the relationship between election and covenant. At times he seems to indicate that they are identical in their extent, although not in their mode. Election is individual, while the covenant is corporate. In the former man is passive, in the latter active. This leads him to say that in a real sense one may not speak of demands or conditions with regard to the covenant. What God gives, He demands. What Christ acquires, He requires. On the other hand, the historical character of the covenant of grace is not lost to him. He states that the covenant is monopleuric in its origin, but bipleuric in its existence, that the covenant has demands and has a conditional form, and that unbelieving members are chaff among the wheat, bad branches on the vine. He does not want to speak in this connection about an external and internal covenant, or an absolute and conditional covenant. He is willing to talk in terms of an internal and external side, however, as well as of people who are *in foedere* - in the covenant -, but not *de foedere* - of the covenant. One must treat those who are inwardly strangers to covenant grace as covenant members in a *judicium caritati*, a judgment of love, as long as they walk in the way of the covenant.

John Murray defines covenant as an administration of grace and promise on God's part, carrying with it the obligation on the part of the beneficiary, which obligation to be fulfilled is not to be construed as man's entering into covenant with God. He comes to this definition upon examination of Scripture passages relating to the covenant of the day and night in their season (Jer. 33:20-25), the covenant with Noah, both prediluvian (Gen. 6:18) and postdiluvian (Gen. 9:9-17), the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:7-21, 17:1-21), the covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12-17), the covenant with the Messiah (Is. 41:6, 49:8-9; Mal. 3:1), and the new covenant (Jer. 31:31ff.). Mr. Murray insists that all the covenant is characterized by a grace and a promise that marks them as inviolable, perpetual, irrevocable, immutable, certain and irrevocable. At the same time he recognizes that the covenant that God makes with men can have no meaning except as it elicits obedience on their part. The covenant is operative only in the context of the response on the part of the ones engaged in the covenant.

Or, as Murray states, while the covenant relationship was unilaterally constituted, it was bilateral in its existence. The mutual nature of this relationship requires a response as a necessary expression of it. It is even proper to speak of faith and obedience as the condition in the beneficiaries apart from which the relationship constituted and the blessings received would not exist. This, however, does not make the covenant conditional. The Israelites repeatedly broke the covenant, forsook it, transgressed it, forfeited all claims to God's promises, yet the covenant can not fail. The nature of the promise implies that there will always be those who will fulfill the conditions apart from which the blessings would be null and void. Thus the original definition stands. A covenant is a promissory dispensation inviolable in its provisions. This is underscored by the usage of the term *diatheke* as testament. It spells the unilateral disposition of property.

Against this background, Murray does not want to describe the intertrinitarian dealings that result in the salvation of sinners in terms of covenant. Covenant is not a pact, a mutual, bilateral agreement. It is an administration of grace and promise. Hence, the term is not applicable to the intertrinitarian undertakings. Flowing forth from this, Murray criticizes the identification of the covenant of redemption and covenant of grace. The covenant is made with man - not with Christ -, and must be defined in terms of an historical administration. Hence, this identification is untenable.

Murray does not want to describe the Adamic administration in terms of covenant either. He rejects the notion of a covenant of works. Covenant is essentially a concept that implies inviolability. This implies that the administration in Paradise does not qualify to be called a covenant. It was broken. It did fail. In this context it may be added that Murray refuses to construe the covenant of Mt. Sinai as a revival or repetition of the covenant of works. This is to put this covenant in an erroneous perspective, apart from the consideration that did not exist can not be repeated.

The covenant of grace did not start until the days of Abraham in Genesis 15. Redemptive grace comes to expression in Gen. 3:15, but the revelation of redemptive grace does not take on the form of covenant administration until Gen. 15.

In conclusion, Murray rejects decisively the concept of covenant as contract, compact, pact or agreement that has the stamp of mutuality. Not even the Bible data that speak of man entering into a covenant with God (Josh. 24:25; 2 Kings 11:4,17, 23:2-3; 2 Chr. 15:12, 23:16, 34:31-32, 29:10; Ezra 10:3; Jer. 34:8-15; Psslms 50:5). God's covenant with man is not coordinated or correlative with man's covenant with God. Man's action is not on a par with God's action. Man's entering into covenant with God points at the reciprocal response on the part of the covenant member in which he rededicates himself to God's covenant which He has sovereignly instituted.

This survey could include Meredith Kline at this point, but since he has made a major contribution in the framework of modern research, we will postpone a discussion of his views until a later time.

4.1.2. *Modern Research*

The methodological point of departure will be the thesis of Wellhausen to the effect that the order of law - prophets, suggested by Scripture should be replaced by the order of prophets - law. It is Wellhausen's contention that the prophets with their stress upon an ethical monotheism preceded, indeed, produced the literature that had the law as a central motif. In his estimation the covenant is of late date and was projected back into the history of Israel to the days of Moses.

Critical scholarship followed the Wellhausen hypothesis without exception until the epoch making study by Mendenhall, entitled *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Based upon the analysis of the Hittite treaty forms by V. Korosec, published in 1931, Mendenhall pointed out the parallels between the Hittite suzerainty treaties and the covenant renewals described in Exodus 19-20 and Joshua 24. This prompted a veritable avalanche of literature on the subject. With slight variations in individual authors the near-universal conclusion was reached that the treaties were patterned after a literary form that contained a preamble, a historical prologue, a statement of substance, a number of stipulations, a list of witnesses and a variety of blessings and curses. There is also a near universal unanimity that this literary form is to be found in the Old Testament. But from that point on there is wide divergence about the nature of the biblical data. Mendenhall, as was stated, saw in Ex. 19-20, Josh. 24, a correspondence in the structure.

Exodus 19

Preamble (19:3)

Historical prologue (19:4)

Statement of substance (19:5a)

Blessings (19:5b-6a)

Joshua 24

Preamble (24:2a)

Historical prologue (24:2b-13)

Statement of substance (24:14)

Witnesses (24:22,27)

Exodus 20

Preamble (20:2a)

Statement of substance (20:3)

Specific stipulations (20:4-17)

Curses (20:7b)

Blessings (20:6,12b)

But he is somewhat skeptical, to say the least, with regard to the book of Deuteronomy. Since the correspondence in Exodus and Joshua is between the Hittite treaties and the biblical material, Mendenhall is willing to draw the conclusion that Exodus 19-20 and Joshua are to be dated in the Mosaic and post-Mosaic era, respectively. He also holds to an early date, pre-Mosaic, of the covenant with Abraham. Thompson agrees with him, except with regard to the book of Deuteronomy. So do Kline and Kitchen. D.J. McCarthy, however, is far from ready to see the correspondence of treaty form in Exodus and Joshua, while he does affirm it with regard to Deuteronomy. But, with Frankena he holds that the correspondence is between Deuteronomy and the Assyrian treaties. This allows him to assign a late date to Deuteronomy. This implies, of course, that the form was imposed upon earlier events. The same holds true, in his opinion, for the Genesis covenants. He is less sure about the relationship between Sinai and Deuteronomy covenants on the one hand, and the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, on the other hand. He calls for further study on the relationship between promise and law. A theology of the covenant at any rate has not yet been written. Von Rad takes his distance from the views of Mendenhall and McCarthy. He is of the opinion that Deuteronomy's origin can be traced back to cultic renewal feasts. Hence, he denies any correspondence in literary forms. Especially Kline criticizes him sharply. D.R. Hillers traces the idea of covenant throughout the Old Testament. First, there is the J. and E. material of the Sinai (Exodus) and Shechem (Joshua) covenants. Exodus 20 and Joshua 24 do not give us eyewitness accounts. Israel took the treaty form and projected it back in its history. This form allowed a free Jehovah to deal with a free people. Still Hillers holds that there was basis in fact. The book of the Judges presents a federation of tribes under the laws of Exodus in the framework of the covenant. God had effective control, but still there was maximum freedom. Nevertheless the theocracy seemed to be a failure. This led, secondly, to the emergence of the P. material. The P. source takes a different approach. It replaces the emphasis from the law upon the promise. The Noahic, Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are awarded center stage. Again, without denying that there is a basis in fact, the redactor begins to play an important role. The covenant is called eternal. The corresponding obligation begins to recede. A great gulf opens up between Mt. Sinai and its stress upon responsibility and the covenant with David. In the latter, the future of the nation is tied to the character of the king. The upshot, however, is no better than in the J. and E. material. Jehovah institutes a lawsuit against His people because of their apostate lifestyle. Read Amos 3:1-2; Hosea 4:1-2; Isaiah 1:2-3; Micah 6:1-8. In this tradition, which is centered around the king, the covenant is not mentioned. With the decline of the kingdom, however, the prophet became the spokesman, and with it the D. material proposed again a different solution to the problem. The law regained its position of importance. The king was grudgingly mentioned (Deut. 17:14-20), and the vistas upon the new covenant were opened (Deut. 30).

Against this backdrop we will now turn to the views of Meredith Kline. He defines covenant as a sovereign administration of the Kingdom of God, of God's Lordship, consecrating a people unto Himself under the sanction of divine law. An inquiry into the biblical data has convinced him that there are two types of covenant, law covenants and promise covenants. The former are found in Exodus 19-24, Deuteronomy 1-33, Joshua 24, the latter in Gen. 15; 2 Sam. 7:14ff.; Jer.

31:31ff. According to Kline, these two types of covenant can be identified in terms of the swearing of the ratificatory oath. If God swears the oath, it is a promise covenant, if man does so, it is a law covenant. The law covenants display the same structure as the Hittite suzerainty treaties. Kline speaks about a sharp distinction between the two types of covenant. Indeed, he quotes Paul to that effect. Paul, according to Kline, talks about a “radical contrast,” a “radical opposition,” a “sharp distinction,” between the Mt. Sinai covenant as a covenant of law, bondage and death and the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of promise, freedom and life (Gal. 3ff., 2 Cor. 3). At this point Kline is placed before a dilemma. When covenant can be defined as an administration of promise and as an administration of law, which should have the priority? Murray, as has been shown, opts for administration of promise. Kline chooses administration of law. Law, in his estimation, has the priority. He adduces various reasons for his choice.

First, the various components of the Adamic administration virtually requires for it to be construed in terms of covenant, more specifically, in terms of a covenant of the law type! Historically, therefore, it has the priority over the promise covenant. In the redemptive covenant, promise was added to law.

Second, in Christ, in whom the principles of law and promise cooperate, obedience to the law is foundational for the issuing and the fulfillment of the promise. The principle of inheritance by law, opposed by Paul with regard to the sinner in Gal. 3-4, appears to be operative with regard to the Christ as the Mediator of the covenant. In the redemptive covenant, promise is not only added to law, it is also based upon law.

Third, no one will attain to the promised consummation of the covenantal blessings unless he attains to holiness without which no one will see God. Thus, in the redemptive covenant, promise is not only added to law and based upon law, but also will not be fulfilled apart from law. Law quite clearly constitutes the ground structure for the redemptive covenant.

Against this background Kline rejects the identification of covenant and election. He calls the reduction of covenant to election a substitution of a logical abstraction for a historical reality, which will have dire exegetical consequences. For example, it will be impossible to speak of the correlate promise-threat as covenantal elements. The distinction between external and internal covenant only serve to veil and obscure this impossibility. Further, it will lead to an endless debate about the conditionality-unconditionality of the covenant. The theology of the covenant will be fragmented unless election is subordinated to covenant. Covenant that is conceived as a guaranteed promise cannot assimilate several aspects of the biblical teaching. However, covenant that has law as its foundation and makes its promises dependent upon the federal representative can accommodate all aspects.

All in all, Kline holds that law covenant must provide the formal generic pattern for the covenant of God and man. He proposes the following overall terminology that would honor this pattern. The one covenant is the covenant of the Kingdom. Its two phases are the covenant of creation (prefall) and the covenant of redemption (postfall). The definition of the covenant, stated at the beginning of the discussion of Kline’s views, implies that the relationship characteristic of

the covenant is bilateral, theocentric and much more than a mercantile contract.

Kline's views have an implicit apologetic value. If Kline is right in his defense of the correspondence between the biblical covenant form and the Hittite treaty form - his arguments, as well as those of Kitchen and Vannoy, are weighty -, critical scholarship will have to face it as a formidable obstacle for the theory that Deuteronomy is of a late date. With it one of the pillars of the J., E., D., and P. approach will have collapsed. Extreme Wellhausianism is already acknowledged as being discredited. A further crumbling of this critical edifice may open the road to a recognition of the integrity of the biblical account so that its message once again will be heard.

In this historical survey, thus far, three definitions of the term covenant emerged:

Pact

Administration of Promise

Administration of Law

Furthermore, while not proposed as a definition, Mendenhall speaks about covenant in terms of relationship. This latter word is suggested as a definition by Mitchell. In fact, already Murray and Kline speak about relationship in their writings. Bavinck's remark that the parties in the covenant determine its make-up would strengthen the argument for covenant as relationship, which in its fullest form is set forth by Mitchell. He contends that both Murray and Kline take one of the concomitant elements of the covenant and regard that as its essence. He argues that oaths, promises, obligations, stipulations, curses, blessings, ceremonies, etc. are all concomitants which, when stripped away, leave the bare bone structure of covenant as "relationship." He comes to that conclusion because the usage of the word covenant always implies two - or more - parties. This is the one feature that every covenant has in common, however disparate the parties may be. Hence, any definition, in Mitchell's opinion, must start with the basis concept of "relationship." Furthermore, he holds that such a relationship is not one of nature or existing law - blood relationship or common citizenship -, it is a relationship of "friendship," or even "love," is firmly established and is meant to have permanence. All other modifiers are determined by the nature and the number of the parties involved.

This concludes the historical survey and brings us to the biblical data, both as to the meaning of covenant and the covenantal nature of Scripture.

4.2. The Biblical Data

4.2.1. The Meaning of Covenant

Both Reformed theology and modern research have made valuable contributions to the understanding of the concept of covenant. However, as McCarthy appraised the present situation, a theology of the covenant still has to be written. There are too many conflicting opinions, too many loose ends.

In assessing what has been presented in the survey, it appears, first of all, that Mitchell's approach is correct in attempting to find the root concept of covenant, which is and must be sufficiently versatile for the term to be used in so many different contexts.

Usually, these contexts are reduced to two basic categories. The one type of context produces parity covenants, in which the parties are equal. The second type produces non-parity covenants, in which the parties are not equal. One writer deviates from this approach and speaks about parity covenants, suzerainty treaties and promissory testaments, as the three basic categories. The boundaries between the several covenants, however, seem to be much more fluid than these categories suggest. There are covenants in which the parties are neither equals or non-equals. The issue of parity or non-parity is simply irrelevant. See e.g. Gen. 21:22ff, and 26:26ff. One party proposes a covenant, because it is to his advantage. This also implies that the aspect of "friendship," or "love," - contra Mitchell - does not have to be present either. This also is only a concomitant. The covenant concept appears to be so versatile that it can be used in many contexts, which cannot be exhaustively categorized.

It must be granted that the notion of "relationship" is basic to all possible covenants. In a covenant one enters into a relationship. But it may be asked whether this notion is not somewhat too neutral and colorless, for a covenant is a relationship that is firmly established and is meant to be permanent. Hence, it may be preferable to define covenant in terms of "bond." If it is correct that the Hebrew *berith* can be traced back to the etymological root of "to bind," this would be reflected in the suggested term.

All covenants, then, have a "bond" in common. Further elements are concomitant. Their presence depend on a variety of factors. Who are the parties? How seriously do they take the covenant? What is their motivation? What are the aims they pursue? What are the circumstances that surround such covenant?

Against this backdrop it can be defended that every covenant is in a real sense unique, although it may have a variety of features in common with other covenants. The covenant of God with His people is definitely unique already, because God is unique.

One of the main issues in the recent debate is, whether this covenant is a promise covenant or a law covenant. The question may even be asked whether this is a proper dilemma. Recent research claims that in the relationship between God and His people there are both promise covenants and law covenants. Not only critical scholars as Hillers, but also men like Kline make that distinction. This would further imply that there may not be one covenant between God and His people. In that case Bullinger and Calvin with their stress upon the unity of the covenant may and must be seriously questioned about the whole tenor of their writings.

In order to give a solution to these and similar problems, the Scripture teaching on the covenant will be set forth systematically.

First, it is advisable to show restraint in applying the term covenant where Scripture elects not to do it. Hence, it appears preferable not to construe the intertrinitarian dealings, basic to God's works of creation, providence and salvation, in terms of covenant. The aberrations, flowing

forth from such an approach, are easily recognizable. The covenant of grace is identified with such covenant, usually called the covenant of redemption or *pactum salutis*. This substitutes a historical reality for a logical abstract. Or, the covenant of grace is construed as the reflection of the covenant of redemption and the tool to accomplish the purposes of the latter in time. This would lead to an equation of covenant and election and would substitute a theologoumenon for a living reality. There appears to be no Scriptural evidence that the covenant of God, into which He enters with men, is an eternal pact or is made with the elect only.

[Editor: As seen throughout this document, solid men of faith have honest disagreements. Not surprisingly, not everyone agrees with Bahnsen's point here or other particulars in the discussion of the scope of the covenant or the overarching covenantal nature of scripture. For a varying viewpoint and additional discussion on the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Works by Joe Morecraft, see Chapter 11, "The Covenant of God" and Chapter 9, "Life in the Garden of Eden" in *Authentic Christianity, An Exposition of the Theology and Ethics of the Westminster Larger Catechism* (Available at: WestminsterCommentary.com).

Appendix A here in this book includes the introduction to Chapter 11 and an excerpt from Chapter 9, "The Covenant of Life" from *Authentic Christianity* as the entirety of these chapters is longer than practical to include here. Also note that Dr. Bahnsen is quoted heavily by Dr. Morecraft indicating significantly more agreement than disagreement on the covenantal nature of Scripture.]

The advisable restraint also pertains to the Adamic administration. It is advisable not to construe that in terms of covenant either. Hosea 6:7, as Calvin already emphasized, should be translated, "Like men, they have broken the covenant." This, it may have to be added, is not to deny the component elements of the Adamic administration, as they are revealed in Gen. 1ff. and also in Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15. It is simply to say that the usage of the concept of covenant, at this point, better be avoided.

It appears wise not to speak of covenant, until Gen. 15. where Scripture explicitly states that God entered into a covenant with Abraham.

Second, the various covenants mentioned are technically not one and the same covenant. Neither the ceremonial concomitants, nor the promises and obligations mentioned, nor the historical circumstances are the same. It has been cogently argued on the basis of the Hebrew that the covenants of Gen. 15 and 17 are not even the same covenant. The translation of Gen. 17:2, so runs the argument, is not, "I will conform my covenant..." but, "I will make my covenant..." At the same time there is no justification to deny the inner connection between the earlier and later covenants. The later are founded upon the earlier, are organically connected with them, indeed, are made possible by them, serve them, and complete them. The several covenants are as many stories in the covenant structure. There is historical unity, continuity and progression. As such it is a living reality that meets needs "today" and at the same time is preparatory for "tomorrow." The inner connection between the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob does not need to be established. God calls it one covenant (Ex. 2:24). The inner connection between the covenant with the patriarchs and with Israel on Mt. Sinai and in Transjordan is taught in

Scripture as well (Ex. 2:24). In fact, Israel was God's covenant people when they arrived at Sinai (Ex, 19:5). The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:7) was given in the context of the existing covenant. Just as in Gen. 17 the circumcision was given to represent the covenant visibly, so in Ex. 31:14ff. the sabbath was introduced as a visible representation of the covenant renewal with the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai. Note the curses connected with the refusal to honor the visible representation. As to the events in Transjordan, it is called a covenant in addition to the one made at Horeb, as well as the continuation of the bond that God initiated with Abraham and the patriarchs (Deut. 29:1,9,12-13). In fact, it also covers the future generations (Deut. 29:14). The covenant of David, recorded in Psalms 89 and Psalms 132, is a continuation of the covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:69-73) and preparatory for the covenant embodied in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Is. 42:6; Jer. 23:3ff., 33:14) and thus for the new covenant. The new covenant, which is really the renewed covenant by virtue of the Greek original, is a fulfillment of the covenant of Mt. Sinai (Jer. 32:31ff.; Heb. 8:8ff).

Third, the distinction between law covenants and promise covenants is not tenable. There is not a covenant where one encounters law without promise and promise without law. When God enters into a covenant with man, specifically Abraham, this is not based upon human merit, but flows forth from the promises in Gen. 3:15 and 12:1-3 and originates in the good pleasure and love of God. This love deals with man in great tenderness and with great realism, according to need. That implies that either the promise or the law will be emphasized as circumstances require. In view of man's pitiable situation, and in order to prevent man from leaning on himself, it could hardly be envisioned that God would not begin with the stress on the promise. This is, indeed, the case in Gen. 15. God promises Abraham a large offspring in its own land following a time of pressure in a strange country. In Gen. 17 the promise is not mentioned first, but rather the law. God holds out the prospect of descendants, that encompass many nations and takes them up in His covenant which is visibly represented in the sacrament of circumcision, but the opening statement emphasizing obedience, already is a harbinger of things to come. The promise will not compromise the need for holiness of life. In the covenant with Israel on Mt. Sinai this is forcefully underscored. Exodus 19:5 informs the Israelites that God's continued smile upon them will only come about in the way of obedience and their keeping the covenant. Exodus 20ff. enlarges upon the contents of obedience. Holiness of life is so central in God's dealings with His people that the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) are presented as "the covenant" (Deut. 4:13). Further, the evaluation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 21-23 is called the Book of the Covenant. Apparently, to spell covenant is to spell law and obedience.

However, the promise is not negated. It is not so that all of a sudden obedience to the law becomes the basis for future blessings. The continuation of God's dealings with His people is rooted in His grace and promise (Ex. 32:13ff.). Of course, the integrity of God's gracious promises is never at the cost of holiness. When, following the golden calf, God continues to be with His people, He repeats the law and its evaluation (Ex. 34:1ff.). A similar pattern is to be seen in the covenant renewal in Transjordan. The Suzerain imposes upon the vassals, whom He began to love in their forefathers which love resulted in the covenant at Horeb (Deut. 4:37ff.), His law, a reiteration of His Ten Commandments plus a significantly enlarged evaluation thereof. Obedience to the law is once again emphasized as the way to blessings and a future for them and their

children (Deut. 4:40, 27:1ff., 28i:1ff., 29:1ff.). At the same time it is inferred that this obedience will not be forthcoming, that an exile will be imposed, but that the Lord at that point will promise to return them and give them and their children a new heart so that they will serve Him with all of their heart (Deut. 29:16ff., 30:1ff.). The promise, it is quite evident, does not diminish the requirements of the law. In fact, obedience to the law is the way in which the promises are being fulfilled. Since man, however, is not able to be obedient, his sinfulness will function as the backdrop against which the light of the promise becomes ever so much brighter. The promise leads to the law. The law leads to the promise. They serve each other's purposes! During the days of David, God repeats the promise to Abraham in a more detailed fashion. The fulfillment will come through the line of David. The focus becomes sharper and sharper. Now, this promise is not "unconditional," as if obedience to the law is not important. God deals with the distinct possibility that later descendants of David will forsake the law. These sons will be punished, but God will continue His love to David. This implies that God's covenant is not "conditional" either. The dilemma "conditional" - "unconditional" is transcended. God's promise is fulfilled in the way of obedience and receives its importance against the backdrop of disobedience. Neither aspect may be disregarded. In the new covenant the promise and the law begin to converge. The promise, as Deut. 30:5 already indicated, is unto obedience (Jer. 31:31ff., Ezek. 36:25ff., Heb. 8:8ff.). This all is personified, and embodied, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the covenant for the people and also a light for the Gentiles. He serves the purposes of those covenants that emphasize the promise, as well as those covenants that emphasize law. He is the Son from the house of David, the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, as well as the one who makes His people holy according to the covenant of Mt. Sinai (Luke 1:69-75).

From what has been shown one can not, indeed, may not distinguish law covenants from promise covenants. Law and promise are as intricately interwoven with one another as responsibility and sovereignty. At times the one may have the emphasis, at times the other. But the one does not neutralize the other, or vice versa. On the contrary, they serve each other's purposes.

After these three points, which present the systematic teaching of Scripture on the covenant, the following composite definition of God's covenant with His people may be given. This definition honors the unity of the covenant structure as well as the continuity and progress of the covenant revelation.

The covenant is a bond, initiated by God and originating in His good pleasure and love, in which he gives Himself to them with whom He enters in this relationship as well as to their descendants, grants them the incomparable privilege of serving Him by holding them to loving obedience and heartfelt holiness, with the sanctions of this bond consisting of life upon obedience and death upon disobedience, and guarantees the lasting character of this bond by promising them new hearts, clean records, and holy lives, procuring these through the work of God the Son and securing them through the operation of God the Spirit out of sovereign grace.

4.2.2. *The Covenantal Scripture*

This section will begin by showing that the Scripture is a covenantal document from beginning to end.

Genesis 1-11 is in a real sense introductory. It covers at least two thousand years. It is meant to get two basic items across. It shows that mankind outside the presence of God is radically and totally bankrupt. Both the flood and the tower of Babel witness to that fact. Furthermore, it makes clear that in spite of this bankruptcy the history of the world is allowed to continue. God's covenant with Noah guarantees this. Thus, both items form, as it were, a platform for the covenant with Abraham. They spell the necessity as well as possibility of that covenant.

Gen. 12 through Malachi present the older covenant. This section of Scripture, which covers approximately two thousand years, begins with the Torah. In it we are familiarized with the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the renewal of this covenant at Mount Sinai and once again in Transjordan. The heart of this covenant is laid out in Genesis 17:1, where God tells Abraham, **I am God Almighty, walk before me and be perfect.** This phrase contains both the self manifestation of God and the need for an obedient life on the part of His people. Through the remainder of the Torah God increasingly expands His self manifestation as well as the requirements for His people, until at the end of the Torah they are virtually complete. There is no essential perfection of God nor a fundamental requirement for man that implicitly or explicitly, in the bud or in full bloom, is not already found in the Torah. It is evident from this how foundational the Torah is for the rest of Scripture. The latter is founded on the former and is determined by it. The foundational character of the Torah is indicated by the Lord Jesus Himself in that He divides the Old Testament into the Law (the first five books, written by Moses) and the Prophets (the other thirty-four books of the Old Testament). The "Prophets" comprise historical, wisdom, prophetic and apocalyptic literature.

The historical books run from Joshua to Nehemiah. In Joshua, Israel settles in the promised land, Canaan. Judges displays the initial woes as a result of Israel's continual apostasy. I Samuel through II Kings describe Israel under the leadership of the kings and basically constitutes a justification and provides the rationale for the captivity. The Israel of the kingdom is, in the final analysis, no different from the Israel of the Judges. To offset this dark picture I and II Chronicles as well as Ezra and Nehemiah hold out the prospect of a beckoning future in the midst of and in spite of the besetting darkness.

The wisdom literature gives detailed information about the nature and beauty of covenant life, however difficult it may be. At the same time it describes the darkness of covenant disobedience.

In the prophets the two aspects of the historical books reemerge. In their interaction with the people they continually show their bankruptcy and the doom that must follow. At the same time they hold out the prospect of a future in which sin and curse will be replaced by obedience and blessing.

The apocalyptic emphasis is found in Daniel.

The new covenant begins with Matthew. It should be emphasized that the structure of the New Testament is parallel to that of the Old Testament.

In the Gospels one encounters something like the Torah. God manifests Himself in the person of Jesus Christ and displays all His perfections both of His transcendence and His immanence. At the same time He lays out the requirements for man. One simply has to think of the Sermon on the Mount, which resembles the legislation on the Mount of the older covenant, namely Mount Sinai. It contains stipulations as well as blessings and curses.

The Acts is the historical book of the new covenant. In keeping with the substance of the new covenant, however, it does not expose apostasy and death, but obedience and life. The theme is victory from Jerusalem to Rome, even if the road is difficult and even if it seems at times that defeat is inevitable.

The book of James, also called the Proverbs of the New Testament, displays the wisdom of the new covenant life.

The epistolary section of the New Testament, beginning with Romans, is “prophetic” in nature. God’s spokesmen address God’s people with God’s word. They speak forth God’s message. They interact with them in terms of doctrine and practice. Pronouncements about the future, at the same time, are not absent. See Romans 11.

The book of Revelation, finally, is apocalyptic in nature. In a sense it is a specific type of prophecy.

It is evident that view of the covenantal Scripture strikes at the root of the view espoused by the dispensational system.

From the point of view of the covenantal approach the dispensational view is atomistic, disjointed and in a real sense regressive.

It is atomistic. The history of the world is divided in (usually) seven periods. There is little connection between them inasmuch as the manner in which God deals with man in each period is different. At a future point in this syllabus the importance of this will become evident.

It is disjointed. The church period was inserted as a last minute emergency measure, because the national kingdom that was promised and that Jesus would have erected did not materialize. Rather than crowning Him king, the Jews crucified Jesus as a criminal.

It is regressive. While the Bible teaches that Israel as a nation was meant to serve the purposes of a spiritual kingdom, in which both Jews and Gentiles would have equal privileges and responsibilities, the dispensational system teaches that following the end of the church period in the rapture there will be a reemergence of Israel as a nation.

Following the survey of Scripture as a covenantal document, a further discussion of its covenantal nature, especially in terms of the purpose of the covenant, is needed.

As has been indicated already, some held that the covenant was made with the elect and was given mainly to cement assurance of salvation. Others, however, held that the covenant was made with believers and their children and was designed ultimately to produce and promote holiness of life to the glory of God.

This will now further be explained. When the Lord entered into a covenant with Abraham, He immediately required him to display a holy conduct. This conduct also had to be implemented in his children as part of the Covenant family. This was displayed in the sign of circumcision. It was given to make visible that God was God and that they were required to please Him. The covenant was continued and placed before Abraham's children on a grander scale and in an enlarged fashion at Mount Sinai. The display of God as God was ever so much more impressive, and the demands made on the Israelites were ever so much more detailed. At the time Israel was camped at the borders of Canaan for the second time a further chapter in the covenant of God with His people had been written. God had shown Himself as God in all His attributes, His power, His grace and His justice. He had shown Himself as the Almighty and JHWH. At the same time, the legislation that would accompany Israel through its history had been completed with the book of Deuteronomy.

The Old Testament tells us that the covenant that God made with Abraham and his children did not achieve its purpose. The Israelite refused to live a holy life according to the commandments of God. The end was the exile. At the very beginning of the exile, however, God introduced the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. In this new covenant there is an even greater display of the Almighty and His attributes, while the grand purpose of the covenant with Abraham does not change. Three obstacles, which prevented the goal of the old covenant from being realized, are now going to be removed. A thousand years of Israelite history demonstrates man's moral depravity. He proves to be rebellious in heart, to have a sin-stained record and to lack the ability of a holy life. The threefold covenant promise is that God the Father replaces them with a believing heart, a clean record and a holy life on the basis of the work of God the Son and through the agency of God the Holy Spirit. With the implementation of the holy life, the grand purpose of the covenant with Abraham is clearly maintained. Jeremiah states, and the letter to the Hebrews quotes, that God is going to write the law on the heart of His people.

The relationship between the two covenants is one of identity in difference. The substance remains the same. God is God and man is man. God is suzerain and man is vassal. God is in a place of authority and man is in the place of obedience. The difference is in the economy. In the older covenant God commands. In the new covenant God commands and promises to give what He commands, as well as everything that serves to insure obedience in its consequent fellowship.

For that reason God gives a new heart to break the antagonism toward obedience and forgiveness of sins to provide the climate of legal peace with Him, as the setting for holiness.

It must be noted that the difference between the two covenants is not absolute. In the first place, the letter to the Hebrews calls the promises of the new covenant better promises. There were promises in the older covenant. In the second place, in the older covenant the realities of the

new heart, forgiveness of sins and a holy life were no unknown entities. The book of Deuteronomy speaks extensively about the heart. It points out its rebellion, and holds out the prospect of its renewal. The book of Leviticus speaks extensively about the forgiveness of sins as well as about holiness of life. It lays out the sacrificial system as well as God's abhorrence of sin. The book of the Psalms speaks extensively about all three aspects. It cries out for a new heart, it talks about the beauty of forgiveness and it mentions many constituent elements of holiness. To go one step further, in the books of the Old Testament the new heart, forgiveness of sins and holiness of life have been received by the remnant of election from among the people of Israel. No, the difference between the two covenants is not absolute.

All in all, however, it must have been clear that in terms of the threefold benefit promised in the new covenant holiness of life is the crowning aspect of God's saving activity. The legal platform of justification and the personal change of regeneration hang in the air without the crowning piece of sanctification. This can be underscored by a reference to Exodus. The central section, that of obedience in the covenant (Ex. 19-24) appears to be just that; central and pivotal. Amos 9:7 informs us that without obedience the first section of Exodus, deliverance through blood, becomes meaningless. Exodus 32-34 shows that without obedience God's fellowship is an impossibility. Following the "golden calf" God tells Moses that He will shelve the Tabernacle plans, even when He does not destroy the Israelites. Only upon continued and persistent intercession does God relent.

At a later juncture in this syllabus. It will have to be shown how the understanding of the Scripture as a covenantal document concretely influences the interpretation of Scripture. At this time we turn to a number of implications of the covenantal nature of Scripture.

The first implication of the covenant-historical nature of Scripture is that the Scriptures are authoritative, infallible and inerrant. These attributes are bound up with the nature of God as covenant God. God the Father as the suzerain speaks (Ex. 20) and writes (Ex. 32:16) His words to His vassals, and insists upon absolute allegiance and obedience upon pain of curse and death (Deut. 28). God the Son as the King speaks His words and also demands absolute submission (Matt. 7:21ff.; 1 Tim. 6:3), again upon pain of judgment and death (John 8:51 and 10:48). God the Spirit inspires the human authors (2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21) and equally requires obedience (Neh. 9:30; Heb. 9:8) once again upon pain of punishment and death (Heb. 3:7). While the authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures are bound up with the nature of the covenant God, the acknowledgement of the authority, infallibility and inerrancy are bound up with the total identification of the covenant member with God and His cause. This total identification was found in the Lord Jesus Christ, both God and man, as the mediator in the covenant. He bowed before the Father and showed that by submitting to His Word as authoritative, infallible and inerrant (Matt. 5:17-18; John 10:33-36; Heb. 10:7). So the Christian, when his heart breaks before God, he will submit to His Word just as Christ submitted to that Word (Luke 8:21; John 14:27, 14:15,21, 18:37). A Christian does not conclude to the authority, infallibility and inerrancy by means of either the deductive or inductive method. In the deductive method one may, for example, take his point of departure in the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture and reason to the authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the Word of God. In the inductive method one may

examine all the difficulties in the Scriptures and claim the uniqueness of Scripture upon the solution of the difficulties. The latter method has serious problems. How does one know that all the difficulties have even been seen, let alone solved? One would have to suspend judgment permanently. The former method does not join the real issue. In the final analysis one's commitment to an authoritative, infallible and inerrant Scripture is a matter of the heart, that bows before God by means of the work of the Spirit and then submits to the judgment of the self authenticating Scripture pertaining to itself as authoritative, infallible and inerrant. Note that the Spirit does its work by means of the very Scripture that authenticates its own uniqueness. See James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23. Note also that recent efforts to create a rift between infallible and inerrant are not acceptable. According to these efforts the Bible is infallible because it is trustworthy in matters pertaining to salvation. But it is not inerrant, because it makes mistakes in the area of natural and historical science. First, the dictionary uses the two terms practically interchangeably. Second, Scripture does not warrant such a differentiation.

The second implication of the covenantal-historical nature of Scripture is that the interpretation of Scripture must be theocentric. From what has been said it has become clear that from God and through God and unto God are all things. See Romans 11:36. They are from God. God created the universe. He gave the covenant. They are through God. He continued history. He introduced the new covenant promises. They are unto God. He acted on behalf of His people for His own holy name's sake. See Ezekiel 36:22,32. Sanctification is the crowning piece of His covenantal dealings with His people.

The third implication is that the interpretation of Scripture must be trinitarian. It is the trinitarian God who acts in creation. See Genesis 1:1, 1:2 and John 1:3. It is the trinitarian God who is active in the older covenant. See Gen. 18:1, 32:28; Ex. 3:2; Joshua 5:15; Psalms 51:11; Neh. 9:20. It is the trinitarian God who is active in the new covenant. See the book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-41 present the promise of God the Father, chapters 42-43 the work of God the Son and chapter 44 the implementation by God the Holy Spirit. The trinitarian cycle is repeated in the chapters 45-48, 49-57 and 58-66, respectively. See further the many prophetic references to God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit in the exilic and post-exilic prophets. In addition to that of course, the New Testament portrays the trinitarian God in all His majesty and mercy.

The fourth implication is that the interpretation must recognize the foundational nature of the earlier Scripture. The later is built on the earlier. The earlier is fundamental for the later. This can be documented again with the book of Genesis. As we saw in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, God acts in terms of promises, with authoritative pronouncements, on the basis of election and in providence. The correct pattern of response is faith, obedience, repentance and submission. What Genesis presents here is not illustrational in nature which can be helpful from time to time for this or that person. No, it is foundational. What was learned from Genesis are universal principles and necessary patterns. God does not deal in any other way. For example, there is no other way to be acceptable to God except through His promise that receives the response of faith. Or, there is no other way to be pleasing to God except on the basis of His electing grace and through repentance. If the church would only have understood this, there would have been no Romanism and no Arminianism. There is not only the foundational nature of the historical sections. The same applies to the "legal" sections. Without the law of God, laid

down on Mount Sinai and in Transjordan, the prophets would have been an impossibility. They interact with the people on the basis of the law. Remove the law, and one may remove the prophets. Also, without the law the work of Christ can not be understood. Without law there would not have been a curse upon sin and hence, no cross. For the basis of the cross is the justice of God revealed in His law, be it ever so true that the spirit of the cross is the love of God. On the other hand, the law is rooted in previous history. The substance of the ten commandments is mentioned by and large in the book of Genesis. Exodus 20 simply organizes what God had progressively revealed.

The fifth implication is that the interpretation of Scripture takes into account the historical setting and the historical development. First a word about the historical development. The doctrine of justification will serve as a simple illustration. In Genesis 15 we read that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. The explanation of this phrase appeared to be very difficult. Some held that according to Gen. 15 Abraham was justified by faith, as also Paul later developed the doctrine of justification in Romans. Others held that Abraham certainly was justified by faith, but that this can not be read into Gen. 15. When his faith was counted for righteousness, according to the text, that phrase should be taken literally. His faith was all the righteousness Abraham needed to be right with God. The rebuttal was that this is not Scriptural. Man has no righteousness whatsoever. Not even his faith can function as righteousness. How to solve this problem? View number 1 is Scriptural, but Gen. 15 does not say this. View number 2 seems to reflect what Gen. 15 says, but is not Scriptural. The solution is rather simple. In Gen. 15 God presents only the first stage of the doctrine of justification. He states that He attached righteousness to Abraham's faith, just as the one side of a dollar bill is attached to the other. God says for all practical purposes, in terms of a universal principle, if you have faith, you have righteousness. There are two things, however, that God does decidedly not say. He does not state what the nature of that righteousness is. Nor does He state how that righteousness is received.

It is interesting to note that both James and Paul take their cue from Genesis 15. James combines it with Genesis 22 and states that the faith that Abraham had, showed itself real when he obeyed God's command to offer Isaac. Thus, James states that he showed himself as having received righteousness - attached to his faith - by his works. The word "justify" is, therefore, taken in the demonstrative sense. For other examples of this usage see Ezekiel 15:41 and Matthew 11:19.

Paul, on the other hand, combines Genesis 15 with passages as Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, where the Lord is said to be our righteousness and Habakkuk 2:4 where the just is said to live by faith. In the historical development of the Old Testament, therefore, both the nature of the righteousness and the "instrument" whereby it is received are disclosed. Paul utilizes this in Romans when he states that a person is justified by faith on the basis of the righteousness of Another, namely Jesus Christ. See also 2 Cor. 5:21.

It hardly needs to be stated that both James and Paul are correct in their interpretation and that they are not on a collision course. James states that one can not claim to have righteousness attached to one's faith when there are no works to show that. After all, faith that remains alone is

no faith and therefore, there is no righteousness because there is nothing to which it can be attached. Paul states that the righteousness that one receives is the righteousness of Christ and can be appropriated by faith alone, without any merits or works.

As to the historical setting, an example of both ethics and prophets may serve to illustrate the point. It is quite clear that King David transgressed God's commandments when he had more than one wife. Why did God not deal with this? The answer is that God's progressive revelation was still in the infant stage. As more became revealed, more was required. In the New Testament with the full revelation of God there is no more leniency. The example of the prophetic literature is taken from Isaiah 6. Isaiah is told that his message will harden the people. Is this to be understood as a universal rule that is still valid today? It has been used that way! But this is totally mistaken. Isaiah prophecies in the historical setting of the pre-exilic time period. The exile has already become inevitable. The judgment is going to come. God will show no more mercy until after the captivity. Isaiah speaks at a specific time in the history of Israel. In the new covenant the historical setting has changed. In that setting the fields are white unto harvest. In that setting there is the ministry of the Spirit. Hence, there must be expectation of an effective ministry among all God's servants.

Under no circumstances, therefore, may one isolate a section of Scripture from its historical setting and development. This would lead to fragmentization, which in turn will lead to a truncated understanding.

The sixth implication is that the interpretation of Scripture is contextual. Every text is part of a whole. The context and scope of the narrower or wider context function as the parameters for the interpretation. Taking the context into account will guarantee that a passage is interpreted in a way that displays the coherence of that passage with the thrust of the rest of Scripture. Thus atomism and the dangers thereof will be avoided. The best way to arrive at a responsible, contextual, interpretation of a passage is to start out with an interpretive outline of the larger setting of the passage. This, first of all, is the total Scripture. In a sense, that outline has been given in this syllabus in terms of the division of Scripture in the older and the new covenant, prefaced by Genesis 1-11, which was said to function as an introduction to the covenant with Abraham. The emphasis upon the covenant makes this, indeed, an interpretive outline. Second, a similar outline must be provided of the book in which the passage occurs. To illustrate. Given immediately following the glory of God entering in the completed tabernacle, Leviticus provides information about

- 1). The access into the presence of God (Lev. 1-17).
- 2). The walk in the presence of God (Lev. 18-27).

It hardly needs to be stressed how timely those issues are following the event described in Exodus 40. The first item discussed under heading 1. is the law of the sacrifices. Apparently, there is no other way into the presence of God, but by means of sacrifices. The first sacrifice described is the burnt offering. This offering seems to be not only first, but also foundational. Every morning, the burnt offering is the first offering that has to be brought to the Lord, even before the sin offering which is discussed later. These few sentences did not provide a full blown outline, but

the contours thereof begin to emerge. Note again that the formulation, the access into the presence of God is interpretive. It both displays and determines the way in which the material under that heading has to be interpreted. If at all possible, the headings and sub-headings must be formulated in terms of universal principles. The more detailed the outline is the more pointed the universal principles will be. For example, the section on the burnt offering can be characterized as the “law of the consecration offering.” Connect this with the information that the burnt offering is first and foundational, and one may draw the conclusion that no one will be permitted in the presence of God apart from consecration and holiness. The two sub-points, the fact that blood is shed and that the offering is totally reduced to ashes, further indicate that consecration can never take place without shedding of the blood of another and also that it must be total. Such an interpretive outline is apparently its own application. In conclusion, the best way to honor the context is to engage in interpretive outlining in terms of universal principles and / or patterns, beginning with the wider context, proceeding to the narrower context and concluding with the text.

At this point we may conclude the discussion of the term covenant-historical and its implications. It must be remembered that this term was designed to assist us in going beyond Luther’s material hermeneutical principle of justification by faith and beyond Calvin’s formal hermeneutical principle of *sola Scriptura*. It is more broad than Luther’s and more substantive than Calvin’s. It must be noted, however, that, while it still may be improved upon, it is to be preferred to revelational-historical, redemptive-historical or Christocentric. Revelational-historical is narrower and less substantive. It only implies that there is a development in the revelation of God. Redemptive-historical, which is widely used, is decidedly less suitable than covenantal-historical. The reason is simple. The scope of Scripture is wider than redemption, the blood payment of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of His people. It certainly is a central element. But it removes regeneration and sanctification from the view of the Bible interpreter if he takes the term seriously. The redemptive-historical aspect, as has been stated, is very important, but exclusive concentration of it will have a tendency to leave the heart and the life of the Christian out of the picture. The term Christocentric has similar problems. It is quite customary to speak about the Old Testament as a Christocentric book or to state that the interpretation of the Old Testament should be Christological, on the basis of John 5:39 and Luke 24:27ff. However, neither one of these two passages claim that the Old Testament testifies only of the Lord Jesus Christ. No, it is preferable to speak of Scripture as a theocentric, trinitarian book. Acts 2 furnishes us with a telling illustration of that fact. In addition to establishing this point it also indicates the authority of the Word of God, the foundational nature of its earlier sections as well as the importance of the historical setting and the narrower and wider context.

First, the Word of God is authoritative. Peter quotes Joel to provide the final interpretation of the events of Pentecost.

Second, it is theocentric. The Spirit comes from the Father and the Son, through the work of the Son and unto the consecration to God and His Word.

Third, it is trinitarian. The Scripture prophesies that the Father will pour out the Spirit on the day of the Lord. Peter posits that the day of Pentecost is the day of the Spirit. The grounds?

Well, Joel says that the day of the Spirit, is the day of miracles and signs, the day of the Lord and the day of salvation. Peter shows that the day of miracles and signs is the day of Jesus of Nazareth, His life (miracles) and death (signs), that the day of the Lord is the day of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ by virtue of His resurrection and ascension, and that therefore the day of salvation is now, repent unto the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. In Peter's answer, the work of Christ, but also of the Father is displayed in a grand fashion. We already mentioned the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Christ. In addition to this Peter states that God raised Jesus from the dead and made Him Christ and Lord.

Fourth, it is foundational. The earlier Scriptures (Joel) determine the later events.

Fifth, it is historical. The development in history resulting in a clear picture of the person and work of the Spirit, is unmistakable.

Sixth, it is contextual. Joel is interpreted by Peter in the wider context of Scripture, while the summons to salvation is formulated in terms of the three new covenant promises. Repent (new heart) unto the forgiveness of sins (new record) and the gift of the Spirit (new life).

All in all, the term covenantal-historical, not in the last place because of its implications, appears to be the most acceptable phraseology to characterize the nature of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. By itself it is still somewhat formal, but together with its implications it is sufficiently substantial.

The only other term that could be considered is kingdom-historical. It may be appropriate and advisable to elaborate some more on this term, especially since it has implications for the relationship between the Old and New Testament, a subject that is important in the present context.

The usual connotation of the word kingdom is the realm, the territory, over which a king reigns. In the Scripture, however, kingdom stands for reign or rule, or kingship.

From one perspective God always has been king and always will be king. The Lord is an everlasting king (Jer. 10:10) and His kingship pertains to the universe (Ps. 47:2,7).

From another perspective the Lord became king at Mt. Sinai. He implemented His reign, rule, or kingship over Israel at that time (Deut. 33:4-5). This reign began when the law was given. Apparently, there is a sense in which there is no kingship without law and no acknowledged kingship without obedience to the law. Quite clearly disobedience does not nullify God's kingship. Rebellion against God's reign evokes its implementation in terms of curse. Since rebellion is the order of the day, it appears that the curse is going to have the final word. This, however, was never God's intention.

This leads us to the consideration of the third perspective. From the first perspective God's kingdom always was, is now, and always will be. From the second perspective God's kingdom came, but did not produce an obedient citizenry. On the contrary, apart from a remnant of election the vast majority of the people of the kingdom appeared to be insurrectionists, rebels and seditionists. From the third perspective, now, God's kingdom will come. This kingdom is presented as coming by the prophet Isaiah. The *terminus a quo* of that kingdom is the birth of a

child, the gift of a son. This child or son is the God of might and the Prince of Peace, in short God-with-us. His will be a reign-of-peace that ever will increase. See Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7. Daniel further elaborates upon the kingdom. Apparently, at the time of his prophesying there are two obstacles that must be overcome. In other words, in coming the Kingdom of God must deal with two powerful enemies. First, it must break the power of the totalitarian state. This proves itself a lethal enemy of the kingdom of God, inasmuch as the former experiences the latter as subversive in terms of its goals and aspirations. The kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Macedonia and the empire of Rome demonstrate themselves to be just such an enemy. The destruction of the power of the totalitarian state is announced and prophesied in Daniel 2. The kingdom of God will be set up and eventually destroy the kingdom of man as it evidences itself in the totalitarian state. Second, the kingdom of God must break the power of reigning sin. This is announced and prophesied in Daniel 9. The Prince, or Messiah, will come and by His death will stop transgression, make an end to sin, make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness. The ninth chapter describes the coming king as just, having salvation and humble. The fact that both aspects are present in the Old Testament prophecies militates against the view that the kingdom announced in the Old Testament is purely physical and political. The latter aspect prohibits it. In fact, even the first aspect all by itself does not warrant such conclusion. That the Kingdom of God is destructive to the kingdoms of man does not imply that the former will be physical and political. The view that the Old Testament suggests the coming of a national kingdom is espoused by Ladd. His thesis is that the Old Testament believer, including John the Baptist, were perfectly justified on the basis of the Old Testament to look for a political kingdom that would come with great force and destroy all human kingdoms, first of all, the Roman empire.

This explains, in his estimation, the bewilderment of John the Baptist, in Matthew 11. Daniel 3 says one thing. Jesus does apparently another. How should the two be harmonized, if that is at all possible? Hence, John's question, "Are you the Christ, or should we look for another person?" In summary, the anticipation of a political kingdom that would destroy the political enemies is not characteristic of a "Jewish nationalistic spirit" that fails to do justice to the Old Testament data. It is suggested, indeed taught, by these data themselves. John the Baptist with his bewilderment is living proof. Before we will determine, however, whether the exegesis of Matthew 11 is correct - the opposite will prove to be the case -, we must inquire into and lay bare the root of Ladd's view. This is to be found in the phrase "the mystery of the Kingdom," recorded in Mark 4:11. He discusses this phrase in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*⁶ and *The Presence of the Future*⁷. According to Ladd,

"A mystery is a divine purpose, hidden in the counsels of God for long ages, but finally disclosed in a new revelation of God's redemptive work."

G.E. Ladd

This mystery is that "instead of making changes in the external, political order of things, it is making changes in the spiritual order and in the lives of men and women." Instead of "destroying human rule," "abolishing sin from the earth," and "bringing the baptism of fire that John had announced" (in line with the prophecy of Daniel that human sovereignty will be displaced

by God's sovereignty) the kingdom of God comes "in an utterly unexpected way," "quietly, unobtrusively, secretly." The kingdom of God is "an offer, a gift which may be accepted or rejected." The kingdom of God is "now here with persuasion rather than with power." The parable of the sower and the seed shows that the kingdom of God does not come with "irresistible power," "it does not force itself upon men," "*men can reject it*" (italics, Ladd). The parable of the wheat, and the tares tell us that wicked and righteous live in a mixed society "*in the world*" (italics, Ladd) until the end of the age." The parable of the mustard seed and the leaven point to the "unforeseen character of the coming of the Kingdom among men." The parable of the mustard seed does not display that there is a gradual expansion. Not until the Lord returns in majesty and glory, according to Ladd, will the kingdom of God possess the earth. No, the mustard seed tells us that "this tiny thing is... God's kingdom and is therefore not to be despised." In the same way the parable of the leaven does not indicate "the gradual permeation of the world by the Kingdom." No, it rather shows that the kingdom of God is almost "unobservable; it scarcely can be seen." All the quotations thus far have been taken from *The Gospel of the Kingdom*⁸, p. 52ff. In *The Presence of the Future*⁹, Ladd goes into greater detail as to his view of the mystery of the Kingdom. That the kingdom was to come, Ladd does not regard as the secret, neither that it was to come in apocalyptic power.

No, the mystery is that "the Kingdom which is to come finally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen in Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men." Daniel 2 held out the prospect of a mighty manifestation of divine power. "Nations would be crushed by God's kingdom, which would then fill the whole earth." Accordingly the Jews expected a display of divine sovereignty "that would overthrow Rome... and exalt... Israel in their own land over all the nations of the earth." This was also the expectation "aroused in the hearts of the people by the announcement of John the Baptist and then by Jesus, 'The Kingdom of God has come near.'" When the Scriptures furthermore teach that the Kingdom is present in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, it "was a fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation," but "in different terms from those one might expect from the prophets." The coming and the presence of the kingdom in the person of the Christ "was not self-explanatory and altogether self-evident." "There was something about it which could be understood only by revelation." The contents of this revelation was that the powers of the kingdom were initially operational "in the spiritual realm, involving the defeat of Satan and the impartation to men of the blessings of the Kingdom." Only later, eschatologically, the kingdom would come with its nations crushing power. Against this backdrop it becomes understandable that Ladd can comment in connection with the parable of the sower and the seed,

"In apparent disagreement with the Old Testament promises, which were elaborated in great detail in the contemporary apocalyptic expectations, Jesus said that the Kingdom had indeed come upon men, but not for the purpose of shattering evil. It is now attended by no apocalyptic display of irresistible power... The Kingdom is working quietly, secretly among men. It does, not force itself upon them... There is no emphasis upon the harvest... The single emphasis is upon the nature of the sowing - the present action of the Kingdom of God."¹⁰

G.E. Ladd

Similarly, the parable of the wheat and the tares illustrates its “hidden, unexpected presence in the world.” “The Kingdom has come into the world without effecting a separation of men; this awaits the eschatological consummation. This setting alone gives the parable its real point.” “Here is indeed the revelation of a new truth; that the Kingdom of God can actually come into the world, creating sons who enjoy its blessings without effecting the eschatological judgment.” “The kingdom... comes with persuasion rather than power and must be accepted to be effective... is not now effecting a separation among men... its present manifestation is small and insignificant (mustard seed)... it will (only) one day fill the whole world... (but) is even now to be desired at all costs.”¹¹

The view of Riddorbos, set forth in his *The Coming of the Kingdom*¹², differs sharply from that of Ladd. This view will be referred to, as we now endeavor to outline an alternative, and in our estimation more biblically justified explanation of the meaning of the phrase “mystery of the kingdom.”

Ladd’s view rests upon three pillars. Pillar number 1 is that Daniel 2 announces a kingdom that by definition is physical and political in nature. That prophecy eventually will be fulfilled, but at the coming of Jesus it is preceded by a “spiritual” stage that was never announced. In fact it was hidden (a mystery) to people until it was revealed by Jesus. We already have said something about Daniel 2. But let it be underscored that the announced kingdom in this chapter was not necessarily and exclusively at that time to be understood in terms of a political entity. Daniel 4:37 records that Nebuchadnezzar speaks about God as the King of heaven. As such He is acknowledged as giving Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom. At this point God’s kingdom was quite clearly not a competing, political, entity. Further, Daniel 9 speaks about the Prince in terms of spiritual realities. His work in terms of this chapter has no political implications whatsoever. Ladd’s conclusion, therefore, in connection with Daniel 2 is not tenable.

Pillar number 2 is the episode with John the Baptist. It appears, however, that Ladd reads too much in that. It is much preferable to hold that John is puzzled, not so much in view of Daniel 2, but in view of the nature of his own God-given message. He, who comes after me, will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire and his axe already threatens the root of the tree. In the work of Christ the axe is noticeably absent. In the Luke context John’s question, “Are you the Christ or should we look for another?” is preceded by the raising of a young man from the dead! There is no self pity in John’s mind. It is much more evidence of faithfulness to his message that prompts him to pose the question. Can I endorse you, in view of the events that take place? Christ’s answer is not; your exegesis of Daniel 3 is correct, but I will reveal a mystery to you that was hidden until now. No, His answer is quite the opposite. It consists of two parts. The first part, is unspoken. He continues to do precisely what prompted John to make the inquiry. The second part is a spoken commentary. In it He quotes Isaiah 61. John, Jesus implies, I am the fulfillment of prophecy. This should not be a mystery to you! Hence, you are blessed if you are not offended. But is there then a rift between Jesus and John? More fundamentally, is there a rift between the Word of God in Isaiah and the Word of God to John? This the Lord proceeds to explain. He tells the crowd that, there is harmony between Him and John. He has an axe in His hand. When they do not believe Him, who with His presence lifted them up to heaven, they will be cast down to hell. In other words, in God’s timetable the fulfillment of Isaiah 61 precedes the

fulfillment of John's message. Both are God's word to man. In conclusion, therefore, Ladd's view in connection with Matthew 11 is no more tenable than his view pertaining to Daniel 2.

This brings us to the third pillar, the phrase, "the mystery of the kingdom."

As to the term "mystery," Scripture indeed indicates that it pertains to something that is concealed or has been concealed. It is not something incomprehensible, or even difficult to understand. It is or was hidden, however plain the fact or event that makes up its substance. It ought to be pointed out, however, that Matthew and Luke do not speak about the mystery of the kingdom, but about the mysteries of the kingdom (plural). There are apparently several features that were hidden and now are, or will be, revealed. What are these features? There is only one answer. The features that are presented in the various parables mentioned in the context. These parables therefore, reveal not only one major truth pertaining to the kingdom, but a variety of aspects. That this is correct appears from Christ's closing statement that a scribe who is instructed in the kingdom brings forth out of treasure new and old things. The old were retained and remained valuable, but new things were added and were emphasized in this context.

And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure new things and old."

Matthew 13:52

This also undergirds the explanation of the word "mystery," just mentioned.

Before we ask the question, which new features were revealed in the parables, another issue has to be faced in connection with these same parables. On the one hand they reveal, but on the other hand they conceal. The mysteries of substance pertaining to the kingdom are revealed in the parables, while the "mystery" of the form of the parables is designed to conceal. The parables, therefore, are meant both to reveal and to conceal. The context further shows that through the revelation Christ gives to some in addition to what they already have, while through the concealment He takes away from others what they still have. Those who have and will be given more are the ones who see and hear. Those who still have and will lose even that are the ones who do not see and hear with their hearts, even if they see and hear with their eyes and ears. The context finally indicates that those who have and will be given more were given what they have in the first place, while the others had not been given what the others had received in the first place. Matthew 11:25 opens that up some more. The Father, according to the Savior, had hidden things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes. What are these things? They pertain to the fact that in Jesus Christ the kingdom had arrived. "Babes" see in Jesus the King. The "wise" see in Jesus at best a "teacher come from God." Nicodemus who fell into that category was told that unless he had a change of heart, unless he was regenerated, he could not see the kingdom. Who else was that kingdom, but the person of the Lord Jesus Christ? In Him that kingdom was embodied, personified, as He indicated when He states, **The kingdom of God is in your midst** (Luke 17:21).

Against this backdrop it is clear why Ridderbos can speak of the "redemptive-historical" place of the parables. Those who have seen, as a gift in Jesus, the beginning of the fulfillment of the

Kingdom promises, are now given further insight into features of the Kingdom that were hidden until this point. Those who did not receive a change of heart, but in utter rebellion resisted to see in Him the king of glory, were barred from further insight. The substance of the parables produces growth and maturity in them from whose heart the veil was lifted. The form of the parables constitutes the obstacle to any progress - a contradiction in terms at this point - for them whose heart was covered by a veil.

It ought to be emphasized strongly that this veil was not there because of a lack of objective Old Testament prophetic or other information. No, Christ's forerunner is told that taking offense to Christ is tantamount to a rejection of the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 61 and therefore can never be excused on the basis of ignorance. Christ's enemies are being told that unbelief with regard to Moses is the cause of the rejection of Christ. See John 5:46. Again, they can never plead ignorance. Finally, Christ's friends were told that they were fools and **slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken** (Luke 24:25). For the third time, ignorance is no excuse. The Lord Jesus posits the clarity and sufficiency as well as the authority of the Old Testament Scripture with regard to Him as the fulfillment of the message of the Old Testament. This also applies to the Lord Jesus as the beginning of the fulfillment of the kingdom that was announced. This kingdom was never announced as an exclusive political entity. Sure, it would destroy the kingdoms of this earth that were of a totalitarian character and therefore would be, by definition, inimical to the cause of God and the Gospel. But it would equally destroy, and is indeed foundational to the destruction of the kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom of sin as it seeks the total overthrow of the reign of God. Both were announced in Daniel.

This all is not to say that no new light has to be or can be added to the clear message of the Old Testament. But God takes one step at a time. The step taken in Daniel in conjunction with the rest of the Old Testament is sufficient for its purpose, the announcement of the coming of the kingdom and its eventual total victory, inclusive of the destruction of the reign of man and the reign of sin. Now, in the parabolic teaching God takes the next step. He reveals how the Kingdom that came in the Son and is now present in Him will continue to realize its objective. The relationship between the prophecy of Daniel and the parabolic teaching of Jesus is not one of "political kingdom with power" versus a spiritual kingdom with persuasion only for the time being. It rather is one of "announcement of the Kingdom of God with its consequent overthrow of the reign of man and of sin before it had come" and a "further announcement as to the way the Kingdom of God will operate in reaching its objectives after it had come."

Note that the further announcement is not exhaustive. But it is in sufficient detail so that after the power of Satan has been crushed on the cross and the reign of sin has been annihilated in principle, the church of Christ has a clear understanding of its task as kingdom people and a buoyant hope as to the total and final victory of the kingdom.

The description of the new features, the additional revelation, in the parables is now relatively simple. The kingdom of God is going to reach its objectives through the proclamation of the Word of God. This, as Ridderbos says, is the way of the kingdom! Realistically, it will meet with the cunning of Satan, withdraw for fear of persecution and final rejection because of the dainties of this world, but it will produce a crop of kingdom people that will bring forth fruit

unto holiness. The first mystery is, therefore, the tool of the Word. A second mystery may possibly be that the Word will cause separation not just between Jews and Gentiles by means of the destruction of the latter insofar as they consist of enemies, but between Jews and Jews, between those who are man-centered and those who are God-centered. The mystery of the Word as tool of the kingdom is found in the parable of the sower and the seed. See also Luke 8:16-18 where the power and decisiveness of the Word is emphasized.

In further quick succession, the parable of the wheat and the tares reveals the time of the extermination of the wicked. The final judgment will come, but not until the seed has been sown and the sower has been able to reap the harvest. The parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven indicate the effectiveness of the Word. It may seem insignificant and harmless, but it outdistances everything else and is totalitarian in character. The parables of the treasure and the merchant tell us that the kingdom of God is not only of inestimable value, but is the only thing that really counts both per se and in the eyes of those whose heart has changed. Finally, the parable of the dragnet reveals the final objective of the kingdom of God, the separation of the wicked from the just and the definitive punishment of the wicked in eternal death.

Not one of these mysteries run counter to the Old Testament prophecies. Nor are they disjointed with regard to the Old Testament. Once the Christ has been embraced as the predicted and predictable fulfillment of the promised kingdom, the path is clear for the completion of the blueprint of the kingdom. The master plan was completed in the Old Testament. Now detailed drawings are added. They are both in line with and supplemental to the Old Testament.

It is clear from what has been said that the term kingdom-historical might be considered as a substitute for covenantal-historical. The kingdom as having come on Mt. Sinai in terms of the law and as coming in the person of Jesus to establish the reign of God in the hearts and in the lives of His people by means of the Word of God and in terms of the law of God (Sermon on the Mount, especially Matt. 5:19-20), correspond completely with the older and new covenant. The only reason why the term covenantal-historical is preferred is this, the latter seems to be more full-orbed. Redemptive-historical focuses in on the area of justification. Kingdom-historical emphasizes the area of sanctification. Covenantal-historical embraces the area of regeneration, justification and sanctification. Hence, the latter will be retained to describe the nature and scope of the Scriptures.

5. The Parts of Scripture

5.1. The Meaning of the Old for the New Testament

The first question that must be faced is the one with regard to the function and purpose of the older covenant.

God seems to have a fourfold purpose with the older covenant.

First, and substantially, He wishes to convey the essence of life. That is obedience to the law. See Deuteronomy 32:47.

Second, and methodologically, He wishes to expose the essence of death. That is disobedience to the law. See Romans 3:20.

Third, and preparationally, He wishes to disclose the transition from death to life. That is grace. See Romans 3:21b.

Fourth, and instructionally, He wishes to display the way He deals with His people and the way in which they should and should not respond to Him. See Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11 and 2 Timothy 3:16.

Corresponding to this fourfold purpose of the older covenant is the fourfold reason why so many centuries passed by before the new covenant was formally announced. See Jeremiah 31:31ff.

First, God wishes to underscore that there is no other life than obedience to the law from a loving heart. The passage of centuries is designed to demonstrate this.

Second, God wishes to emphasize that man is, indeed, radically and totally depraved in heart, record and life. The passage of centuries intends to leave this without a doubt.

Third, God wishes to stress that only He can, must and will make any difference in man's regeneration, justification and sanctification. It is all of grace. The new heart is a gift. The new record is a gift. The new life is a gift. Again, the passage of centuries is designed to make this abundantly clear.

Fourth, God wishes to indicate the many facets of His dealings as well as the multifaceted possible and necessary responses. Here again, the passage of centuries functions to shed light upon this.

In what has been said it can be concluded that the fourfold purpose of the older covenant is closely intertwined with the historical development. Only in the context of the latter is the former clearly delineated. The implications of this will be worked out later.

Further scrutiny, moreover, of the fourfold purpose of the older covenant discloses that the various types of literature of the Old Testament serve that purpose in their own way. The historical is the bedrock of every aspect. The substantial and methodological aspect are served by the law with its various commandments, statutes, ordinances and all of the symbols. The preparational

aspect is served by some of the symbols or shadows of the law as well as some of the prophetic literature, including the prophetic sections of the law. The instructional aspect is served by law and prophets. All this implies that the various types of literature are covenantal in nature. This recognition will appear to be of great value in the eventual discussion of these types of literature. They all serve the purpose of the covenant.

Two questions remain to be answered in the context. The first one pertains to the law of God. How does it function in the covenant? The second pertains to the instructional purpose of the older covenant. How does one glean the instruction from it in the new covenant?

First, then the question of the function of the law in the new covenant.

Negatively, it does not function as the ground for justification, nor as the source of sanctification. As to the ground for justification, the law does not function, nor was ever meant to function as such, either in the older or the new covenant for that matter. It was designed to expose the sinfulness of every sin and of every man as sinner. Thus it would “shut up” all men to Jesus Christ and His righteousness. See Romans 3:9ff. and Galatians 3:19ff. As to the source of sanctification, Scripture states explicitly that because of the impotence of man to obey the law, even after his regeneration, the Lord Jesus Christ is the fountainhead of his holiness. See John 15:5 and Romans 6:14ff.

Positively, however, Scripture states with equal explicitness that the law is established in both the area of justification and sanctification. It is established in the former in that Christ met all the requirements of the law in passive and active obedience, in death and life. See Romans 3:31. It is established in the latter in that the believer must and will, purposefully and increasingly meet the requirements of the law through his walk in the Spirit. See Romans 8:4.

It is especially the function of the law as the “substance” of sanctification that poses many problems. What does it mean that the believer meets the requirements of the law, indeed that the “law is written on the heart?” This ought now to be determined.

The first issue to be settled pertains to the meaning of the law that is going to be written on the heart. The combination of Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Ezekiel 36:27 and Hebrews 8:10 shows that it is the Mosaic legislation, with its commandments, statutes and ordinances. But this poses the further question, how the Mosaic legislation functions in the new covenant? The following answers have been given.

1. The Mosaic legislation must be kept in its totality with the exception of those sections that are explicitly excluded in the New Testament (Seventh Day Adventists).
2. The Mosaic legislation must be kept partially. The so-called ceremonial and civil sections are abrogated, but the remaining, or moral, sections retain their force. (Traditional Reformed position).
3. The Mosaic legislation has no place in the present dispensation of the church (Dispensationalism).

It appears that neither of these three answers is able to do justice to all the Scriptural data. Hence, a fourth solution is now suggested.

4. Basic to the law of God are the ten commandments. Both in Exodus and Deuteronomy the ten commandments are presented as the heart of the covenant (renewal) and immediately thereafter evaluated. In Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 the ten commandments, also characterized as the “ten words” or simply the “covenant,” are given as the constitution. In Exodus 21-24 and Deuteronomy 6:26 they are evaluated in terms of case laws. The ten commandments give the universal principles, reflecting the character of God. The case laws comprise the application of these principles reflecting the holiness of God in specific circumstances. Interspersed among the case laws, however, one encounters what may be called the symbolical laws, for example, the law indicating the difference between clean and unclean foods. The majority of these symbolical laws, to be found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers as well as Deuteronomy, occur in the area of sanctification. They spell the absolute, radical and total rift between holiness and unholiness, life and death, and fundamentally, God and Satan. See especially Leviticus 20:24-26. They are needed as pointers, direction signals, traffic signs, because of the externality of the older covenant administration. The pointers are needed as constant reminders, **Be holy, as I am holy**, “be separated from sin.” It is important to remember that the total fabric of Israel’s society was permeated with these symbolical laws. They are to be found in the area of the worship of God, public life, family life, and private life. They function unceasingly as silent, but eloquent sermons not to compromise with the unholy.

The symbols also occur in the context of justification (sacrifices) and “glorification” (partaking of meat offered in the sacrifices), but the majority is found in conjunction with sanctification, once again underscoring holiness of life as the crowning piece of the covenant and an essential element.

Note that the symbols are neutral in themselves. The unclean foods are not sinful in themselves, etc. But they can eminently be used by God to bring out that which He does not want us to miss. E.g. separate yourself from sin!

In the new covenant, the effectiveness of the better promises removes the urgency of the external symbols. In the area of justification the symbols of the sacrifices are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death. In the area of “glorification” the symbol of eating is fulfilled in the indwelling Spirit who provides through His indwelling, fellowship with God. In the area of sanctification, the symbols in the area of worship, public life, family life and private life, are fulfilled in that the law is written on the heart. When the reality has arrived, the direction signals, the traffic signs, the “shadows,” are by definition replaced. Hence, they no longer need to be observed. The only two symbols that are in force in the new covenant have explicitly been instituted as the symbols of the new covenant, namely baptism and the Lord’s Supper. See for the latter 1 Corinthians 11:25. Although the older covenant symbols no longer need to be served, they will always maintain their message. This is as fresh, clear and compelling in the new covenant as it was in the older covenant. That is why in John 1 the Lord Jesus is called “the lamb of God,” and

in 1 Corinthians 5 “our Passover” (justification). That is why Revelation 3 talks about the desire of the Lord Jesus “to sup” with his people (fellowship). That is why 2 Corinthians 6 uses the injunction against putting two different animals under one yoke as the foundation for the absolute, radical and total, separation from sin (sanctification).

It is amazing how the fourth solution solves the problems. First, the architecture of the Mosaic legislation is not violated. Throughout this legislation the symbols are sprinkled. In fact, they comprise at least fifty percent of this legislation, most of them in the area of sanctification. But when these symbols are removed because the truth has arrived, the basic architecture of the ten commandments (the constitution of the law) and the case laws (the application of the constitution) remains intact. Second, it is quite simple to apply the principle that determines which sections of the Mosaic legislation ought to be observed and which ones no longer need to be observed. The symbolic sections belong in the latter category. The other sections belong in the former.

It seems that in this connection one more item ought to be discussed. A major attack against the idea that, the Mosaic legislation, without the symbols, is still in force in the new covenant age, if not the major attack, is launched in terms of the fourth commandment. New Testament teaching pertaining to this commandment, it has been said, shows that the time of the Mosaic legislation has passed. To substantiate such contention passages as Romans 14:5-6 have been quoted.

One person values one day over another, another values every day the same. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and the one who eats, does so with regard to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat, and he gives thanks to God.

Romans 14:5-6

What should be the response to such attack? First, it is more than questionable whether Romans 14:5-6 can support the case against the fourth commandment. Romans 14:5-6 introduces a category of people that regards every day the same. If that would apply to the day mentioned in the fourth commandment as well, then these people would not observe any kind of cycle. No Christian today, of whatever stripe or variety, would fit into that category. In one way or another all Christians follow the six and one pattern or cycle, be it with greater or lesser strictness. A person who would appeal to Romans 14 for support of a more lenient approach, would do so without justification. The only one who may look to Romans 14 is the man who has no special day whatsoever. But what if there would be New Testament evidence that the fourth commandment no longer needs to be observed - something that the writer of this syllabus is not willing to grant, because he regards the six and one cycle as instituted in Paradise -, what then? This still would not clinch the case against the Mosaic legislation as still being in force today, minus, of course, the symbolic sections. At worst, it could prove that the fourth commandment is symbolic in nature. Just as there are symbols in the case laws, so there would be a symbol in the framework and fabric of the ten commandments, namely the fourth one. It would point to the separation from sin, death and Satan, and urge the commitment to holiness, life and God. As such it could not be regarded as the “Achilles heel” of the ten commandments. It would not mar

its structure or architecture. Neither could it be used as a point of departure to declare the ten commandments “no longer binding in the New Testament, because one appears to be no longer binding.” A more extensive discussion of the fourth commandment, of course, can not be presented at this time.

This brings us to the second question, the one pertaining to the instructional purpose of the older covenant.

A satisfactory answer to the second question will have to meet several conditions.

First, it will have to provide an acceptable alternative to the psychologizing, moralizing, spiritualizing, and typologizing trends and tendencies mentioned above while at the same time honoring their legitimate motivations and concern. Scripture has implications for what a man is. This is understood by the psychologizer. Scripture has implications for what a man ought to do. This is understood by the moralizer. Scripture has implications for future realities. This is understood by the spiritualizer. Scripture has implications for future patterns. This is understood by the typologizer.

Second, it will have to reflect the principles of Scripture itself, especially with regard to the instructional use of the older covenant material by the New Testament authors. Their instructional use of the older covenant, after all, was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is the thesis of the present writer that the instructional value of the Old Testament is bound up with the universal principles according to which God deals with mankind as well as from the patterns of response on the part of mankind.

The universal principles that govern and determine God’s dealings of the past remain in force. Therefore, they apply to, and have applicatory implications for, the present.

The patterns of response are applicable, either negatively or positively, according to how they are characterized by God and His spokesmen or ought to be characterized in view of the narrower or wider context of Scripture.

Both principles and patterns, at times, must be gleaned from the text by diligent study. At other times, they lie on the very face of the text and can be “harvested” quite easily.

Of course, in establishing these principles and patterns, the hermeneutical rules ought to be observed that are intertwined with and implicit to the covenantal-historical nature of the Scriptures. These rules will be set forth in the next section. But at this time our interest is simply to establish the methodology of how to use the Old Testament with a view to its instructional value.

As far as the principles and patterns are concerned that must be gleaned from the text, the book of Genesis provides us with illustrations, that are verified by Scripture itself. God deals with His people in terms of promises that require the response of faith (Abraham) on the basis of election without any merit on man’s part, which necessitates repentance (Jacob). Romans 4 explains the life of Abraham in terms of promise and faith. Romans 9 and Hosea 12 explain the life of Jacob

in terms of election and repentance. Taking our cue from Scripture itself, the life of Isaac can be explained in terms of God's pronouncement and Isaac's complete disregard to heed that pronouncement, while the life of Joseph shows God's providence and Joseph's submission to it. God, therefore, deals in terms of promise, pronouncement, election and providence with His people. His people are required to respond in terms of faith, obedience, repentance and submission. A proper response produces the smile of God, real life and true liberty. An improper response produces the frown of God, death and slavery.

In addition to the more general principles and patterns there are the more specific principles and patterns. One example will suffice, again verified by Scripture. When Jacob hates Leah and loves Rachel, God gives children to the former and refuses them to the latter. When every effort, scheme, etc. on the part of Rachel fails, she finally "tries God." She prays and receives a child, whom she calls Joseph. This name indicates that she wants another one to remain competitive in this area with Leah. When the second son arrives she knows that she is dying and gives her son the name Ben-oni. This means "son of my sorrow." This makes her Mrs. Sorrow. She, therefore, dies with a discontented, mourning, murmuring spirit. A life of unholiness and idolatry before God has thus a tragic end. See Genesis 35:18. The applicatory implications are self evident. The universal principle is that a spirit of murmuring about a frustrated life fails to see the cause of frustration, namely an unholy life, and fits in with a lifestyle that is idolatrous. This universal principle is its own application. Scripture itself proscribes such an approach inasmuch as it utilizes Rachel as a symbol of discontent and murmuring. She returns as such in Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:18. In fact, Jeremiah and Matthew tell us that she comes out of the grave. She should not have been around, but she is. Nothing, can cure her of her self pity, discontent and murmuring spirit in Genesis, not the birth of a son, nor the cause of God. Nothing can dispel her spirit in Jeremiah and Matthew. In Jeremiah she reappears because Ephraim, the son of Joseph, is exiled. She murmurs and refuses to be comforted, in spite of the fact that Ephraim is exiled because of his sins and God holds out the prospect of a future. In Matthew she emerges from the grave because the children of Bethlehem are murdered. She murmurs and refuses to be comforted, despite the fact that the child, the Son of God, escaped and this escape would lead to a worse death, the death on the cross, for the sake of His people.

From this example it becomes quite clear that Scripture itself gleans the instructional value from the older covenant in terms of the universal principles and patterns of response that can be found in, and gleaned from, the text as from a gold mine. In terms of Rachel's life it states that self pity, discontent, unending mourning and murmuring, results from a life that is unholy and / or apathetic before God and is therefore condemnable. It is that much more condemnable when it is a reaction to circumstances that are bound up with the coming of the Kingdom of God either in curse or blessing.

As far as the principles and patterns are concerned, moreover, that lie on the face of the text, the illustrations are ready at hand. The book of Exodus promulgates the ten commandments. They are universal principles that have and retain validity. They are ready made and ready to use as such. Paul makes this clear as to the fifth commandment. He quotes it in Ephesians 6:2.

Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise).

Ephesians 6:2

It is an abiding principle. The pattern of response is equally transparent. When the Israelites sin against God in the affair with the golden calf, 1 Corinthians 10:7 condemns this as idolatry. When the principle is clear, the transgression is transparent as a transgression.

It should be noted that the usage of universal principles and patterns of response from the Old Testament by the New Testament is found in new and different settings. The cumulative effect of the study of the various settings will sharpen the application of the principles and patterns to today's situations.

It should further be noticed that the examples have been taken from historical and "legal" sections of the Old Testament. Poetry and prophecy will be discussed later as separate units.

5.2 The Usage of the Old by the New Testament

In the New Testament one finds an abundance of quotations from, allusions to, paraphrases and summaries of Old Testament passages. A study of this usage is, in the final analysis, a study of the unity, continuity and progress of the Scriptures, a subject that is at the heart of this section. It is important because a variety of scholars have maintained that at this point a disunity between the Testaments emerge. On the one hand, the New Testament builds on the Old Testament. On the other hand, however, the New Testament criticizes the Old Testament and interprets it in a new, doubtful, unnatural and forced manner. For example, see Henry M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*¹³. He also speaks about "dishonest practice" in terms of a changed or new meaning given to OT passages, although in general he attests to the "fidelity" of the New Testament writers to the Old Testament and holds that "instances of strained interpretation are the exception rather than the rule" (p. 25,38). In the light of these and similar statements by Shires and others we will do well to examine the usage of the Old Testament by the New Testament authors very carefully.

We will begin by providing a list of most, if not all, quotations of the OT by the NT. This list was drawn up by R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*¹⁴.

We will reproduce this list under the following headings.

Quotations Occurring in Mark and the Double or Triple Synoptic Tradition:

I. Quotations by the Lord Jesus

A. With Introductory Formulae:

1. Mark 7:6f.; Matt. 15:8f. (Isa. 29:13).
2. Mark 7:10; Matt 15:4 (Exod. 20:12; 21:17 [LXX-21:16]; Deut 5:16).
3. Mark 11:17; Matt. 21:13; Luke 19:46 (Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11).
4. Mark 12:10f; Matt 21:42; Luke 20:17 (Ps. 116:22f. [LXX-117:22f.]
5. Mark 12:26; Matt 22:32; Luke 20:37 (Exod. 3:6).

6. Mark 12:36; Matt. 22:44; Luke 20:42f. (Ps. 110:1 [LXX-109:1]).
7. Mark 13:14; Matt. 24:15 (Dan.9:27; 12:11).
8. Mark 14:27; Matt 26:31 (Zech. 13:7)

B. Without Introductory Formulae:

9. Mark 10:7f.; Matt. 19:5 (Gen. 2:24).
10. Mark 10:19; Matt. 19:18f.; Luke 18:20 (Exod. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20).
11. Mark 12:29f.; Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27 (Deut. 6:4f.).
12. Mark 12:31; Matt. 22:39; Luke 10:27 (Lev. 19:18).
13. Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46 (Ps. 22:1 [MT-22:2; LXX-21:2]).

II. Quotations Occurring in Matthew and Luke, But Not in Mark:

A. With Introductory Formulae:

14. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4 (Deut.8:3).
15. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12 (Deut. 6:16).
16. Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8 (Deut. 6:13).
17. Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27 (Mal. 3:1).

B. Without Introductory Formulae:

18. Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35 (Ps. 118:26 [LXX-117:26]).

III. Quotations Occurring in Matthew Alone:

A. With Introductory Formulae:

19. Matt. 5:21 (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17).
20. Matt. 5:27 (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18).
21. Matt. 5:31 (Deut. 24:1).
22. Matt. 5:33 (Ps. 50:14 [LXX-49:14]).
23. Matt. 5:38 (Exod. 21:24; Lev. 24:20).
24. Matt. 5:43 (Lev. 19:18).
25. Matt. 13:14f. (Isa. 6:9f.).
26. Matt. 21:16 (Ps. 8:2 [MT & LXX-8:3]).

B. Without Introductory Formulae:

27. Matt. 9:13 (Hos. 6:6).
28. Matt. 12:7 (Hos. 6:6).
29. Matt. 18:16 (Deut. 19:15).
30. Matt. 19:19 (Lev. 19:18).

IV. Quotations Occurring in Luke Alone:

A. With Introductory Formulae:

31. Luke 4:18f. (Isa. 61:1f.; 58:6).
32. Luke 22:37 (Isa. 53:12).

B. Without Introductory Formulae:

33. Luke 23:30 (Hos. 10:8).
34. Luke 23:46 (Ps. 31:5 [MT-31:6; LXX-30:6]).

V. Quotations Occurring in John Alone, With Introductory Formulae:

35. John 6:45 (Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:33).
36. John 7:38 (Isa. 12:3; 43:19f.; 44:3; 58:11).
37. John 10:34 (Ps. 82:6 [LXX-81:6]).
38. John 13:18 (Ps. 41:9 [MT-41:10; LXX-40:10]).
39. John 15:25 (Ps. 35:19 [LXX-34:19]; 69:4 [MT-69:5; LXX-68:5]).

Quotations in the Acts

I. Quotations Attributed to Peter:

1. Acts 1:20 (Ps. 69:25 [MT-69:26; LXX-68:26]) - I.F.: “it is written (γέγραπται) in the book of Psalms.”
2. Acts 1:20 (Ps. 109:8 [LXX-108:8]) - I.F.: “and” (covered by the preceding introductory formula).
3. Acts 2:17-21 (Joel 2:28-32 [MT & LXX-3:1-5]) - I.F.: “this is that spoken (τοῦτό ἐστιν τό εἰρημένον) by the prophet Joel.”
4. Acts 2:25-28,31 (Ps. 16:8-11 [LXX-15:8-11]) - I.F.: “David said concerning him.”
5. Acts 2:34f. (Ps. 110:1 [LXX-109:1]) - I.F.: “he [David] said.”

6. Acts 3:22f. (Deut. 18:15,18f.) - I.F.: “Moses indeed said.”
7. Acts 3:25 (Gen.12:3; 18:18; 22:18) - I.F.: “saying to Abraham.”
8. Acts 4:11 (Ps. 118:22 [LXX-117:22]) - I.F.: “this is” (οὗτός ἐστιν).

II. Quotations Attributed to the Church Generally:

9. Acts 4:25f. (Ps. 2:1f.) - I.F.: “sovereign Lord... who through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David, your servant, said.”

III. Quotations Attributed to Stephen:

10. Acts 7:3 (Gen. 12:1) - I.F.: “He [God] said to him.”
11. Acts 7:6f. (Gen.16:13f.) - I.F.: “God spoke in this manner.”
12. Acts 7:7b (Exod. 3:12) - I.F.: “God said.”
13. Acts 7:27f. (Exod. 2:14) - I.F.: “saying.”
14. Acts 7:32 (Exod. 3:6) - I.F.: “the voice of the Lord came.”
15. Acts 7:33f. (Exod. 3:5,7-10) - I.F.; “the Lord said to him.”
16. Acts 7:37 (Deut.18:15) - I.F.: “Moses, who said to the sons of Israel.”
17. Acts 7:42f. (Amos 5:25-27) - I.F.: “as it is written in the book of the prophets.”
18. Acts 7:49f. (Isa. 66:1f.) - I.F.: “as the prophet said.”

IV. Quotations Attributed to Philip:

19. Acts 8:32f. (Isa. 53:7f.) - I.F.: “the place of the scripture which he [the Ethiopian Eunuch] read was this”; cf. v. 35, “from the same scripture he [Philip] preached to him Jesus.”

V. Quotations Attributed to James:

20. Acts 15:16-18 (Amos 9:11f.) - I.F.: “the words of the prophets, as it is written” (γέγραπται).

VI. Quotations Attributed to Paul:

21. Acts 13:33 (Ps. 2:7) - I.F.: “as also it is written (γέγραπται) in the second psalm.”
22. Acts 13:34 (Isa. 55:3) - I.F.: “thus He [God] said.”
23. Acts 13:35 (Ps. 16:10 [LXX-15:10]) - I.F.: “therefore also He [God] says in another place.”
24. Acts 13:41 (Hab. 1:5) - I.F.: “which is spoken in the prophets.”

25. Acts 13⁴⁷ (Isa. 49:6) - I.F.: “so the Lord commanded us.”
26. Acts 23:5 (Exod. 22:28 [MT & LXX-22:27]) - I.F.: “It is written” (γέγραπται).
27. Acts 28:26f. (Isa. 6:9f.) - I.F.: “truly spoke the Holy Spirit by the prophet Isaiah to our fathers, saying.”

Quotations by Paul

I. Quotations Occurring In Romans:

1. Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
2. Rom. 2:24 (Isa. 52:5) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
3. Rom. 3:4 (Ps. 51:6; LXX-50:6) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
4. Rom. 3:10-18 (Ps. 14:1-3 [LXX-13:1-3]; 5:9 [MT & LXX-5:10]; 140:3 [MT-140:4; LXX-139:4]; 10:7 [LXX-9:28]; Isa. 59:7f.; Ps. 36:1 [MT-36:2; LXX-35:2]) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
5. Rom. 4:3,9,22 (Gen. 15:6) - I.F.: “What does the scripture say?”
6. Rom. 4:7f. (Ps. 32:1f. [LXX-31:1f]) - I.F.: “as David also says.”
7. Rom. 4:17 (Gen. 17:5) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
8. Rom. 4:18 (Gen. 15:5) - I.F.: “according to that which was said.”
9. Rom. 7:7 (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21) - I.F.: “the law said.”
10. Rom. 8:36 (Ps. 44:22 [MT-44:23; LXX-43:23]) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
11. Rom. 9:7 (Gen. 21:12) - I.F.: “but.”
12. Rom. 9:9 (Gen. 18:10,14) - I.F.: “this is the word of promise.”
13. Rom. 9:12 (Gen. 25:23) - I.F.: “it was said to her.”
14. Rom. 9:13 (Mal. 1:2f.) - I.F.: “as it is written.”
15. Rom. 9:15 (Exod. 33:19) - I.F.: “to Moses He said.”
16. Rom. 9:17 (Exod. 9:16) - I.F.: “the scripture said to Pharaoh.”
17. Rom. 9:25f. (Hos. 2:23 [MT-2:25], 1:10 [MT-2:1]) - I.F.: “as He [God] said also in Hosea.”
18. Rom. 9:27f. (Isa. 10:22f.) - I.F.: “Hosea cried out concerning Israel.”
19. Rom. 9:29 (Isa. 1:9) - I.F.: “as Isaiah said before.”
20. Rom. 9:33 (Isa. 28:16; 8:14) - I.F.: “as it is written.”

21. Rom. 10:5 (Lev. 18:5) - I.F.: "Moses wrote."
22. Rom. 10:6-8 (Deut. 30:12-14) - I.F.: "the righteousness which is by faith speaks in this manner."
23. Rom. 10:11 (Isa. 28:16) - I.F.: "the scripture says."
24. Rom. 10:13 (Joel 2:32 [MT & LXX-3:5]) - I.F.: "for."
25. Rom. 10:15 (Isa. 52:7) - I.F.: "as it is written."
26. Rom. 10:16 (Isa. 53:1) - I.F.: "Isaiah says."
27. Rom. 10:18 (Ps. 19:4 [MT-19:5; LXX-18:5]) - I.F.: "yes, indeed (μενοῦνγε)."
28. Rom. 10:19 (Deut. 32:21) - I.F.: "Moses says."
29. Rom. 10:20f. (Isa. 65:1f.) - I.F.: "Isaiah says."
30. Rom. 11:3 (1 Kings 19:14) - I.F.: "the scripture says of Elijah."
31. Rom. 11:4 (1 Kings 19:18) - I.F.: "What was the divine response to him?"
32. Rom. 11:8 (Isa. 29:10; Deut. 29:4 [MT-29:3]) - I.F.: "as it is written."
33. Rom. 11:9f. (Ps. 69:22f. [MT-69:23f.; LXX-68:23f.]) - I.F.: "David says."
34. Rom. 11:26f. (Isa. 59:20f.; 27:9) - I.F.: "as it is written."
35. Rom. 11:34f. (Isa. 40:13; Job 41:11 [MT & LXX-41:3]) - I.F.: "for."
36. Rom. 12:19f. (Deut. 32:35; Prov. 25:21f.) - I.F.: "it is written... says the Lord."
37. Rom. 13:9 (Exod. 20:13-17; Deut. 5:17-21) - I.F.: "for this."
38. Rom. 13:9 (Lev. 19:18) - I.F.: "If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word."
39. Rom. 14:11 (Isa. 45:23) - I.F.: "it is written."
40. Rom. 15:3 (Ps. 69:9 [MT-69:10; LXX-68:10]) - I.F.: "as it is written."
41. Rom. 15:9 (Ps. 18:49 [MT-18:50; LXX-17:50]) - I.F.: "as it is written."
42. Rom. 15:10 (Deut. 32:43) - I.F.: "again he says."
43. Rom. 15:11 (Ps. 117:1 [LXX-116:1]) - I.F.: "and again."
44. Rom. 15:12 (Isa. 11:10) - I.F.: "and again Isaiah says."
46. Rom. 15:21 (Isa. 52:15) - I.F.: "as it is written."

II. Quotations Occurring in 1 Corinthians:

46. I Cor. 1:19 (Isa. 29:14) - I.F.: "it is written."
47. I Cor. 1:31 (Jer. 9:24 [MT-9:23]) - I.F.: "as it is written."
48. I Cor. 2:9 (Isa. 64:4) - I.F.: "as it is written."
49. I Cor. 2:16 (Isa. 40:13) - I.F.: "for."
50. I Cor. 3:19 (Job 5:13) - I.F.: "it is written."
51. I Cor. 3:20 (Ps. 94:11 [LXX-93:11]) - I.F.: "and again."
52. I Cor. 6:16 (Gen. 2:24) - I.F.: "for... said he."
53. I Cor. 9:9 (Deut. 25:4) - I.F.: "in the law of Moses it is written."
54. I Cor. 10:7 (Exod. 32:8) - I.F.: "as it is written."
55. I Cor. 10:26 (Ps. 24:1 [LXX-23:11]) - I.F.: "for."
56. I Cor. 14:21 (Isa. 28:11f.) - I.F.: "in the law it is written."
57. I Cor. 15:27 (Ps. 8:8 [MT & LXX-8:7]) - I.F.: "for."
58. I Cor. 15:32 (Isa. 22:13) - I.F.: none.
59. I Cor 15:45 (Gen. 2:7) - I.F.: "so it is written."
60. I Cor. 15:54f. (Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14) - I.F.: "then shall come to pass the word which is written."

III. Quotations Occurring in II Corinthians:

61. II Cor. 4:13 (Ps. 116:10 [LXX-115:1]) - I.F.: "according to what is written."
62. II Cor. 6:2 (Isa. 49:8) - I.F.: "He [God] says."
63. II Cor. 6:16-18 (Lev. 26:11f.; Isa. 52:11f. and possibly II Sam. 7:14) - I.F.: "as God said."
64. II Cor. 8:15 (Exod. 16:18) - I.F.: "as it is written."
65. II Cor. 9:9 (Ps. 112:9 [LXX-111:9]) - I.F.: "as it is written."
66. II Cor. 10:17 (Jer. 9:24) - I.F.: "but."
67. II Cor. 13:1 (Deut. 19:15) - I.F.: none.

IV. Quotations Occurring in Galatians:

68. Gal. 3:6 (Gen. 15:6) - I.F.: “as.”
69. Gal. 3:8 (Gen. 12:3) - I.F.: “the scripture... announced before to Abraham.”
70. Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26) - I.F.: “it is written.”
71. Gal. 3:11 (Hab. 2:4) - I.F.: “because.”
72. Gal. 3:12 (Lev. 18:5) - I.F.: “but.”
73. Gal. 3:13 (Deut. 21:23) - I.F.: “it is written.”
74. Gal. 3:16 (Gen. 13:15; 15:18; 17:8 and possibly 22:18) - I.F.: “He [God] did not say,... but.”
76. Gal. 4:30 (Gen 21:10) - I.F.: “What does the scripture say?”
77. Gal. 6:14 (Lev. 19:18) - I.F.: “all the law is fulfilled in this one statement.”

V. Quotations Occurring in Ephesians:

78. Eph. 4:8 (Ps. 68:18 [MT-68:19; LXX-67:19]) - I.F.: “therefore He [God] says.”
79. Eph. 5:14 (Isa. 26:19; 60:1) - I.F.: “therefore He [God] says.”
80. Eph. 5:31 (Gen. 2:24) - I.F.: none.
81. Eph. 6:2f. (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) - I.F.: none.

VI. Quotations Occurring in the Pastoral Epistles:

82. I Tim. 5:18 (Deut. 25:4) - I.F.: “the scripture says.”
83. II Tim. 2:19 (Num. 16:5) - I.F.: none.

Quotations by the Evangelists

I. Quotations Occurring in Mark’s Editorial Comments:

1. Mark 1:2f. (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3) - I.F.: “as it is written (καθώς γέγραπται) in Isaiah the prophet.”

II. Quotations Occurring in Matthew’s Editorial Comments:

2. Matt. 1:23 (Isa. 7:14) - I.F.: “that the word of the Lord by the prophet might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) saying.”
3. Matt. 2:15 (Hos. 11:1) - I.F.: “that the word of the Lord by the prophet might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) saying.”
4. Matt. 2:18 (Jer. 31:15 [LXX-38:15]) - I.F.: “then was fulfilled (τότε ἐπληρωθη) the word

by Jeremiah the prophet, saying.”

5. Matt. 2:23 (probably Judges 13:5-7; 16:17) - I.F.: “that the word by the prophets might be fulfilled, (ὅπως πληρωθῆ) that.”
6. Matt. 3:3 (Isa. 40:3) - I.F.: “for this is the one spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying.”
7. Matt. 4:15f. (Isa. 9:1f. [MT & LXX-8:23 - 9:1]) - I.F.: “that the word by Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) saying.”
8. Matt. 8:17 (Isa. 53:4) - I.F.: “that the word by Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, (ὅπως πληρωθῆ) saying.”
9. Matt. 12:18-21 (Isa. 42:1-4) - I.F.: “that the word by Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) saying.”
10. Matt. 13:35 (Ps. 78:2 [LXX-77:2]) - I.F.: “that the word by the prophet might be fulfilled, (ὅπως πληρωθῆ) saying.”
11. Matt. 21:5 (Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9) - I.F.: “that the word by the prophet might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) saying.”
12. Matt. 27:9f. (Zech 11:12f.; Jer. 18:1f.; 32:6-9) - I.F.: “then was fulfilled (τότε ἐπληρωθη) the word by Jeremiah the prophet, saying.”

III. Quotations Occurring in Luke’s Editorial Comments:

13. Luke 2:23 (Exod. 13:2,12) - I.F.: “as it is written (καθώς γέγραπται) in the law of the Lord.”
14. Luke 2:24 (Lev. 12:8) - I.F.: “according to what is said (καθώς γέγραπται) in the law of the Lord.”
16. Luke 3:4-6 (Isa. 40:3-5) - I.F.: “as it is written (ὡς πληρωθῆ) in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet.”

IV. Quotations Occurring in John’s Editorial Comments:

16. John 2:17 (Ps. 69:9 [MT-69:10; LXX-68:10]) - I.F.: “It is written (γεγραμμένον ἐστίν).”
17. John 12:15 (Zech. 9:9, possibly Isa. 40:9) - I.F.: “as it is written (καθώς ἐστιν γεγραμμένον).”
18. John 12:38 (Isa. 53:1) - I.F.: “that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) which said.”
19. John 12:40 (Isa. 6:9f.) - I.F.: “again Isaiah said.”
20. John 19:24 (Ps. 22:18 [MT-22:19; LXX-21:19]) - I.F.: “that the scripture might be fulfilled, (ἵνα πληρωθῆ) which says.”

21. John 19:36 (probably Ps. 34:20, perhaps also Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12) - I.F.: “that the scripture might be fulfilled (ἵνα πληρωθῇ).”
22. John 19:37 (Zech. 12:10) - I.F.: “again another scripture says.”

Quotations in the Book of Hebrews

1. Heb. 1:5a (Ps. 2:7) - I.F.: “to which of the angels did He [God] ever say (εἶπεν).”
2. Heb. 1:5b (II Sam. 7:14) - I.F.: “and again.”
3. Heb. 1:6 (Deut. 32:43 in LXX and 4QDt, though not in MT; or perhaps Ps. 97:7 [LXX-96:7]) - I.F.: “He [God] says (λέγει).”
4. Heb. 1:7 (Ps. 104:4 [LXX-103:4]) - I.F.: “He [God] says (λέγει).”
5. Heb. 1:8f. (Ps. 45:6f. [MT-45:7f.; LXX-44:6f.]) - I.F.: “but about the Son.”
6. Heb. 1:10-12 (Ps. 102:25-27 [MT-102:26-28; LXX-101:26-28]) - I.F.: “and.”
7. Heb. 1:13 (Ps. 110:1 [LXX-109:1]) - I.F.: “to which of the angels has He [God] ever said (εἶρηκέν).”
8. Heb. 2:6-8 (Ps. 8:4-6 [MT-8:5-7]) - I.F.: “somewhere someone testified, saying (διεμαρτύρατο πού τις λέγων).”
9. Heb. 2:12 (Ps. 22:22 [MT-22:23; LXX-21:22]) - I.F.: “He [Jesus] says (λέγων).”
10. Heb. 2:13a (Isa. 8:17) - I.F.: “and again.”
11. Heb. 2:13b (Isa. 8:18) - I.F.: “and again.”
12. Heb. 3:7-11 (Ps. 96:7-11 [LXX-94:7-11]) - I.F.: “the Holy Spirit says (λέγει).”
13. Heb. 3:15 (Ps. 95:7f. [LXX-94:7f.]) - I.F.: “while it is said (ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι).”
14. Heb. 4:3 (Ps. 95:11 [LXX-94:11]) - I.F.: “He [God] has said (εἶρηκέν).”
15. Heb. 4:4 (Gen. 2:2) - I.F.: “somewhere He [God] has said (εἶρηκεν που).”
16. Heb. 4:5 (Ps. 95:11 [LXX-94:11]) - I.F.: “again in this passage (ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν).”
17. Heb. 4:7 (Ps. 95:7f. [LXX-94:7f.]) - I.F.: “again, He [God] set a certain day... as was said before (προεἶρηται).”
18. Heb. 5:5 (Ps. 2:7) - I.F.: “the one who spoke [i.e. God] said (ὁ λαλήσας).”
19. Heb. 5:6 (Ps. 110:4 [LXX-109:4]) - I.F.: “In another passage He [God] says (ἐν ἑτέρῳ λέγει).”
20. Heb. 6:14 (Gen 22:17) - I.F.: “God... swore by Himself, saying (θεός... ὠμουνε καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ λέγων).”

21. Heb. 7:17 (Ps. 110:4 [LXX-109:41]) - I.F.: “He [God] testifies (μαρτυρείτα / μαρτυρεί).”
22. Heb. 7:21 (Ps. 110:4 [LXX-109:4]) - I.F.: “by the One [i.e. God] saying to him (διὰ τοῦ λέγοντες πρὸς αὐτόν).”
23. Heb. 8:5 (Exod. 25:40) - I.F.; “He [God] said (φησὶν).”
24. Heb. 8:8-12 (Jer. 31:31-34 [LXX-38:31-34]) - I.F.: “He [God] says (λέγει).”
25. Heb. 9:20 (Exod.24:8) - I.F.: “he [Moses] says (λέγων).”
26. Heb. 10:5-7 (Ps. 40:6-8 [MT-40:7-9; LXX-39:7-9]) - I.F.: “He [the eschatological Messiah] says (λέγει).”
27. Heb. 10:16 (Jer. 31:33 [LXX-38:33]) - I.F.: “the Holy Spirit also testifies (μαρτυρεῖ) to us, for He said (τό εἶρηκέναι) .”
28. Heb. 10:17 (Jer. 31:34 [LXX-38:34]) - I.F.: “and.”
29. Heb. 10:30a (Deut. 32:36) - I.F.: “we know Him [God] who said (τόν εἰπόντα).”
30. Heb. 10:30b (Deut. 32:36) - I.F.: “and again.”
31. Heb. 10:37f. (Hab. 2:3f.) - I.F.: “for.”
32. Heb. 11:18 (Gen. 21:12) - I.F.: “concerning whom it was said (ἐλαλήθη).”
33. Heb. 12:5f. (Prov. 3:11f.) - I.F. “the exhortation that addresses (διαλέγεται) you.”
34. Heb. 12:20 (Exod. 19:13) - I.F.: “that which was commanded (τό διαυτελλόμενον).”
35. Heb. 12:21 (Deut. 9:19) - I.F.: “Moses said (εἶπεν).”
36. Heb. 12:26 (Hag. 2:6) - I.F.: “He [God] has promised, saying (ἐπήγγελται λέγων).”
37. Heb. 13:5 (Deut. 31:6,8) - I.F.: “He [God] has said (αὐτός εἶρηκεν).”
38. Heb. 13:6 (Ps. 118:6 [LXX-117:6]) - I.F.: “we are bold to say (λέγω).”

Quotations by the Pastorals

I. Quotations Occurring in James

1. James 2:8 (Lev. 19:18) - I.F.: “If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, (εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελείτε βασιλικόν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν) you do well.”
2. James 2:11a (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18) - I.F.: “for he who said (ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν).”
3. James 2:11b (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17) - I.F.: “also said (εἶπεν καί).”
4. James 2:23a (Gen. 15:6) - I.F.: “the scripture was fulfilled that said (ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἢ λέγουσα).”

5. James 4:5 (probably a proverbial maxim drawn from such passages as Gen. 6:3-7; Exod. 20:5 and Deut. 32:11f., 16-22) - I.F.: “do you think the scripture says in vain (δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει).”
6. James 4:6 (Prov. 3:34) - I.F.: “therefore he says (διό λέγει).”

II. Quotations Occurring in I Peter

7. I Pet. 1:16 (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7) - I.F.: “for it is written (διότι γέγραπται).”
8. I Pet. 1:24f (Isa. 40:6-8) - I.F.: “for” (διότι)
9. I Pet. 2:6 (Isa. 28:16) - I.F.: “for it is contained in scripture (διότι περιέχει ἐν γραφῇ).”
10. I Pet. 2:7 (Ps.118:22 [LXX-117:22]) - I.F.: none.
12. I Pet. 3:10-12 (Ps. 34:12-16 [LXX-33:12-16]) - I.F.: “for” (γύρ).
13. I Pet. 4:18 (Prov. 11:31) - I.F.: “and.”
14. I Pet. 5:5 (Prov. 3:34) - I.F.: “because” (ὅτι).

III. Quotations Occurring in II Peter

15. II Pet. 2:22 (Prov. 26:11) - I.F.: “it has happened to them according to the true proverb” (συμβέβηκεν αυτοῖς τό τῆς ἀληθοῦς παροιμίας).

The lists of citations just reproduced indicate only part of the interrelationship between the Testaments. There are approximately 250 acknowledged quotations in the NT and approximately 200 quotations that are not prefaced by any formula. In addition to this, roughly 950 passages of the OT are referred to in the NT, while at least 1,000 passages in the NT allude to, paraphrase, summarize or reflect OT verses.

While scholars agree on these statistics, they do not do so on the attitude of the NT with regard to the OT. Some hold that the NT, with due acknowledgement of the general authority of the OT, still at times is critical of it. See Henry M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*¹⁵. He refers to Matt. 19:3-9 as an example.

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate.” They said to Him, “Why, then, did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Matthew 19:3-9

Others, among whom Nicole, are of the opinion that the NT looks at the OT as always and totally authoritative. To back this up they point to formulas as “it is written” (Matt. 4:4) and “Scripture says” (John 7:38). Also mentioned is that God’s actions are ascribed to Scripture, before Scripture was even written. Rom. 9:17 tells us that “Scripture says to Pharaoh.” There appears to be a commonly recognized identification of God and Scripture. Further, 56 times God is said to be the author of a passage. See Matt. 19:5. This applies to the Holy Spirit as well. Often He is the one who speaks, - at times through human beings. See Matt. 1:22, 22:43; Acts 1:16, 28:25; Heb. 3:7. OT references are to be found in all kinds of contexts, sermons, historical material, letters and prayers. The letters in which the citations occur are addressed to Jews, Gentiles, churches, individuals and pertain to friends as well as foes. The quotations serve the purposes of argumentation, illustration, instruction, documentation and reproof. The Lord Jesus cites the OT to crowds, disciples, questioners, opponents, on the cross and after the resurrection. Acknowledgement of the OT as authoritative is pervasive throughout the NT.

In addition to the statistics and the attitude of the NT toward the OT, the issue of the accuracy of the NT in quoting the OT is pertinent.

First of all, it ought to be understood that ancient writers often inserted their own words in citations. Hardly ever would a source be quoted verbatim. Copying required the highest degree of verbatim accuracy, quoting did not. In the latter case the question was whether the sense of the passage was correctly conveyed. Case in point is the treatment of the words and speeches of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Gospel writers. These are quite clearly not recorded verbatim. Otherwise there would be no differences among the Gospel writers. No, each one accurately conveyed the sense of the speeches and the meaning of the words spoken by the Lord Jesus.

Second, it may not be overlooked that all references in the NT are translations, either from the Hebrew or from the Aramaic, and in addition to this, quite often these translations, if they were not produced for the occasion, were quoted by memory. Even if they were not verbatim, they were quite properly inserted in the text. It was the custom of the day. Of course, the sense could not be distorted. In this connection some additional complications ought to be mentioned. The text that was foundational to the references was either the Hebrew, non-Masoretic, or proto-Masoretic, the Greek Septuagint (LXX), or the Aramaic Targums, which were interpretive or paraphrastic. Today we possess the Hebrew manuscripts prepared by the Masoretes or written by the Dead Sea community. The LXX manuscripts date from 400 A.D., while the Targums go back to 1500 A.D. It is superfluous to mention that the NT was written in the Greek in the first century A.D.

Often the NT writers quoted from the LXX, a translation from non-Masoretic or proto-Masoretic texts. It is interesting to note that the LXX text of Jeremiah is 1/8th shorter than the Masoretic text. At first the LXX was discounted. However, it appeared to correspond at this point with the non-Masoretic text of the Dead Sea scrolls. Note that our OT is a translation of the Masoretic text.

Often the LXX is identical to the Masoretic text, but at times it is not. For example, compare the quotation in Eph. 4:18 of Ps. 68:18 with our OT on that point. The quotation is from the LXX, our OT is the Masoretic text. Compare also the LXX quotation of Amos 9:12 in Acts 15:16-18 with the Masoretic text of Amos 9:12 reflected in the English Bible. See also Heb. 1:6 which contains a quotation of Deut. 32:43. The LXX is more extensive than the Masoretic text of Deut. 32:43 in our Bible.

At times the quotations reflected the Targum, for example in the citation of Isa. 6:9 in Mark 4:12. Often the Targum differs both from the LXX and the Masoretic text.

The quotations that correspond with the Masoretic text at times agree with the LXX, at times they differ.

There is also a mixed strand in the quotations. For example, 20 formal quotes in Matthew are neither LXX, Masoretic or Targum. On the other hand other quotes in Matthew are taken from the LXX.

Third, the quotes may comprise one verse, a chain of verses (also called pearl stringing), or a combination of two verses. Mark 1:2 quotes Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3. Isaiah receives the credit. Matt. 27:9 refers to Zech. 11:13 and Jer. 18:1-3. Jeremiah receives the credit this time.

The most difficult issue as to the usage of the OT by, and in the NT, is not the statistics, nor the attitude, nor the accuracy, but rather the interpretation of the OT by the NT.

Shires¹⁶ holds that the NT writers at times adapt the OT in a way that shows complete disregard of the context and the original meaning of cited Scriptural passages from the OT. He refers to the quotation of Ps. 94:11 in I Cor. 3:19-20 and of Isa. 26:19, 52:1 and 60:1 in Eph. 5:14. As to the latter verse, the quotations are alright, but the addition, the author's own interpretation, makes the NT context final and not the OT context. Shires¹⁷. He also talks about doubtful, unnatural and forced interpretation. He cites Heb. 1:5-13 with its string of quotations interpreted as referring to Jesus and to 1 Pet. 2:4-8, which quotes Isa. 28:16 in verse 6, Ps. 118:22 in 7 and Isa. 8:14 in verse 8. Verse 4 speaks about stones and each one of the quotations refers to a "stone." The occurrence of this word in each verse does not seem to Shires to be sufficient ground for quoting them in the same context and having them refer to Jesus. See also the citation of Deut. 21:23 in Gal. 3:13.

Longenecker believes that the NT interpretation of the OT runs parallel to the interpretation of the OT by Jewish scholarship. In an earlier context the various ways in which early Jewish scholarship interpreted Scripture have been enumerated, the literalistic, midrash, peshet and allegorical approach. According to Longenecker, the NT displays the same approaches, plus a fifth one, the typological approach. The NT interprets the OT literalistically when it quotes Deut. 6:4 in Matt. 22:37, Lev. 19:18 in Matt. 22:39, Ex. 22:28 in Acts 23:5 and Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5:31. It uses the midrash approach in Matt. 22:32. On the basis of the fact that Ex. 3:6 states that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the NT concludes that God is a God of the living and not of the dead and consequently, that the resurrection was an undeniable truth. The peshet approach is displayed in the quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matt. 2:23 and of Jer. 31:15

in Matt. 2:18. Hosea 11:1 states that God called His son out of Egypt. In Hosea this applies to Israel's exodus. In Matthew, this is applied to Jesus' return from Egypt to Nazareth. A typical example of the fulfillment motif that superimposes a truth upon an OT passage that per se does not contain that truth. The typological interpretation comes to the fore in John 3:14, where Jesus compares Himself to the brazen serpent of Numbers 12:9 and in John 12:40, where Jesus quotes Isa 6:9, the passage that speaks of the blinding of the eyes and the hardening of the heart. Finally, the allegorical method is used in 1 Cor. 9:9, where Deut. 25:4, the verse that speaks about the muzzling of the ox, is quoted and in Galatians 4:21-31 where Paul himself calls his exposition "an allegory" (4:24). Note yet that Longenecker speaks about four principles that are kept in mind and applied in Jewish interpretation, the principle of corporate solidarity, correspondence in history, eschatological fulfillment and messianic presence.

In the principle of corporate solidarity the interpreter moves, for example, from people of Israel to the Messiah without any explanation.

The principle of the correspondence in history prepares the interpreter to trace correspondence between God's activities of the past and actions in the present, between events and persons then and events and persons now. This provides the rationale for the typological approach.

The eschatological fulfillment means that the announcement of the messianic kingdom was fulfilled beginning with the birth of Christ. The early church lived in the "last days."

The messianic presence implied that the OT had to be interpreted christologically, or possibly even more pointedly, christocentrically.

It is important to note that according to Longenecker it is not correct to hold that the interpretive and exegetic procedures of the NT with regard to the OT can be adopted by the church. He is of the opinion that the peshet interpretation of Christ and the apostles cannot be duplicated. They were unique. Christ is the Son of God and the apostles are led by the Spirit in a unique way. Further, the midrashic and allegorical handling of the text is part of the cultural context through which the transcultural and eternal Gospel was expressed. The fact that the apostles, as children of their time, used rabbinic methods and showed the influence of rabbinistic education does not authorize us to go about the interpretation of the text in the same fashion. Thus, according to Longenecker we may not and cannot reproduce the exegesis of the NT where it is based upon a revelatory stance, where it evidences itself to be merely cultural or where it shows itself to be circumstantial and ad hominem in nature. We may, and can, however, where the NT treats the OT more literally and more historico-grammatically.

Before moving on to our own position with regard to the rules of the NT interpretation of the OT, a few comments are in place. The approaches of both Shires and Longenecker are unacceptable. Shires' approach is at odds with the inerrancy as well as the unity and continuity of the Scriptures. The weakness of Longenecker is that for all practical purposes he attempts to string the beads of the NT data on the thread of Jewish interpretive patterns. It would be utterly foolish to maintain that there are no correspondences between biblical and non-biblical literature. As to

the OT, the book of Deuteronomy has the same formal structure as the Hittite suzerainty treaties. As to the NT, it was written in the ordinary everyday language and its epistolary structure paralleled the customary letter form of the day. But a protest must be lodged when the correspondence of a formal nature is replaced by a dependence of a material nature. Then the Scriptures lose their unique character. The Bible never slavishly follows the trend of the time. Numerous efforts have been made to demonstrate this. At the beginning of this century a famous speech was entitled “Babel eder Bibel” (Babylon or Bible). In it the claim was made that finally the origin of the Bible in form and much of its contents had become visible. The various component elements of the Bible could be traced back to its Babylonian roots. This type of approach is indicative of a spirit that betrays not to have grasped, and not to have been gripped by, the message of Scripture. This same spirit is evident in the various attempts to establish the date of the exodus. The biblical data are unequivocal. Give or take a few years, Scripture demands that the date of the exodus must be at 1446 B.C. This date, however, poses problems in terms of the synchronization with the Pharaonic dynasties. Hence, liberal scholarship, followed by some conservatives, has set the date at 1225 B.C. or thereabouts. This would fit better with the known dates of the Egyptian dynasties. The problems with that data, however, on anyone’s view are at least as difficult. A recent book, entitled *The Exodus Problem*¹⁸ authored by Donovan Courville, takes issue with the whole approach to the problem. This approach takes for granted that the dates of the dynasties are infallible and inerrant. This has as corollary that the Scripture has to be wrested in the framework of extrabiblical data that cannot be doubted or changed. Taking his cue from a hypothesis from Velikowski, Courville maintains that painstaking scholarship may and should come to the conclusion that the dynasties have to be reorganized. In this approach the Pharaonic history is measured by the biblical data. Courville claims that as a result of this he does not have to make Egyptian history fit into the biblical framework. No, it fits quite snugly. The details of his scholarship cannot be discussed at this point. But the spirit behind this scholarship is refreshing. In addition to this, it is, and at least should be, the spirit of every Bible scholar that is gripped by its message, to measure all data by the inerrant Word as a standard and not vice versa.

After these comments, let us make an attempt to provide some guidelines to assist in understanding the nature and the scope of the OT quotations, etc. in and by the NT authors. The quotations of the OT in the NT reflect the various aspects of the nature and scope of the Old Testament.

First, the OT teaches what life is, namely obedience to the law of God. Hence, the NT quotes the law of God as such. See in Matt. 7:24 where “doing the sayings” of Christ mentioned in the previous chapters spells life. The commandments figure prominently in these sayings.

Second, the OT teaches what death is, namely disobedience to the law of God. Hence, the NT quotes the law of God as exposing man as dead in trespasses and sins. See Rom. 7:7.

Third, the OT teaches the transition from death to life by means of the symbolisms. Hence, the NT quotes the symbolisms in conjunction with their message and their fulfillment. For the symbolism in the area of justification, see Hebrews 9. For the symbolism in the area of sanctification, see 2 Corinthians 6:14. For the symbolism in the area of fellowship, see Revelation 3:20.

In addition to these symbolical “shadows,” eventually to be replaced by the “substance” or the “truth,” there is another type of shadow. This type consists of persons and / or items that are a reflection of a “heavenly” reality and at the same time function as a foreshadowing for a future historical realization of that same reality. See Hebrews 7 for a discussion of Melchizedek and Hebrews 9 for a discussion of the tabernacle.

Fourth, the NT contains instructional teaching. Accordingly the NT quotes the OT or utilizes the OT in this connection. This utilization can assume several forms.

For one, the NT quotes passages in which one finds “ready made” universal principles. They are simply carried over as such. See Matt. 22:37-39 where Deut. 6:4 and Lev. 19:18 are quoted.

Second, the NT quotes historical events and gleans universal principles from them to the general instruction of the NT congregations. See 1 Cor. 10:6ff. where a variety of events are referred to for “our warning.” Note that in this connection Paul uses the Greek words *tupos* (type) and *tupikoos* (typically). More about this later. See also 2 Cor. 6:16-18 where Ezek. 37:27; Lev. 26:22-12; Isa. 52:11-12; Ezek. 20:34 and 2 Sam. 7:14 are quoted.

Third, the NT quotes or refers to OT passages, not as prophecies, but as Nicole says, as strikingly characterizing a corresponding, similar or parallel NT situation for the general instruction of the hearers. See John 3:14, where the Lord Jesus talks about His death comparably to the lifting up of the serpent of brass in the wilderness. See also Matt. 12:40, where Jonah 1:17 is quoted.

Fourth, the NT takes a cue from an OT passage, “takes off” from there and “builds it out” without inferring that this passage is “fulfilled prophecy.” It does so under the authority and inspiration of the Spirit of God. That the NT writers use this procedure is undoubtedly occasioned by the fact that they are so immersed in, and permeated by, OT phraseology, data and thought patterns that it comes naturally. Romans 10:6-8, with its reference to Deut. 30:12-14, may serve as an illustration.

Fifth, as has been said by Nicole, the Spirit of God may, if He sees fit, take a passage of the OT and change it so that it serves His sovereign purpose. He adds the warning, however, that one should not resort too quickly to this as a possible solution.

The four main points just mentioned pertain to the scope of the Old Testament. There is also a motif in the NT manner of quotation, however, that is based on the nature of the Scripture as covenantal-historical. The Scripture is historical in character and contains in the earlier sections predictive and promissory material. This brings us face to face with the fulfillment motif.

One type of prediction or promise is set forth in clear, unmistakable language. Both its contents and its fulfillment do not leave any doubt. They are both “literal,” for want of a better term. In this category is the announcement of the fall of Babylon in Isa. 13:19-22, as well as the fall of Jerusalem in Matt. 24. See also the prophecy with regard to the birth of Christ (Micah 5:2 and Matt. 2:6) and the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:8-32 and Acts 2:17-21).

A second category of predictions is couched, as Albert Barnes points out, in a language that is more elevated than the fulfillment would demand on the surface of it. An illustration is the prophecy of Isa. 9:1-2, especially when read in its context. Matt. 4:14-16 declares that Isa. 9:1-2 was fulfilled with Christ's first labor in Galilee. Surely only the eye of faith would have recognized this. We intend to come back to this principle in a later context.

A third set of predictions is capable of more than one fulfillment. Isa. 7:14 appears to have first of all Hezekiah in view. Verse 14 does not necessarily require that he still has to be born in the future. The verses 15 and 16 imply that before he grows up, the enemies will be destroyed. In further perspective Isa. 7:14 is fulfilled in the birth of Christ. See Matt. 1:23. See also Dan. 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11 in conjunction with Matt. 24:15. The abomination of desolation is first of all a reference to the activity of Antiochus Epiphanes. Secondly, it applies to the activity of the Romans at the fall of Jerusalem.

A fourth number of predictions announces an event, the fulfillment of which takes place in a series of successive stages. The illustration has been used of a traveler who approaches a mountain chain. From afar it seems one massive object. Coming closer he notices that it consists of a number of consecutive ranges. The depth perspective is not there until he has reached the mountain chain. See for an example Matt. 3:10-12. John expected an immediate judgment upon the coming of the Son of God. Matt. 11 indicates that in between the baptism with the Spirit and the judgment is the age of the proclamation of the Gospel. See also Matt. 13. John predicted the total range of the work of the Lord's Christ. Matt. 13, in conjunction with Matt. 11, informs us about the various stages of that work.

A fifth group of prophetic utterances are not predictions in the real sense of the word, but still are quoted as being fulfilled. These utterances are made to characterize a certain event that has taken, or is in the process of taking place. At a later time there is such a striking parallel with another event that the Bible writer talks about a fulfillment of the earlier utterance. See for example Hos. 11:1 that according to Matt. 2:15 is fulfilled when Jesus returns to Nazareth from Egypt. See also the fulfillment of Jer. 31:15 in Matt. 2:18. Something similar takes place in conjunction with the wisdom literature. Many of the utterances of the Psalmists are quoted by the NT authors as having been fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Acts 2:25-36 for the fulfillment of Ps. 16:8-11 and Ps. 110:1. See Matt. 27 for the fulfillment of several verses of Ps. 22. With regard to this fifth group Barnes states that the language is at times so full and rich that it appropriately expresses other events in similar circumstances. This implies that the term "fulfillment," or "fulfilled" must be taken in a wider sense.

It ought to be noted that in case of a double fulfillment of a predictive prophetic utterance the original understanding is quite legitimate and is not nullified, but rather supplemented by a later fulfillment. At the same time the original fulfillment does not exclude the propriety of larger vistas authoritatively revealed in the NT. Thus states Nicole!

The third and fifth categories of utterances have given rise to a discussion of the distinctive characteristic of these utterances. Some characterize them as utterances with a "mystic," or "spiritual" sense beyond the literal one. Such terminology easily revives the notion of a multiple

sense of Scripture as was propounded in the Middle Ages. In addition to this, the terms “mystic” and “spiritual” are questionable. The word “mystic” had a bad connotation while the word “spiritual” might imply that the literal sense is not spiritual. To speak of a deeper sense is not satisfactory either. It also evokes the threat of a “multiple” sense of the Bible. The Roman Catholic theologians have begun to speak of a *sensus plenior*, or “fuller sense.” In this they are followed by a variety of protestant theologians. This however, is pressed by the same problem of the “multiple sense.” Rather than speaking in terms of “sense,” modified by whatever adjective, it seems preferable to talk in terms of “fulfillment” or “application.” It is quite in line with the Scriptural data to state that a predictive prophetic or other type of utterance has a further (Isa. 7:14 // Matt. 1:22), or an extended (Hos. 11:1 // Matt. 2:15) fulfillment or application.

One of the major champions of this view in recent days is Walter Kaiser. In numerous articles he has defended the thesis that the sense of a passage is what the human writer means it to say. In this he has not gone unchallenged. Nicole for example, holds that it is perfectly proper to speak of further or extended fulfillments or application. But he also wishes to keep the door open for unintended fulfillments. He quotes John 11:49-52 to support his view. Kaiser is unalterably opposed to this on the ground that a multiple sense would then, in principle, be accepted. He distinguishes between meaning and significance in the footsteps of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. The meaning, he insists, is one, namely the sense that the writer intended it to have. The significance may be multiple, according to the setting in which the passage is applied. The arguments and counter arguments, especially with regard to passages as John 11:49-52 and 1 Pet. 1:10ff., will be dealt with at a later point in conjunction with prophecy.

It was impossible, of course, to provide an exhaustive solution of the problems connected with the NT usage of the OT in this context. But it is hoped that some of the guidelines laid out above will be helpful and at least will show the way in which the unity and authority of all of the Scriptures can be retained and the message of the Bible will be driven home to the hearer.

It should be recognized that some of the conclusions reached thus far will prove to have implications for typology, prophecy and allegory. These three areas have been touched upon in this context. That could hardly be avoided. A more full blown discussion, hopefully, will follow at a later time.

This brings the treatment of the starting point of hermeneutics to a close. Much has been left unsaid. But the importance, specifically of the nature of Scripture and its implications for the relationship between the two Testaments, should not have eluded anyone. The direction of one’s hermeneutics is determined by one’s view of the nature and scope of Scripture.

III. The Goal of Hermeneutics

6. The Understanding of Scripture

It is general practice to credit Schleiermacher with the eye-opening insight that “understanding” is central to the discipline of hermeneutics. This sparked a development both in philosophy (Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer) and in theology (Bultmann, Ebeling, Fuchs) which claimed center stage for hermeneutics in both disciplines.

It ought to be recognized, however, that already in the 17th century the Reformed theologian, John Owen published a treatise that set forth the centrality of the notion of understanding in the totality of the discipline of what subsequently was designated as “hermeneutics.” Its rather lengthy title is indicative of this fact, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.*¹⁹

It further ought to be recognized that the notion of understanding in the Schleiermacher tradition is radically divergent from that of John Owen, who is in the Reformed tradition. The Schleiermacher tradition has its roots in the Kantian distinction between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom. The former is the area of scientific thought. This thought aims at intellectual mastery over its object of inquiry and subsequently “explains” it. The latter is non-objectifiable in nature. It transcends the area of the sciences. Its subject matter can only be “understood.” Explanation and understanding are as mutually exclusive of one another as the realms of nature and freedom. It is against this backdrop that the scholars in the Schleiermacher tradition develop their hermeneutic. The Kantian polarity determines their approach. Schleiermacher and Dilthey attempt to reach the subject matter of the inward, psychic life experience by “becoming ‘contemporary’ with the author” beyond the language of the text. Barth seeks to be grasped by the subject matter of the Word of God by systematically concentrating upon its echo in the language of the text. Bultmann wishes to lay bare the subject matter of authentic existence by the existential interpretation of the language of the text. Fuchs and Ebeling focus their attention upon the subject matter of God’s saving Word that addresses man’s self-understanding through the language of the text. Whatever the internal differences of these scholars may be, their general approach is identical. The various subject matters are all non-objectifiable. They cannot be grasped by theoretical thought. Further, they sustain a relationship to texts. They cannot be divorced from them. Finally, they cannot be identified with these texts. They must be distinguished from them. The polarity appears dialectic. The poles mutually exclude and presuppose one another. The subject matter may not be identified with the text. At the same time it does not come into view apart from it. This gives rise to a peculiarly thorny problematic. Not only is the hermeneutist faced with utterances (the text) about the unutterable (subject matter), a bewildering issue in itself. But also he is faced with the fact that his utterances pertain either to utterances about the unutterable, or to the unutterable that eludes any utterances.

The Reformed tradition is radically different. Its point of departure is not a Kantian dialectic polarity, which in the final analysis is a dead-end street. Its point of departure is the text of Scrip-

ture, consisting of the Old and New Testament, as the verbally inspired, authoritative and trustworthy Word of God. Of this Scripture is further held that it is characterized by perspicuity. All that the believer, whether simple or profound, needs for both faith and practice is clearly and understandably revealed. This is not to say that no difficulties are acknowledged. On the contrary! But they are not metaphysical in nature, as in the Schleiermacher tradition, in which the subject matter and the text are by their very nature of a different order.

In the Reformed tradition the fundamental difficulty is ethical. Apart from regeneration, in which the rebel-sinner is taught by God, and illumination, in which the needy saint is assisted by the Spirit, the truth of the text is and remains elusive. The problem, it ought to be underscored, is not with the perspicuity of the text, but with the darkness of the reader.

Further difficulties in the area of understanding arise from the nature of what is revealed - the doctrine of the trinity, the two natures of Christ, etc. In addition to this, difficulties in the area of interpretation result from the manner in which the truth is revealed - parables, idioms, etc.

What we propose to do in this section is to examine the area of understanding by means of a summary outline of John Owen's treatise on the subject²⁰. This treatise contains the most thorough and systematic treatment of the subject matter ever given.

It is Owen's thesis that the believer in the due use of the means appointed by God can come to a full assurance of the understanding of the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures, which will direct him in the life of God, deliver him from the dangers of darkness, enable him to shoulder sufferings and conduct him to blessedness.

That understanding does not require immediate prophetic inspiration, authoritative instruction by a church, is not attainable by the mere use of our own natural reason, but flows forth from a special work of the Spirit who supernaturally illumines the believer's mind and thus leads him to a full assurance of the understanding of the truth. Owen adds that the means of the right interpretation of Scripture and of the understanding of the mind of God in it are twofold, namely prayer and meditation on the one hand, and a knowledge of "arts and sciences" as subservient to the former, on the other hand.

In support of his insistence that a special work of the Spirit is needed to understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture he quotes and exegetes Psalms 119:18; 2 Cor. 3:13-18; Luke 24:45; Eph. 1:17-19, 3:14-19; Matt. 13:11; 1 Cor. 4:7; James 1:5. In addition to these passages he discusses John 16:13; I John 2:20,27; John 6:45; 1 Thess. 4:9.

Specifically John 6:45, where the prophetic announcement is quoted that in the new covenant "all will be taught of God," is referred to again and again. This verse is viewed as foundational for the teaching of Scripture as well as for Owen's conviction that no understanding of Scripture is possible apart from divine agency, in other passages further delineated as the illumination by the Holy Spirit.

The following quotations will serve to give an insight into the importance, as well as implications of the biblical testimony that no one is really taught to understand who is not taught of God.

“As unto them whom the Spirit of God undertakes to instruct, He requires that they be meek and humble, that they give themselves unto continual prayer, meditation and study in the word day and night, above all that they endeavor a conformity in their souls and lives unto the truths that He instructs them in. These are hard conditions unto flesh and blood, few there are who like them, and therefore few they are who apply themselves unto the school of God... Men may have a knowledge of words and the meaning of propositions in the Scripture, who have no knowledge on the things themselves designed in them. The things revealed in the Scripture are expressed in propositions whose words and terms are intelligible unto the common reason of mankind... [but] That assurance... which believers have in spiritual things is of another nature and kind than can be attained out of conclusions that are only rationally derived from the most evident principles, and therefore doth it produce effects of another nature, both in doing and suffering, for this is that which effectually and infallibly puts them on all those duties and that obedience in self-denial and the mortification of sin which the world either knoweth not or despiseth, for **he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure**, 1 John 3:3. And this also enables them cheerfully and joyfully to suffer all that the world can inflict on them for the profession of those truths whereof they have that assurance. But nothing of this ensues on that common knowledge which men may have from themselves of sacred things... Wherefore, if there be persons of such a pride and profaneness as to undertake an inquiry into the Scriptures, to know the mind of God in them, and teach it unto others, without prayers and supplications for the teaching, leading, guidance, and assistance of the Holy Spirit or, which is worse, who condemn and despise all these things as enthusiastical, it may not be expected that they should ever understand or approve of the mysteries that are contained therein. Is it not hence that both teachers and hearers make so slow a progress in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Gospel or grow so little in the knowledge of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! How many are there among us who, for the time and the outward means, are become as babes, and have need of milk, and not of strong meat! Whence is it that so many teachers do so little endeavor to go on to perfection, but content themselves to dwell on the rudiments of first principles of our profession? Is there not great studying and little profiting? great teaching and little learning? much hearing and little thriving? Do we abide in prayer, and abound in prayer as we ought, for that Spirit who alone can lead us into all truth? for that unction which teaches us all things with assurance and experience? I fear here lies our defect. However, this I shall say, that there is no duty which in this world we perform unto God that is more acceptable unto Him than fervent prayers for a right understanding of His mind and will in His word, for hereon all the glory we give unto Him, and the due performance of our obedience, do depend.”²¹

J. Owen

Herewith Owen has concluded his discussion of the first major point, namely the necessity of a special work of the Spirit in the illumination of our minds to make us understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Following this he deals with the nature of that special work. Owen points out that Scripture presents an efficacious work of the Spirit producing understanding of the things contained in the

Scriptures, distinct from the objective proposition of them in the Scripture itself. They are related as an “internal work” to an “outward means.” He refers to and discusses phrases as “the opening of the eyes,” “the enlightening of the eyes of our understanding,” “the opening of the understanding (Psalms 119:8; Eph. 1:18; Luke 24:45), “translation out of darkness into light” (1 Peter 2:9; Col. 1:13; Eph. 5:8), “the giving of an understanding” (1 John 5:20), “teaching, leading and guiding into the truth” (John 6:45, 16:13; I John 2:20,27), “shining into our hearts” (2 Cor. 4:6). Throughout the discussion of these passages Owen makes the same point again and again. What God communicates to us internally, so that we possess the true knowledge of His mind and will in the Gospel is distinct from the light of truth which is in the Gospel itself. The one is subjective, the other objective only, the one is wrought in us, the other proposed to us. The nature of the internal, subjective work of the Spirit is further expressed, according to Owen, by the terms, “light” (Eph. 5:8), “understanding” (Psalms 119:34,144; 2 Tim. 2:7), and “wisdom” (Col. 1:9; Dan. 12:10; Hosea 14:9; Psalms 107:43). Note well that Owen in this context does not explicate the relationship between the inward illumination and the outward means of grace.

After this discussion of the necessity and nature of the special work of the Spirit, Owen proceeds to ask how one attains to a saving knowledge of the mind of God revealed in Scriptures.

His answer to this question forms the balance of his treatise.

First, he inquires into the causes and reasons of the ignorance of the mind of God.

The cause of it is not, as the Roman church holds, the obscurity, perplexity and difficulty of the Scripture, but rather the mind of man.

Generally, the mind is dark and depraved. It cannot see heavenly truth. It is carnal and wanders from the truth. This effects humility in ourselves and compassion toward others. See Hab. 2:4 and Jude 22-23. Further, the mind is full of corrupt affections. See 1 Tim. 6:5 and 2 Tim. 38. Among them are pride or carnal confidence, love of honor and praise, a tight adherence to corrupt traditions, spiritual sloth, love of sin and temptations of Satan. All these will prevent a person from attaining a “full assurance of understanding” in the mysteries of God. The removal of these obstacles is the work of the Spirit. He communicates spiritual light. He purges the corrupt affections. He implants spiritual habits opposite to these corrupt affections. He effects humility, godly fear, reverence and a resolution unto obedience. See Psalms 25:9,12,14; Prov. 28:5 and Matt. 18:3.

Second, Owen points out that the Spirit has prepared and composed the Scripture as the means for communicating the saving knowledge of God to our minds. Scripture, says Owen, is not a number of doctrines or truths conveyed in a specific system. In the living form, in which it is given, it functions as a counselor (Psalms 119:24), it is applicable to the church in its various conditions and stages (Hebrews 1:1), it has as ultimate goal, not the methodical comprehension of truths, but conformity to God in holiness of life (“It does not argue, syllogize, or allure the mind, but it enlightens, persuades, constrains the soul to faith and obedience,”²² it paves the way to the ordinance of the ministry (“This is not co-ordinate with the Scripture, but subservient to it,”²³ Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 3:14-17), the duty of meditation (Psalms 1; Prov. 2:3-5), indeed, a

continual search of the total Scripture. See for the last point especially Vol. IV, p. 192²⁴, where Owen cogently argues that every need of man is supplied in the Word of God. This leads him naturally to a discussion of the perspicuity of Scripture.

On the one hand, he states that the obscurity of Scripture is due to the minds of men, who either are prepossessed with opinions, etc., or come to the reading of Scripture in the mere strength of their own natural abilities.

On the other hand, he states that in spite of the perspicuity of the whole of Scripture with regard to its proper end, there are passages that are a.) hard to be understood, and b.) hard to be interpreted.

As to the former category, he subsumes under it mysteries such as the trinity, the incarnation, the eternal decrees and the resurrection of the dead. They are clearly revealed in Scripture and the degree of knowledge that can be attained in connection with them is sufficient to

“... ingenerate, cherish, increase, and preserve faith, and love, reverence, with holy obedience, in them, in such a way and manner as will assuredly bring them unto the end of all supernatural revelation in the enjoyment of God.”²⁵ (Emphasis added.)

J. Owen

As to the latter category, he speaks of things hard to be interpreted, not from the nature of these things revealed, but rather from the manner of their revelation. In this connection he speaks of allegories, parables, mystical stories, allusions, unfulfilled prophecies, references to past customs, persons and places, computation of times, genealogies, the signification of single words seldom or only once used in Scripture as well as the names of unknown birds or beasts. In Owen’s view, if any teachings are important for us to know and believe, the difficult places will be complemented by other passages where the same truth is revealed clearly. So the OT shadows are clearly declared in the NT substance. Continuing difficulties call for continuing exercise of faith, diligence and humility, while still unfulfilled prophecy, be it sufficient to guide in faith and regulate obedience, is by the nature of the case still partially dim. Some passages are even purposefully difficult to hide truths from evil, perverse and proud men.

Third, the Scriptures, prepared and composed by the Spirit of God, now must be read and studied with great diligence, with a due consideration of the analogy of faith, a due examination of the design and scope of the whole and the parts, and a careful observation of antecedents and consequents.

In order to be profitable this study of Scripture must be what Owen calls “spiritual,” “disciplinary,” and “ecclesiastical.”

It is spiritual when it meets at least the following five qualifications.

It must be accompanied by fervent and earnest prayer for the illumination by the Spirit.

Such prayer will be answered (Luke 11:13), as it will effect humility and teachableness. Indeed, Owen states that this will produce a knowledge of the truth that will keep a man from errors and that will be sufficient for the guidance and preservation of the life of

God in the whole of his faith and obedience. Further, prayer must focus in on the particular passages that are being studied. To undertake an interpretation of any passage, a work so above man's ability to manage, without the invocation of God constitutes a provocation of God.

The second qualification is a readiness to receive impressions from divine truths as revealed to us conforming both the mind and the heart with a view to the experience of the power of godliness.

In the third place Owen mentions practical obedience in the course of our walk before God. Says Owen, "the true notion of holy, evangelical truths will not live, at least not flourish, where they are divided from a holy conversation." To support this thesis he quotes John 7:17, "If any man do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." See also Eph. 4:12-14. Owen simply wishes to convey that holiness of life is a means to the end of the knowledge of the truths of Scripture.

The fourth qualification is a constant design for growth and progress in knowledge out of love for the truth and experience of its excellency. The truths they know are so beneficial that believers press on to further wisdom and knowledge. See Hosea 6:3; Prov. 2:3-5.

In the fifth place Owen talks about the ordinances of spiritual worship. In a closing comment he states unequivocally that to decry a spiritual study as unnecessary is to deny the chief principles of Christian religion.

It is what Owen calls "disciplinary," when there is a skill in the original languages, a knowledge of history and geography and a skill in the ways and the methods of reasoning. Such skills and knowledge must be a sanctified means unto illumination and may not fuel pride. If the latter takes place, according to Owen,

"... the Holy Spirit usually teacheth not such persons, neither should I expect to learn much from them relating unto the truth as it is in Jesus. But yet the stones they dig may be made use of by a skillful builder."²⁶

J. Owen

It is ecclesiastical, when it gives consideration to the light, knowledge and understanding God has given to faithful men throughout the history of the church.

Owen's contribution to the discipline of hermeneutics is unique and invaluable. No one has dealt with the issue of the understanding of the Scripture like he has. No one can afford not to take it to heart. This makes it even more bewildering, to say the least, that his contribution has been nearly universally forgotten, overlooked or simply ignored. M.S. Terry, in his extensive *Biblical Hermeneutics*²⁷, devotes seven lines to Owen and does not even mention his treatise on hermeneutics. A.B. Mickelsen does not refer to Owen in his very detailed bibliography. B. Ramm²⁸ fails to refer to Owen as well. This is also the case with the Reformed hermeneutist, L. Berkhof, who wrote *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*²⁹. Only A.W. Pink in his *Interpretation of the Scriptures*³⁰, recognizes and acknowledges the significance of Owen's contribution. This

is not to say that the “personal dimension,” as H. Jacobsen, “On the Limitations of Hermeneutics” in *Interpreting the Word of God* (eds. S.J. Schultz and M.A. Inch)³¹, calls it, is totally overlooked. Jacobsen refers to Mickelsen, p. 356-366, and Ramm, p. 12ff. He himself quotes J.M. Gray who stresses the importance of prayer and states that the intuitive ability to understand the spiritual teaching of Scripture *seems* (italics from the present writer) to flow from their thirst for righteousness,” (Jacobsen, p. 228). How much more directly and forcefully does Owen address the issue!

This is not to say that no additions can be made to Owen’s contribution. But they will be just that, additions.

When we now proceed to give our view of the understanding of Scripture both the substance of Owen’s work and some additions to it will be easily recognizable.

There is an understanding of God, His work and His word that is unique.

1. It is unique because of its source . It comes from God the Father. See John 6:45.
2. It is unique because of its procuror. It is brought about by God the Son. See Luke 24:45.
3. It is unique because of its agent. It is effected by God the Spirit. See Eph. 1:17-19.
4. It is unique because of its instrument. It is produced through the instrumentality of the church, either the leadership that teaches and preaches, or the membership that exercises fellowship. See Eph. 4:11ff.
5. It is unique because of its implementing means. It comes to pass by means of the proclamation of the Word of God and prayer. See Luke 24:32,44 and Eph. 1:16ff.
6. It is unique because of its object. Its object is the Scriptures. See Psalms 119:18 and Luke 24:45.
7. It is unique because of its appropriating means. It is appropriated by means of heartfelt searching and praying. See Prov. 2:3-5 and James 1:5, 4:2c, as well as Jer. 29:12-13.
8. It is unique because of its subject. Its subject is the man whose heart has been changed in rebirth. See Deut. 29:4; John 3:3; Matt. 11:25.
9. It is unique because of its nature. It is not simply an exercise of the intellect, or of the will or of the emotion. It is a spiritual reality that is experienced by man’s heart as the core of his being. See Luke 24:25,32.
10. It is unique because of its accompaniments. It is accompanied by love toward God and love toward neighbor. See Deut. 30:6; Jer. 32:40.

Only some of these statements are in need of additional evaluation.

Scripture appears to say more about the third, fourth and fifth one, and especially the interrelationship among them, than is found in Owen’s treatment.

7. The Implementation of Scripture

The substance of the third, fourth and fifth statements, mentioned in the previous section is so much bound up with the issues of the implementation of Scripture that we will elaborate upon them under this heading.

Owen seems to hold to the traditionally Reformed position that the Holy Spirit works *cum verbo* (with the Word). While that is not incorrect *per se*, it ought to be added that the Lutheran emphasis upon the Spirit of God working *per verbum* (by / through the Word) is not only a very healthy complement, but also in some cases a necessary correction. The Scripture is replete with data that support the conviction that the Spirit of God works through the Word. See James 1:18 in connection with regeneration and John 17:17 in conjunction with sanctification.

This, of course does not deny the *cum verbo*. Passages as Acts 16:14 are only too clear.

Both the *per verbum* and the *cum verbo*, therefore, summarize important aspects of the truth. There is another aspect, however. It is not only that the Spirit works through the Word and with the Word, but in a real sense, according to the testimony of Scripture itself, the Word of God is the Speaking Spirit Himself. See Hebrews 3:7.

The implications of all three aspects are significant.

The fact that the Word is the Speaking Spirit implies that the Spirit of God Himself is confronting man, which in turn heightens his responsibility. Rejecting the Word is rejecting the Spirit of God Himself.

The fact that the Spirit of God works with the Word implies that one may not, by definition, identify being Scripture taught with being Spirit taught. Agent and means belong together, but may not be confused. Parallel to this, one may not, by definition, identify being man taught with being God taught. This would confuse the source with the instrument. In this connection the need and function of prayer ought to become clear. It is indispensable, precisely because of the non-identification of the agency and means, and source and instrument. While the first aspect discussed stressed the close confrontation by the Spirit and the responsibility of man, this second aspect emphasizes the sovereignty of God and the utter dependence of man.

The fact that the Spirit of God works through the Word implies that one may not separate source and instrument, agency and means. God's inscrutable wisdom has tied the goal of the understanding of God, His work and His Word to faithful operation of the instrument and the usage of the means. This spells the indispensable significance of instrument and means. God works through man and the Spirit works through the Word. Matthew 16:13ff. teaches that for the gates of hell to let go of its prey, the church must be taught of God and in line with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word must be proclaimed with discriminating and applicatory force. This last sentence is in need of further evaluation.

Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the other

prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you yourselves say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Then He gave the disciples strict orders that they were to tell no one that He was the Christ.

Matthew 16:13-20

In verse 18 Peter is called the rock on which Christ will build His church. In other words, he is called foundational for the church by the Lord Jesus Christ. The question, of course, has arisen whether this is not too dangerous. How can a human being be foundational to the church? Some people have denied that this is possible, as well as that verse 18 teaches us this. The rock, according to them, is not Peter, but Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is this confession that constitutes the foundation of the church. But, first of all, this is not what the text says, and, secondly, it is a decided impoverishment over the contents of the text. The foundation is personal! There are, however, two qualifications. Peter is the foundation, to the extent that he is taught of the Father (Matt. 16:17). To the extent he is not taught of God, but follows the dictates of his own heart and mind, he is a “Satan,” that is an “opponent” (Matt. 16:23).

And yet Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s purposes, but men’s.”

Matthew 16:22-23

The second qualification becomes clear in the light of Ephesians 2:20.

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Not only are all the apostles (plus the prophets) called the foundation stone - against the Roman view which regards Peter the *primus inter pares* - but they are said to line up with the chief cornerstone, namely Christ. This brings the second qualification to light. Peter is foundational only to the extent he is aligned with the person and work of the savior. If he does not line up, he, once again, can be called a “Satan,” or “opponent” (Matt. 16:23). Peter, therefore, is not foundational because of anything in himself. This must answer the misgivings of them who cannot envision a human being as foundational in any sense of the word. The Bible, however, is replete of that teaching. To be sure, Peter and the apostles are foundational in a very unique sense of the

word. More about this later. But in an equally real sense, every Christian who is in authority, whether elder, deacon, father, mother, employer or government person is foundational.

Office bearers in the church must give an account of their charges in the day of judgment. They may build with hay, wood and stubble to the temporal or eternal detriment of these charges. In case of gross neglect of duty, the blood of the charges will be required of the office bearers. See Hebrews 13:17; 1 Cor. 3:12; Acts 20:26,28. How beneficial, on the other hand, is a proper, biblical, oversight! See John 21:15ff.; 1 Peter 5:1ff. A similar pattern emerges in conjunction with the home. The sins of the fathers, according to Exodus 20:4, will be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate the Lord. From these Scriptural examples, that can be multiplied, the importance of personal foundation stones is unmistakable. No confession can take their place, however necessary and beautiful a God- and Christ-honoring confession may be. The later and younger generations rest upon the earlier and older generations. The older determine the direction of the younger. This must lead to a continuous self-examination on the part of those in authority, whether elders, fathers or otherwise. To the extent that they are not taught of God and in line with the person and work of Christ, they are quicksand. They will not be edifying, but destructive. When Peter can become a “Satan” just like that, this certainly can happen to everyone of us. It is well to remind ourselves that the Savior pronounces a “woe” over them who cause little ones to stumble.

Verse 18, however, does not only call Peter the rock upon which Christ will build His church, but it also gives the assurance that the gates of hell will let go of its prey. This can only be stated as such, of course, when it is understood that the church has taken the offense and hell is on the defense. But how will this “conquest” be accomplished? Hell seems as impregnable as ever! At this point we move on from a discussion of the “instrument” to a discussion of the “means.” The conquest can be accomplished only as the keys of the kingdom are used to open and to close. This task, once again, is entrusted to Peter in the context of Matt. 16 and to the church in general in Matt. 18:18.

**Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven;
and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**

Matthew 18:18

Let it be stressed, first of all, that Peter and the other apostles have a unique position. According to John 20:22-23, the Lord Jesus breathed upon them and said, **Receive the Holy Spirit**. What is the purpose of this “reception of the Spirit?” Does it represent a pre-Pentecost Pentecost? This is not acceptable. It was not until Acts 2 that Peter and the other apostles received the power promised them in Acts 1:8. But what then is the solution? A combination of John 14:15-16,25-26, 16:13 and 20:23 appears to infer that the apostles receive the Spirit with the specific purpose to open and close the kingdom of heaven appropriately. This therefore, is the qualification that will make it unobjectionable to entrust this power in the hands of mere humans. They must be guided by the Spirit. This is precisely what is promised in the earlier chapters of John and begins with the reception of the Spirit in the later chapters of John. This reception will ensure that they will use the keys of the kingdom correctly. This allows us to take the next step. The keys are nothing but the Word of God, at first spoken by the apostles and later written

down, either by them or by close associates. If by the latter, they received their information from the apostles themselves or otherwise from the apostolic deposit. Thus the received Spirit in John 20:22 was not only the Spirit of enablement in terms of the opening and closing of the Kingdom, but also the Spirit of inspiration that procured the infallible and inerrant keys of the Kingdom. Thus also, the later church is able to apply the keys of the kingdom. They possess these keys in the written Word of God. This, clearly, secures the uniqueness of the apostles. They formed, produced the key under the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit. At the same time it guarantees the continuing usage of the keys by the church that is built on the foundation of the apostles. It ought to be added, of course, that anything else but a ministerial use of the Word of God cannot qualify as a God pleasing, proper, usage of the keys. Hence, Luther had no qualms to burn the certificate of excommunication that he received from the Pope. This excommunication had no proper base in the Word of God and therefore was not a genuine excommunication. This did not just make it useless, but severely to be condemned. No human word may take the place of God's Word as final reference point! It is the height of pride and folly.

The case of Luther, however, should not lead anyone to the conclusion that it is better not to use the keys of the kingdom at all. This will turn the conquest, spoken of earlier, into defeat. Only when the church of Christ is willing to use the Word of God as keys of the kingdom, can it hope to conquer the gates of hell. Too often preachers and teachers use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, as circus riders. They dazzle and impress the "people in the stands" with their prowess. But they forever fail to use the sword as sword. It is not a show piece, it is a weapon of offense. As such it conquers, if needs be by means of wounding and even killing. As such it was used by the preachers in the NT and during the times of the great revivals in, and the reformations of, the church. As such they were faithful to the blueprint that was laid out by God in the Scriptures. As God taught men they used the God ordained means In the God appointed way. Concretely, this says that they used the Word of God in a discriminating and applicatory fashion. The contents of both terms need to be explained.

Proclamation or teaching of the Word of God is discriminating when certain passages that speak about the difference between those who serve God and those who refuse to do so, are so explained that the hearers do not have the least doubt where they stand in their relationship to God. This is the way in which Peter proclaimed the Word of God on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This is the way Stephen preached the Word of God in Acts 7. This is the way Paul presented the Word of God in Acts 17. Such proclamation, preaching and presentation leaves two trails, a trail of life and a trail of death. See 2 Cor. 2:14ff. In Acts 2 the emphasis was on the trail of life, in Acts 7 on the trail of death and in Acts 17 both trails become visible. It must be added that such proclamation, preaching and presentation is dangerous for the preacher. He "sticks his neck in the gates of hell." He either sets the prisoner free or he "loses his neck" literally or for all practical purposes. Peter saw the prisoners set free. Stephen lost his life. Paul encountered a mixed reaction. Some scorned and others were converted. For further NT examples, see 1 Cor. 15:34; 1 John 1:6,8,10, 2:9, 3:17; John 8:31ff. In other words, in discriminating preaching, proclamation, teaching or presentation, the one who brings the message loves the unbeliever more than this man loves himself. He is willing to show the non-believing hearer exactly where he stands so that his response is either one of succumbing to the truth, collapsing before it, or a

further, more conscious rebellion against it. At the same time, he will reinforce the confidence of the believer, even if he does it the way John does it in 1 John 3:19ff.

Proclamation or teaching of the Word of God is applicatory when the preaching or teaching text is brought home to the believing hearer in such a clear fashion that he will either be strengthened in his obedience or repent of his disobedience. The proclamation or teaching of the Word of God does not and should not be satisfied with agreement only. It may not be content with anything but obedience or at least a pattern of response that is pleasing to the Lord. A regenerate person who has received a new heart through the agency of the Spirit of God, has as his magnificent obsession to be pleasing to the Lord. See 1 John 3:6,9. When the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit, makes its cutting edge felt in his life, there may be an initial drawing back because of the accompanying pain. Every repentance is painful, be it sweetly so to the believer. But in the final analysis, the Word of God has in the heart of the regenerate person such a friend that ultimately its wounds are preferred over the kisses of an enemy. See Prov. 27:6. What an encouragement for the person who makes the presentation! He may be assured that ultimately God's people welcome whatever the Word of God has to say. This applies to comfort, encouragement, exhortation, admonition, rebuke, indeed even the prospect of excommunication. The following examples are designed to make clear what has been said thus far.

A message on Phil. 4:6-7 may not be satisfied until steps have been taken in the lives of those who are given to worry, to eliminate worry. The steps are carefully spelled out in the passage. It should also be ascertained that those who do not worry are free from it, not because they have a stronger character, but as a gift from the Lord.

A message on 2 Cor. 8-9 is not really "complete" until the principle of 8:15 is understood and implemented by the church. The same thing applies to a message on 1 Thess. 5:16-20.

In summary, the proclamation of the Word of God must be discriminating and applicatory with a view to effecting an understanding of the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures as well as a corresponding conduct.

What does this all entail for the one who proclaims the Word?

What has been said about the *per verbum* implies that he is only "foundational," when he is taught of God and in line with the Christ. That is, for all practical purposes, he must have an understanding of the mind of God himself and must have this adorned with a corresponding conduct. How else can he himself hope to effect this in his hearers? See Rom. 15:18.

What has been said about the *cum verbo* implies that he must instruct with gentleness and meekness, be it clearly and forthrightly. He may never forget that the sinner is blinded by Satan, opposes himself and that only the Spirit of God can make the difference. See 2 Cor. 4:3-4 and 2 Tim. 2:24-26.

What has been said about the Word of God being the Speaking Spirit implies that he must be filled with the Spirit. The instrument of the Spirit can hardly hope to be effective without being possessed by the Spirit of all instruments. Inasmuch as the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and the

instrument is the ambassador of Christ, the latter, in order to be a proper instrument of the Spirit must reflect the Lord Jesus Christ as his representative. Hence, in order to be a proper instrument of the Spirit, the one who proclaims the Word of God must be filled with the love of Christ and the zeal of Christ as well as the other attributes that have been ascribed to Him as the Mediator between God and man. The understanding, of course, is that while Christ has these attributes perfectly, man can only have them purposefully. See Rom. 9:1ff.; 2 Cor. 5:11,14, 11:2. See also John 2:17.

The official proclamation of the Word of God, let it be stressed, is only one part of the instrumentality by which God effects understanding of His mind and implements His will. Both in Acts 2:42ff. and Eph. 4:11ff., the former in term and the latter in substance, mention fellowship following the proclamation of the Word of God. There is an increasing recognition that fellowship is more than simply a characteristic of the church of Christ. It is increasingly being acknowledged as a means of grace. In fact, in Acts 2 it is placed in the second position of the four means of grace set forth in that context, while in Eph. 4 it is the only additional means of grace mentioned. The combined contents of Acts 2 and Eph. 4 permits us to define fellowship as “speaking and acting the truth in love.” This is the essence of fellowship. A broader description, taking the context into account, would be, “The activity of the people of God in the body of Christ, under a God given, responsible leadership, in which they share the life of God by speaking and acting the truth in love unto individual and corporate edification according to their various functions of grace and stations in life.” In this framework we will content ourselves to say a few things about the essence of fellowship. Having been instructed by means of the proclamation of the Gospel in the truth, the people of God take its contents and minister to others and edify others with it. This is fellowship. It is like the bloodstream in the body. It carries the oxygen of the Word of God to the farthest extremities of the body of Christ. The spiritual hunger and thirst of all are being satisfied. To the extent this hunger and thirst are absent, either in whole or in part, this is being dealt with. Acts 2 presents a beautiful picture of the acting of the truth in love. The members of the church, filled with the Spirit as they were, gave their treasures, their talents and their time, indeed, themselves to their brothers and sisters. Eph. 4 together with other Scriptures testify that speaking the truth comprises encouragement, comfort, exhortation, admonition, rebuke and as the last remedy, excommunication. Fellowship begins with the elders and the deacons, as the God given leaders, and continues with the rest of the membership, men and women, parents and children, husbands and wives, employers and employees, government and subjects, wherever God has stationed a person. The fellowship flows first from “superiors” to “inferiors,” then from “equals” to “equals” and finally from “inferiors” to “superiors.” Superfluous to say, fellowship can only be exercised among Christians. It turns into witnessing when a Christian acts or speaks the truth to non-Christians.

In addition to the proclamation of the truth and fellowship, Acts 2 mentions two other means of grace, the Lord’s Supper and prayer. We will not spend much time in discussing these two means of grace at this juncture. Suffice it to say that prayer is both an implementing means and an appropriating means. It must be present along side the proclamation and the exercise of fellowship. The truth of the *cum verbo* requires it. Understanding of the mind of God and the corresponding conduct is and remains a grace of God. It must be present to receive understanding

and the corresponding conduct. For prayer as an appropriating means, see Luke 18:13; Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13.

Two concluding remarks about the ninth and tenth statements, mentioned above.

First, the nature of the understanding of the mind of God, resulting from the agency of the Spirit, is unique. Owen correctly brings out that it is a gift. Scripture compares it to a “‘spiritual’ seeing,” where there once was only a “‘physical seeing,” and / or a lack of “‘spiritual’ seeing” or “‘blindness.” See Deut. 29:3ff.; John 3:3. In the final analysis, only those who have spiritual sight will understand what spiritual understanding is. This must be a sobering thought. See yet Rev. 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22, 13:18.

Second, true understanding is always translated into action. Owen’s remarks on this aspect are worth underscoring, especially his focus on suffering. He states that assurance of the understanding of the mind of God will enable a man to take the suffering for righteousness sake that will come his way. The assurance will make him stand like a rock. But apart from that it will produce love toward God as well as the neighbor. See Prov. 4:4ff., 7:7ff., 8:5ff.; Daniel 12:3.

IV. The Activity of Hermeneutics

8. The Language of Scripture

8.1. General Remarks

The general remarks presented here are a compilation of material found in Mickelsen³², Terry³³ and Berkhof³⁴.

For the interpretation of the language of the Old and New Testament, as well as for the understanding of what it wishes to convey, the following aspects of language, and more specifically of words, have to be kept in mind (not necessarily in order of importance).

1. The sound of words. The sounds of words, especially, but not exclusively poetry, is often quite impressive. It has been said that in the Hebrew of Judges 5:22 one cannot miss the sound of the galloping horses.
2. The form of words. The form of words often will allow the student of the Bible to recognize its place and function in the sentence.
3. The primary meaning of words. The primary meaning of words can often be determined by their etymology, although just as often the etymological origin cannot be traced anymore. One positive example is *ekklesia*, which is a noun that is derived from the verb “to call out.” This tells us something about the nature of the church.
4. The usage of words. At times an author defines his own terms. But most often the meaning of a word must be derived from the context, either the more immediate context or the broader context. For example, the word “truth” in the Greek language may mean, dependability, truth as opposed to falsehood or reality. It is only the context that can determine its meaning in a specific case. The same applies to the word *pneuma*, that may signify wind, breath, temper, unholy spirits and the Holy Spirit. In this connection it may be the nature of the subject matter that will determine the meaning of a word or words. For example, 2 Cor. 5:1-2 speak about a house, a tabernacle and a habitation. The subject matter tells us that they all apply to the human body. One may mention as well a stated contrast that is determinative. See Rom. 8:5-8 for the antithetic expression “according to the flesh” and “according to the spirit.” Furthermore, the importance of parallelisms ought to be kept in mind. See Psalms 7:13, where the Psalmist speaks about instruments of death and explains this in the following member by the word “arrows.” Of importance as well is the fact of parallel passages in which one finds parallel words (Isaiah 9:6 and 10:21; John 9:39 and Romans 11:33) or parallel phrases (2 Sam. 8:18 and 1 Chron. 18:17; Matt. 8:24 and Mark 4:37). Finally, the scope of a specific passage may be a contributing factor.
5. The history of words. There is growth in language. At certain times specific words are used more frequently than at other times. For example, the word *edah* is used more often to denote the congregation of Israel in the earlier books of the Hebrew Bible, while

the word *qahal*, which also denotes congregation, occurs more often in later books.

6. The setting of words. One would do well to pay attention to the cultural setting, the historical setting, the geographical setting, the political setting, as well as the social setting of words used.
7. The synonymous use of words. Not only may one word have several meanings, but several words may also have one meaning, be it with certain shades of difference, The word “to kill” for example, in Hebrew, can be expressed in a variety of ways. One word may mean to put to death, another one to slaughter, a third one to murder, a fourth one to sacrifice. Further, the words *neos* and *kainos* in the Greek both mean “new,” but the first one points to newness in time, or young, while the second one indicates newness of quality or kind. Other examples are *agapeoo* and *phileoo*, both meaning “to love.” In John 21:15-17 both are used. Are there two different shades of meaning in this passage? Most likely there are, but there is no consensus about this among scholars.
8. The relationship of words. This is also called syntax. First, the order of the words in Hebrew or Greek ought to be examined. The order in the Hebrew is usually predicate, subject, object. In the Greek it is subject, predicate, object. Deviation from the regular order is important. For example, John 1:1 says **God was the word**. The object comes first. Because of that place in the sentence it does not have a definite article. Jehovah’s Witness have failed this aspect of Greek syntax and translated, “The word was a god.” Syntactically this is indefensible. Second, the verb comes in a variety of tenses, moods, voices, persons or numbers. It may occur in the infinitive form, the participle form, etc. Third, the noun comes in a variety of cases, with or without prepositions. Fourth, clauses may be relative, causal, comparative, local, temporal, conditional, concessive, etc.

8.2 Figurative Language

Special attention will now be given to figurative language. In order to do so, however, we must place this against the backdrop of literal language. Ramm³⁵ puts it very well when he maintains that the term literal, in connection with language, stands for the basic, customary, natural, usual, ordinary, apparent, obvious, socially designated meaning. As such it cannot be equated with a wooden letterism on the one hand, or with allegorism on the other hand. Ramm emphasizes that the antonym of literal is figurative and not spiritual. The antonym of spiritual is material or carnal.

This leads us to the subject matter of figurative language. According to some, figurative language arises from the general poverty of language. There are not enough words to express every possible thought. Hence, the need for some ordinary words to be used in a figurative manner. According to others it is not the poverty, but rather the versatility of language that comes to expression in figurative language.

What follows is a compilation of Berkhof, Mickelsen, Terry and Ramm, except the discussion of typology and allegory.

Figurative language has two aspects, figures of words and figures of thoughts. We will elaborate first upon the figures of words and then the figures of thought.

8.2.1. *Figures of Words*

- a. Figures emphasizing comparison. The first one is simile. This is an explicitly stated comparison using words such as “like” and “as.” See Jer. 23:29; Mal. 3:2; Matt. 23:37; Luke 10:1-3 and 13:24. The second one is metaphor. In a metaphor one thing is described in terms of something else.
- b. Figures emphasizing association. The first one is metonymy. In this figure one thing is mentioned for another. The cause is mentioned instead of the effect. See Job 34:6; Prov. 12:19; Luke 24:27. Or an adjunct is mentioned instead of the subject. See Gen. 42:38; Hosea 1:2. The second one is synekdoche. The whole is mentioned for the part. See Judges 12:7; Eccles. 12:3.
- c. Figures emphasizing the personal dimension. The first is personification. Things are personified. See Num. 16:32; Psalms 114 (*passim*); Matt. 6:34. The second one is apostrophe. In this figures are addressed as persons. See Psalms 114:5-6; 2 Sam. 18:33.
- d. Figures requiring additions to complete thought. The first one is ellipsis. The interpreter must supply words or expand and alter the construction to make the sentence complete. See Acts 18:6; Gal. 3:5. A zeugma is a special kind of ellipsis, in which one part of the sentence depends upon another part that is absent. See 1 Cor. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:3. The second one is aposiopesis. In this figure a part of the sentence is suppressed for emotional reasons or rhetorical effect. See Luke 13:9; Mark 11:32.
- e. Figures involving an understatement. The first one is euphemism. A less strong word is substituted for a word that might be too harsh or seem offensive. See Acts 1:25. The second one is litotes. A negative statement is used to declare an affirmative truth. See Acts 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:15-16.
- f. Figures involving intensification or reversal of meaning. The first one is hyperbole. See John 21:25; Deut. 1:28. The second one is irony. See 1 Cor. 4:8.
- g. Figures involving fullness of thought. The first one is pleonasm. In this figure an idea is repeated. See 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Luke 22:11. The second one is epizeuxis. A word is repeated for emphasis. See Rev. 14:8. The third one is climax. See Rom. 5:3-5.
- h. The figure of interrogation. See Rom. 4:9-10, 8:31-36.
- i. Figures involving a break in the flow of thought. The first one is parenthesis. See Gen. 23:2. The second one is digression. See Eph. 3:2-13; Heb. 5:10 - 7:1. The third one is anacolouthon. In this figure there is an unexpected change from one construction to another without completing the former. See Zech. 2:11; Psalms 18:47; Luke 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:3. A very famous example is Rom. 5:12ff. In this passage one finds also a parenthesis.

It must be carefully noted that this list of figures, just as all grammatical and syntactical sections in handbooks dealing with language, is descriptive, rather than prescriptive. Language is a living entity. It cannot be placed in the prescriptive framework of a scholarly work. Any work of this type only reflects the realities it finds in language. Hence, it is very difficult to set up rules that determine when a word is used in its literal or primary signification or whether this primary signification is transcended and a word is used in an acquired or secondary sense. In fact, at times a word may be used in its acquired sense so frequently that the original signification is forgotten and seems antiquated when it is brought out. This is not to say that there are insuperable obstacles that prevent a clear determination of the literal or figurative usage. Not at all. There are general principles, the application of which will make it relatively easy to determine the usage of a word. Some of these are careful consideration of the general character of the book, the plan of the author, the context and scope of the passage, a clear conception of the cultural, geographical and historical setting, from which the figurative language is borrowed, as well as a focus on the principle idea that is conveyed rather than placing too much importance on all the details. On the other hand, this does not imply that no uncertainties will remain. To illustrate, there are certain metaphorical expressions that make allusions. But it is not always crystal clear to what these allusions are made. Examples are Psalms 45:1; Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12.

Turning now to the figures of thought, Mickelsen makes the distinction between opaque figures and extended figures. The former comprise fables, riddles and enigmas, the latter, parables and allegories. Terry adds a third category, namely types and symbols. It is interesting to note that Mickelsen regards the first two categories, the opaque and extended figures, figures of speech and seems to put types and symbols in a different class, while Terry classifies all three categories as figures of thought. In this syllabus Terry's classification is followed. The very fact that types are usually discussed in conjunction with, or in contrast to, allegories appear to point to the approach of Terry as preferable.

Following these introductory remarks, let us now proceed with the discussion of the figures of thought as they are encountered in Scripture.

8.2.2. *Figures of Thought*

- a. Opaque figures. The first one is the fable. The two classic examples are found in Judges 9:1:21 and in 2 Kings 14:9. In the fable the characters are often members of the animal and vegetable kingdom, as Mickelsen correctly states, who depict the emotions and failures of human beings. The second one is the riddle. In a riddle the inquiring mind is made to search for a hidden meaning. For the word riddles, see 1 Kings 10:1; Proverbs 1:6. Notice, furthermore, for an example Judges 14:14. The third opaque figure is the enigma, or enigmatic saying. The obscurity of these sayings arise both from the profundity of their contents and from the condition of the hearers. See Num. 12:6-8; Prov. 49:4, 78:2 as well as John 10:6, 16:25,29. See also John 21:18. It is questionable whether Peter immediately understood what the Lord Jesus was saying at that point.

- b. Extended figures. The first one is the parable. In a parable one thing is placed alongside another for the sake of comparison. Mickelsen calls a parable an extended simile. This reflects recent scholarship in the area of parables. For quite some time the details of the parables were allegorized to a great extent. Around the turn of the century, however, Jülicher spearheaded a marked change in the interpretation of parables. He held - eventually Dodd followed in his footsteps - that a parable wished to get one central point, or message across. The details, as Dodd put it, do not have an independent significance. This view is now generally adopted as correct.

Jülicher held that the essential point is a general moral truth. Dodd, however, places the parables in the context of the main message of Jesus and is of the opinion that the kingdom of God is the focus of the parables. This is worked out extensively by Mickelsen³⁶. A word of caution is in place, however. It is certainly true that many parables of the Lord Jesus deal with the kingdom of God. The substance of the parables was designed to give further information about the kingdom of God in terms of its implementation in this world. The form of the parables moreover, was meant to withhold the information from those who had not recognized and acknowledged that the kingdom had come in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, on the one hand the parables revealed new details about the kingdom, on the other hand they hid these details. At the same time, however, there are also parables, especially those that occur in the Old Testament, that do not pertain to the Kingdom. As to these parables Jülicher is at least partially right. These parables point to a specific truth, spiritual, "moral" or otherwise. See for some Old Testament parables, 2 Sam. 12:1-4, 14:4-7; 1 Kings 20:38-40. See for some other parables that do not immediately pertain to the Kingdom, Luke 11:5-8, 18:1-14, etc. These latter parables, at least this is the strong impression we receive, are not designed to hide or conceal, but rather to get a message across in a very vivid, pointed way. Again, this is not to say that these latter parables were immediately clear to the hearers. As Terry puts it, a parable may enshrine a profound truth that the hearers may not immediately apprehend, but he adds that sooner or later the truths of the parables will break through and because of the striking form in which the truth is couched, make a lasting impression.

That the central point may not be immediately clear stands to reason. The parables portray a rich and varied imagery taken from every aspect of human life. Everyday experiences are used as vehicles to convey spiritual truths. These experiences must be understood!

But how then can the central truth be gleaned from the parable? Often the clue is given in the explanation by the speaker of the parable. This is the case from time to time with the parables spoken by the Lord Jesus. Often an indication is given in either the introduction or the conclusion of the parable. In every other case the setting or context of the parable must be consulted carefully.

After the central truth has been established attention can be given to the details. These details may not be interpreted independently from the essential point.

They have been compared to feathers that assist the arrow to pierce the mark. Neither may the details be regarded as conveying in every instance a special message. The Lord Jesus Himself for example, in the interpretation of the parable of the tares and the wheat, did not attach meaning to every detail. See Matt. 13:24-30 and 36-43.

The second extended figure of thought is the allegory. Just as the parable is an extended simile, so the allegory is an extended metaphor. See Mickelsen³⁷. In the allegory there is a plurality of points of comparison. The words in this figure, of course, are used figuratively. As examples of allegories Mickelsen mentions John 10:1-16 and John 15:1-10. The most prominent of all extrabiblical allegories is the famous *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. The interpretation of the allegories just mentioned is not too difficult. As an example, John 15 wishes to convey a message about the Father, the Son and the believer. The Father plants the vine and is interested in fruit. The Son makes fruit bearing possible by carrying the branches. The believers must bring forth fruit, even much fruit, by means of abiding in the Christ through the Word and prayer. Terry states that in an allegory one thing is affirmed for another. While the parable uses words in their literal sense and its narrative never transgresses the limits of what might have been actual fact, the allegory is using words in a metaphorical sense and its narrative is manifestly fictitious. In addition to the passages mentioned by Mickelsen, Terry characterizes as allegories Psalms 80:8-15; Eccles. 12:3-7; Ezek. 13:10-15; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 6:11-17.

The crux of the matter, however, is found in Gal. 4:21-31. After stating that Abraham had two sons, one of the bondwoman and one of the free woman, the first one born according to the flesh and the second through the promise, Paul comments that these "things are allegorical." He then proceeds with a further explanation. Hagar stands for the Sinai covenant and the present Jerusalem. Sarah, by implication, for the new covenant and the Jerusalem that is above. Just as the child of Hagar persecuted the child of Sarah, so the members of the present Jerusalem, legalistic Judaists and slaves, persecute the members of the Jerusalem above, Christians and free children of God. As the child of Hagar was dismissed, so the legalistic Judaists must be removed from the fellowship. Only the children of the free woman will receive the inheritance.

There is a wide divergence of opinion about this passage. What does Paul mean when he says that these "things are allegorical." Chrysostom holds that Paul uses the term allegory, but really means "type." Barnes states that Paul uses this narrative of real events to illustrate an important principle. Kevan, in *Revelation and the Bible*³⁸, believes it to be illustrational or an argument *ad hominem*. He uses the tool of his Judaizing opponents against themselves, without necessarily implying that he regards this tool as generally appropriate and acceptable. Schmoller, quoted in Terry³⁹, takes a different approach. He believes that Paul indeed allegorizes here, but by saying it removes the hermeneutical difficulty. He gives an allegory and not an exegesis. He does not claim that what he says is the true sense of the narrative. In other words, Paul concedes and assumes the historical truthfulness of the Old Testament narrative, so concludes Terry, but makes an allegorical use of it for a special and exceptional purpose. So Mickelsen⁴⁰.

All these views have in common that under no circumstances do they wish to explain Gal. 4:21-31 in a way which would legitimize the interpretation of Scripture by means of the allegorical method. That is why one commentator states that the explicit mentioning of things allegorical stamps it as an exception. That is why other commentators hold that Paul really typologizes, argues *ad hominem* or is simply illustrational. As long as this passage cannot be used to substantiate the allegorizing method, every commentator is content.

Note well, none of these commentators are opposed to allegories. An allegory is a figure of speech that is to be found in every language. No, they are opposed to allegorizing. There is a decisive difference between allegory as figure of speech and allegorizing as method of interpretation. The main charge against allegorizing is customarily that it is unhistorical, if not anti-historical and that it is non-literal, if not anti-literal. The allegorical method aims to penetrate through the shell of the historical account and the literal text to an inner, secret, mysterious sense, which is extrinsic to the historical narrative and the literal words. This sense is the great prize that is waiting to be discovered by the skilled interpreter. In principle this can lead, as has been stated, to “fantasy unlimited.” In fact, allegorizing is usually identified as such. Kevan⁴¹, speaks about introducing chaos into speech, destroying the objectivity of truth, succumbing to the wildest forms of interpretation, choosing an arbitrary instrument for making the Old Testament say whatever the expositor wished. Undoubtedly the allegorical method has been guilty of such outgrowths. The primary meaning of the text has often been ignored and suppressed. There is obviously no excuse for this. But in practice, the system of thought to which the interpreter was committed formed a restraint. There was a method to the madness of the allegorical approach. One’s views were read in and forced upon the text. But these views were usually conceived in terms of one system or another.

Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation*⁴², adds yet that not only did interpreters set forth their ready made systems in their interpretation (So Eichrodt), but also were their systems influenced by their interpretation.

It is interesting to note that in Barr’s opinion⁴³, it is not quite true to say that allegorization is antihistorical. When historical narratives are interpreted allegorically, the historical aspect, indeed, vanishes. But when legal texts are interpreted that way, there is no historical aspect “to vanish.” So how could such interpretation be called anti-historical? Barr refers to 1 Cor. 9:9 to illustrate his point, which appears to be well taken. The main objection against the allegorical interpretation remains that it does not do justice and does not intend to do justice to the literal, normal, meaning of the text. But this brings us then, back to Gal. 4:21-31. Does Paul use the allegorical method and should he be taken as providing the church with an example of what interpretation really ought to be?

As has been stated, some commentators hold that Paul’s approach here is either *ad hominem* or exceptional.

Other commentators point to the fact that the Greek *allegoreuein* may cover all forms of metaphor, parable or illustration and most of all of type.

In either case the question is pertinent, whether what Paul is doing may or should function as a model for present day interpretation. To the extent that the allegorizing method disregards and / or even discards the original, literal meaning, the answer must decisively be in the negative. There is no system of thought that goes beyond Scripture and which must be read into Scripture. The revelatory process came to a close with the close of the New Testament canon. Hence, Scripture must be read always and invariably literal in the sense of taken in its normal, ordinary, common meaning, while taking into account the nature and extent of figurative language. But while this must be said, the question may be asked whether Paul “allegorizes” in the way just described. Or is it so that the apostle Paul does no more and no less, but glean universal principles from the Old Testament narrative that are then explicitly condemnatory for the Judaizing opponents, who would have refused to go the Judaizing route had they really understood the nature and function of the historical sections of the OT in their foundational and instructional scope. It seems to the present writer that the explanation of the Gal. 4 passage must be sought in this direction. Only thus it can be said that Gal. 4 does not introduce an interpretation that is extrinsic to the OT text. Implicit in this view, of course, is that the term *allegoreuein* is taken in a very broad sense, and furthermore, that Gal. 4 is exegesis as well as a model for present day exegesis. The only alternative is to declare Gal. 4 an *ad hominem* and / or exceptional approach.

- c. “The third category.” For lack of a better title both typology and symbolism will be discussed under “the third category.” This is to indicate that both are essentially different from opaque and extended figures of thought as well as from figures of speech. For an interesting discussion hereof, see Terry.⁴⁴ Terry holds that types and symbols constitute a class distinct from all other figures of speech and thought, although he adds that types have some resemblance to similes and parables and symbols have resemblance to metaphor and allegories. Similes, parables and types have in common that a formal comparison is made or assumed between persons and events. The language is employed in a literal sense. Metaphors, allegories and symbols have as a characteristic feature that one thing is said and seen, while another is intended. Terry further states that a type is a figure, person, institution, office, action or event by which some truth of the Gospel was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. A symbol, on the other hand, has no reference to time. It is to represent some character, office or quality.

Turning now to typology, Joseph A. Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth Century Literature*⁴⁵, provides the following definition of typology with the following four constituent elements.

“Typology... may be defined as the method of interpreting Scripture in which the persons and events, incidents and narratives of the Old Testament the Old Testament *res ipsae*, are viewed as realities which are also at one and the same time prophetic signs and foreshadowing of persons and events in God’s redemptive plan as it is revealed and fulfilled

in the New Testament.”⁴⁶

J.A. Galdon

The four elements which distinguish and characterize typology as a form of biblical interpretation are

“... the historical realism of both terms of the typological relationship, the type and the antitype, the basic and essential correspondence between the two terms, the similarity between the two, the relationship of shadow to reality, the notion that one pole of the typological reference must be fulfilled, a *forma perfectior*, of the other, and finally, the divine resonance and Christic correspondence of the type and antitype within the biblical theology of history.”⁴⁷

J.A. Galdon

Terry mentions⁴⁸ the following three characteristics of a type. There must be some notable point of resemblance. There must be some evidence that the type was designed and appointed by God to represent the thing typified. The type must prefigure something in the future. He continues to talk about typical persons (Adam and Christ), typical institutions (the lamb and Christ), typical offices (prophet, priest, king and Christ), typical events (exodus from Egypt, etc. for our admonition, Thus Terry!!!), typical actions (the looking of the Israelites at the serpent of brass and the believing in Christ). Terry states that in the interpretation of types one must search for the real point of resemblance, the points of difference and contrast, while only the light of the Gospel will guarantee a complete interpretation. Finally, Terry is of the opinion that one should not simply acknowledge as types which are explicitly characterized as such by the New Testament. No, one may and should find other types provided one uses good sense and sound judgment.

Ramm⁴⁹ speaks about the propriety of the typological interpretation in view of the general relationship of OT and NT. The relationship is forged by the strongly prophetic element of the OT. It is precisely this prophetic element that justifies the typological interpretation, or as Ramm puts it, the typological method of thinking. To underscore the propriety of typological interpretation further, Ramm points to the Lord’s use of the OT as well as the vocabulary of the NT in which the OT is shown to be the shadow of the NT.

We will conclude this survey on typology with a reference to the views of W.S. Lasor. developed in B. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*⁵⁰. He defines a type as a symbol that at a future time will be replaced by a reality. This definition is clearly restrictive. He rejects the notion that any person, place, thing or action in Scripture can be a type. He regards this an extension of the meaning of type which is unwarranted and dangerous. Thus, he does not believe that Joseph can be called a type of Christ. Possibly certain aspects of his life are symbolic, for example, the rejection by his brothers, etc. Perhaps, Lasor says, these symbols can be called “types” of Christ’s similar experiences. On the other hand, he holds that the tabernacle, or temple, is a type of Christ. The presence of the Lord became a reality in the incarnation. See John 1:14. The fact that the “whole” is typical, however, does not imply that the “parts” are

typical as well. To seek significance in every detail of the tabernacle, Lasor regards as allegorical. With von Rad, Lasor finds the basis for typology “in the organismic redemptive and the progressive revelatory activity of God.” There is a connection between the saving events of the OT and the saving events of the New Testament. Von Rad is insistent that typological interpretation has to do only with the witness to the coming divine event and not with such correspondences in historical, cultural or archeological details as the OT and the NT may have in common. Thus he refuses to see David, Joshua, the tabernacle, or the Passover lamb as types of Christ. This is even more restrictive than Lasor’s view. See also Barr’s discussion of von Rad in *Old and New in Interpretation*⁵¹. Barr speaks in this connection of seven kinds of situations in which there are similarities in style and pattern between OT and NT. Here follows his list, which he regards rather artificial and not sharply to be delineated due to the fact that the NT writers do not have a principle to differentiate the various situations.

- a. Explicit types, Moses and Christ.
- b. Real allegory, the muzzled ox.
- c. Paraenesis, Balaam and Sarah.
- d. Fulfillment of prophecies cited.
- e. Proofs from linguistic details e.g. “seeds” in Galatians.
- f. Similarities in language, e.g. the Song of Hannah and the Magnificat of Mary.
- g. Similarities in action.

It is evident from this survey that there is no unanimity in the area of typology. What the one regards as legitimate the other does not. What the one characterizes as typology, the other holds to be allegory. Undoubtedly one’s presuppositions have a lot to do with this. In the case of von Rad, it hardly can be denied that his view of typology is the result of the influence of Karl Barth. Because of all this there appears to be only one way to proceed. What does the Bible itself have to say about types and typology?

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* shows that the Greek word *tupos* occurs 14 times in the NT. The word has apparently two basic meanings. The first one pertains to that which impresses, marks, stamps, patterns, moulds, etc. The second one pertains to that which is produced by the impression, the mark, the stamp, the pattern, the mould, etc. Since most of the occurrences fall in the first category, we will begin with the second one. John 20:25 speaks about the “marks,” or “prints” of the nails, Acts 7:43 about an “image” or “statue,” Acts 23:25 about the “text” of a letter. As to the first category, the NT speaks 6 times of a model or example for a holy life. See Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3. Further, Rom. 6:17 refers to a “mould” of teaching that makes an indelible imprint upon the hearers.

This leaves 4 occurrences still unaccounted for, Acts 7:44; Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 10:6 and Heb. 8:5. It is the opinion of the TDNT that in these passages the word *tupos* is used as a hermeneutical technical term introducing a typological method that without its distorted outgrowths is still valid today.

In discussing this thesis we will begin with the Pauline usage. The TDNT writes with regard to 1 Cor. 10:6.

“Analysis of the context raises the question how far the term *tupos* presses the significance of OT events. Exegetical discussion centers on whether *tupos* here means ‘example,’ ‘model,’ which expresses a rule, or technically “advance presentation” intimating eschatological events. Our own analysis rules out the former and suggests that the word takes on here, for the first time, the technical sense in which it is often used in Christian literature subsequent to Paul.”

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

The problem with this statement is that “our own analysis“ is not produced! This alone already makes the statement quite unconvincing. The translation “example“ or “mode“ is more than adequate to express Paul’s intention. Paul is simply telling the Corinthians that in the OT events mentioned in 1 Cor. 10, there are universal principles present, both in terms of God’s dealings and and in terms of man’s patterns of conduct or response, that are applicable to the Corinthians as well. The nature of the OT events, the pattern of conduct is unacceptable and makes Paul speak in terms of warning. Behind Paul’s writing there is indeed a hermeneutical method, a method of conveying the message of the OT, but this was the prevalent method that alone does justice to the Scripture as a covenantal-historical book, See Chapter I of this syllabus.

With regard to Rom. 5:14, the TDNT states,

“In the universal havoc he caused, Adam is for Paul a *tupos*, an advance presentation, through which God intimates the future Adam, namely Christ in His universal work of salvation... *tupos* is the advance presentation which indicates higher correspondence. In this case the correspondence is antithetical.”

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

The TDNT adds,

“Paul can adopt the term, which was familiar to him already in the sense of a moulding original, for a technical use consonant with his basic meaning.”

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

In this same context the TDNT admits that there seems to be no preparatory stages for the technical use of *tupos* in Paul. However, again according to the TDNT, Paul does express in this term what is essential to OT prophecy. On the basis of election the prophets state that judgment will not have the final word, but the past actions of God in the redemption of His people (e.g. the exodus) will be transcended by the future events of salvation. Accordingly, Paul interprets the OT Scripture in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to

be sure, in terms of a typology in which the OT phenomena point to and are fulfilled in the eschatological events of salvation.

The TDNT adds yet that already in the early church the typological approach undergoes a fundamental change. In the early church the types are not events, figures, or institutions which point beyond themselves to something definite, but rather concealed descriptions of what has now been manifested. Here typology is basically an allegorizing of events and institutions. Typology is no longer a spiritual approach which was taught kerygmatically with a view to faith, but a hermeneutical device which is offered with scribal argumentation as gnosis.

The TDNT is correct that the typological approach of the early church should receive much sympathy. But this does not legitimize the approach of the TDNT. In view of the ordinary usage of the term *tupos*, what prevents any reader of the NT to translate this term in Rom. 5:17 as “pattern?” There is a pattern in the relationship between Adam and the Adamites in terms of the fall. This pattern is one of solidarity. “In Adam’s fall we sinned all,” as the little rhyme goes. This same pattern repeats itself in the relationship between Christ and His Christians. Again there is a solidarity. “Through Christ’s righteousness, they all were justified.” The principle that was operative in Adam’s case was also operative in Christ’s case.

Acts 7:44 is a rather simple passage to explain. It merely says, contrary to the TDNT which speaks about a mythical speculative background that influenced Hellenistic Judaism, which in turn influenced early Christianity, that Moses saw a model, a pattern of the tabernacle. This he followed in the actual construction.

As to Hebrews 8:5 the usage of the term *tupos* is parallel to that of Acts 7:44. There was a model, according to which the tabernacle was built. The latter is called *antitupos* in Hebrews 9:24. This is the product of the pattern or model. The terminology itself, therefore, does not pose many problems, as long as it is not hardened into a hermeneutical technical terminology. The context of Hebrews 8 and 9 certainly does not require this. Note yet that 1 Peter 3:24 also uses the term *antitupos*. This can be translated as “counterpart,” i.e. counterpart to the water of the flood through which Noah and his family were saved.

In conclusion, it seems that there is no definite reason to ascribe to the word *tupos* or *antitupos* for that matter, a technical sense. The word *tupos* basically means pattern, model or mould. As such it can be productive. At times the product is called *tupos* as well. See John 20:25; Acts 7:43 and 23:25. As such it can be something for people to follow. See Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3. As such it can be something that will make the same imprint upon all who are exposed to it. See Rom. 6:17. As such it can be applicable in specific circumstances only. See 1 Cor. 10:6. As such it may be repeatable only once. See Rom. 5:14. As such it may have only one product. See Acts 7:44 and Heb. 8:5. As such it may have a counterpart in a later time period. See Heb. 9:24 and 1 Peter 3:24. This concluding summary fairly accounts for the term in

its basic meaning and in the variety of contexts it may appear. Sanctified common sense dictates when and where the interpretation of Scripture today may detect similar patterns, models and moulds. It is safe to say that Scripture presents models for holy living, universal principles applicable for all ages and teaching that functions and must function as a mould. It is equally safe to say that to erect an elaborate edifice of typology, in which a more or less pronounced historical correspondence of events, things or persons would warrant speaking of types, is not acceptable. To be sure, there are historical correspondences to be found in many a context. But these do not automatically spell “type” in the technical sense of the word.

Turning now to symbols, Terry divides them into three categories, the miraculous symbols as the burning bush, the literal symbols as the bread and the wine in the Lord’s Supper and the visionary symbols as the almond rod of Jer. 1:11. Terry enumerates three fundamental hermeneutical principles of symbolism. First, the names of the symbols are to be understood literally. Second, the symbols denote something essentially different from themselves. Third, some resemblance is traceable between the symbol and the thing symbolized. He mentions yet Fairbairn’s concern that the symbols be contemplated in their broader and commoner aspects and that the symbols are interpreted consistently and uniformly. Furthermore, Terry speaks about symbolical numbers, names, as well as colors. See Terry⁵², see also Mickelsen⁵³. A proper understanding of the function and purpose of symbols in general and the proper interpretation of specific instances in particular are important especially in connection with, and in the context of, prophetic literature. Rev. 20 is a case in point. First of all, the question is whether the number “thousand” is symbolical. Second, the question must be faced as to what it means, if it is symbolical. It is quite heartening to hear Lasor say,

“The human mind is able to set the symbol against its context and interpret it, in most cases, instantly.”⁵⁴

W.S. Lasor

9. The Literature of Scripture

Following the discussion of the language of Scripture, we will now turn to a discussion of the literature of Scripture. There are several types of genres of literature in the Bible. We will mention them and devote some remarks to each genre.

9.1. The Historical Genre

Not much will be said about this genre; except to reiterate what has been stated earlier in this syllabus. The historical sections display the universal principles of God’s dealings with His people as well as the patterns of response on the part of this people. In order to find them, both the wider and narrower context should be studied. Such study begins with an outline. For the purpose of class discussion two samples of outlines will now follow. The first is an outline of the book of Nehemiah. The second one is an outline of a section of Acts 2.

First, then the outline of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah, Principles of Spiritual Leadership

I. The Rebuilding of the Wall, Chapters 1-6

II. The Retraining of the People, Chapters 7-13

I. The Rebuilding of the Wall

1. Preparation for Task / Service in Dire Circumstances (1:1-11)

- a. Information
- b. Confession
- c. Petition
- d. Position

2. Commission to Task / Service in Impossible Circumstances (2:1-10)

- a. Burden
- b. Mission
- c. Supply
- d. Aggravation

3. Beginning of Task / Service in Grave Circumstances (2:11-20)

- a. Investigation
- b. Cooperation
- c. Opposition
- d. Determination

4. Breadth of Task / Service in Encouraging Circumstances (3:1-32)

- a. Population
- b. Nobles
- c. Strangers
- d. Families

5. Continuation of Task / Service in the Face of Opposition (4:1-6)
 - a. Anger
 - b. Mocking
 - c. Prayer
 - d. Progress
6. Perseverance in Task / Service in the Face of Threat (4:7-23)
 - a. External Conspiracy
 - b. Internal Discouragement
 - c. Reminder
 - d. Watchfulness
7. Endurance in Task / Service in the Face of Disunity (5:1-19)
 - a. Problems
 - b. Rebuke
 - c. Restoration
 - d. Example
8. Completion of Task / Service in the Face of Subtlety (6:1-19)
 - a. Crafty Invitation
 - b. Accusing Letter
 - c. Sly Suggestion
 - d. Continuing Harassment

II. The Retraining of the People

1. The Introduction to the Joy of the Lord (7:1-73)
 - a. Appointments
 - b. Genealogy
 - c. Numbers
 - d. Gifts

2. The Emergence of the Joy of the Lord (8:1-18)
 - a. The Law Read
 - b. The Law Interpreted
 - c. The Joy of the Lord
 - d. The Feast of Booths
3. The Accompaniment of the Joy of the Lord (9:1 - 10:27)
 - a. Godly Sorrow
 - b. Grateful Acknowledgement
 - c. Humble Confession
 - d. Total Consecration
4. The Effect of the Joy of the Lord (10:28-39)
 - a. Sanctity of Marriage
 - b. Observance of the Sabbath
 - c. Care for the Temple
 - d. Payment of the Tithes
5. The Continuation of the Joy of the Lord (11:1 - 13:3)
 - a. The Populating of Jerusalem
 - b. Dedication of the Wall
 - c. Care for the Officials
 - d. Separation from Mixed Multitude
6. The Disappearance of the Joy of the Lord (13:4-31)
 - a. Infiltration of the Enemy
 - b. Non-Payment of Tithes
 - c. Desecration of the Sabbath
 - d. Return to Intermarriage

Or,

6. The Battle for the Joy of the Lord (13:4-31)
 - a. Battle for the Integrity of the Temple
 - b. Battle for the Payment of Tithes
 - c. Battle for Observance of the Sabbath
 - d. Battle for a Biblical Marriage

The second outline is that of a part of Acts 2. Following the outpouring of the Spirit of God, which was accompanied by “eye-catchers” to draw the attention of the people to this fact, a sound as of a mighty wind, cloven tongues as of fire, and speaking in the native languages of the hearers, a charge of drunkenness is being made. Thereupon Peter makes his “defense,” which results in a large congregation. Both the preaching of Peter and the life of the congregation are evidences of the presence of the Spirit of God. Note that this presence was both experiential and activating. There was no doubt that those who received the Spirit knew it, were conscious of it, and became immediately productive, they acted.

As to Peter’s preaching, it was both Scriptural and powerful. It was Scriptural in that he expounded Joel 2:26-32. Joel begins by making a statement. In the last days the Spirit of God will be poured out upon the church. To pinpoint the time of this outpouring Joel adds that the day of the outpouring will be:

1. The Day of the Extraordinary (Acts 2:19-20a)
 - a. Miracles on Earth
 - b. Signs in Heaven
2. The Day of the Lord (Acts 2:20b)
 - a. Great
 - b. Notable
3. The Day of Salvation (Acts 2:21)
 - a. Calling
 - b. On the Name of the Lord

In his sermon Peter answers the charge of drunkenness and asserts that this is, indeed, the day of the outpouring of the Spirit of God. He demonstrates that this day meets the requirements of Joel.

1. The Day of the Extraordinary is the Day of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22-23)
 - a. Miracles on Earth: Remember the Life of Jesus
 - b. Signs in Heaven: Remember the Death of Jesus

2. The day of the Lord is the Day of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:24-36)

- a. Great: Remember His Resurrection
- b. Notable: Remember His Ascension

At this point there was an interruption. Recognizing that they had murdered the Son of God, that their victim was their judge!, the listeners cried out, cut to the heart, **What must we do?** (Acts 2:37). In answer to this cry Peter develops the third point of Joel's prophecy.

3. The Day of Salvation is Now (Acts 2:38-40)

- a. Calling on the Lord is Repentance
- b. The Lord Will, Then, Forgiveness and the Gift of the Spirit.

Peter's preaching was not only Scriptural, but also powerful. He was fearless in joining the issue of their sin to the point in calling them to repentance. Without the presence of the Spirit of God, Peter as a preacher and Peter's preaching would have been a total impossibility.

Something similar we notice in the congregational life.

Acts 2:42-47 sketches:

1. The Four Essential Elements of Every Christian church

- a. The Apostles' Teaching
- b. Fellowship
- c. The Lord's Supper
- d. Prayers

2. The Four Practical Consequences of the Christian Life

- a. Fellowship of Possessions
- b. Fellowship of Time
- c. Fellowship of Purpose
- d. Fellowship of Praise

3. The Four Blessed Effects of a Christian Testimony

- a. Awe Among People
- b. Favor of the People
- c. Favor of the Lord
- d. Daily Additions

The congregational life, thus presented, is only possible due to a takeover by, and a surrender to, the Spirit of God.

Note that the outpouring of the Spirit of God was not selective. It took place immediately upon the exercise of repentance.

9.2. The Legal Genre

An outline of Leviticus 16 and Deuteronomy 14 in their respective contexts follow here. Further discussions are reserved for the class room.

Leviticus:

1. Access Into the Presence of God (Chapters 1-17)
 - a. The Sacrifices (1:1 - 7:38)
 - b. The Priesthood (8:1 - 10:20)
 - c. The People (11:1 - 15:33)
 - d. The Culmination (16:1 - 17:16)
2. Walk in the Presence of God (Chapters 18-27)
 - a. The People (18:1 - 20:27)
 - b. The Priests (21:1 - 22:33)
 - c. The Feasts (23:1 - 25:55)
 - d. The Conclusion (26:1 - 27:34)

Leviticus 16: The Day of Atonement

1. The Preparation for the Atonement (Chapters 1-10). Time, Manner, Garments, Sacrifices
2. The Act of the Atonement (Chapters 11-19). Atonement for the Priests, For the People, Of the Holy Place, Of the Courtyard, Securing Forgiveness of Sins
3. The Accompaniment of the Atonement (Chapters 20-28). Second He-goat Into the Desert, Burnt Offerings, Removal of Ashes, Washings, Symbolizing Holiness of Life
4. The Concluding Injunction (Chapters 29-34). Day and Place Prescribed

Deuteronomy:

1. Preamble: Covenant Spokesman (1:1-5)
2. Historical Setting: Recent Covenant History (1:6 - 4:49)
 - a. Survey of the Events Since Horeb (1:6 - 3:29)

- b. Focus on Obedience to the Law (4:1-40)
- c. Cities of Refuge and Conclusion (4:41-49)
- 3. Stipulations: Prescribed Covenant Life (5:1 - 26:19)
 - a. Review of the Horeb Covenant (5:1-33)
 - b. The Application of the Constitution (6:1 - 26:19). Evaluation of the Ten Commandments
- 4. Ratification: Well Defined Covenant Sanctions (27:1 - 30:20)
- 5. Succession Arrangements: Gracious Covenant Continuity (31:1 - 33:29)

Deuteronomy 14: Evaluation of the Third Commandment

- 1. Face to Face with Death (14:1-2)
- 2. Face to Face with Animal Food (14:3-21a)
- 3. Face to Face with the Future (14:21b-29). The Name of the Lord, Which Stands for His Powerful Presence is the Opposite of the Empty Vanity of the Gentiles

9.3. The Wisdom Genre

See in this connection Mickelsen⁵⁵, who speaks about wisdom literature under the heading of poetry. To assist in further class discussions we will insert in these notes at this point two summary outlines, one of Job and one of James. The latter is inserted here because it has been called the Proverbs of the NT.

Job:

- 1. Job 1-2: Job and Satan

God demonstrates in Job that the true fear of God, the loving reverence for God, really exists on earth. Job loves God for whom He is, not just for what He gives.

- 2. Job 3-31: Job and His Three Friends

Job's friends increasingly press him for a confession of some terrible sin, which in their estimation must lie at the root of his calamities. Job states that there is a secret, but that this secret is not one of sin in him, but rather that it is in God. The more the friends press Job, the more Job appears to press God to reveal the secret and vindicate him.

- 3. Job 32-37: Job and Elihu

Elihu points to a messenger, one among thousands. He will declare Job's righteousness over against his three friends, but also show Job's sins in general, which require a ransom.

4. Job 30-42: Job and God

When God talks to Job and begins by giving a lecture in geography and biology, Job angrily declares that he will not open his mouth any more. God does not seem to take him and his situation seriously. When God continues to give him a lecture on zoology, Job understands that God is indeed joining the issue. He shows him that Job's secret is safe in the hand of a God who is almighty, allwise and who controls everything. This leads to Job's repentance. The knowledge he now has of God is as if he has seen God face to face. His earlier knowledge is like hear-say information compared to it. Following his prayer for his friends God restores his health, his possessions and his family.

James:

1. The Way to Holiness from the Divine Perspective (1:1-27)
 - a. The Trial Temptation Complex (1:2-18)
 - b. The Word of God (1:19-27)
2. The Principles of Holiness in the Framework of Scripture (2:1-26)
 - a. Holiness and the Law (2:1-13)
 - b. Holiness and Faith (2:14-26)
3. The Implementation of Holiness in the Experience of the Christian (3:1 - 4:10)
 - a. The Obstacle to Victory (3:1-9)
 - b. The Nature of Victory (3:10-18)
 - c. The Requirements for Victory (4:1-10)
4. The Range of Holiness in the Fabric of Life (4:11 - 5:18)
 - a. The Relationship to the "Other" (4:11-17)
 - b. The Relationship to Yourself (5:1-11)
 - c. The Relationship to the Circumstances (5:12-20)

9.4. The Prophetic Genre

More attention will be given to the prophetic literature than to the other genres because of its peculiar nature. A prophet is, generally speaking, a man or woman who "forthtells," or "proclaims" the Word of God. He or she does so under "the pressure of divine fervor,"⁵⁶ as Terry puts it. In forthtelling the Word of God, the prophet usually applies the law of God that already exists in fresh fashion to his peculiar situation, generally in terms of directives and often in terms of judgment. Often, he also speaks forth new revelation from God in a specific situation. In addition to this the prophet is used to "foretell." There is no doubt that there is a predictive

element in the words of the prophets. Predictive words often come, as Terry states “in symbolic drapery.”⁵⁷ According to Terry, one “must employ in the interpretation of prophecy essentially the same great principles as in the interpretation”⁵⁸ of other genres. First, one should determine the historical position of the prophet; second the scope and plan of the book; thirdly the usage and import of his words and the symbols; and fourthly, ample comparison of the parallel Scripture.

Ramm⁵⁹ makes the following observations about prophecy.

He gives two reasons why prophecy gives rise to such divergent interpretations. Prophetic language is not without its ambiguity. This cannot be sufficiently underscored. Especially the foretelling type of prophecy is bound to be ambiguous, inasmuch as it speaks about events in the future with its own cultural and historical context in a language that reflects the cultural and historical patterns of the prophet. A striking example is found in Revelation 9 where John sees locusts with the shape of horses, with breastplates of iron and tails as scorpions. It is generally understood that John foretells the appearance of a machine of destruction that is so terrible that it takes a composite symbol to express it. This implies, of course, that an accurate description of that “machine” cannot be given. In view of this and similar symbols it has been increasingly recognized as a fundamental principle of interpretation of prophecy that “prophecy becomes fully clear only after it has been fulfilled.” See Lasor in Ramm⁶⁰.

The second reason for the divergency in interpretation is the extent of the prophetic Scripture, still according to Ramm.

To create some order in the chaotic picture of prophetic interpretation, Ramm proposes the following approach.

First, in terms of fundamentals he states that one must begin with paying careful attention to the language of prophecy (nouns, proper names, etc. as well as figures, poetry and symbols), then determine the historical background of the prophecy, further take the context into account, also be mindful of the nonsystematic character of prophecy and finally, search for parallel passages.

Second, the interpreter must determine whether the prophecy is didactic or predictive, conditional or unconditional, fulfilled or unfulfilled. As far as fulfilled prophecy is concerned, one may gain valuable insights from it. For example, see James quotation of Amos 9:11 in Acts 15:13ff. If prophecy is unfulfilled, one should proceed with caution. There is also the possibility of multiple fulfillment.

Third, according to Ramm, the literal meaning of a prophetic passage always ought to be the controlling guide. While this does not open the road to a forced literalism it blocks the way to a runaway spiritualizing. The question, of course arises, what determines the correct interpretation so that it can escape the Scylla of the one and the Charybdis of the other? Every interpreter of whatever school of prophetic interpretation will answer that the nature of the passage is the final determinant. This is without a doubt a clear answer, but practically speaking, this is not of much immediate assistance. The “battle” has to be fought over and over again in individual instances. The only thing Ramm is willing to say over and above what has been said already is

this. He holds that in addition to the strict literal principle of interpretation of the OT, the interpreter must keep in mind, by way of additional principles that:

1. The Old Testament must be regarded as a Christian book (calling for an expanded typological interpretation).
2. The coming of Christ brings about some change in the form of fulfillment (against an extreme and indefensible literalism).
3. The New Testament interpretation of OT prophecy must be honored.

In this connection Ramm mentions the Hebrews 8 passage that deals with the new covenant. This passage proves that the new covenant comprises Gentiles as well as Jews. Hence, it cannot be conscientiously held that the new covenant will not be present until a so-called millennium. In the meantime Ramm holds that the principles outlined thus far do not settle the millennial question, the *crux interpretum* of Old Testament prophetic interpretation. He does not apologize for that. A particular belief, he states, is the product of an applied hermeneutical theory.

We will conclude this survey of Ramm's views with his evaluation of the apocalypse as one of the modes of prophetic communication.

1. All the rules mentioned up till this point apply to the apocalypse as well.
2. A completely literalistic method is impossible. Beasts cannot talk and act like men, to use one example.
3. The question must be asked whether a particular symbol had a special meaning in the culture of the writer.
4. The context must be studied to see whether the meaning of a symbol is furnished.
5. A study must be conducted in history to find out whether an apocalyptic passage has been fulfilled.
6. Comparisons of apocalyptic literature must be made. A clue to the meaning of a symbol in the NT can be provided by other passages in the NT or by passages in the OT.

We will bring this section on the prophetic literature to a conclusion with some general observations. The first set of observations pertain to prophecy in general, the second with apocalyptic literature in particular.

Both the fact and the contents of prophetic literature implies something about God and provides something for man. It evidences the sovereignty of God. Everything is under His control. It testifies to the inviolability of God's plan. There is no fear of failure. It emphasizes the wisdom of God. The tapestry of history is beautifully woven. It demonstrates the omnipotence of God. Nothing can thwart God's purpose. On the other hand, the benefit man reaps from it is great. It spells security. Everything is in God's hand. It spells comfort. The believer can determine his

place in history, be it not necessarily in detail. It spells hope. Victory is certain. It assists the believer in his task. He can use it in the preaching of the Gospel.

The fact and contents of apocalyptic literature, an aspect of the prophetic genre, also says something about God and to man. It discloses the greatness and majesty of God. This should be regarded as more central than the disclosure of things and events. It impresses us, especially the book of Revelation, with the centrality and reign of Christ. He has the final and absolute authority over both church and world. It emphasizes the universal principles according to which the Triune God controls, directs and brings the history of this world to its consummation. Searching out these principles is more important, being a central aim of apocalyptic literature, than a curious and superficial identification of events. On the other hand, man is thoroughly enriched by this type of God's revelation. It teaches him practical godliness. It discloses to him the nature and necessity of worship. It identifies the real enemy. It emphasizes the inevitability and gravity of the spiritual battle. It provides comfort inasmuch as history is orchestrated by God and His Christ. It gives hope because the final victory is absolutely sure. Indeed, it also spells the nature of present victory. As someone once stated, present victory even may spell death.

In summary, prophetic literature in general and apocalyptic literature in particular, just as all other Scripture, is part of the great self manifestation of the Triune God in the glory of His being and the beauty of His perfections. At the same time it discloses the task of man and all that is needed to fulfill this effectively.

For further class discussion, once again several outlines will be given.

First of all, two outlines of prophetic literature in general will be inserted at this point.

Amos

Introduction: 1:1-2

1. Judgments Against the Nations (1:3 - 2:16)

- a. Damascus
- b. Philistia
- c. Tyrus
- d. Edom
- e. Ammon
- f. Moab
- g. Judah

h. Israel: Two Reasons for Judgment (6-8), and (9-12) and Description of Judgment (13-16)

2. Judgments Against Israel in Prophetic Proclamation (3:1 - 6:14)

Introduction: (3:1-8)

- a. Focus on the Ruling Class (3:9 - 4:3)
- b. Focus on the Basic Religious Degeneration (4:4-13)
- c. Focus on Repentance (5:1-17)
- d. Focus on Presumptions (5:18 - 6:14)

3. Judgments Against Israel in Prophetic Visions (7:1 - 9:10)

- a. The First Vision: Grasshoppers (7:1-3)
- b. The Second Vision: The Fire (7:4-6)
- c. The Third Vision: The Plumbline (7:7-17)
- d. The Fourth Vision: Basket of Fruit (8:1-14)
- e. The Fifth Vision: The Lord on the Altar (9:1-10)

Conclusion (9:11-15)

- a. The First Stage of the Messianic Kingdom (11)
- b. The Second Stage of the Messianic Kingdom (12-13)
- c. The Third Stage of the Messianic Kingdom (14-15)

Zechariah:

Introduction (1:1-6)

I. Prophetic Visions (1:7 - 6:8)

- 1. The Promises of God the Father (1:7 - 3:13)
 - a. The Vision of the Man in the Midst of the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17)
 - b. The Vision of the Four Horns and the Four Carpenters (1:18-21)
 - c. The Vision of the Man with the Measuring Line (2:1-13)
- 2. The Work of God the Son (3:1-10)
 - a. The Vision of Joshua the High Priest (3:1-10)
- 3. The Agency of the Spirit (4:1-8)
 - a. The Vision of the Candlestick (4:1-14)

- b. The Vision of the Flying Scroll (5:1-4)
- c. The Vision of the Ephah (5:5-11)
- d. The Vision of the Four Chariots (6:1-8)

Transition: (6:9-15): A Prophecy in Symbolic Form

II. Prophetic Proclamation (7:1 - 14:21)

1. The Promises of God the Father (7:1 - 8:23)
 - a. The Depravity of Israel Stated and Explained (7:1-14)
 - b. The Renewed Presence of God with Israel Predicted and Developed (8:1-17)
 - c. The Coming of the Gentiles to God Among His People Prophesied and Evaluated (8:18-23)
2. The Work of God the Son (9:1 - 11:17)
 - a. The Announcement of the King (9:1-10)
 - b. The Program of the King (9:11 - 10:12)
 - c. The Rejection of the King (11:1-17)
3. The Agency of the Spirit (12:1 - 14:21)
 - a. Triumph Through Repentance (12:1-14)
 - b. Cleansing After Chastisement (13:1-9)
 - c. Holiness Through Living Waters (14:1-21)

Following these two outlines of prophetic literature we will insert two outlines of apocalyptic literature.

Daniel:

I. Chapters 1-6: The Repeated Defeats of the Kingdom of Man Before the Kingdom of God, a Historical Reality

- Ch. 1. The Service of God Prevails Over the Service of Man
- Ch. 2. The Power of God Prevails Over the Power of Man
- Ch. 3. The Worship of God Prevails Over the Worship of Man
- Ch. 4. The Glory of God Prevails Over the Glory of Man
- Ch. 5. The Plan of God Prevails Over the Plan of Man

Ch. 6. The Law of God Prevails Over the Law of Man

II. Chapters 7-12: The Certain Victories of the Kingdom of God Over the Kingdom of Man, a Prophetic Promise

Ch. 7. The Outline of the All Over Victory of the Kingdom of God Given, the Vision of the Four Beasts, the Little Horn, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Ch. 8. The Roadblock to the Fundamental Victory of the Kingdom of God Removed, the Vision of the Ram, the He-goat and the Little Horn

Ch. 9. The Basis of the Continuing Victory of the Kingdom of God Laid, the Vision of the Seventy Weeks

Chs. 10-12. The Pattern of the Final Victory of the Kingdom of God Indicated, the Vision of the Man Clothed in Linen

Ch. 10. The Introduction of the Man Clothed in Linen

Ch. 11. The Message of the Two Antichrists

Ch. 12. The Final Comments of the Man Clothed in Linen

Revelation 12-13: The Satanic “Trinity”

Ch. 12. The Dragon: The Imitation of God the Father Acting as if He has the Final Authority

- a. His Defeat Before the Son of God (1-6)
- b. His Removal from Heaven (7-12)
- c. His Attacks on Earth (13-17)

Ch. 13. The First Beast: The Imitation of God the Son Receiving the Authority from the Dragon and Reviving from a Mortal Wound

- a. The Appearance of His Authority (1-4)
- b. The Exercise of His Authority (5-10)

The Second Beast: The Imitation of God the Spirit Receiving its Authority from the First Beast and Pointing Everyone to Him

- a. The Deceptive Authority of the Second Beast (11-15)
- b. The Oppressive Authority of the Second Beast (16-17)

Note: The concluding verse, 13:18 mentions the number 666. This gave rise to the formulation of the “satanic trinity.” It is a very good imitation, but only an imitation! The dragon is the Devil himself. The first beast emerging from the sea (of nations) stands for political power. The second beast emerging from the earth stands for the false ideology.

9.5. The Epistolary Genre

For class discussion here follows an outline of 2 Corinthians 5:18 - 9:15 in the framework of the total epistle.

I. The Characteristics of the Man of God (1:1 - 5:17)

II. The Contents of the Message of God (5:18 - 9:15)

III. The Nature of the Battle of God (10:1 - 13:14)

II. The Contents of the Message of God (5:18 - 9:15)

1. Reconciliation (5:18-21)

a. The Ministry of Reconciliation (18-19)

b. The Summons of Reconciliation (20-21)

2. Sanctification (6:1 - 7:1)

a. The Holiness of the Minister (6:1-10)

b. The Holiness of the Congregation (6:11 - 7:1)

3. Repentance (7:2-16)

a. The Necessity of Repentance (7:2-10)

b. The Beauty of Repentance (7:11-16)

4. Liberality (8:1 - 9:15)

a. The Exhortation to Liberality (8:1-15)

b. The Organization of Liberality (8:16 - 9:5)

c. The Circle of Liberality (9:6-15)

This concludes the section of literature types in the Scriptures. It has been said that the Gospels also comprise a certain type of literature, inasmuch as there is no other literature in the world that resembles it. This point appears to be well made. However, at this juncture an outline of a Gospel or part of a Gospel will not provide a substantially additional insight in the interpretation of Scripture. Hence, this will not be inserted in the notes.

This brings the syllabus on hermeneutics to a close.

Appendix A: Discussion of the Covenant

by Joe Morecraft

Excerpt from Chapter 11, “The Covenant of God” from *Authentic Christianity, An Exposition of the Theology and Ethics of the Westminster Larger Catechism*

This is an exposition on Westminster Larger Catechism Questions 30-35.

Introduction to “The Covenant of God”

“The covenant is the center and bond of all [true] religion consisting in the communion of God with man and embracing in its compass all the benefits of God toward man and his duties toward God.”

Francis Turretin

And we preach to you the good news [gospel] of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus.

Acts 13:32

Hermeneutics influences worldview. The way we read and interpret the Bible is inseparable from the way we look at life and live in this world. Three different ways of reading the Bible are available to American Christians in the 21st Century, and each of these ways lead to three different ways of looking at the world.

First, the evolutionary approach reads it as if it were merely a record of the evolution of man’s beliefs about God, from polytheism, to a primitive monotheism, to a consistent monotheism, to a complicated trinitarianism. According to this view, the Bible is not a book from God about God, it is a book by man about man’s evolution in religion, and therefore it is of no divine authority. This hermeneutic grows out of a worldview that sees man as God, that is relativistic since it believes no moral absolutes from God exist. It encourages state control of man’s evolutionary development.

Second, the dispensational⁶¹ approach to reading the Bible does not allow for unity and continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, nor does it allow for unity in the history of redemption in the Bible. It divides the Bible and history into various dispensations or periods of testing during which times God deals with people in different ways. The dispensation in which one lives determines what sections of the Bible are authoritative to that person. Since Christians of the New Testament and afterward do not live in the Old Testament, the Old Testament laws and promises and threats are not for them but for the Jews, who are God’s earthly people as the church is God’s spiritual people. This way of approaching the Bible creates a series of dichotomies in our worldview. It tears the fabric of life. It results in antinomianism, i.e., a disregard for God’s Law, particularly in the Old Testament. It is pessimistic and defeatist toward the future believing that as things get worse and worse, the Christian’s only hope is to be silently raptured out of this life. Such defeatism produces a paralysis toward present crises, which often leads to encouraging peaceful co-existence with evil in a society.

Third, the covenantal approach to the Bible sees in the Bible the unifying message and framework of God's covenant with His people in Christ, as the basis of unity and continuity in the Christian life and mission in this world.

The covenantal worldview recognizes that all the relationships of life between God and human beings are based on covenants. All of human life takes place with reference to the Covenant of God with His people in Christ. That covenant is

“... the divine framework for human life, both religious, [social] and civil, from the beginning of the world until the last judgment.”⁶²

C.S. McCoy & J.W. Baker

This idea of the covenant is not an innovation, rather it is

“... the very fabric from which the history of salvation was woven through the centuries, from Adam [to today].”⁶³

C.S. McCoy & J.W. Baker

A covenantal worldview spread rapidly during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. It was brought to America by early settlers in the British colonies - the Anglicans in Virginia and the southeastern seaboard, the Puritans in New England and especially the Presbyterians in the Middle and Southern colonies. It gathered momentum during the colonial period and acquired the traits that identify a distinctively American covenantal (federal) tradition. It was taught in all the colleges and it influenced the foundation of all the colonial charters and later state constitutions.

This covenantal worldview, growing out of the Bible and the 16th century Protestant Reformation, was the moral, social and political foundation of American society.

“Federalism [covenantalism] was the social and political air breathed by the leaders of the American Revolution and by Madison and his colleagues at the Constitutional Convention. From them, federalism formed the basis of the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States of America.”⁶⁴

C.S. McCoy & J.W. Baker

This shaping influence of a covenantal worldview can be seen in the influence of two bestsellers in 18th century America, both written by men committed to the covenantal theology of the Reformation:

- 1) *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, written in 1579 by Philippe Duplessis Mornay, a French Huguenot.
- 2) *Lex Rex*, written in the early-mid 17th century by the famous Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford.

Both of these books show the influence of John Knox and John Calvin.

Covenantalism permeated the social life of early America - family, church, state, commerce. It gave shape to the society that later became the United States of America. The basic elements of that worldview include the following:

- 1) All human beings are created in covenant with God and are subject to His divine moral order, as either covenant keepers or covenant breakers.
- 2) The individual, home, church and state are all to enforce God's moral order, being in covenant with Him.
- 3) In human communities particular persons become representative of an entire social group - fathers represent their children, elders their churches, elected officials the citizens.
- 4) Because human beings are prone to covenant breaking, the civil government must have checks and balances and separation of powers.

The union of people in a society is more than a social contract. It is a covenant relation from God Himself woven into the very fabric of creation and history. A society is not merely a collection of individuals; it is a covenanted society of interdependent, interactive agreements based on the Word of God.

“Society develops from private to public associations, as smaller societies unite by covenant into larger social entities [the city, county, state and nation]... The smaller groups are represented in the larger group by persons who represent collectively the members of the groups from which they come, and it is the groups they represent rather than they themselves who are the members of the larger group. If humans are gathered together without a covenant - there is only a crowd, a mob.”⁶⁵

C.S. McCoy & J.W. Baker

Mob rule, for example, has no place in a covenanted society. Our founding fathers in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries preferred a confederated republic to either a democracy or a consolidated nation. The War Between the States was fought to change the covenantal nature of American society and politics, to change a covenanted society into “one nation indivisible,” with allegiance going to the central civil government in Washington, D.C.

Three modern wars have been fought in order to preserve a covenantal approach to society: The English Civil War under Cromwell in the 1640s, the “Glorious Revolution” in England under William and Mary in 1688, and the American War of Independence in 1776. The French Revolution of 1789, the War Between the States in the 1860s, and most modern wars have been fought to destroy a covenantal approach to society.

What are some of the basic elements of a covenantal hermeneutic of the Bible? First, the covenant of God defines the basis for the unity of the Bible's message and framework, and for unity of our individual life histories with the history of the Old Testament and New Testament. Second, this doctrine of the covenant is THE distinctive feature of Christianity, which distinguishes it from all other religions: the voluntary and merciful condescension of God to save human beings from evil. In all man-made religions, man tries to find God, man tries to work his way up to God, man tries to achieve his own salvation. But in the divinely revealed religion of Christianity, God comes down to human beings and makes a covenant with us, God saves us and our society through Christ the Mediator of His covenant. God seeks and saves those who are lost and who cannot climb up to Him. This covenant is

“... the center and bond of all [true] religion, consisting in the communion of God with man and embracing in its compass all the benefits of God towards man and his duties towards God.”⁶⁶

F. Turretin

The Explanation of the Title, “The Covenant of God”

The Synonyms for Covenant in the Bible

The covenant is called PROMISE, because it is of God and not of man. It rests entirely upon the promise of God and depends upon that promise, not only with regard to the blessings promised by God, but also with reference to the duties demanded of us. Thus God performs not only His own part but also ours. A promise is different than an offer. A promise is a declaration that binds the person who makes it to do the very thing promised. A promise then is also an assurance that that which is promised will be performed in behalf of the one to whom the promise is made. It is God who makes this promise. Nothing can hinder Him from realizing that promise in Christ. Its fulfillment is not contingent upon the will of man. This promise is as faithful and true as God is unchangeable. He will surely fulfill His promise.

“When He binds Himself to do or to bestow anything, He is bound by Himself and by all His divine attributes to realize the promise unto them to whom it is made. For He cannot deny Himself.”⁶⁷

H. Hoeksema

When Romans 4:13-14 speaks of the “promise” it is obvious that it is referring to the covenant of grace God made with Abraham in Genesis 12-17:

“For *the promise* to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and *the promise* is nullified” (emphasis added).

Romans 4:13-14

In making his point that the word of God has not failed, because **they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel** (Rom. 9:6), Paul explains that

It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of *the promise* who are regarded as descendants” (emphasis added).

Romans 9:8

Here again we learn that God’s word has not failed in bringing its promised blessings to **the children of the promise**, i.e., the true children of the covenant, the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

The covenant is called GOSPEL because its promises are fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ. In Acts 13:32, Paul declares that his apostolic gospel is nothing other than the covenant of grace made to the Old Testament fathers and fulfilled in Christ:

“And we preach to you *the good news* [gospel] *of the promise* made to the fathers,

that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus” (emphasis added).

Acts 13:32

In Romans 1, Paul introduces the focus of his gospel as the covenant of grace fulfilled in Christ:

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart *for the gospel of God, which He promised* beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His Son (emphasis added).

Romans 1:1-2

And in Galatians 3:8, once again we see the covenant and its promises referred to as the gospel:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed in you.”

Galatians 3:8

So then, the gospel is the covenant of grace in Christ.

The covenant is called an OATH to represent its permanence, unchangeableness and eternity. When Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, praised God in his *Benedictus*, recorded in Luke 1:67-79, he rejoiced that in Christ, God will bring His people salvation from their enemies and from the hand of all who hate them,

To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father.

Luke 1:73, Gen. 22:16-18

God’s oath is the guarantee of the complete realization of God’s covenant in Christ.

The Covenant of God is a Covenant of “Grace”

First, it proceeds from God’s grace. It is not based on human merit, bargaining with God, or human achievement. It originates in the undeserved favor and mercy of God. God did not establish this covenant with people because they deserved it, but in spite of the fact that they did not deserve it because of their sin. In her famous *Magnificat*, Mary the mother of Jesus, praises God that His covenant promise and the salvation her Son, the Messiah, would bring, are all of grace, totally undeserved, unearned and unmerited by man:

He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.

Luke 1:54-55

Zacharias makes the same emphasis when he says, that God is sending salvation in Christ

... to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant... to grant us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear.

Luke 1:72, 74

Second, everything in the covenant is gratuitous, even the demands placed on all who have received God's grace. The covenant is full of rewards that are promised to those who believe, repent and obey God. However, these rewards are purely gracious. In other words, God does not reward us according to what our obedience deserves, but He rewards us far beyond what we deserve. Our righteousness deserves nothing good from God, but God has chosen to bless our faithfulness to Him inspired by the Holy Spirit in far greater measure than anything we deserve. He blesses us not according to our merit, but **according to the riches of His grace** (Phil. 4:19). Furthermore, the demands of God on those in covenant with Him - faith, repentance and obedience - are themselves gifts of God's grace to His people. Left to himself, man, dead in his sins, cannot do what God requires him to do. But in the covenant of grace, God changes the hearts of His people, writes His Law on their hearts, and fills them with His Holy Spirit so that they have both the power and desire to do what He demands of them. In the New Covenant, God makes this promise:

I will give you a new heart. and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Third, God established the covenant of grace with us in Christ to glorify Himself and His saving grace:

... in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:7

The Covenantal Framework of the Bible: The Covenants of Promise

The Unifying Framework of the Bible and its Message

One word exists that defines the basis for the unity of the Bible's message and framework, and for the unity of the individual life histories of Christians with the history of the Bible: COVENANT - a bond of eternal friendship between God and His people in Christ.

"With whom was the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as His seed."

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 31

The Biblical phrase for this covenantal framework and message of the Bible is **the covenants of promise** (Eph. 2:12). Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have an overarching structure and theme: **the promise** (Gen. 17:7; Rom. 1:2; Gal. 3:14). The administration of that promise has a rich and varied development through a series of interrelated Biblical "covenants," each building upon and advancing the previous ones to present us with one vast, panorama of promises and demands in the Scripture, which we call: the Covenant of Grace.⁶⁸

"Covenantal grace was central to all of God's administrations. There was one underlying promise that formed the core of all the diverse administrations of covenant relationship; God's purpose was not divided, His intentions were not dichotomized... Paul declared that 'as many as are the promises of God, their affirmative is in Him (Jesus Christ),' (2

Cor. 1:20). Whatever promises God delivered to His people in the Old Testament all point to and center in the person and work of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁹

G. Bahnsen

All the various strands of Biblical truth are unified as they “dovetail” into or “flow out of” the person and work of Christ. He is the fulfillment and administrator of the totality of *covenant* promises (2 Cor. 1:20). His presence and activity comprise the power by which His kingdom advances in the subduing of men’s hearts to the Lord God (Matt. 13:1-52).

“Because the various strands of hope for redemption converge on this single person, He becomes the unifying focus of all Scripture. Both ‘kingdom’ and ‘covenant’ unite under ‘Immanuel.’... (Matt.26:28, cf. Luke 22:20)... In the person of Jesus Christ, the covenants of God achieve incarnational unity. Because Jesus, as the Son of God and mediator of the covenant, cannot be divided, the covenants cannot be divided. He himself guarantees the unity of the covenants, because He himself is the heart of each of the various covenantal administrations.”⁷⁰

O.P. Robertson

The various covenants of redemptive history in the Bible unite in one overarching covenant from creation to the consummation at the end of the world. This one, ever-expanding covenant is eternal (Gen. 17:7). It began in eternity, embraces all history, and continues in its blessings and curses throughout eternity. This unity and continuity of “the covenants of promise” is evident from the fact that God’s covenant gives to the Bible A UNIFYING FRAMEWORK and A UNIFYING MESSAGE, or a structural unity and a thematic unity.

The Unifying Framework of the Bible

First, God’s covenant gives the Bible A UNIFYING FRAMEWORK. An obvious unity exists between the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3;17), the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19-24), and the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7). This unity is evident in

- 1) The history and experience of God’s people from Abraham to David.
- 2) The development of the covenants genealogically, in the line of continued generations.

With reference to the history and experience of God’s people, we see that the Exodus and the possession of Canaan are fulfillments of the Abrahamic Covenant (Ex. 2:24; 6:4-8); the history of Israel after Mt. Sinai under Moses continues to focus on the divine promises to Abraham (Ex.32:13-14; Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Josh. 1:3); the Mosaic Covenant is rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant (Ex. 6:1-8; Deut. 1:1-8; Ex. 32:13; Ps. 105:8-10; Lev. 26:42); the Mosaic Covenant in no way annulled or interrupted the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:17); the Davidic Covenant is rooted in the Abrahamic (2 Sam. 7:8-16; 23:5; 1 Chron. 16:15-18), and is a development of the Mosaic (2 Sam. 7:6,23; 1 Kings 2:3-4). The centralization of worship under David was anticipated by Moses (Deut. 12:5,11,14,18); and the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem connected with the coronation of the king and the establishment of God’s throne was in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (1 Chron. 16:15-18).

God's covenant arrangements run in a genealogical line as is evident from the **seed** concept (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 20:5-6; Deut. 5:2-3; 7:9; 2 Sam. 7:12). David's son is heir to the promises to Moses and Abraham. (See also Deut. 29:14-15; Ps. 105:8-10; Isa. 59:21; Acts 3:25.) Deuteronomy 7:9 shows us that covenant promises extend to one thousand generations, not only reminding us that this is an eternal covenant, but also that it involves a continuous succession of generations.

Two important principles must be kept in mind at this point.⁷¹

- 1) The "grafting" principle (Gen. 17:12-13). Any definition of the significance of "Israel" must include this dimension. "Israel" cannot be restricted to a closed ethnic community (Rom. 11:17,19). By "ingrafting," the Gentile became an Israelite in the full sense of the word. His line stands as legal heirs of genealogical promises.
- 2) The "pruning" principle (Rom. 9:13; Mal. 1:2, 3; Gen. 25:23). This must also be included in identifying "Israel" (Rom. 9:6).

An obvious unity also exists between the Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant in Christ.⁷² The New Covenant may be understood in no other way than as the realization and fulfillment of the projections and promises of the Old Testament covenants. Jeremiah 31:31-34 and 32:39-41 show the intertwining of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants in the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). Ezekiel 34:20-31 shows the intertwining of the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant. And Ezekiel 37:24-26 combines all three - the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic - in the New Covenant. (See also Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:15-18; 2 Cor. 1:20). Everything that happens to God's people happens because of God's Covenant promises, laws or sanctions.

The Unifying Message of the Bible

Second, God's covenant gives the Bible A UNIFYING MESSAGE. A common theme underlies the entire Biblical revelation, a singular covenant "promise" of union and communion with God and His people in Christ. This is the heart of all Biblical covenants (Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:6-7; 19:4-5; Lev. 11:45; Deut. 4:20; 29:13; 2 Kings 11:17; 2 Chron. 23:16; Ezek. 34:24; Jer. 24:7; 31:33; 32:37-41; Zech. 2:11; 8:8,16; Eph. 4:25; Heb. 8:10; 2 Cor. 6:16).

This heart promise of God's covenants has been called the "Immanuel-principle," because the name, "Immanuel," means "God with us." In the Old Testament it is developed in terms of God's dwelling (in the Tabernacle and Temple) in the midst of His covenant people (Ex. 25:8; 29:42-45; Lev. 26:9-13; Deut. 12:5,11,14; 14:22; 16:2-11; Ezek. 37:26-28). Jesus Christ is "Immanuel, God with us," (Matt. 1:23). Jesus Christ is God incarnate. He "tabernacled" with us (John 1:14; Eph. 2:21-22; Rev. 7:15; 21:3). In Him the heart-theme of the Old Testament covenants reaches a climax in that the promise of God dwelling with His people is embodied in a single person (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3-4). Therefore, in Christ and the New Covenant He established, all the Old Testament covenants unite into one.

This unity of all the Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant is many-sided. The Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant have the SAME GOAL - the establishment of a

kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9). They are all covenants of GRACE (Ex. 14:13; 15:2; 19:4; 20:2; 22:19; John 3:14; Ex. 32:13; Deut. 20:1-9; Heb. 11:24-29). They all have the SAME DEFINITIONS, in fact, the words and ideas of the New Testament are informed by the definitions of those words and ideas in the Old Testament. For example, in all the Old Testament covenants and in the New Covenant, sin is the transgression of Biblical Law (Josh. 7:11; Isa. 24:5; Hosea 6:7; 1 John 3:4). They all have the SAME CHURCH (Gen. 35:11; Acts 7:38; Heb. 3:1-6), the SAME GOSPEL (Gal. 3:8), the SAME FAITH (Rom. 4), the SAME CHRIST (Heb. 11:26), the SAME BLESSINGS (Eph. 2:1-2), and the SAME ETHICS (Matt. 5:17-18). All Biblical covenants also have the SAME PRINCIPLES, OPERATING POWER and FOUNDATION.

“Grace is the foundation, and holiness the character [1 Pet. 1:15-16], of all covenant relationships with God.”⁷³

G. Bahnsen

This covenantal unity of framework and message in the Bible has practical significance for us today. Everything that happened to the people of God in the Bible happened because of what was promised and commanded in **the covenants of promise**. The same is true of us today. We, as believers, and our families are members of the same covenant framework as the believers in the Bible. We share a common history. Whatever happens to us in our lives happens because of the promises and commands of God’s covenant. Furthermore, the message on which God’s people in the Bible were nourished, upon which they built their civilization, and which they were to keep intact and declare to the world, is the very same message that saves and nourishes believers today. We must build our civilizations on it and face our futures hopefully in its light. When a person becomes a Christian today, he enters into the religion of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus (Rom. 11:17-32). This adds depth, breadth and momentum to his life in this world. It gives him a rootedness with which he can face the future, knowing that the future belongs to his believing generations.

The Covenants of the Bible

The Covenant of Redemption

Although the Larger Catechism does not mention this covenant, made between the Persons of the Trinity in eternity, (since it deals only with the covenants of works and of grace, made in history), it intimates such a covenant when it informs us that

“... the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as His seed.”

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 31

Neither the Westminster Confession of Faith nor the Shorter Catechism make this point in their explanation of God’s covenants with man. The covenant of grace which God makes with the elect in Christ in history is rooted in the covenant of redemption which God made with Christ in eternity, so that the two can be said to be one covenant of grace, just as the root and the trunk of a tree comprise one tree.

The Foundation of Our Salvation

The foundation of our salvation is the eternal covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, which is called the covenant of redemption. If the gospel is a remedy for our sin, then God must have had an eternal plan to provide such a remedy. When we study the Bible we see that God not only planned to save sinners by the gospel, but also that His plan to save had the nature of a covenant in the Godhead. Because of the perfect unity between the Persons of the Trinity, it is certain that the conditions required for redemption would be performed and that the rewards resulting from the completion of these conditions be bestowed.⁷⁴ The love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit are founded for the elect upon the covenant of redemption in the triune God in eternity.

We must not approach our study of the covenant of redemption with the opinion that all this is irrelevant intellectual speculation, similar to the argument about the number of angels that will fit on the end of a pin. This subject is:

“... the foundation for all sure comfort, joy, holy amazement, and the magnification of God. Therefore, we must strive to understand this doctrine well, and to make use of it continually.”⁷⁵

W. á Brakel

The Root of the Covenant of God with Man

The historical covenants of promise are rooted in the covenant life of the Holy Trinity.

“God is the eternally living one in Himself. There is the most perfect unity of Being in God, and nevertheless personal distinctions: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, willing and thinking, living and loving in the one, eternally good and perfect divine Being, thinking and willing and loving always the same, and knowing one another perfectly, and yet so, that each of the three Persons lives that divine life according to His personal attributes. It is herein that the essence of the covenant is to be found. That life of God is a covenant life, a life of the most intimate communion of love and friendship, resting in the unity of God’s Being and living through the personal distinction. The Lord God is a covenant God. Now it has pleased God, according to His sovereign good pleasure, according to the counsel of His will, to reveal this covenant life outside of Himself and to make the creature a partaker of that divine covenant life.”⁷⁶

H. Hoeksema

The Nature of the Covenant of Redemption

Before the creation of the universe, in the eternity of the Trinity, God the Father determined to give God the Son to be the Head and Redeemer of the elect, God the Son determined to present Himself as the Surety of the elect, and God the Holy Spirit determined to reveal the Son and His salvation to the elect. In this covenant God the Father placed demands upon God the Son, which God the Son gladly accepted; and upon condition of His obedience, the Father promised the Son great rewards. From this covenant of redemption in the Trinity in eternity flows the covenant of grace in history, which is our salvation.

The entire plan of salvation was included in the eternal decree of God (Eph. 1:3-13). God the Father originated the plan of salvation, God the Son executed and accomplished it, and God the Holy Spirit applies it to all the elect. This presupposes a VOLUNTARY BONDED AGREEMENT - a covenant - among the three Persons of the Trinity.

“Whenever, on the one hand, there are requisite conditions and commands as well as promises and sacraments, and on the other hand, consent and acceptance of conditions and promises, satisfaction of conditions, and a demand for the promised benefits upon satisfaction of conditions, then we have an incontrovertible reference to a covenant. All of this exists between God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus there is a covenant between both of them,”⁷⁷ with reference to the elect’s salvation.

W. á Brakel

In the covenant of redemption all the parties are equal, none requiring of the other what the other is not willing to give. The two parties are God the Father, representing the entire Trinity, and God the Son, representing God’s elect.⁷⁸ What motivated the triune God to make such a covenant? The good pleasure of His own will (Rom. 9:11,16; Eph. 1:3-6).

Requirements and promises fill up the covenant of redemption. God the Father required of the Son that He make amends for the sin of Adam and of all the elect whom He had given the Son to save. He promised the Son that He would reward Him greatly for His obedience to the terms of this covenant. Therefore, the covenant of redemption may be defined⁷⁹ as

“... the agreement between the Father giving the Son as Head and Redeemer of the elect, and the Son, voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father had given Him.”⁸⁰

L. Berkhof

The covenant of redemption not only includes the choosing of those who would be redeemed, and the agreeing upon a Redeemer by whom they would be redeemed; it also includes the working out and the application of salvation accomplished by Christ and planned in the eternal counsel of God.

“The plan of redemption is established through the Father in the Son but it is established also in the fellowship of the Spirit... It is the Spirit who is earned, promised, and sent by Christ (John 16:7; Acts 2:4,17)... And all this the Holy Spirit can work out and bring into being because, together with the Father and the Son, He is the one true God who lives and reigns eternally.”⁸¹

H. Bavinck

The Biblical Basis for the Covenant of Redemption

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament refer to this covenant. In Psalm 89:3,28,34 God speaks with reference to the Messiah:

I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My Servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations... My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him... My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

Psalms 89:3,28,34

This psalm praises God for His promises to His people in the covenant He established with King David in 2 Samuel 7, who is a type of Christ (Hosea 3:5). Therefore, when Psalm 89 speaks of David, it also speaks of Christ as He is typified by David.

Verses 1-37 refer to Christ, as the Chosen of God (vs. 3), the Holy One of Israel (vs. 18-19), One who is mighty (vs. 19), the Anointed One (vs. 20), the Firstborn of God (vs. 27), the King of kings (vs. 27), One whose kingdom is global (vs. 25), and One whose kingdom is eternal (vs. 36-37). David cannot be said to be the Firstborn Son of God, the King of kings, and the Possessor of an eternal kingdom; but insofar as he is a type of Christ, these things can be said of him. Verses 38-52 present us with a contrast between David's kingdom and Christ's kingdom. Christ's is global and eternal; David's is regional and temporary.

Psalm 89 was written long after David had passed off the scene. He seems

“... to look for another, a prophetic David, one of whom King David of olden days was so clear a type, a Messianic David, upon whom help may be laid as on one that is mighty.”⁸²

E. Mack

Many of the statements in this psalm

“... forbid in themselves fulfillment in David, or in any merely human son of David. They lead the mind directly to a King of Kings on an eternal throne, with an ageless dominion. Unless they have been realized in the Christ, the Son of God, the covenant with David has been broken.”⁸³

E. Mack

Therefore, in Psalms 89:3,28,34, where it is said that “David” is in a covenant engagement with Jehovah, it is evident that it is referring, not only to the Davidic Covenant accomplished in history by Jesus Christ, but it is also referring to a covenant made between the Lord and Christ, of which “the covenants of promise” are the historical outworkings.

In Isaiah 42:6, God the Father addresses God the Son, saying,

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

Isaiah 42:6

In this verse God speaks of “calling” someone to be His servant (42:1), and of “appointing” him as **a covenant to the people** (42:6). In calling the person, God reveals His own “righteousness,” that is, this servant’s mission is rooted in God’s absolute justice, in strict accordance with God’s will. God promises to uphold and sustain this servant in his mission because all the forces of hell will oppose him.

What does it mean to say that this servant is “appointed” **as a covenant to the people**? This is

striking language, for the servant is actually identified as a covenant, thereby declaring that the servant is the one with whom a covenant is made and through whom it is mediated to the people of God.

“To say that the servant is a covenant is to say that all the blessings of the covenant are embodied in, have their root and origin in, and are dispensed by him. At the same time, he is himself at the center of all these blessings, and to receive them is to receive him, for without him there can be no blessings. Such language could not apply to Israel, but only to One who may truly be designated a covenant... In New Testament terms, this means that they to whom God sovereignly bestows the grace of salvation receive the Servant Himself.”⁸⁴

E.J. Young

All of this presupposes that God had previously made a covenant with the Servant who is a covenant with His people, in which He agreed to be that Servant-Covenant.

In Zechariah 6:12-13, the Lord of hosts says,

Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and he will build the Temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the Temple of the Lord. He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two [of them].⁸⁵

Zechariah 6:12-13

The two of them has reference to the two persons who have been mentioned in the text: **the Lord of hosts** and **the Branch**, who is the divine-human Messiah (Isa. 4:2, 11:1). The reference cannot be to the two offices of Christ mentioned here - His kingly and priestly offices, as the NASB indicates. Although these two offices do coalesce in one person, i.e., Christ, nevertheless, the reference cannot be to this fact, for the following reasons.

- 1) Christ is one person, but the text mentions two persons.
- 2) The text contains no reference to two offices, but to **a priest on His throne**.
- 3) Christ had three offices, not simply two. He was a prophet, as well as a priest and a king. Therefore, if the reference is to His offices, it should have stated “between these three.”
- 4) “There can be no mutual consultation between offices, as this is the activity of persons.”⁸⁶

Therefore, **the two of them** refers to Jehovah and the Messiah, whose work it is to build God’s Temple on earth, i.e., the Church, as a priestly King of that Church.

“This required mutual understanding and consent as well as consultation, counsel, and wisdom. Thus the Father and the Son not only agreed to promote the peace of the elect, but they also agreed about the manner of execution, that is, it would be accomplished by the Prince of Peace, the Branch, who had the necessary qualifications for this task.”⁸⁷

W. á Brakel

Thus God can speak of **the counsel of peace** between the Father and the Son, in which they covenanted to bring the elect into a peaceful relation with the triune God. This covenant is called a “counsel,”

“... both on account of the free and liberal good pleasure of both [the Father and the Son], and of the display of the greatest wisdom manifested therein.”⁸⁸

H. Witsius

In Luke 22:29, Jesus speaks to His disciples of His Father’s covenant with Him:

Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.

Luke 22:29

In this statement Jesus is encouraging His disciples by telling them that just as certainly as God the Father has covenanted with Him to give Him a kingdom, so He covenants with them that they will certainly and without fail enjoy fellowship with Him in the kingdom His Father has given Him. The words, “granted” and “grant,” in our text are forms of the Greek word, *diatithemi*, meaning “to promise or grant something by virtue of a covenant.” It is closely related to the Greek noun, *diatheke*, meaning covenant. Here we have covenant promises from the Father made to Christ, which are confirmed in Christ with reference to the salvation of His disciples. In other words, we have here a direct reference to a covenant made between the Father and the Son. By virtue of a previous covenant, Christ obtains a kingdom, and we enter into its life by virtue of a covenant Christ had made with us.

The reality of the covenant of redemption is also clearly seen in the fact that Christ is called our **Surety** in both the Old and the New Testament.

Jesus has become a Guarantee [Surety] of a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:22

A surety is someone who engages himself to become responsible for meeting the legal obligations of another. The New Covenant and our enjoyment of its blessings are based on the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ. He took our sin and its penalty upon Himself for us and in our place, and met all the demands of God’s broken Law and offended justice, so that we, His people, might be fully and eternally reconciled with God. We sinners owed God a great debt. Jesus paid our entire debt for us, and God accepted His payment in our place.

No one can be a surety unless a contract or a covenant is agreed upon between the creditor and the surety of the debtor. The creditor must agree to a surety. He must be satisfied with and consent to a person functioning as a surety. And the surety must obligate himself to the creditor to pay the debt of those whom he represents. Therefore, since Jesus Christ has become our Surety by virtue of the mutual consent and approval of God and the Son, a covenant exists between God the Father and God the Son.

One point must be clarified. Jesus did NOT satisfy God’s law as our Surety in our place in order to procure God’s eternal mercy for us. If that were the case, then Christ would be viewed as more benevolent and merciful than the Father. We know that is not the case, since the Persons

of the Trinity are equal and harmonious in their perfections. Rather, the truth is that Christ's work as our Substitute was necessary in the carrying out of the Father's purpose of mercy consistently with His other perfections, such as His justice and truthfulness. He could not disregard the claims of His justice, nor could He retract what He had spoken. His justice demands death from sinners, and He has explained that in His Word. In mercy, He provides a Surety who satisfies God's justice and who vindicates His truthfulness.

The Relation of the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace

The covenant of grace is that bond of friendship established by God with His people in Christ, wherein He brings them into a communion of life with Him and gives them a sovereignly-dictated order of life. The covenant of redemption is the eternal prototype of this covenant of grace in history. It is the firm foundation of the covenant of grace, making the covenant of grace possible. And it gives effectiveness to the covenant of grace, for it provides the means for its establishment and execution.

In the covenant of redemption, the Father and the Son are the equal parties; but in the covenant of grace, God and man are unequal parties. The covenant of redemption was made in eternity before the creation of the world; and the covenant of grace was made in history after the creation of the world. In the covenant of redemption the parties had infinite confidence in each other, and so no surety was needed; but in the covenant of grace the parties had no confidence in each other, and therefore a surety-mediator was necessary. The Father and Son are of one essence and character, equal in majesty and glory, who needed no one to reconcile them. God and man possess two entirely different characters. God is angry with man every day, and man is in a state of rebellion against God. To reconcile them a Mediator is needed.

Conclusions and Applications

First, *the covenant of grace has its origin and basis in the covenant of redemption*. From this eternal covenant between the Persons of the Holy Trinity flows the beginning, continuance and end of our salvation.

“Had there been no covenant of redemption, there would be no covenant of grace. The new covenant which God makes with men is an everlasting covenant, whose efficacy is anchored in the eternal covenant between the persons of the trinity. Salvation is by faith alone; faith is the entry into the covenant of grace. But it is the covenant of redemption that provides the faith and its application by the Holy Spirit, as well as the surety for the performance of all the promises of God relating to salvation.”⁸⁹

C. Bogue

“Before anyone existed, and before the gospel was proclaimed to them, it had already been decreed and established in this covenant when each of the elect would be born; when and by what means they would be brought into the covenant, the measure of grace, comfort and holiness; and the quantity and nature of the tribulations and crosses they would have to endure in this life... Therefore, the elect on the one hand need but be still and to let the Lord work. They need but to open their mouths to receive, for whatever is

comprehended in the articles of this covenant will most certainly be given to them. On the other hand, they must focus upon this covenant, be active in entering into the covenant of grace, and living therein, they must make it the foundation of their life. This will motivate the godly to proceed with understanding and steadfastness, neither resting in the steadfastness of their faith or godliness nor, as one so often is inclined to do, being tossed to and fro when both appear to diminish. In consequence of this, they will acknowledge that the manifestation of every grace and influence of the Holy Spirit proceeds from this covenant. They will be enabled to exclaim feelingly, joyously and lovingly, **For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.** Romans 11:36.”⁹⁰

W. á Brakel

Second, *the covenant of redemption reveals a love that is unparalleled and which exceeds all comprehension.* What a blessed thing it is to have been known and loved in this covenant between the Father and the Son before time began. What a wonder it is to have been given by the Father to the Son to be saved by Him, and to have been the object of the eternal and mutual delight of the Father and the Son from all eternity. How blessed that person is who is included in the covenant of redemption, and who, being surrounded and filled with God’s eternal love, is enabled to love in return, exclaiming, **We love Him, because He first loved us** (1 John 4:19).

Third, the covenant of redemption teaches us that *the work of salvation is from first to last, from beginning to end, the work of God alone, and not of man* (Rom. 11:34-36).

Fourth, *the covenant of redemption is the work of God’s infinite mind AND of His sovereign and omnipotent will*, which powerfully realizes His plans in time and history. God’s perfections are not silent and passive; they are almighty, full of life and action. THEREFORE, when the Bible teaches us of the covenant of redemption, it proclaims to us that God Himself carries out that covenant and brings it to full realization without failure. The covenant of redemption is the work of God in eternity and the motivating power and guarantee of the work of redemption in history. Therefore, whatever happens in time and history,

“Nothing can ever deflect His high decision: it will remain from generation to generation. There is no ground whatsoever for discouragement or despair. Everything certainly shall be as God in His wisdom and love determined it. His almighty and gracious will is the guarantee of the redemption of mankind and the rescue of the world. In the great afflictions our hearts therefore remain at peace in the Lord.”⁹¹

H. Bavinck

Fifth, because the covenant of grace from generation to generation is nothing other than the working out of the eternal covenant of redemption in God, therefore, *a person does injustice to the work of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*, “*when he removes the foundation of eternity from time by loosening history from its anchorage in the gracious, almighty Divine will.*” (H. Bavinck)⁹²

Sixth, the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace cannot be separated, but they differ from each other in this: *the covenant of grace is the actualization of the covenant of redemption.*

The plan of redemption is not enough in itself, it must be carried out in time. History is important to God, for it is the stage on which real redemption from sin takes place.

Seventh,

*“Behind the covenant of grace lies the sovereign and omnipotent will of God, which is penetrated by Divine energy and which therefore guarantees the triumph of the kingdom of God over the whole power of sin... Further, that will is the will of a merciful and kind Father, who never forces things with brute violence, but successfully counters all our resistance by the spiritual might of love.”*⁹³ (Emphasis added.)

H. Bavinck

Eighth, *in the covenant of redemption we see the distinguishing trait of Christianity that separates it from all other of the world’s religion.*

“Between the self-conceived and self-willed religions, on the one hand, and the religion based on the special revelation to Israel and on Christ there is, consequently, a difference of principle. In the first it is always man who tries to find God, but who constantly shapes a false idea of Him and therefore never gets a true insight into the nature of sin and the way of redemption; but in the second, in the religion of the Holy Scriptures, it is always God who seeks man, who discloses man to himself in his guilt and impurity, but who also makes Himself known as He is in His grace and compassion. From the depths of the human heart there rises the plaint: Would that God would rend the heavens and come down. In Christianity the heavens do open, and God descends to earth.”⁹⁴

H. Bavinck

The covenant of redemption is proof that God took the initiative in entering into fellowship with man.

Ninth, *the honor of God is inseparably linked to the doctrine of the covenant of redemption.* After the fall, man in himself is unable to do anything to please God, unless God changes his heart. Earning eternal life by doing good has forever been taken out of man’s hands. Eternal life is a gift God must give freely, not a wage which man can earn or which he deserves. The work of God in saving sinners and bringing them into fellowship with Himself is His work alone, and is carried out in such a way that the glory of His grace is magnified, without detracting from that glory by attributing some of the credit of his salvation to man himself. On this point the entire Reformation, both Lutheran and Calvinist, took exception to Rome, which had failed to appreciate this fundamental truth.

“Yet the reasons which had driven both sides to this protest were different. With Luther it was the thirst for peace and stability for a restless conscience which could find no tranquility in Rome’s salvation by works. As long as the sinner himself has to do something for his acquittal, his work remains unstable. Thus the *sola fide* became the shibboleth of the German Reformation, justification, its principal doctrine. One will agree that, despite all the purity with which this doctrine develops and in which, in developed form, it is given anew to the church, the highest point is still not reached, namely, that point from which the Scripture itself views the matter when, in the words of Paul, it sees the heart of

Abraham's faith in his **giving glory to God** (Rom. 4:20). Even in its doctrine of justification, Lutheranism did not catch hold of this idea in its fullness... It was different with the Reformed. They too, felt the same necessity to leave the waves of Rome's salvation by works and once again stand on solid ground. But beside and behind this necessity there lay a deeper longing: a thirst for the glory of God that did not primarily meditate on its own peace. When the Reformed takes the obtaining of salvation completely out of man's hands, he does this so that the glory which God gets from it might be uncurtailed. What is important for him is the realization that *God glorifies Himself in the salvation of sinners...*

“At this point the Reformed principle and the doctrine of the covenant of redemption are interlocked. The fact that redemption is God's work by which He wills to be glorified can in no wise be more strongly expressed than by thus exposing its emergence from out of the depths of the divine Being Himself. Here it is God who issues the requirement of redemption as God the Father. Again, it is God who for the fulfillment of that requirement becomes the guarantor as God the Son. Once again, it is God to whom belongs the application of redemption as God the Holy Spirit. In the clear light of eternity, where God alone dwells, the economy [arrangement] of salvation is drawn up for us with pure outlines and not darkened by the assistance of any human hand. It is a creation of the triune One from whom, through whom and to whom are all things.”⁹⁵ (Emphasis added.)

G. Vos

Tenth, *the covenant of redemption is the basis for the certainty of the success of the evangelization of the earth.* As we have seen, in that covenant, the Father promised the Son the subjection of all the world's nations to Him: **May He also rule from sea to sea... And let all kings bow down before Him, all nations serve Him** (Psalm 72:8,11). These verses, along with many others, such as Psalm 89 and Isaiah 49:3-12,

“... reveal a glorious covenant between the Father and the Son, stipulating that nations the most degraded, and the most remote from the scenes of prophecy, are embraced in the compassings of redeeming mercy.”⁹⁶

W.S. Plumer

God, who cannot lie, has promised that the nations will bow to Christ, therefore, they shall, without doubt, bow before Christ in faith and worship.

God has not only promised the full accomplishment of the covenant of redemption, He has also promised the full realization of the means by which the results will be accomplished. Therefore, if He has promised Christ that the nations will come to Him in faith, then they will come to Him by means of the Church's faithful witness to the gospel and by her faithfulness to Christ's Great Commission to make the world's nations Christ's disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

“It is for a joy that so much of the work of redemption is already done. The ransom is all paid. Mockery, spitting, and crucifixion are over. The grave has delivered up the crucified. The blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The Spirit has been poured out. Millions have been called, cleansed and saved. All the means are provided, and all the

plans devised for subduing the world to Christ. Let us test their sovereign efficacy. Let us count no sacrifice great, no self-denial irksome, if we may but glorify God and bring men to Christ. One soul is worth all the effort ever made by man to save it. Men are perishing. We know of a remedy for their maladies. Let us not keep silence, but proclaim the glad tidings of salvation... Oh, for a zeal that should eat us up!”⁹⁷

W.S. Plumer

Excerpt from Chapter 9, “Life in the Garden of Eden”

Excerpt from Chapter 9 in *Authentic Christianity, An Exposition of the Theology and Ethics of the Westminster Larger Catechism*

“[Eden] was not, in the first place, simply the original home for the first man and woman, it was the place where the man and the woman would be received into fellowship with the Creator in His own ‘home.’”

R.C. Sproul

And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Genesis 2:8

The Covenant of Life⁹⁸ a.k.a. The Covenant of Works

“Acquaintance with this covenant is of the greatest importance, for whoever errs here or denies the existence of the covenant of works, will not understand the covenant of grace, and will readily err concerning the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus.”⁹⁹

W. á Brakel

Reality of the Covenant

Life in the Garden of Eden was defined and enriched by “the Covenant of Life,” which God made with Adam

“... upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, of which the tree of life was a pledge; forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.”

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 20

This Covenant of Life was a bond

“... between God and the human race as represented in Adam, in which God promised eternal salvation upon condition of obedience, and threatened eternal death upon disobedience.”¹⁰⁰

W. á Brakel

Although the word “covenant” (*berith* in Hebrew), is not used in the first chapters of Genesis, all the elements of a true covenant between God and man are definitely present: parties, promises, demands, sanctions, a bond of life-and-death significance. Furthermore, this covenant is specifically mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. In Hosea 6:7, we read that **like Adam they**

transgressed the covenant. As Adam transgressed the covenant arrangement established with him by God at creation, so Israel has broken the covenant God made with her at Mt. Sinai. Notice that Hosea 6:7 specifically mentions a covenant with Adam, which he transgressed (see also Job 31:33). The phrase in Hosea, **like Adam**, cannot mean “like men,” for two reasons:

- 1) No plural is used here.
- 2) It would be rather inane since man can hardly sin any other way than like men.

Nor can it be translated, “at Adam,” for two reasons:

- 1) It clearly reads “as or like Adam.”
- 2) Bible scholars know of no such location as “Adam.”

Jeremiah 33:20-22,25-26 and 31:35-36 refer to a pre-fall covenant:

“This is what the Lord says: ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night do not occur at their proper time, 21 then My covenant with David My servant may also be broken, so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. 22 As the heavenly lights cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of My servant David and the Levites who serve Me.’”

Jeremiah 33:20-22

“This is what the Lord says: ‘If My covenant for day and night does not continue, and I have not established the fixed patterns of heaven and earth, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so as not to take from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and have mercy on them.’”

Jeremiah 33:25-26

**This is what the Lord says,
He who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar -
The Lord of armies is His name:
“If this fixed order departs
From Me,” declares the Lord,
“Then the descendants of Israel also will cease
To be a nation before Me forever.”**

Jeremiah 31:35-36

The terminology in these passages is an allusion to the covenant established at creation, rather than to the one established with Noah after the Flood. The sun and moon, as light-bearers, are mentioned in Jeremiah and in Genesis 1, but not in Genesis 9, which contains the covenant with Noah. The creation narrative in Genesis, as Jeremiah’s declaration, refers to stars and the moon,

but the covenant with Noah makes no such reference. The point Jeremiah is making, therefore, is this: if God is faithful to His covenant with creation at the very beginning before the fall, He will also be faithful to His covenant with Israel. There is absolutely no reason to distrust the faithfulness of God to His covenant promises.

The omission of the word “covenant” in Genesis is no argument against this interpretation for three reasons:

- 1) The word, “covenant,” is also absent in the record of the covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, but that arrangement is obviously covenantal.
- 2) All the elements required by the definition of “covenant” are present in this pre-fall relationship between God and Adam.¹⁰¹
- 3) The parallel which Paul draws between Adam and Christ in Romans 12:12-20 can be understood only on the assumption that Adam, like Christ, was the head of a covenant, and that he stood in a covenant relationship to his descendants.

The Covenant’s Foundation and Principles of Grace

When God entered into this Covenant of Life with unfallen Adam, as the root and head of the human race (Rom. 5:12-20), He acted in pure grace and condescension.

“God... moved by pure grace, condescended to establish a covenant with His holy creature, in virtue of which a temporary obedience might be graciously accepted as a ground for God’s communicating Himself to him, and assuring him ever after of holiness, happiness, and communion with God.”¹⁰²

R.L. Dabney

In grace, God offered to bestow upon obedient Adam far more than he would ever earn or deserve by his obedience. This relationship between God and Adam was not only a natural one between Creator and creature, or Sovereign and subject. It had the added quality of a covenant bond, wherein a loving Father graciously seeks the welfare and happiness of His dependent children.

The undeserved, unearned, and unmerited grace of God pervades the Covenant of Life. It can be seen in the following principles:

First, the principle of *probation*: God could have defined the relation between Himself as Creator, and man as creature, merely in terms of Sovereign and servant, in which relation, man would be duty-bound to obey the will of his Sovereign, with the expectation of no reward. Instead, when God created man, He created him as His servant, and in his unfallen condition, as His son, in fellowship with Him, as His image (Gen. 1:27; Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28-29).

God also gave Adam the opportunity to secure for himself, and his posterity, unloseable eternal life and indefectible holiness of life, by bringing him into a probation period, wherein Adam’s righteousness and holiness would be tested. If he remained faithful for the duration of the probation, he and his posterity would be confirmed in their divine sonship and eternal fellowship

with God, and, on an even higher plane than Adam had experienced during the probation. If Adam proved unfaithful to God, by eating of the forbidden fruit, he and his posterity would lose their sonship, their spiritual life, and their close communion with their Father.

This Covenant of Life, this probation with its conditions, promises, and penalties, was all of grace, for in it God promised to do more for Adam and his posterity than they would ever deserve or merit. God's grace prompted Him to do more for man than man's actions called for and to teach man more than man's mind could discover. The conditions and promises of the Covenant of Life flow from the free acts of God's bounty.

Second, the principle of *revelation*: Adam could not have dreamed of such a gracious covenant without a special communication from God. He was placed, at the beginning of his life, under a divine arrangement, in which he was the subject of special divine revelation. Man's life in this world has always been defined and conditioned by the gracious self-revelation of the character and will of God. Adam's religion was a revealed religion. The Covenant of Life was, in its totality, the revelation of God. The principles of that covenant and the purposes of God on which it was based could never have been ascertained by Adam, apart from God's making them known to him.

God's grace

"... has always been greater than our deserts. Our moral nature is adjusted to a scheme of pure justice, and whenever God's love prompts Him to outrun its demands, our expectations must be determined by special revelation of His purposes and plans. His free acts cannot be anticipated by any measure of reason or conscience. If known at all, they have to be made known by Himself. To deny, therefore, that our religion must be revealed, is to say that God can never do more than our merits can exact; it is to limit and contract His goodness."¹⁰³

J.H. Thornwell

The Covenant of Life, as founded on grace with a view of bestowing a reward which human reason could not have contemplated, necessarily implies the intervention of divine revelation. Why? If man's obedience to divine will is to be tested, that divine will must be revealed to man. Which is supreme? The will of man or the revealed will of God? The purpose of this probation and this divine revelation is to attain the end that

"... the finite creature shall make God its supreme end; the will of God its supreme law; the glory of God its highest good. To attain this end the creature must renounce its own self as a law, and determine its will only by the will of God. The degree to which it renounces self-will and embraces the Divine will determine the degree in which it is conformed, consciously and reflectively, to the moral law... God's will must come into contact with man's, nakedly and exclusively, as will. The command must seem to be arbitrary - no reason in nature of the thing presented. The case will then test man's faith in God, and his readiness to follow Him with implicit confidence, simply and exclusively because He is God."¹⁰⁴

J.H. Thornwell

Third, the principle of *justification, i.e., probation limited by time*: God's grace is clearly seen in the Covenant of Life in the limitation of Adam's probationary, testing period, with reference to time. Without the Covenant of Life with its conditions and promises, Adam's perpetual innocence was his only guarantee of perpetual favor with God. The smallest infraction of God's revelation would unravel the entire relationship. No former or future obedience would make up for one sin. Man's condition would be constantly precarious. He would be perpetually exposed to the possibility of falling away from God by one act of disobedience to God's perpetual demands. He would always be capable of falling, his holiness would be capable of changing, and his blessed condition would always hang in suspense.

Therefore, being moved by sheer grace, God condescended to establish the Covenant of Life with Adam in which He would graciously accept a temporary obedience to a limited probationary period as the basis for God's giving Himself in love to Adam, and assuring him of eternal and indefectible holiness, happiness and communion with the Living God. A temporary probationary period of testing was accepted by God in place of an everlasting exposure to the possibility of falling into sin under the perpetual demands of God. God limited the probationary, testing period for Adam, and in so doing, accepted his temporary obedience during that time frame, as equivalent to what Adam's perpetual innocence would have accomplished. It rendered apostasy from God impossible for Adam, after the limited testing period had expired, during which Adam proved himself faithful.

“If God chooses to gather our whole being into a short probation, and to make the obedience of that period equivalent to an immortality spent as faithful servants, the supposition that after the period was passed we could sin involves the monstrous idea that there can be a perpetual right to God's favour on the part of those who are destitute of his love - that men can be at one and the same time the objects of the Divine complacency and disgust. The essential notion of justification is, that obedience for a limited time shall place the subject beyond the possibility of guilt. If he is faithful during the stipulated period, he is safe for ever, he is confirmed immutably in life... If God treats limited as perpetual obedience, He must make limited obedience secure perpetual obedience.¹⁰⁵

J.H. Thornwell

Fourth, the principle of *representation, i.e., probation limited as to persons*: God acted in grace, not only by limiting the time frame of Adam's probation, but also by limiting the persons being tested to Adam, as the root, head and representative of the entire human race (Rom. 5:12-20). Without the Covenant of Life, wherein Adam stood for all men, representing all who would descend from him in ordinary generation, each individual would have to stand or fall according to his own individual obedience. But in this covenant, the risks of probation were limited to one man, acting for all men, instead of being indefinitely repeated forever in the conduct of each individual.

“The provision by which Adam was made a public person [the representative of the human race], and not treated as a private individual, is as much a provision of pure goodness as any other provision of the whole scheme. If he had maintained his integrity, and we had inherited life and glory through his obedience, none would ever have dreamed

that there was aught of hardship or cruelty in the scheme by which our happiness had been to us so cheaply secured. The difference of result makes no difference in the nature of principle... *Without the principle of representation it is possible that the whole race might have perished and perished for ever.* Each man... would have been placed under the law of distributive justice. His safety, therefore, would have been for ever contingent. It is possible that if the first man, with all his advantages, abused his liberty and fell, each of his descendants might imitate his example and fall also... There can be no redeemer if each man is to be treated exclusively as an individual. If we cannot sin in another, we cannot be redeemed by another. If the principle of representation is to be excluded from God's government, salvation to the guilty must also be excluded."¹⁰⁶ (Emphasis added.)

J.H. Thornwell

The motive in God which moved Him to introduce this principle of representation in the Covenant of Life was grace.

“However the principle has been perverted by man, and made the instrument of involving the race in ruin, it has been revealed in its real significance by God, who has made it the instrument of peopling heaven with innumerable myriads of souls who might have been hopelessly lost had not His government over us admitted the possibility of laying help upon One who was mighty and able to save.”¹⁰⁷

J.H. Thornwell

Fifth, the principle of *adoption, i.e., gracious rewards for obedience*: God's grace is especially manifested in the promise of the Covenant of Life, which was to crown the successful probation of Adam. Everything depended upon the nature of that promise. *The reward promised to Adam's obedience was far more generous than his obedience deserved*, securing forever his position as a son of God, and surrounding him forever with the safeguards of His wisdom, omnipotence and faithfulness, making his holiness, happiness and eternal life in God's favor indefectible and unloseable.

Although Moses says nothing explicitly about a promise in this covenant, nevertheless the Bible does teach elsewhere that such was the case. Not only is it expressly stated elsewhere, it is clearly implied in the Genesis narrative. Obedience, throughout the Bible, is indissolubly connected with life, just as disobedience is connected with death - **this commandment, which was to result in life** (Rom. 7:10; see also Matt. 19:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 8:3-4). These texts imply that Adam was placed in a position in which he might have secured everlasting life by obedience.

Moreover, the work of redemption in Christ has accomplished for us the same blessings (same in kind, greater in degree), which Adam would have accomplished for his posterity had he passed the test.

“Christ had done for us what the law was ordained to do, but failed to do only through the fault of man. Whatever, therefore, Christ has purchased, Adam might have gained. The life which Christ bestows was in the reach of Adam; the glory which Christ imparts was accessible to our first head and representative. Whatever Christ has procured for us,

He has procured under the provisions of the law which conditioned human religion in Eden. The principles of the dispensation then and there enacted have not been changed; they have only been carried out and fulfilled.”¹⁰⁸

J.H. Thornwell

Christ was a covenantal representative, and so was Adam. *Christ's probation was limited, confined to His humiliation.* Christ was given the promise of justification to life as the reward of His temporary, but perfect obedience of thirty-three years. The same must have been true of Adam. The parallels of Romans 5:12-20 imply these similarities.

Sixth, the principle of *eternal life*: The life promised Adam in the Covenant of Life, upon his successful probation was not mere extended existence. Eternal life in the Bible includes the blessing of knowing God, and all that implies (John 17:2-3). Eternal life includes holiness, happiness, intimate knowledge of God, and eternal security. Eternal life implies:

- 1) A change of inward condition.
- 2) A change of outward condition.

“In relation to Adam, the inward change would have consisted in removing the mutability of his will. If he had kept the law, he would have been rendered indefectible in holiness by an influence of Divine grace moulding his habits so completely into his will that he never could have departed from the good pleasure of God. He would have attained, by the blessing of God, in the way of reward to his obedience, that moral necessity which is the noblest freedom and which constitutes the highest perfection of a rational creature.”¹⁰⁹

J.H. Thornwell

This is what we will be in Christ after our resurrection from the dead on the last day.

“Whatever of joy, privilege, blessedness and glory are implied in this relation was held out to Adam as a motive to fidelity. Confirmed in holiness; admitted into the closest communion with God; treated as a child; honored as an heir; what more could God have done for him? This was life, eternal life; and this life in both its elements would have accrued from his justification. Temporary obedience, being accepted as perpetual innocence, would have secured perpetual innocence; and probation being closed by a full compliance with the conditions - which is justification - would have rendered man a fit subject for receiving, as he was able to bear it, from the infinite fullness of God. To sum up all in a single word, *the promise to Adam was eternal life; and eternal life includes the notions of indefectible holiness and of adoption, which are inseparably linked together.*”¹¹⁰ (Emphasis added.)

J.H. Thornwell

God has always dealt with mankind on the basis of Divine grace, and never on the basis of human merit. Even the Covenant of Life, commonly called the Covenant of Works, is a covenant of Divine grace. In fact, the principles of grace that shine out so brightly in the gospel of Christ, revealed in the New Testament, are intimated and introduced in the very beginning of history, at

the fountain head of the human race, in the first covenant God ever made with man, in Eden before the Fall, with Adam as the representative of the human race.

In the Covenant of Life, as we have seen, Divine revelation is presented as an act of gracious condescension on the part of God, for man's benefit and essential for his salvation. In the gospel, Jesus Christ is the revelation of God. In that gospel, Christ is the Savior who reveals the terms of salvation, and He is the Lord who reveals the terms of life. The Divine Covenant itself is the gracious condescension of God to man, bestowing upon him far more than he deserves, before and after the fall. Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant, wherein God condescends to commune with His church in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The idea of justification is also graciously introduced in the Covenant of Life. God's acceptance of obedience for a limited time, instead of requiring obedience for an unlimited probationary period, placing the obedient one beyond the possibility of sin, and making him safe forever is the essence of justification. God would have justified Adam had he been faithful. He would have rewarded him with perpetual innocence and eternal life for his temporary obedience, just as if he had perpetually obeyed Him. In the Gospel we are justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God justifies us. He accepts us through faith upon the basis of the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, just as if we had obeyed and been sacrificed ourselves. Through faith in Christ, God treats us as if we had never sinned, treating us as Christ deserved, not as we deserve.

Divine representation and imputation is also at the heart of the Covenant of Life. Adam was the covenantal representative of the human race, the root and head of the race. He stood for us. We were in him. Whatever happened to him would happen to us. We would experience the effects and consequences of his actions. We, his posterity, would receive whatever he deserved. He sinned and died, therefore, we sin and die (Rom. 5:12-20). Now through faith in Him, whatever happened to Christ happens to us. We enjoy the consequences of His obedience and sacrifice and resurrection. Adam's sin, condemnation and death were imputed to Adam's posterity, i.e., laid to our responsibility, attributed to us, credited to us. So, by grace through faith, Christ's life and righteousness are imputed to all believers. His righteousness is credited to our account, and on that basis we are accepted with God (2 Cor. 5:18-21), while our guilt, sin and punishment are laid on Christ in our place.

And lastly, eternal life is introduced in the Covenant of Life. By virtue of creation, Adam possessed mature life and unblemished holiness of character; but, just as his life was loseable, so was his holiness of character. Although he was made in the image of God and had the law of God written on his heart, with the power to fulfill it, nevertheless, until he successfully passed the time of testing, he was

“... under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of [his] own will, which was subject unto change.”

Westminster Confession of Faith, IV, ii

Life was promised Adam in the Covenant of Life. Had he obeyed until the end of the probation, he would have secured for himself and his posterity unloseable eternal life. He would have been

blessed with God's irreversible favor, as we will be in heaven. He would have been in a condition where it would have been impossible for him to sin again. What we lost in Adam, we have regained abundantly in Christ. In fact, *we have far more in Christ than we lost in Adam* (Rom. 5:12-20). Jesus Christ came to give believers life and to give it to us more abundantly. Christ was sent to earth from God and was given authority over all mankind, so that to all whom God had given Him to save, He would give eternal life:

And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.

John 17:3

The Covenant's Participants

This covenant established a life and death bond between the Creator of the universe and the first human being, Adam (Gen. 1:2,26,28). Adam was the divinely appointed representative of the entire human race in this relationship (Gen. 1:28; 2:16; Rom. 5:12-20).

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:22

God constituted Adam the covenantal head of all mankind so he could act in behalf of all his posterity. God placed Adam on temporary probation to determine whether Adam would willingly submit his will to the revealed will of God.

The Covenant's Conditions

God gave Adam the promise of life in the path of obedience, which, if he walked in that path, would secure life for himself and for all his descendants. If he chose to disobey, he would secure death for himself and his posterity (Rom. 5:12-20). Adam chose to disobey (Gen. 3:1-6). His deliberate choice of disobedience corrupted himself; but, in addition, because he was the natural, covenantal and representative head of mankind, his disobedience affected, corrupted and condemned all his descendants. In righteous judgment, God imputes the guilt of Adam's sin to all those represented by, and covenantally related, to him. As a result, Adam's descendants are born in sin and in need of a Savior.

So then as through one transgression [of Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [of Christ] there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience [Adam's], the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one [Christ's] the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:19

The Covenant's Promises and Threats

God justly threatened Adam and his posterity with death - spiritually, physically, and eternally, if he disobeyed God's commands.

From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die.

Genesis 2:16-17

The Covenant's Two Trees

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:9; 3:3) symbolized the principle of probation. It is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because it was God's

“... instrument to lead man through probation to that state of religious and moral maturity wherewith his highest blessedness is connected.”¹¹¹

G. Vos

It was *the sign of God's supremacy over man and of man's submission to God*. Man is to live in terms of God's definitions, moral boundaries and ethical standards. He is to learn the radical difference between good and evil, from God's perspective. He is not to determine good and evil for himself, as if he were God, and as if God had not spoken.

In forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God was not forbidding him the knowledge of good and evil.

“[Man] was to learn the good in its clear opposition to the evil, and the evil in its clear opposition to the good. Thus it will become plain how he could attain to this by taking either fork of the probation-choice. Had he stood, then the contrast between good and evil would have been vividly present to his mind: the good and evil he would have known from the new illumination his mind would have received through the crisis of temptation in which the two collided. On the other hand, had he fallen, then the contrast of evil with good would have even more vividly impressed itself upon him, because the remembered experience of choosing the evil and the continuous experience of doing the evil, in contrast with his memory of the good, would have shown most sharply how different the two are.”¹¹²

G. Vos

The Tree of Life was the symbol of the principle of life in its highest potency. It was God's “pledge” to Adam of life and communion with Him in covenant faithfulness to each other. This tree stood for

“... the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life to be secured by obedience throughout his [Adam's] probation... The truth is thus clearly set forth that life comes from God, that for man it consists in nearness to God, and that it is the central concern of God's fellowship with man to impart this.”¹¹³

G. Vos

Had Adam obeyed God fully, he could have eaten of the tree of life, which would have been the appropriate, sacramental means of communicating and conveying eternal life. Revelation 2:7 teaches us that God promises triumphant believers in Jesus that we will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life forever.

The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7

We eat of it now in the Word and Sacraments, by which the Spirit communicates, conveys and seals the blessings of the covenant to us, which includes eternal life in the presence of God.

The Present Status of the Covenant of Life

First, *the human race is no longer on probation*. The time of testing to determine whether or not we will fall from our integrity is over. We have fallen in Adam:

All in Adam die.

1 Corinthians 15:22

The terms of Adam's probation, along with his situation and relationships, were unique, and neither individuals nor the race will ever be in that probationary period again.

He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:18

Study Romans 5:12–20 to see how all people have fallen from their original integrity in Adam, and how all people are implicated in Adam's sins.

Second, *human beings cannot attain to eternal life and communion with God in terms of the Covenant of Life*, i.e., by their obedience to God's Law. This possibility was forever forfeited for the human race by the fall of Adam.

“Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 2:16

Moreover, the Covenant of Life had no redemptive provisions, i.e., no provisions for atonement and forgiveness of sins or for cleansing from sin's corruptions. Therefore, the need arose for a redemptive covenant, which God established with Adam immediately after the fall (Gen. 3:15–24.)

Third, *God continues to require of man perfect obedience as a requirement of fellowship with Him.*

[L]ike the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

1 Pet. 1:15-16

But man, the sinner, is unable to produce that perfection; therefore he is under a curse and God’s righteous condemnation. He is in need of a mediator-substitute and second righteous representative to meet and satisfy the demands of the Covenant of Life to be saved from death and hell. Those demands are PERFECT CONFORMITY TO GOD’S COMMANDS and FULL SATISFACTION FOR GOD’S BROKEN COMMANDS. In the gospel, Jesus Christ offers both His perfect life and His sacrifice on the cross in the place of those He came to earth to save; so that now, by faith, believers are “accepted in the Beloved.”

Once the Covenant of Life had been violated,

“... no way of relief from the death-curse may be found other than a bloody substitution. Only as Jesus, the Lamb of God, bears in Himself the ultimate curse of the creation covenant may restoration be accomplished.”¹¹⁴

O.P. Robertson

The salvation promised in the gospel and our acceptance with God as His forgiven children are based on Christ’s perfect fulfillment of the Covenant of Life in behalf of all those who believe in Him. *The Covenant of Grace for us is a Covenant of Works for Christ.* He fulfilled its conditions and thus merited its promises for us. He has merited for His people eternal life in the highest degree of perfection by taking upon Himself on the cross the eternal death and curse for sin which we deserve.

For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression, [Adam’s], there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [Christ’s], there resulted justification of life to all men.

Romans 5:17-18

The Last Adam, Jesus Christ, our new representative, instead of the first Adam, has by His life, death and resurrection, restored the image of God in His people, the New Humanity in Christ. He has placed them in a position to reign with Him, to share dominion with Him, and to apply successfully the creation mandates to all of life, motivated by love for Him, so that God’s original goal of worldwide, godly dominion will be reached.

“The self-attesting Christ will yet gain the victory. But He will gain it when the theologians, philosophers, and scientists, [and everyday Christians], and all that have cultural responsibility, reassume the mandate given to Adam to subdue the earth to the praise of its maker and Redeemer.”¹¹⁵

C. Van Til

Fourth, *the mandates and promises of the Covenant of Life give us a whole and unified world-and-life-view*. We become kingdom-centered, rather than exclusively church-centered. The Christian man and woman, as the restored images of God, are to be concerned with all of life on earth, now and forever. There can be no religiously or ethically neutral zones on earth. Faith in and obedience to the Word of God must pervade and dominate everything. God's all-embracing covenant promises and demands must define the entirety of life in this world for Christian families and churches.

The creation mandates - dominion, marriage, procreation, Sabbath and work - which directed and enriched the life of man and woman in Eden before the Fall were not abrogated by the Fall.

“Their obligation and sanctity remain inviolate. It is not saying too much if we maintain that these creation ordinances furnish us with what is central in the Biblical ethic. These ordinances govern the life of man in that which is central in man's interest, life and occupation; they touch upon every area of life and behavior... Conditions and circumstances have been revolutionized by sin, but the basic structure of this earth, and of man's life in it, has not been destroyed.”¹¹⁶

J. Murray

Fifth, John Murray explains the following three positive observations concerning the continuing relevance of the Covenant of Life:

- 1) We all stood the probation in Adam as our representative head and failed in Adam. His sin was our sin, his fall our fall, by reason of solidarity with him. Likewise the fulfillment of the threat draws posterity within its scope. All who die, die in Adam, and in Adam all died (cf. Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22). The threat exercises its sanction with unrelenting severity, unless totally different provisions of redemptive grace intervene.
- 2) Christ's vicarious sin-bearing on behalf of the new humanity included the Adamic sin as well as all other sins.
- 3) The obedience Christ rendered fulfilled the obedience in which Adam failed. It would not be correct to say, however, that Christ's obedience was the same in content or demand. Christ was called on to obey in radically different conditions, and required to fulfill radically different demands. Christ was sin-bearer and the climactic demand was to die. This was not true of Adam. Christ came to redeem, not so Adam. So Christ rendered the whole-souled totality obedience in which Adam failed, but under totally different conditions and with incomparably greater demands.

We are liable to regard the Adamic administration as abstract, unrelated to our situation and practical interest, and so far removed from us that it has little or no relevance. If we are inclined to think so, it is because we do not have a Biblically conditioned way of thinking. The Adamic institution is intensely relevant if our thought is regulated by the Biblical revelation.

“We are sinners and we come into the world as such. This situation demands explanation. It cannot stand as an empirical fact. It requires the question: Why or how? It is the

Adamic administration [the Covenant of Life] with all its implications for racial solidarity that alone provides the answer. This is the Biblical answer to the universality of sin and death.

We need salvation. How does salvation come to bear upon our need? Racial solidarity in Adam is the pattern according to which salvation is wrought and applied. By Adam sin-condemnation-death, by Christ righteousness-justification-life. A way of thinking that makes us aloof to solidarity with Adam makes us [unfit, unready and unqualified] to the solidarity by which salvation comes. Thus the relevance of the Adamic administration to what is most basic, on the one hand, and most necessary, on the other, in our human situation.¹¹⁷

J. Murray

The Covenant of Life and the Law of God

God revealed His Law to Adam. He spoke the creation mandates to him, and He inscribed His Law on his conscience:

For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending themselves.

Romans 2:14-15

If men after the fall have the work of God's law written on their consciences, how much more clearly and perfectly would unfallen Adam have that Law written on his heart. Furthermore, the fact that God is man's supreme Sovereign, and man is His humble servant, indicates that man lives by every law that comes from God's mouth, defining the nature of his obedient servanthood.

What Law did Adam have? The Westminster Confession of Faith answers:

“God gave to Adam a law... by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience... This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments.”

WCF, XIX, i, ii

So then, *the Law God gave Adam was the Law of the Ten Commandments*, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Is this a Biblical viewpoint? Most definitely! God doubtlessly gave Adam a perfect law, which is the law of love, i.e., the law of the ten commandments (Matt. 22:37-39). There is only one transcribed standard of moral righteousness, and that is the law of the ten commandments (Deut.4:1-10). Having made Adam in His image, God would inscribe on his heart His Law, which was a “transcript of His holiness,” i.e., the law of the ten commandments:

Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom?

Job 31:33

“God having formed man an intelligent creature, and a subject of moral government, He gave him a law for the rule of his conduct. This law was founded in the infinitely righteous nature of God, and the moral relations necessarily subsisting between Him and man. It was originally written on the heart of man, as he was endowed with such a perfect knowledge of his Maker’s will as was sufficient to inform him concerning the whole extent of his duty... It is also called moral law, because it was a revelation of the will of God, as his moral governor, and was the standard and rule of man’s moral actions. Adam was originally placed under this law in its natural form, as merely directing and obliging him to perfect obedience... This law ‘which was ordained to life’, is now become ‘weak through the flesh’, or through the corruption of our fallen nature. It prescribes terms which we are incapable of performing; and instead of being encouraged to seek life by our own obedience to the law as a covenant, we are required to renounce all hopes of salvation in that way, and to seek it by faith in Christ. But all men are naturally under the law as a broken covenant, obnoxious to its penalty, and bound to yield obedience to its commands. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but also for all his posterity, when he violated it, he left them all under it as a broken covenant...

“Upon the fall of man, the law, considered as a covenant of works, was disannulled and set aside; but, considered as moral, it continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness. That fair copy of the law which had been inscribed on the heart of the first man in his creation, was, by the fall, greatly defaced, although not totally obliterated. Some faint impressions of it still remain on the minds of all reasonable creatures. Its general principles, such as, that God is to be worshipped, that parents ought to be honored, that we should do to others what we would reasonably wish that they should do to us - such general principles as these are still, in some degree, engraven on the minds of all men. Romans ii:14, 15 - [For when the Gentiles who do not have the [written] Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.]... God was graciously pleased to give a new and complete copy of it. He delivered it to the Israelites from Mount Sinai... In this promulgation of the law, He summed it up in Ten Commandments.”¹¹⁸

R. Shaw

Summary

1. The law of God was the standard of right and wrong for Adam before the Fall.
2. The demands of God’s law are absolute, requiring personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience (WCF, XIX, ii).
3. This very law,¹¹⁹ in its moral demands, has never been abrogated, and stands for all people everywhere, as summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17). In other words,

“What was right for Adam and wrong for Adam is precisely the same as that which is commanded of or forbidden us by the Ten Commandments. Adam broke the Law. But he and his children ceased not to be men. The only change was in their relationship to the law... They had ceased to live by it and had come to live against it... And yet in at least

two important ways, men testify that they are obligated to keep the law of God:

- 1) “All men exercise moral judgment, (Rom. 2:1)...
- 2) “All men are likewise possessed of conscience, Romans 2:15... Man’s inherent sense of right and wrong is due to the fact that he cannot escape the claims of the law of God... To deny that Christians are obligated to keep the law of God is to deny that Christians are to love God and their neighbor. For on these two hang all the law of God, (Matt. 22:37-40).”¹²⁰

G.I. Williamson

Appendix B: A Reformed Confession Regarding Hermeneutics¹²¹

by Greg Bahnsen

Article 1: God's Prerogative to Reveal Himself

WE AFFIRM that God alone has the competence and authority to define His own character, work and will, so that man's knowledge of the same depends upon divine self-revelation.

WE AFFIRM that the only unchallengeable authority for doctrine or life, either for the individual believer or the corporate church, is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

WE DENY that human speculation, imagination, tradition (even that of the church), or reasoning (even that labeled "science") has the aptitude or right to repudiate, replace, correct, or supplement what God has revealed about Himself, His works, or His will.

WE DENY that continuing changes in the world's scholarship pertaining to nature or history or changes in the lifestyle of unbelievers justify in themselves amending our interpretation of Scripture or correcting what it teaches.

Article 2: God's Efficacy in Revealing Himself

WE AFFIRM that God is omnipotent and sovereign, so that nothing has prevented Him from clearly and infallibly revealing to man His person and attributes, His works, and His will.

WE AFFIRM that the process of transmitting God's word through the ages has not diminished the infallibility and authority of the original message.

WE DENY that anything about the human mind and its functioning, any feature about human language, or the temporal and cultural particularity of all communication thwarts God from delivering to man a clear and universally applicable revelation of Himself, His works and His will.

WE DENY that God's use of human instrumentality in proclaiming or writing His word entails the fallibility or errancy of that word as a final product.

WE DENY that Scripture's perfection is incompatible with its genuine human authorship.

WE DENY that the inerrancy of the original text of Scripture automatically extends to the process of transmission and translation.

Article 3: God's Non-Verbal Self-Revelation in the Created Order

WE AFFIRM that God continually reveals Himself as Creator, Sustainer, Governor and Judge to all mankind through the external world's order and splendor, as well as through man's internal consciousness as a rational and moral being.

WE AFFIRM that this general revelation so clearly, effectively, and inescapably displays the deity, personal attributes, glory, and moral will of God that all men are left without excuse for sin and unbelief, standing under His wrath and condemnation.

WE AFFIRM that, apart from God's saving grace, fallen men naturally respond to God's general revelation by seeking in a variety of unrighteous ways (ranging from open repudiation to false religiosity) to suppress and distort the truth about God, resulting in vain reasoning and darkened understanding.

WE DENY that God's general revelation communicates His saving grace or plan, and that it can relieve man's spiritual, intellectual or moral plight.

Article 4: God's Self-Revelation in the Canonical Scriptures

WE AFFIRM that, both before and after the fall, God has also specially revealed Himself, His works, and His will in a variety of ways: by addressing individuals, by typological events and ritual institutions, by inspired proclamation through prophets and apostles, and supremely by the personal manifestation of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

WE AFFIRM that many of these various divine revelations were verbally recorded for all subsequent ages in the canonical Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is also itself the very revelation of God to man as a word of both information and power.

WE AFFIRM that in all of its linguistic functions, whether praises, promises, commands, threatenings, questions, assurances, exhortations, confessions, narratives or propositional teaching, etc. the Scripture is authoritative as God's word.

WE AFFIRM that the Scripture communicates not only all of the theological and moral truths of general revelation, but goes beyond what is available to man in general revelation by especially revealing God's gracious plan of salvation and its accomplishment in history, focusing upon the work of Jesus as the Christ.

WE DENY that there was or is continuing additions to special revelation beyond the historical completion of the canon of Scripture.

WE DENY that the theological truths and moral demands communicated by general revelation disagree with the theological and moral content of Scriptural revelation, either in substance or specific application.

WE DENY that the authority of God may be separated from or set in opposition to the authority of Scripture, in part or in whole, on any matter which Scripture addresses, including details of nature or history.

WE DENY that any human judgment or assertion which purports to interpret and give expression to God's non-verbal general revelation may take precedence in theology or ethics over God's own verbally-expressed revelation.

WE DENY any dichotomy between an inerrant "kernel" and an alleged errant "husk" of the Scriptural message.

WE DENY the inference that, because the Bible does not present itself as a "textbook" in a certain field of study, what the Bible teaches in that field may be dismissed as erroneous.

WE DENY that the veracity of God's verbal revelation may be confined to matters of eternal salvation, or restricted to an absence of willful deception by the writer, or reduced to Scripture infallibly accomplishing God's personal purposes in its hearer or reader.

Article 5: The Relevance of Extrabiblical Scholarship

WE AFFIRM that extrascriptural studies in fields relevant to Biblical interpretation (e.g., linguistics, archaeology, natural science, history) may be a great benefit in elucidating the meaning of the Biblical text and deepening our understanding of it.

WE AFFIRM that when such studies appear to conflict with the Biblical text, they may legitimately occasion the reexamination and possible correction of previous interpretations given to the text.

WE DENY, however, that any Biblical text which has been given its proper linguistic sense (in semantic, literary and theological context) may be challenged, corrected, or ignored on the basis of conclusions reached in fallible, extrabiblical fields of study.

WE DENY that modern studies using sophisticated scholarly tools or computer technology may properly produce such novel interpretations of any Scriptural text that its original recipients, without the tools of modern scholarship, could not have gained that understanding for themselves from the text itself (even with the aid of progressive revelation).

Article 6: The Historico-Grammatical Method of Interpretation

WE AFFIRM that God's verbal revelation in Scripture is intended as a public communication and must be properly understood according to the same principles of interpretation which apply to any human, non-esoteric, literary work.

WE AFFIRM that the Scripture is interpreted correctly only when interpreted according to its letter ("literally") in the normal, historical and grammatical sense, taking account of a text's literary genre (whether figurative or not, etc.) and the author's intent (as determined semantically, and by the local and broader literary contexts).

WE DENY that Scripture contains secret wisdom or hidden, subtle meanings which are ascertained by approaching the Bible on some supposed higher or Spiritual plane.

WE DENY that deeper, creative insights and artistic connections in Scripture should be maximized by lines of interpretation which follow no objective, definite, or consistent rule of interpretation which would make publicly predictable and correctable conclusions possible.

WE DENY that Scripture is properly handled by any "prooftexting" method which fails to consult a text's local context as well as the entire teaching of Scripture as it pertains to any particular text.

WE DENY as well that any theological or moral truth (including the larger theme or thrust of the Bible as a whole) can be established without adducing texts from Scripture which prove it or without showing that it follows by sound logical inference from such.

WE DENY that Scripture, as some would allege about any literary work, is empty of fixed and objective meaning so that its language makes no unchanging disclosure, its authorial intent is inaccessible, and every reading of a text constitutes a misreading.

WE DENY that literary evidence of stylized expression, order or balance in a text of Scripture precludes its historicity or factuality.

WE DENY that the Biblical authors invented illustrative stories or traditions and then narrated or presented them as though they were actual historical events.

Article 7: The Primary and Secondary Authors of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that God used a variety of fallible human authors and editors with differences in background, personality, interest, setting and linguistic idiom in producing the Scriptures, and yet the Holy Spirit was in each case the primary author of the Scriptures, thus requiring that the Bible be acknowledged as completely true in what it teaches and interpreted as one book (with unity, harmony and consistency), not many.

WE DENY that the teaching of one Biblical author may be set in conflict with the teaching of another Biblical author, as though they contradict each other rather than complementing and enriching each other in their distinctive styles, themes, and assertions.

WE DENY that any author of Scripture misunderstood, misinterpreted, or misapplied any previous portion of Scripture which he quotes or to which he alludes.

WE DENY that, at the time the human authors of Scripture received revelation from the Holy Spirit, they fully perceived the full implications of their own words or how they would come to pass in the light of redemptive history and further revelation.

WE DENY that any of the erroneous beliefs and historical limitations of an author's society or his own personal misperceptions were incorporated as truth in the text of Scripture, thereby calling for the correction of modern experts in science, history, sociology, etc.

Article 8: The Self-Interpreting Nature of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that the normative themes or conceptual perspectives by which the truths of Scripture should be organized and interpreted may be drawn from the Scripture itself.

WE AFFIRM that extrabiblical themes, perspectives, frameworks or organizing principles which are brought to the text may be pedagogically convenient or effective in teaching the message of Scripture, but have no authority for determining the meaning of the text itself.

WE DENY that any Biblical model or perspective leads to doctrinal or moral conclusions which are at odds with conclusions reached by means of other Biblical models or perspectives.

WE DENY that the pre-understandings and personal horizon which the reader brings to the text of Scripture may properly function to edit its message or render its meaning not objectively uniform for all readers.

WE DENY that the historical and cultural specifics used in Biblical motifs or paradigms hinder a true understanding of the Biblical text, deter readers from discerning its intended sense, or prevent cross-cultural translation, proclamation and application of what the Biblical authors meant.

Article 9: The Clarity of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that God's central message and demand in Scripture is so clear that any hearer or reader using the common and ordinary means of literary interpretation may understand it.

WE AFFIRM that even the deepest divine mysteries which are revealed in Scripture are communicated clearly enough that with diligence they may be cogently understood and taught.

WE DENY that all parts of Scripture are equally plain to all readers or as readily understood in themselves as other parts of Scripture.

WE DENY that there is a need for a pope, an infallible church or council, or modern scientific experts to interpret the true meaning of Scripture and explain to all men what is and is not incumbent upon them to believe and obey.

WE DENY that the true and full meaning of any Biblical text is multiple, subjective, or varies from reader to reader.

WE DENY that any aspect of the Biblical message can be expressed only in irresolvably contradictory assertions or in a fashion which requires mystical apprehension.

Article 10: The Redemptive-Covenantal Development Within Scripture

WE AFFIRM that all of God's post-fall covenantal administrations complemented (not contradicted) each other, being progressively revealed facets of the same underlying single promise of God which came to fulfillment in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ.

WE AFFIRM that the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are one in purpose and substance, constituting a unified Covenant of Grace established by God, with both Testaments testifying to the person and saving work of Christ as the central message of the whole Bible.

WE AFFIRM that under Old Covenant administrations, the redemptive precepts and marks of ritual purity or consecration were temporary foreshadows of the Savior, being a tutor which taught justification by faith and led to Christ, who was the aim or purpose to which the entire Old Covenant Scriptures pointed.

WE DENY that the Old Covenant foreshadows which are found in redemptive precepts or regulations for ritual purity or consecration are obligatory after the advent of the reality they anticipated, the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ.

WE DENY that the New Covenant's displacement of Old Covenant regulations for redemption or ritual purity and consecration places the Old and New Covenants in opposition or antagonism to each other.

WE DENY that the laying aside of the redemptive and ritual aspects of Old Covenant teaching legitimately implies the laying aside of the whole of Old Covenant instruction, as though only those things repeated in the New Testament have continuing authority and application.

Article 11: Scripture's Unchanging Moral Instruction

WE AFFIRM that the moral character and behavior which God requires of man are a reflection of His own holy, righteous and unchanging character, so that all men in all ages are under obligation to the moral instruction found throughout the Bible, both in the norms given generalized statement and in the moral principles which underly Scripture's culturally specific illustrations and applications.

WE DENY that God has a double standard of morality (one for His people and a different one for the cultures of the unbelieving world) or any notion of ethical relativism.

WE DENY that Christ's accomplishment of the salvation anticipated throughout the Old Testament has cancelled the moral instruction previously revealed by God.

Article 12: The Objective Text as Standard

WE AFFIRM that the standard by which our unchanging God manifests His holy requirements and guides the lifestyle of His people is set down specifically and definitively in the text of His written word.

WE AFFIRM that the teaching and norm of the written text remains fully and solely the authority for God's people whether they are historically closer to man's fall from original purity, or to the accomplishment of redemption at Christ's first advent, or to redemption's consummation at Christ's final coming.

WE DENY that God intends His people to live by their maturing ethical consciousness or by some gradually evolving moral standard which goes beyond, or even against, the Scriptural text, the divinely intended control factor for theology and ethics.

WE DENY that since the closing of the Scriptural canon, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, now guides His church as it approaches the consummation of history to tolerate or commend practices which were previously forbidden by Him in the inspired text of the New Testament or the Old Testament (as interpreted and modified by the New).

Article 13: The Holy Spirit's Role in Our Proper Handling of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that, although unbelievers can understand the literary sense of the Scriptural text, the saving discernment, acceptance, and application of God's word requires the Holy Spirit's work of enlightenment, regeneration, bestowal of faith, nurture and sanctification.

WE DENY that a holy and righteous handling, summarizing, teaching, proclamation and application of Scripture can be performed by unregenerate men, even though there may be limited value in their discussions of the Scriptures.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches men to believe or leads men to do what is contrary to the Scripture.

Endnotes

- [1] Mickelsen, Berkeley, *Interpreting the Bible*, (Eerdmans Pub Co, 1963), p. 23-24
- [2] Berkhof, Louis, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, (Baker Book House, 1952), p. 15-16
- [3] Editor Note: “*Sensus plenior* is a Latin term which means, literally, ‘fuller sense,’ or ‘deeper meaning’. The term *sensus plenior* is used to refer to those passages which, at their most obvious level speak of one person or event, but which also have a deeper meaning hinted at through that specific event in question.”
<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/qna/plenior.html>
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- [7] Ladd, George Eldon, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, (Eerdmans, 1974), p. 218ff
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- [15] Shires, Henry M., *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, (Westminster Press, 1974), p. 29
- [16] Shires, Henry M., *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, (Westminster Press, 1974)
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- [19] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965)
- [20] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965)
- [21] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 154, 156, 157, 158, 160
- [22] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 190
- [23] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 190
- [24] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 192

- [25] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 196
- [26] Owen, John, *Causes, Ways, and Means, of understanding the Mind of God, as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein. And a declaration of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external means of the interpretation of them.* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol IV. p. 217
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- [44] Terry, Milton, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, (Zondervan Publishing House; 2nd edition, 1964) p. 334ff
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- [68] “God’s multiple bonds with His people ultimately unite into a single relationship.”
 Robertson, O. Palmer, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), p. 28
- [69] Bahnsen, Greg, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1977), p. 499
- [70] Robertson, O. Palmer, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p. 51-52. (See John 5:39-47 and Luke 24:27,44.)
- [71] These are taken from O. Palmer Robertson’s book *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980)
- [72] There is even a clear unity of the Adamic and Noahic Covenants with the New Covenant (Gen. 8:22; Rom. 16:20; Gen. 3:15)
- [73] Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, p. 187
- [74] Because of our finite understanding, we cannot fully understand revealed truths in the Bible of the intertrinitarian relations in the Holy Trinity before the creation of the universe. We, therefore, must walk humbly with our God, seeking to understand as deeply as possible whatever God has revealed about Himself, and refusing to go beyond what He has revealed.
- [75] Brakel, Wilhelmus á, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 4 vols. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), 1:261
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[78] “It is plausibly urged by Dick, that in this transaction, the Father acted not only for Himself, as one person of the Trinity, but for the whole Godhead, as representative of the offended majesty of the three persons equally. His reason is, that all the persons being similar in attributes and dignity, must be conceived of as all alike offended by man’s sin and guilt; and alike demanding the reconciling intervention of a Daysman [mediator]; the Holy Ghost as much as the Father. It must be confessed that Dick cannot present any scriptural, direct proof of this view; but it seems reasonable.”

Dabney, Robert L., *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., [1878] 1972), p. 434

[79] Jonathan Edwards gives a fuller definition of the covenant of redemption than Louis Berkhof. Edwards defines it as “the eternal covenant that was between the Father and the Son, wherein Christ undertook to stand as Mediator with fallen man, and was appointed thereto of the Father. In that covenant, all things concerning Christ’s execution of His mediatorial office, were agreed between Christ and His Father, and established by them. And this covenant or eternal agreement, is the highest rule that Christ acts by in His office; and it is a rule that He never departs from. He never does any thing, more or less, than is contained in that eternal covenant. Christ does the work that God gave Him to do in that covenant, and no other; He saves those and those only, that the Father gave Him in that covenant to save; and He brings them to such a degree of happiness as was therein agreed. To this rule Christ is unchangeable in His regard; it stands good with Christ in every article of it, yesterday, today and for ever... the Father provides, chooses, sends and accepts a Savior. The Son is the Savior, who satisfies justice and answers the law, and buys redemption for His people. The Holy Ghost immediately confers the benefits of all this and actually makes the elect partakers of the salvation Christ has wrought.”

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[85] The New American Standard has the last line of Zechariah 6:13 to read: “Between the two offices.” This is more interpretation than translation. The King James Version has more literally: “between them both.” “Both” is *shenayim* in Hebrew.

[86] Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:254

[87] Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:255.

[88] Witsius, Herman, *The Economy of The Covenants Between God and Man*, 2 vols., (Phillipsburg, PA: The den Dulk Foundations, Presbyterian and Reformed, [1803] 1990), 1:169

[89] Bogue, Carl, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace*, (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing Co., 1975), p. 111

[90] Paraphrase of Wilhelmus á Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 4 vols., trans. Bartel Elshout (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), 1:250

[91] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, p. 270

[92] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, p. 273. Emphasis added.

[93] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, p. 277-78.

[94] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, p. 265

- [95] Vos, Geerhardus, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), p. 246-247
- [96] Plumer, William S., *Hints And Helps In Pastoral Theology*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1874), p. 359
- [97] Plumer, *Hints and Helps in Pastoral Theology*, p. 361-62
- [98] This covenant between God and Adam in Eden has been given several names in the history of theology, all of which are appropriate:
- 1) The Covenant of Works, emphasizing its conditions.
 - 2) The Covenant of Life, emphasizing its promises.
 - 3) The Covenant of Creation, emphasizing its universality.
 - 4) The Edenic Covenant, emphasizing its geographical and historical location.
- [99] Brakel, Wilhelmus á, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 4 vols. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 1:355
- [100] Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 1:355
- [101] A covenant is a bond between God and men, which is of life-and-death importance and which is established and defined by God alone.
- [102] Dabney, Robert L., *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, [1878] 1975), p. 302
- [103] Thornwell, James H., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, [1875]1986), 1:268.
- [104] Thornwell, James H., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, [1875]1986), 1:278
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- [113] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 28
- [114] Robertson, O. Palmer, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), p. 87
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- [116] Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., [1957] 1964), p. 44
- [117] Murray, John, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols., (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:58-59

[118] Shaw, Robert, *The Reformed Faith*, (Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, [1845] 1974), p. 192-194

[119] “Adam heard as much in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai, but only in fewer words and without thunder.” (John Lightfoot); quoted in Kevan, Ernest, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press, 1976), p. 60

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[121] Taken from the Course Materials documentation provided in conjunction with Greg Bahnsen’s audio lectures on Hermeneutics and Exegesis at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WGjv5eUNzStTriIASpMFU-97t6TAB-MQV/view>