

THE BOOK OF PSALMS AS THE BOOK OF CHRIST:
A CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO
THE BOOK OF PSALMS

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*To my loving wife Cheryl,
and my three wonderful children,
Jennifer, Joel, and Timothy*

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John 19:24 (Psalm 22:19)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AB	Anchor Bible
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
ANF	The Anti-Nicene Fathers
<u>ANQ</u>	<u>Andover Newton Quarterly</u>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<u>ARG</u>	<u>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</u>
<u>ASTI</u>	<u>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</u>
<u>ATR</u>	<u>Anglican Theological Review</u>
<u>AusBR</u>	<u>Australian Biblical Review</u>
<u>AUSS</u>	<u>Andrews University Seminary Studies</u>
<u>BA</u>	<u>Biblical Archaeologist</u>
<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<u>Bib</u>	<u>Biblica</u>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
<u>BibRev</u>	<u>Bible Review</u>
BibS(N)	Biblische Studien (Neukirchen, 1951-)
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</u>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<u>BSac</u>	<u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>
<u>BT</u>	<u>The Bible Translator</u>
<u>BTB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u>

BZAW Beihefte zur ZAW
 CBC Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
 CBQMS Catholic Biblical Quarterly--Monograph Series
CH Church History
CJT Canadian Journal of Theology
 ConBNT Coniectanea biblica, New Testament
 ConBOT Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
CQR Church Quarterly Review
CR Critical Review of Books in Religion
 CRINT Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum testamentum
CTM Concordia Theological Monthly
CurTM Currents in Theology and Mission
 DJD Discoveries in the Judaeen Desert
ETL Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses
EvQ Evangelical Quarterly
ExpTim Expository Times
 FB Forschung zur Bibel
 FBBS Facet Books, Biblical Series
HAR Hebrew Annual Review
HBT Horizons in Biblical Theology
HeyJ Heythrop Journal
 HNTC Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HTR Harvard Theological Review
 HTS Harvard Theological Studies
HUCA Hebrew Union College Annual

IBC Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching

IEJ Israel Exploration Journal

IBS Irish Biblical Studies

ICC International Critical Commentary

IDBSup Supplementary volume to Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

Int Interpretation

JAAR Journal of the American Academy of Religion

JBC Jerome Biblical Commentary

JBL Journal of Biblical Literature

JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies

JETS Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

JHNES John Hopkins Near Eastern Studies

JJS Journal of Jewish Studies

JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JQR Jewish Quarterly Review

JSNT Journal for the Study of the New Testament

JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament--
Supplement Series

JSS Journal of Semitic Studies

JTS Journal of Theological Studies

MNTC Moffat New Testament Commentary

NCB New Century Bible

Neot Neotestamentica

NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament

NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NIGTC The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT Novum Testamentum
 NovTSup Novum Testamentum, Supplements
 NPNF Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NTS New Testament Studies
 OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis
Or Orientalia
 OTL Old Testament Library
OTS Oudtestamentische Studiën
 PTMS Pittsburgh (Princeton) Theological Monograph Series
PSTJ Perkins (School of Theology) Journal
RelS Religious Studies
RelSRev Religious Studies Review
ResQ Restoration Quarterly
RevExp Review and Expositor
RevQ Revue de Qumran
 SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
 SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
 SBLSP Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
 SBLSS Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
 SBT Studies in Biblical Theology
SJT Scottish Journal of Theology
 SNTSMS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
ST Studia Theologica
 STDJ Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TBT The Bible Today

<u>TD</u>	<u>Theology Digest</u>
<u>TDNT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>
<u>TDOT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</u>
<u>TS</u>	<u>Theological Studies</u>
<u>Today</u>	<u>Theology Today</u>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
<u>TynBul</u>	<u>Tyndale Bulletin</u>
<u>TZ</u>	<u>Theologische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>USQR</u>	<u>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</u>
<u>VC</u>	<u>Vigiliae Christianae</u>
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<u>WTJ</u>	<u>Westminster Theological Journal</u>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<u>WW</u>	<u>Word and World</u>
<u>ZAW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
<u>ZNW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>

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Finally, praise to the Lord who has revealed himself to
in canon and in his Christ. May he be pleased to use this
work for his glory and the good of his Church.

PREFACE

This dissertation is an investigation into the proper interpretation of the messianic psalms, with special reference as to whether the current emphases on canonical analysis can assist in that process.

Part One investigates the history of messianic psalm interpretation and the relatively brief history of canonical analysis and criticism. Chapter 1 is a look at the history of the messianic exegesis of the Psalms from after the time of the New Testament to the present. Chapter 2 focuses entirely on the canonical analysis of Brevard Childs, while chapter 3 examines the canonical criticism of James Sanders.

Part Two deals with the what I have called the Christo-canonical approach to distinguish it from some approaches that are called canonical, but, which, I will argue, should not be considered so. Chapter 4 deals with the canonical process approach of Bruce Waltke, who provided the original stimulus for the topic of this dissertation. Chapter 5, then, outlines the theses and assumptions of the Christo-canonical approach with respect to the nature of canon. Chapter 6 outlines the theses and assumptions of the Christo-canonical approach with respect to the nature of the interpretive canonical task.

Part Three applies the approach to the book of Psalms. Chapter 7 deals with the shape of the Psalter. Chapter 8

investigates the function of the Psalms in their canonical context. Chapter 9 applies the findings of the two previous chapters to three test cases, Psalms 8, 41, and 129. Finally, chapter 10 briefly outlines some of the implications of the Christo-canonical approach for reading and understanding the book of Psalms.

Throughout the dissertation the Hebrew verse enumeration is used for the Masoretic Text of the book of Psalms. When reference is made to the Greek text of the Psalter, the Septuagint enumeration is used. Except for those places where I felt it was necessary to give a more literal translation, the New International Version (copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society and Zondervan Bible Publishers), has been used.

PART ONE

THE HISTORY OF MESSIANIC PSALM INTERPRETATION AND
CANONICAL INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 1

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MESSIANIC OR CHRISTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS

This survey could begin with the very writing of the Psalms themselves, for, as I will try to show, there was a messianic intention present from the very start. This intention becomes increasingly clearer as the canon grows and becomes fully developed with the revelation of Jesus Christ and the completion of the canon of the Old and New Testaments. Also, this survey could start with the New Testament, for it is certainly true that the early Church Fathers saw their exegesis as being of a piece with the apostles (though not canonical, of course).¹ However, since that is part of the thesis I am trying to prove, this survey will begin post-canon, that is, from the time when the canon is complete, though not necessarily well-defined and recognized. The survey will cover the following broad areas: Apostolic Fathers to ca. AD 200, the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools to ca. 500, Middle Ages to ca. 1500, the Reformation to ca. 1600, and from the Reformation to the present.

¹Glenn W. Olsen, "Allegory, Typology and Symbol: The *Sensus Spiritualis*. Part Two: Early Church through Origen," *Communio* 4 (1977): 366, 371.

Apostolic Fathers to ca. AD 200

The Old Testament exegesis of the Church in this time period must be seen in the light of the Church's struggle with enemies on several different fronts: the military might of the Roman Empire, Greek philosophy, the anti-Christian polemic of the Jews,² and heretical tendencies within the Church itself. Use and exegesis (not necessarily Christological) of the Psalms served to combat enemies on all these fronts. In particular, it helped to combat Marcion's attempt to cut the Church off from the Old Testament, an attempt which the Fathers rightly recognized would result in cutting off the very foundation of the Church's argument that Jesus was the Christ.³ At the same time, it should be remembered that we

²I believe, however, that William L. Johnson ("Patristic Use of the Psalms until the Late Third Century" [Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982], 3) goes too far in characterizing the whole of Psalms exegesis in this era as being "anti-Jewish." The dissertation fails both to define "anti-Jewish" and to distinguish various levels of opposition to the Jews and their exegesis. An example of this is as follows (pp. 100-101): "Some anti-Jewish attitudes in the Fathers supported by the Psalms which have already been referred to and/or implied can now be noted in summary fashion. The Christian affirmation of Jesus as the messiah stands as a single but profound rejection of Judaism's insistence that the messiah was yet to come. In accounts of his passion, the Fathers habitually found prophecies in the Psalms which the Jews said were really references to some Old Testament figure. The Fathers openly and emphatically pointed out direct participation of the Jews in the death of Jesus. The Jews were even accused of deleting parts of the Psalms which made reference to the cross of Jesus." The problem here is that "Christian affirmation of Jesus as the messiah" should not be seen as "anti-Jewish" on the same plane as the other things he mentions.

³Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Old Testament in the Christian Church," Theology 66 (1963): 51. Ralph L. Smith notes that "early Christians could continue to use the psalms because they

have no extant Psalms commentaries from this time period, and that there is no hard evidence that there was a conscious attempt to find Christ in every psalm.⁴ The Fathers did not always draw a straight line from a particular psalm to Christ, nor did they always feel the need to allegorize to "search for some hidden meaning."⁵ The earliest uses of the Psalms in the Apostolic Fathers seem to be directed more toward motivation to good works than for pointing either prophetically or allegorically to Christ.

Among the Apostolic Fathers, 1 Clement (ca. AD 95) and Barnabas (ca. AD 100) are the only works that use the Psalms to any significant degree.⁶ For the most part their use is parenetic, but they engage in Christological exegesis as well. An example from each will demonstrate this. Clement introduces the words of Ps 34:12-20 by putting them in Christ's mouth: "Now faith in Christ confirms all these things

reinterpreted them in the light of Christ" ("The Use and Influence of the Psalter," Southwestern Journal of Theology 27 [1984]: 6).

⁴Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," JBC, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 611.

⁵Contra R. D. Richardson, "The Psalms as Christian Prayers and Praises," ATR 42 (1960): 343.

⁶O. Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms in the Early Church," in Studia Patristica 4, ed. F. L. Cross, TU 79 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 146. Johnson notes that even the Didache, which gives elaborate instructions in regard to several of the liturgical and ritual functions of the early Church, makes no reference to the Psalms as a part of these services, nor does it do any proof-texting from the Psalms ("Patristic Use of the Psalms," 161-63).

for he himself through the Holy Spirit thus calls us: "Come my children, listen to me . . ." ⁷ Motivation for making Christ the speaker of this particular psalm could come from the use of v. 21 in John 19:36; yet, interestingly, Clement stops just short of quoting v. 21 in his rather lengthy citation.

The author of the Epistle of Barnabas, allegorizes to point to both baptism and the crucifixion in Psalm 1. He introduces his quotation of Ps 1:3-6 as the words of "another prophet," and then, after finishing the quotation, says:

Notice how he pointed out the water and the cross together. For this is what he means: blessed are those who, having set their hope on the cross, descended into the water, because he speaks of the reward "in its season"; at that time, he means, I will repay. But for now what does he say? "The leaves will not wither." By this he means that every word that comes forth from your mouth in faith and love will bring conversion and hope to many. ⁸

Among the apologists there is not much use made of the Psalms except for Justin Martyr (AD 96-166). ⁹ Linton comments on how Justin followed a well-recognized method in order to make his Christological interpretations. The method was (1) to over-literalize the language of a particular passage, (2)

⁷1 Clem. 22. Cited in J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings, 2d ed., rev. and ed. Michael W. Holmes (London: Macmillan, 1891; 2d rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 55.

⁸Barn. 11. Cited in Lightfoot and Harmer, Apostolic Fathers, 305. See also Frederic W. Farrar's comments on this passage (History of Interpretation [E. P. Dutton, 1886; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961], 169-70).

⁹Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms in the Early Church," 147.

to show, based on the over-literalized language, how the passage in question cannot refer to the "natural subject," (3) then substitute, or rather, "reintroduce," the correct subject.¹⁰ For example, Justin refers Psalm 22 to Jesus, remarking that David suffered none of the things mentioned in the psalm.¹¹ Again, in Psalm 24, Justin shows how the gates in vv. 7-10 cannot be the gates of the temple, for they are no longer existent; they must, therefore, be the doors of heaven. The King of glory cannot be either Solomon or Hezekiah, for they were both well-known, and in either case, "it would be absurd to think, that the guardians of the temple-doors should ask him, who he was." Nor can the text refer to God, for he has always been in heaven and has never had an occasion to enter it. "Thus the text must concern the risen Lord, who enters heaven to sit on the right hand of God. The scenery is not of earth but is cosmic. It is the guardians of heaven who do not recognize Christ in his *kenosis*."¹²

Another device that Justin used was that of trying to distinguish the person or *prosopon* speaking in the passage.

¹⁰Ibid., 144-47.

¹¹Justin, 1 Apol. 35.6. Quoted in Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 147.

¹²Linton ("Interpretation of the Psalms," 147-48) paraphrasing Justin (Apol. 51; Dialog. 36, 85). Linton notes that this is not far removed from the argumentation used by Peter in Acts 2 regarding Psalm 16. On other early Christian usage of Psalm 24, see Allen Cabaniss, "The Harrowing of Hell, Psalm 24, and Pliny the Younger: A Note," VC 7 (1953): 65-74; and Alan M. Cooper, "Ps 24:7-10: Mythology and Exegesis," JBL 102 (1983): 37-60.

That is, it is important to determine whether the prophet is speaking from himself or "out of person" (*apo prosopou*). When it is according to the latter, the psalmists are speaking "by the divine word which moves them."¹³ We will see this again in Clement of Alexandria.

Justin also argued with the Jews over textual matters. Evidently, a Christian interpolation in Psalm 96:10 had added the words "from the tree [or "cross"]" after the declaration "The Lord reigns." Several of the Latin Fathers quote the passage with the interpolation, even though there is only a single extant Septuagint manuscript that has the addition. Rather than recognize the addition as an obvious interpolation, Justin argues with Trypho that the Jews were, in fact, the ones who had left out the phrase."¹⁴

Irenaeus (AD 135-202), as the father of biblical theology, stressed the essential unity of the Old Testament and New Testament and the normativity of New Testament exegesis of the Old.¹⁵ The Psalms became for him a source of details regarding Christ's earthly life. He found the virgin birth prophesied in Ps 85:13 and the memorialization of the virgin Mary in Ps 45:18 ("I will perpetuate your memory

¹³Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 147.

¹⁴Noted by Johnson ("Patristic Use of the Psalms," 39-40). Johnson notes that Tertullian also supports the authenticity of the phrase and ridicules the Jews for not being able to recognize the obvious reference of the psalm to Christ.

¹⁵Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 149.

through all generations"; cf. Luke 1:48, "From now on all generations will call me blessed").¹⁶

Two scholars closely related in their exegesis are Tertullian (AD 160-220) and his great admirer Cyprian (AD 195-228). Tertullian, like others before him, found details of Christ's life in the Psalms. Using Ps 22:10 he showed how it had been prophesied that the Messiah would come forth from the womb and nurse at his mother's breasts.¹⁷ Everywhere in the Psalms he could find references to the Lord's passion, and in at least two different places found in the Psalms conversations between Jesus and his Father.¹⁸ Cyprian followed his master Tertullian closely in his exegesis. Indeed, it has been suggested that the Psalms were as important as the Gospels in forming his Christology.¹⁹

Three things should be noted at this point. First, as Donald Juel notes, there is no one method of Scripture interpretation here that takes precedence over another in

¹⁶Johnson, "Patristic Use of the Psalms," 32-33.

¹⁷Ibid., 33.

¹⁸Ibid., 14. Interestingly, Max Wilcox ("The Aramaic Targum to the Psalms," in Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, ed. David Asaaf [Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986], 147) has shown how in one of his messianic interpretations, Tertullian agrees with the Targum to the Psalms against both the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text.

¹⁹Lars Olav Eriksson, "Come, Children, Listen to Me!": Psalm 34 in the Hebrew Bible and in Early Christian Writings, ConBOT 32 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991), 132 n. 244.

seeing Christ in the Psalms.²⁰ In other words, we are not yet talking about schools of interpretation. Second, I think it is important to note that, while these interpretations may seem allegorical to us, most of the Fathers we have looked at (except perhaps for the Epistle of Barnabas) were being, at least in their own eyes, fairly literal in their exegesis. They talked in terms of prophecy or promise and fulfillment, rather than in terms of some arbitrary allegorism. I am not denying that they were allegorical, but rather, that they did not perceive themselves to be so. And in this, they somewhat unconsciously practiced and anticipated the exegesis that Faber Stapulensis (Lefevre D'etaples) consciously articulated in the fifteenth century.²¹ Third, though it may seem like the opposite may be the case, it is impossible, as noted before, to prove that these early Church Fathers tried to find Christ in all the psalms. Indeed, Justin's attempt to determine the *prosopon* of the Psalms seems to show that there was no all-pervasive attempt to find Christ in "every nook and cranny." But this would change.

The Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools to ca. 500

The contrast between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis has been exaggerated. It is true, however, that the contrast

²⁰Donald Juel, Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation in Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 139.

²¹See the discussion on Faber later in this chapter.

shows up most sharply in their respective exegeses of the Old Testament and, most particularly, in the Psalms.

The Alexandrian School

In opposition to the previously named Church Fathers, the Alexandrians openly embraced Greek philosophy, thought of it as being of divine origin, and brought its allegorizing technique into their exegesis.²² The first prominent scholar of this school was Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215). While his overall approach to Old Testament exegesis was allegorical, he did not always use it indiscriminately. For example, he used the *prosopon* argument that we saw earlier in Justin Martyr to show that Christ must be the speaker in Psalm 16. However, anticipating the concept which was later called "corporate personality," he regards Christ as speaking not for himself, but as the representative of the whole people of God of all time, both Jew and Gentile.²³

Of course, the most prominent scholar of the Alexandrian school and, to our knowledge, the first Christian commentator on the Psalms, though the commentary is not extant,²⁴ was Origen (AD 185-254). There is no doubt that he engaged in

²²Farrar, History of Interpretation, 183-84.

²³Clement, Strom. 6.6, sec. 49,2-50,1. Cited in Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 150.

²⁴Karen Jo Torjesen, Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis, Patristische Texte und Studien 28 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 19.

very fanciful and highly arbitrary allegorical exegesis.²⁵ That he did so, however, exclusive of the historical and grammatical sense is simply not the case. Though he did tend to relegate the literal meaning of a passage to a place of value only for the more simple believer, he made it clear that he thought the literal sense was important. For example, his exegesis of Psalm 37 is very literal with no real trace of allegory.²⁶ Nor did he necessarily try to find Christ in every psalm. In one place he criticizes the Devil for his exegetical blunder in trying to apply Ps 91:11-12 to Christ. Satan should have known that the phrase, "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways," could not be applicable to Christ, for certainly Christ has no need of protection from angels.²⁷ It must be admitted, as Linton has pointed out, that this is certainly not part of any program on Origen's part to delimit the Christological interpretation of the Psalms.²⁸ We should, however, notice two things in this example. First, here is at least one place in the Psalms where Christ is not to be found. Second, he is not

²⁵For a study of Origen's allegorical exegesis, see R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture (London: SCM, 1959).

²⁶Torjeson, Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis, 23.

²⁷Origen, Homily on Luke, 31. Cited in Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 150-51.

²⁸Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 150-51.

to be found there because, for Origen, the literal meaning would not allow it. In fact, Origen seems to be using the method we saw earlier in Justin Martyr's exaggeration of the literal meaning, demonstration of how the literal meaning cannot apply to the assumed subject (Christ), and substitution (or "reintroduction") of the proper subject, in this case, any righteous and faithful person in general.²⁹

Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260-340), while not necessarily a full-blown Alexandrian in his exegesis, engaged in allegorizing of the Origenistic type. In commenting on Ps 110:7 ("He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head."), he combined Ps 123:4; Matt 26:4; Phil 2:8; and Eph 1:20, and argued that the brook referred to the Lord's temptations and cross (the "cup" he drank being the brook) and his subsequent exaltation from the Father ("lifting up his head").³⁰

Yet, Eusebius did not find Christ in all the psalms either or think that the ego of the psalms always had to be Christ. Part of his reasoning was that there are confessions of sin in many of the psalms, and these confessions cannot be seen as Christ's, but are rather to be seen as the confessions

²⁹Origen also used the *prosopon* argument we saw in both Justin and Clement; see R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event, 197-98.

³⁰Moisés Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible?: The History of Interpretation in the Light of Current Issues, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie), 69, citing D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius of Caesarea (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1960), 93.

of the pious who become convicted of their sins. Eusebius is not always consistent with this line, however. For example, Ps 41:5 has a confession of sin, but v. 10 was cited by Christ in reference to Judas in John 13:18. In this instance, Eusebius makes Christ a confessor of sins on our account, on the principle that the "I" of any psalm must be the same throughout. The "I" of the psalms is not the same in every psalm, but once it is established who the "I" is (in this case, Christ), that person must be the "I" throughout the whole.³¹

The effects of Alexandrian exegesis can be seen in many others in the next three centuries, whether they should actually be thought of as being in the Alexandrian "school" or not, but still with varying views as to the pervasiveness of Christ's presence in the Psalter. In the fourth century, Hilary of Poitiers (d. AD 368) argues that Christ is the key to the true knowledge of the book of Psalms, suggesting that this is what is meant in Rev 3:7 when Christ says that he holds the key of David (David here being not the person, but the Psalter which he was considered as having authored).³² Ambrose (AD 339-97), who had such a profound effect on Augustine, said that "the Psalter is the voice of the

³¹Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 151-52, citing Eusebius, Demonstration evangelica 10.1, 18, 23.

³²A. K. Squire, "Adam's Song in a Commentary of Hilary of Poitiers," in Studia Patristica 17/1, ed. Elizabeth Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 339.

Church."³³ Jerome, before turning away from Origenistic allegory, would try to distinguish from the psalm superscriptions whether Christ or some other was the speaker, and would even within individual psalms assign one verse to David, the next to Christ, the next to another, the next to the individual Christian, the next to the whole Church, and back and forth.³⁴ Commentators would take care to investigate whether individual psalms were spoken *vox Christi* (by Christ), *vox ad Christum* (to or about Christ), or both.³⁵ The Songs of Ascents were turned into songs about Christians ascending to the heavenly city.³⁶ Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, and the Temple all became symbols for the Church; in particular, Jerusalem represented the Church triumphant, and Zion, the Church militant.³⁷

³³Henry de Candole, The Christian Use of the Psalms (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1958), 39.

³⁴Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 154-55; W. F. Ewbank, "The Spiritual Interpretation of the Psalter," CQR 165 (1964): 429-36; G. W. H. Lampe, "To Gregory the Great," Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 177.

³⁵Klaus Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, trans. R. Graeme Dunphy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 220. Massey H. Shepherd, Jr. notes that these distinctions also became part of the Church's liturgy (The Psalms in Israel's Worship [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1976], 35).

³⁶F. Hockey, "Cantica Graduum: The Gradual Psalms in Patristic Tradition," in Studia Patristica 10, ed. F. L. Cross, TU 107 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), 356.

³⁷John M. Neale and Richard F. Littledale, A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Medieval Writers, 4th ed. (London: Joseph Masters, n.d.; repr., New York: AMS, 1976), 1.449-50.

Though he is not strictly an Origenist, this is the best place to discuss the Psalms exegesis of Augustine (AD 354-430), whose exegesis, though not necessarily his theology, dominated the hermeneutical course of the Middle Ages. A stumbling-block preventing Augustine's conversion to Christianity was his literal approach to the Old Testament which he had adopted from the Manicheans. But Ambrose taught him to read the Old Testament spiritually or allegorically, thus lifting the veil from his eyes and bringing about his conversion. Augustine, using this allegorical method in his commentary on the Psalms, gave them the most thoroughly Christological interpretation to that time.³⁸ As Neale and Littledale remark, "No commentator ever surpassed S. Augustine in seeing Christ everywhere; `Him first, Him last, Him midst and without end.'"³⁹ For example, Augustine saw the sun in Ps 19:5-6, "which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion," as a reference to the virgin birth of Christ: "That is, as a bridegroom when the Word was made flesh, He found a bridal chamber in the Virgin's womb."⁴⁰ For Augustine, Ps 3:6, "I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the Lord sustains me," becomes a prophecy of the Lord's death, burial, and

³⁸Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 4.

³⁹Neale and Littledale, Commentary, 1.77.

⁴⁰Augustine, Expositions on the Book of Psalms, trans. anon. (Oxford: John Henry Parker; F. and J. Rivington, 1847), 1.135.

resurrection.⁴¹ Sometimes, even Augustine himself seems to recognize how hard it may be for the reader to recognize Christ in the Psalm, as he says concerning Psalm 31:

Here then Christ speaketh in the Prophet: I venture to say, Christ speaketh. The Psalmist will say some things in this Psalm, which may seem as if they could not apply to Christ, to that excellency of our Head, and especially to That Word Which was in the beginning God with God: nor perhaps will some things here seem to apply to Him in the form a servant, which form of a servant He took from the Virgin; and yet Christ speaketh . . .⁴²

It is important to note, however, that Augustine's exegesis was not just the logical extension of the allegorical method; it was also combined with the rules of Tyconius⁴³ (late 4th cent.) to give a new element to Christological interpretation. Up to Augustine's time, the question had been whose voice was speaking in any given psalm: was it a voice speaking about Christ, a voice speaking to Christ, or was it the voice of Christ himself speaking to the Father? Augustine combined allegorical exegesis with Tyconius's first rule (concerning the mystical union Christ and his body) to give a "whole Christ" interpretation to the Psalter. As Miller says:

It was left to the ingenious hand of Augustine later to combine all these aspects into one: "The psalm is the

⁴¹Ibid., 1.11-12.

⁴²Ibid., 1.239. On this passage, see Marvin E. Tate, "The Interpretation of the Psalms," RevExp 81 (1984): 366.

⁴³See Pamela Bright, The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Inner Purpose and Logic, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 2 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), esp. pp. 61-62; also, Karlfried Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 104.

voice of the whole Christ, Head and body": *Psalmus vox toitus Christ, capit is et corporis*.⁴⁴

Linton's judgment on this significant exegetical advance is worth quoting here, because it explains, in part, why Augustine's exegesis (and not that of the Antiochenes to be discussed below) had such hold over interpretation in the Middle Ages:

Although it cannot be maintained, that the solution of Augustine, as to the subject of the Psalms is in any respect exegetically convincing, it can nevertheless be reasonably said, that the central problem of the Psalms has reached a definite stage. For with Augustine's conception of *Christus totus* the christological and the parainetical, the dogmatical and the devotional use of the Psalms--both essential to the Church--are brought into harmony.⁴⁵

However, there were those who opposed this allegorizing,⁴⁶ for they saw that heretics could use the method too. For example, the Manicheans used Ps 19:5 (cf. the use by Augustine mentioned above) as proof that Christ laid aside his human nature in the sun.⁴⁷ The opponents of allegorical interpretation were those of the school of Antioch.

⁴⁴Athanasius Miller, "The Psalms from a Christian Viewpoint," Worship 31 (1957): 340.

⁴⁵Linton, "Interpretation of the Psalms," 156.

⁴⁶Even among those who generally followed an allegorical method, there were those, such as Athanasius, who may have turned somewhat away from it for various reasons; see G. C. Stead, "St. Athanasius on the Psalms," VC 39 (1985): 76.

⁴⁷Farrar, History of Interpretation, 208 n. 6.

The Antiochene School

Diodore of Tarsus (d. AD 394) is usually regarded as the founder of the Antiochene school. We have no extant work of his, though Froehlich is of the opinion that portions of his commentary on the Psalms may be preserved in an "eleventh-century manuscript under the name of Anastasius of Nicaea."⁴⁸ In his prologue Diodore somewhat anticipates modern scholarship in his discussion of the order and arrangement of the Psalms, and the non-authenticity of the superscriptions.⁴⁹ As regards the interpretation of the Psalms, Diodore says nothing about type or antitype, but only about how a psalm may be adapted for many different uses. Commenting on Psalm 118, he says that it must first be understood according to its historical context, but that it may then be understood as fitting the circumstances of those who come after. He is careful to note, however, that the latter is not a case of allegory, but simply an adaptation to "many situations according to the grace of him who gives it power."⁵⁰

The foremost representative of the Antiochene school was Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 350-428). Though his commentary on the Psalms is not extant, we are able to piece together from both his followers and opponents his exegesis of the Psalter.

⁴⁸Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church, 21-22.

⁴⁹Ibid., 85.

⁵⁰Ibid., 93.

It is well known that Theodore regarded only four psalms as messianic (2, 8, 45, and 110). But it must be understood that by messianic Theodore meant psalms that were actually prophetic of Christ. He still regarded all the psalms to be Davidic and believed that they were oracles given to David rather than a collection of religious devotional poetry or a compilation of cultically oriented hymns.⁵¹ For Theodore, just as much as for earlier exegetes, David was a prophet; the difference was that Theodore considered the period of fulfillment of the prophecy to extend all the way from the time of David's son Solomon down to the time of the Maccabees, considering only those four psalms mentioned above as extending into New Testament times.⁵² Aside from these four psalms, the New Testament writers' usage of psalmic passages to refer to Christ was not because they were predictive of Christ, but because the psalms' "phraseology and the rich meaning and symbolism contained in them supported analogous spiritual conditions in Christian revelation."⁵³ Theodore allowed only a typological relationship between the literal meaning of Psalm 22 and Christ. He pointed out that the psalm could not in any way be literally about Christ, for even the second half of the verse which Christ quoted on the cross

⁵¹Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos, Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible: A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis, Theological Inquiries (New York: Paulist, 1989), 82-83.

⁵²Ibid., 84.

⁵³Ibid., 144-45.

("Why are you so far from helping [saving] me") could only be uttered by a sinner, and Christ could never speak of his sins.⁵⁴ His opponents replied that the psalm had to be messianic because the title of the psalm said that it was "for the end" (*eis to telos*, the Septuagint's rendering of *lamnassēah*, commonly rendered in most translations today as "for the choir director"). Theodore's reply was that the titles were not always authentic.⁵⁵

As for the psalms he did consider to be messianic, his argumentation with respect to Psalm 45 will be sufficient to show his reasoning. Throughout the commentary he seeks to establish the "argument" of each psalm.⁵⁶ This argument consists of establishing what *prosopon* is to be assigned to David in each of the psalms. David, being a prophet, wrote the Psalms with divine guidance and assumed in each one the *prosopon* of a future historical figure. In Psalm 45, argues Theodore, David has adopted the *prosopon* of Christ and thus prophesies of the time of his incarnation.⁵⁷ But how does Theodore know that David is speaking in the person of the

⁵⁴Ibid., 145-46.

⁵⁵Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 66.

⁵⁶Lampe, "To Gregory the Great," 178.

⁵⁷James L. Kugel and Rowan W. Greer, Early Biblical Interpretation, Library of Early Christianity 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 188; Joseph W. Trigg, Biblical Interpretation, Message of the Fathers of the Church 9 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 33.

Messiah here? Zaharopoulos's summary of Theodore's argument explains that

contrary to the current Jewish interpretation which read Psalm 45 as a nuptial song written by David to be sung at Solomon's wedding, we, the Christian commentators, must maintain that the imagery is altogether too exalted, and the thought too peculiar to suit a royal epithalamium song. David, who was one of the greatest personalities of the Old Testament, could not have written such a secular song celebrating the marriage of an earthly king. A literal interpretation of this psalm will make it look like a joke or mockery. The only way out of this predicament is to "spiritualize" the whole content of the psalm, and then interpret it as a prophetic metaphor. The psalm is more than a love canticle celebrating the sumptuous nuptials of an ancient Israelitic king; it is written in the prophetic style and spirit. According to Theodore, it is a prophecy of Christ and his church. Consequently, we need not bewilder ourselves with fruitless attempts to identify the "king" with an earthly monarch (Solomon or Hezekiah), and the "queen" with a mortal princess, but we may at once see our Savior wedded to his bride, the church, in these adoring words of the psalm. Prophecy is here clothed with "spiritual metaphor."⁵⁸

Noting Theodore's inconsistency here in allowing a messianic interpretation for the psalm, Zaharopoulos notes that

the Mopsuestian is neither the first nor the last biblical scholar who has been forced to compromise his guiding methodology and basic presuppositions. The esteem in which he held David would not allow him to accept his hallowed hero as a rhapsodist and entertainer composing wedding songs. With his emphasis on grammar and literalism, the secularism of the psalm forced Theodore to sacrifice irrationally his method of interpretation on the altar of allegory.⁵⁹

This leads me to two final observations about the Antiochene exegesis. First, as many have pointed out recently, the difference between the Alexandrian *allegoria* and

⁵⁸Zaharopoulos, Theodore of Mopsuestia, 150.

⁵⁹Ibid., 150-51.

the Antiochene *theoria* has been exaggerated. The Alexandrians did give attention to the literal interpretation, and the Antiochenes, their protests notwithstanding, did engage in allegorical interpretation.⁶⁰ Their *theoria* was, "for all practical purposes a close equivalent of Alexandrian *allegoria*."⁶¹ As Froehlich says,

At close inspection both allegory and *theoria*, speak about the same analogical dynamic Origen so eloquently described: the biblical text leads the reader upward into spiritual truths that are not immediately obvious and that provide a fuller understanding of God's economy of salvation.⁶²

Second, it must be observed here that, no less for the Antiochenes than for the Alexandrians, allegory was used, not by choice but by necessity. And the necessity was caused by the need for relevance. For some, the need was to find meaning in what seemed to be so many obscure details in various portions of the Scriptures. For the Alexandrians, though it is simplistic to say so and does not account for their entire motivation, the need was to integrate their scriptural faith with philosophical allegorism. For Theodore, the need was to account for the presence in the Scriptures of what seemed to be no more than a secular wedding song. Indeed, as Silva has pointed out, though working with a broader definition of allegory than some would allow,

⁶⁰Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? 53.

⁶¹Brown, "Hermeneutics," 612.

⁶²Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church,

"Allegorical interpretations are very difficult to avoid for a believer who wishes to apply the truth of Scripture to his or her life"; indeed, "every hour of the day thousands of Christians allegorize the Scriptures as they seek to find spiritual guidance."⁶³

No wonder then, that, by and large, it was the Alexandrian exegetical method that continued into the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages to ca. 1500

It was, indeed, the Alexandrian allegorical method that dominated the Middle Ages. Until the fourteenth century there were few proponents of the Antiochene exegesis, at least, few whose writings have survived. Isidore of Pelusium felt that a great disservice was done by making the whole Old Testament refer to Christ, because then the force of passages that really do refer to Christ are weakened in their apologetic force.⁶⁴ Theodoret (d. 460) propounded Antiochene views for a while, but then seems to have drawn back, even criticizing Theodore for being more Jewish than Christian in his exegesis.⁶⁵ Julian of Aeclanum (d. 454) has left a commentary on the Psalms, but it is most probably a translation from

⁶³Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? 63, 66.

⁶⁴Lampe, "To Gregory the Great," 178.

⁶⁵Farrar, History of Interpretation, 219; Grant and Tracy, A Short History, 63.

Theodore's work.⁶⁶ Some of Theodore's teaching on the Psalms seems to be represented in a manual composed by Junilius Africanus (ca. 550), Instituta regularia divinae legis.⁶⁷ Finally, Isho'dad of Merv (9th cent.) has an introduction to the Psalms that defends Antiochene exegesis and refers to "impious" Origen as the inventor of the art of allegory. The introduction treats only Psalms 2, 8, 45, and 110 as messianic, just as Theodore had.⁶⁸

Apart from these few remnants of Antiochene exegesis the exegetical course of the Middle Ages is dominated by Alexandrian allegory and by the "four-horse chariot" of John Cassian (d. 435). Cassian's four senses of Scripture (literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical) more fully fleshed out the allegorical method.⁶⁹ These four senses of Scripture were further taken up in the Psalms commentary of Cassiodorus (490-583) and in numerous medieval commentaries to follow. The allegory was often highly arbitrary. Farrar makes mention of one Antonius, Bishop of Florence, who allegorized the eighth Psalm: "to mean that God put all things

⁶⁶Raymond E. Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior* of Sacred Scripture" (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary's University, 1955), 44-45.

⁶⁷Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 18; Grant and Tracy, A Short History, 70.

⁶⁸Zaharopoulos, Theodore of Mopsuestia, 115; Grant and Tracy, A Short History, 64-65.

⁶⁹Smalley, The Study of the Bible, 38; Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior*," 56; Grant and Tracy, A Short History, 85-86.

under the feet of the Pope." The sheep were the Christians, the oxen were the Jews and heretics, the beasts of the field were the pagans, and the fish of the sea represented the souls in purgatory. For Antonius, the statement in Ps 74:13, "You broke the heads of the monster in the waters," was proof that demons could be cast out by baptism."⁷⁰

The main vehicles for the exposition of Scripture and, in effect, Alexandrian exegesis, in the Middle Ages were the *catena* and the *gloss*. These were largely compilations of interpretations and comments by the Church Fathers and their successors on various texts of Scripture (in this way bearing some resemblance to the growth of the Talmud in Judaism).⁷¹ There were commentaries on the Psalms in the Glossa Psalmora, the Magna Glossatura, and the Glossa Ordinaria. In addition to the catenas and the glosses, there were the *postilla* (commentaries that developed from lectures). All of these perpetuated Alexandrian allegorical and Christological exegesis. Also, the Psalms were abundantly used in the Church's liturgy, in which Gregory the Great (540-604), one of the greatest of allegorizers, had a dominant hand in

⁷⁰Farrar, History of Interpretation, 297.

⁷¹For more information on the catenas and glosses see Farrar, History of Interpretation, 249-53; Grant and Tracy, A Short History, 83-84; Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, 249-50; Smalley, The Study of the Bible, chap. 2; "The Bible in the Medieval Schools," in Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 197-209; and in the same volume, Dom Jean Leclercq, "From Gregory the Great to Saint Bernard," 189-197.

formulating. The use of the Psalter in the great Christian festivals and liturgies helped to secure its Christological interpretation. Leafblad notes:

It was the tradition to conclude every psalm and versicle (psalm verse which was used as a complete unit apart from the context of the entire psalm) with the lesser doxology *Gloria Patri*. Its use in this manner set the Psalm within a New Testament trinitarian framework. Furthermore, it served to affirm the pre-existence of Christ who is prophetically portrayed in the psalms. More than a mere gesture, this dogmatic and apologetic practice served to confirm the Christological significance of such texts from the Old Testament . . .⁷²

Before passing on to some of the later exegetes who began to rediscover the importance of the literal sense, it would be appropriate to mention briefly the course that Jewish exegesis began to take in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. Judaism, in the face of the Christian proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah, had tenaciously held on to a messianic exegesis of the Psalms. There was also in Judaism, as in Christianity, the parallel development of literal interpretation (*peshat*) and a more figurative, mystical interpretation (*derash*).⁷³ With Rashi (1040-1105), David Kimhi

⁷²Bruce H. Leafblad, "The Psalms in Christian Worship," Southwestern Journal of Theology 27 (1985): 48; see also Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, 220; Smalley, The Study of the Bible, 29; Leclercq, "From Gregory the Great to Saint Bernard," 189; S. J. P. van Dijk, "The Bible in Liturgical Use," in Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 220-52.

⁷³Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Study of the Bible in Medieval Judaism," Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 253-54.

(1160-1235), and Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. 1167), there was a more persistent insistence in Psalms exegesis on the *peshat* versus the *derash*, in order to counteract Christian allegorical interpretation. Thus, Psalm 2, traditionally interpreted in Jewish exegesis of the day of the Messiah, becomes in Jewish exegesis, at least according to the *peshat*, a psalm about David's coronation.⁷⁴ The importance of this exegetical move on the part of Jewish scholars, for our study, is that for those Christian scholars who were more apologetically inclined in their exegesis, there was correspondingly more attention paid to the literal sense in order to interact with Jewish scholarship on that level. However, for those who were more concerned with the life of the Church and the process of edification, there was correspondingly less attention to the literal sense.⁷⁵

With the founding of the Abbey of St. Victor in 1110, there was set in motion a recovery of the importance of the literal sense. Hugh (or Hugo) of St. Victor (d. 1142) emphasized the literal sense, though still retaining an

⁷⁴Michael A. Signer, "King/Messiah: Rashi's Exegesis of Psalm 2," Prooftexts 3 (1983): 273-78.

⁷⁵For more on this subject see Rosenthal, "The Study of the Bible in Medieval Judaism," 252-79; Signer, "King/Messiah: Rashi's Exegesis of Psalm 2," 273-78; Uriel Simon, Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); James S. Preus, From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 70; Smalley, The Study of the Bible, 193.

allegory based on the literal sense.⁷⁶ His exegesis was still very much Christologically oriented,⁷⁷ though little of it is extant except for a few devotional notes on a few psalms.⁷⁸

One of his disciples, Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175), practically denied any role to allegory at all. His influence is perhaps best seen in the Psalms commentary of one who was "almost certainly a pupil of Andrew,"⁷⁹ Herbert of Bosham (ca. late 12th, early 13th cent.). Herbert declares that he is not adept at explicating the mystical sense and will try to explain only the literal or lowest sense of the Psalter.⁸⁰ Yet for each psalm he also mentions what has been the "traditional, christological interpretation of each psalm." Smalley notes that one would think Herbert would be forced to choose, at this point, in favor of the literal over the traditional. Sometimes he does, but he is inconsistent. At times he will choose the literal interpretation in deference to Jewish exegesis. At other times he will opt for the traditional Christological interpretation, while admitting

⁷⁶Smalley, The Study of the Bible, chap. 3; Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior*," 58-59.

⁷⁷Norbert Lohfink (The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament, trans. R. A. Wilson [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1968], 51) quotes him as saying, "The whole divine Scripture is one book, and this one book is Christ."

⁷⁸Smalley, The Study of the Bible, 97-98.

⁷⁹Ibid., 187.

⁸⁰Ibid., 187-88. My discussion of Herbert's exegesis relies heavily on Smalley's description (pp. 186-94).

that it is not the literal interpretation. But here, he is almost surely equivocating on the use of the word "literal," actually making the literal meaning to be the opposite of the true meaning.⁸¹ Herbert also interacts with Jewish exegesis, sometimes siding with Rashi's historical exegesis, sometimes chastising him for abandoning a traditional Jewish exegesis and doing so out of hatred for Christians.⁸² Herbert nowhere gives any one principle by which a messianic psalm may be distinguished from one that is not. However, he does suggest that on occasion the Apostle Paul has by his apostolic authority changed the sense of some Psalms passages in his citation of them (e.g., Ps 68:19).

In the thirteenth century, with the rediscovery of Aristotle, the importance of the literal sense as the foundation for all the other senses and as the only true basis for theological work was emphasized by Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). He did not at all deny the allegorical or spiritual sense, but held that this spiritual sense was limited in its

⁸¹See Smalley's discussion of his exegesis of Psalm 64 (The Study of the Bible, 192-93). S. B. Frost also notes that Herbert considered the lowest sense of the Psalter to be Christological ("The Christian Interpretations of the Psalms," CJT 5 [1959]: 27).

⁸²Smalley (The Study of the Bible, 193) further says regarding Herbert's interaction with Rashi, "In a lively piece of historical reconstruction, he argues that the Jewish people contemporary with Christ must have been accustomed to hear the psalms interpreted as messianic prophecies; otherwise the apostles would never have gained a hearing when they applied these prophecies to Christ in their preaching." I will try to show later that this is not as reconstructive as Smalley suggests.

usefulness to edification and could not be used apologetically.⁸³ There is some disagreement over whether this spiritual sense was, in fact, a "second" literal sense.⁸⁴ This carried over into the fourteenth century and the work of Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349) who, however, does indeed suggest that a passage of Scripture may have two literal senses. There was, on the one hand, the literal sense of the human author, and then on the other, the "true" literal sense of the divine author.⁸⁵ He was in touch with the Jewish scholarship of his day, and being "the best equipped scholar of the Middle Ages,"⁸⁶ he interpreted the Psalms according to the "historical" literal sense. But he was also a Christian who wanted to make the Psalms relevant to the Christian life, therefore he also interpreted each psalm according to the "spiritual" literal sense. Even though Nicholas is best remembered for his emphasis on the human author's "historical" literal sense, Preus notes that no one has pointed out (i.e., as of 1969) that his designation of the spiritual sense as a second literal sense, actually opened the way for a renewed

⁸³Smalley, "The Bible in the Medieval Schools," 215-16.

⁸⁴Contrast Grant and Tracy (A Short History, 88-89) with Scott Hendrix ("Luther Against the Background of the History of Biblical Interpretation," Int 37 [1983]: 232).

⁸⁵Hendrix, "Luther Against the Background," 232.

⁸⁶Heiko A. Oberman, Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents, translation of documents by Paul L. Nyhus (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1966), 286.

emphasis on spiritual interpretation and abandonment of the historical sense. Preus writes:

For the first time in literature, a New Testament reading of an Old Testament passage is dignified with the label "literal," and arguments are brought forward to defend it. Given Lyra's authority in the years that followed, it would now be easy for someone simply to dispense with the first of these literal senses (historical) in favor of the more edifying second "literal" sense. The near-suffocation of the historical-literal meaning, about which Lyra complained, would now be able to proceed, armed with the apparent authority of Augustine, Thomas, and the foremost champion of historical exegesis in the late Middle Ages.⁸⁷

Preus then gives an example of how Nicholas interprets Psalm 2 literally in regard to the original historical situation, but then goes on to say that he, in accord with "the doctrine of the apostles and the saying of the ancient Hebrew doctors, will explain this psalm as being literally about Christ."⁸⁸ For Nicholas, this spiritual literal sense does not always result in a psalm being considered messianic, but it does open the way for it in those who follow. Thus, unwittingly, Nicholas set in motion a reversion to the elevation of the spiritual sense above what was traditionally called the literal sense.

Paul of Burgos (d. 1435) follows Nicholas's discussion to a degree, but wants to find more of a grammatical or historical connection that ties the spiritual sense to the literal sense. So, for instance, that the New Testament

⁸⁷Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 69.

⁸⁸Ibid., 70 (emphasis Preus's).

quotes Psalm 2 in reference to Christ is not sufficient. Rather, it is the grammatical fact that the son in Psalm 2 is addressed in the singular and therefore can apply to only one person, and that person must be Christ, that secures the Christological interpretation. Also, with this line of interpretation, Paul seeks to make this literal Christological interpretation serve an apologetic function. Thus, he faults the Jews, not for their inability "to discern the spiritual senses," but because they have a "false understanding of the literal sense."⁸⁹

James (Jacobus) Perez of Valencia (d. 1490) argues seemingly against Nicholas and Paul when he holds that the spiritual sense is valid for theological (i.e., doctrinal) and apologetic proof and seeks to discard the literal sense altogether. For him, the Old Testament has theological value only as it is understood to be about Christ. His commentary on the Psalms is particularly Christological, though he may arrive at a Christ-centered interpretation by one of two routes: either by promise and fulfillment, or by allegorical or spiritual interpretation.⁹⁰

The last interpreter to be considered in this section is Jacobus Faber Stapulensis (or Jacques Lefevre d'Etapes; d. 1536). His commentary on the Psalms was published in 1509,

⁸⁹Ibid., 86-97.

⁹⁰See the discussion of Perez in Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 102-116.

just four years before Luther began his first lectures on the Psalms in 1513.⁹¹ Faber, in essence, says, "enough of all this foolishness" and simplifies the entire discussion by putting forth what he considers to be the one literal sense, which encompasses both the meaning of the divine author and that of the prophet.⁹² Nicholas had suggested two literal senses; Perez had for all practical purposes abandoned the historical literal sense; now Faber says: the spiritual sense is the literal sense, and there is no other sense. The only "valid" sense is the "prophetic literal sense or the New Testament literal sense. The intention of the prophet is identical to the intention of the Holy Spirit, who speaks through him."⁹³ For Faber, it is a "tragic, un-Christian confusion that calls the literal sense `that which makes David an historian rather than a prophet.'"⁹⁴ The historical sense is practically entirely discounted:

The actual intention of the psalmist (that is, David throughout), and the "autobiographical" confession arising out of that situation, have nothing to do with the proper interpretation of the Psalms. In fact, Faber opposes to that history David's claim of having been a mouthpiece of the spirit. One could scarcely remove himself more decisively from the sphere of historical exegesis.⁹⁵

⁹¹Oberman, Forerunners, 286-87.

⁹²Ibid., 287; Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 137-38.

⁹³Oberman, Forerunners, 287.

⁹⁴Cited in R. Gerald Hobbs, "How Firm a Foundation: Martin Bucer's Historical Exegesis of the Psalms," CH 53 (1984): 486.

⁹⁵Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 138.

As Preus states, Faber "has taken what seems to be the shortest, least arduous route to an altogether christological exegesis of the Psalms."⁹⁶ However, as Preus goes on to state, the cost was a high one, for doctrine, history, and the literal sense were all sacrificed in the process.⁹⁷ It was left for the Reformation to recover the losses.

The Reformation to ca. 1600

In this section, we will look at Martin Luther and John Calvin in particular, and just briefly at a few other Reformers.

Martin Luther

Before he nailed the ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenburg on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) was an exegete of the Psalms. In August 1513 he began a lecture series on the Psalms that only concluded in October 1515. From the outset, he exegeted the Psalms as being literally about Christ. This can be seen by comments on various psalms in the preface to these lectures.⁹⁸ Regarding Psalm 1 he says, "Literally this means that the Lord Jesus made no concessions to the design of the Jews and of the evil and adulterous age that existed in His time." For the second

⁹⁶Ibid., 142.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 10, First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 7.

Psalm he says, "Literally this refers to the raging of the Jews and Gentiles against Christ during His suffering." And regarding Psalm 3 he says, "This is literally Christ's complaint concerning the Jews, His enemies." His justification for this is that "every prophecy and every prophet must be understood as referring to Christ the Lord, except where it is clear from plain words that someone else is spoken of."⁹⁹ Even of the first penitential psalm, Psalm 6, Luther says, "this whole psalm is like raging fire and the most impatient zeal erupting from the heart of Christ."¹⁰⁰ And of another penitential psalm, Psalm 38, Luther says that it must be understood literally concerning Jesus Christ. In v. 5 where the psalmist says, "my iniquities have gone over my head," Luther declares that it must be understood that, "in the first place, they went over the head in the case of Christ with respect to punishment, but not with respect to conscience."¹⁰¹

His scheme, at least in the early part of these lectures, is to give first the literal sense of each psalm as it refers to Christ, then to give the allegorical sense as it refers to the Church, and then to give the tropological sense as it refers to the individual Christian. For the most part,

⁹⁹Ibid., 10.7

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 10.78.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 10.177.

he ignored the anagogical sense.¹⁰² Also, contributing to Luther's Christological exegesis is what Steinmetz has called the *caput-corporis-membra* schema:

All Scripture is written concerning Christ. Because of the union of Christ and the Church as *caput et corpus*, whatever is spoken prophetically concerning Christ is at the same time (*simul*) posited of the Church His body and of every member in it.¹⁰³

However, during the course of the lectures, there seems to be a shift away from this three or four senses of Scripture scheme, along with a less and less explicitly literal-Christological explanation of each psalm. Preus's explanation for this is that Luther has turned away from the Stapulensis and Perez type of christologizing and despite his apparent dislike, in the first part of the commentary, for Nicholas of Lyra's "judaizing" exegesis, he has in fact come round to Lyra in the end.¹⁰⁴ Preus believes that Luther's hermeneutic, whereby the Old Testament must be interpreted by the New Testament, and the literal meaning of the Old Testament was only what the New Testament interpreted it to be, was one that

¹⁰²Hendrix, "Luther Against the Background," 230. However, David C. Steinmetz feels that this non-emphasis in individual psalms on the anagogical sense was due to the overall eschatological orientation of the commentary (Luther and Staupitz: An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 4 [Durham: Duke University Press, 1980], 60).

¹⁰³David C. Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," ARG 70 (1979): 55.

¹⁰⁴Preus, From Shadow to Promise, 268-69.

left the Old Testament without any theological content.¹⁰⁵ But as Luther continued his lectures he began to have more of an appreciation for the "faithful synagogue" of the Old Testament, and then he finally "discovered that the Old Testament faith and religion were so much like his own that they could become exemplary for his own faith, and for the Church's self-understanding."¹⁰⁶ Preus theorizes that Luther gradually came to an appreciation of Old Testament faith:

In his first course as a professor of Bible, Luther's task was to provide an interpretation of his text that would be both learned and edifying for his Christian audience. Although the text was an Old Testament book, his first response was to abandon it, in effect, in favor of the New Testament. He outdid the whole tradition, from Augustine to Faber, both in his christological interpretation and in setting up an opposition between the "historical" sense and his "prophetic" interpretation. As he was at length to discover, however, he could not carry through this plan and at the same time do justice to the Old Testament text, for "all its goods" were not in present grace and spirit, but in future "words and promises." When Luther awakened to this fact and began hearing the testimony of pre-advent Israel, the result was not only the theological recovery of the Old Testament but the eloquent first themes of an emerging Reformation theology.¹⁰⁷

In essence, Preus is suggesting that Luther's Christological interpretation of the psalms in the early part of his lecture course is what kept him from coming to the full realization of the doctrine of justification by faith. Preus's theory has not gone unchallenged,¹⁰⁸ and I do not

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 147-53.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 166.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁸See Gordon Rupp's review of Preus's book in JTS n.s. 23

believe that Luther's Christological exegesis was at all responsible for hindering his discovery of justification by faith (though this may be the case with the allegorical exegesis). Yet, one thing is certainly true: though Preus may have exaggerated just how pronounced the change is within the confines of the two-year lecture series in the Dictata super Psalterium, there is no doubt that a change did occur between this first lecture series and the next which began in 1518. Notice his different perspective as disclosed in the preface to the publication of those lectures:

At the urging and insistence of my fine students I am expounding the Psalter for the second time in your [Frederick] Wittenburg . . . As I expound it, I do not want anyone to suppose that I shall accomplish what none of the most holy and learned theologians have ever accomplished before, namely, to understand and teach the correct meaning of the Psalter in all its particulars. It is enough to have understood some of the psalms, and those only in part. The Spirit reserves much for Himself, so that we may always remain His pupils. There is much that He reveals only to lure us on, much that He gives only to stir us up. And as Augustine has put it so clearly, if no human being has ever spoken in such a way that everyone understood him in all particulars, how much more is it true that the Holy Spirit alone has an understanding of all His own words! Therefore I must openly admit that I do not know whether I have the accurate interpretation of the psalms or not, though I do not doubt that the one I set forth is an orthodox one. For everything that blessed Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius, Hilary, Cassiodorus, and others assembled in their expositions of the Psalter was also quite orthodox, but very far removed from the literal sense. For that matter, this second exposition of mine is vastly different from the first. There is no book in the

(1972): 276-78; Scott H. Hendrix, Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the "Dictata super Psalterium" of Martin Luther, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), esp. pp. 263-82; Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation," 26 n. 14.

Bible to which I have devoted as much labor as to the Psalter.¹⁰⁹

In essence, Luther, humbly but decisively, turns his back on allegorical exegesis, and it shows in his commentaries on the Psalms. Now, for Luther, Psalm 1 is about the "personal blessedness" that "is common to all men."¹¹⁰ In a preface to a commentary on the penitential psalms he states that in his first commentary on the Psalms he "often missed the meaning of the text," and then goes on to exegete Psalm 6 as referring to any penitent who is contrite over his sins.¹¹¹ Psalm 38, of which Luther had said that it must be understood literally about Christ, is now to be understood as portraying "most clearly the manner, words, acts, thoughts, and gestures of a truly penitent heart."¹¹² The prophetic-Christological interpretation is still to be found, particularly in Psalms 2, 8, 19, 45, 68, 109, 110, 117, and parts of Psalm 118.¹¹³ For example, in regard to Psalm 109, Luther says that "David composed this psalm about Jesus Christ, who speaks the entire psalm in the first person about Judas, his betrayer, and

¹⁰⁹Luther's Works, vol. 14, Selected Psalms III, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, 284-85.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 14.287.

¹¹¹Ibid., 14.140.

¹¹²Ibid., 14.156.

¹¹³Luther's Works, 12.1-93, 97-136, 137-44, 195-300; 13.1-37, 227-348; 14.1-39, 41-106, 257-77, 313-49.

against Judaism as a whole, describing their ultimate fate."¹¹⁴ But the difference is that now Luther christologizes only when led to do so by reason of New Testament citation or the recognition of what appears to be the purely prophetic. Christ is not to be found in allegory, but in promise and the belief of the Old Testament faithful in that promise. Luther was not entirely consistent and still occasionally engaged in allegorical exegesis.¹¹⁵ But for the most part, the literal meaning of the text now carries the day, though the New Testament had priority in determining what that literal meaning was.

What caused this change in Luther's approach? Some have attributed it to a closer attention to the Hebrew text. When he started the original lectures in 1513 he was not that proficient in Hebrew. But during the years 1515-18 he studied Hebrew more intensely in preparation for future lectures on the Psalter.¹¹⁶ Luther himself referred to his new attention

¹¹⁴Luther's Works, 14.257.

¹¹⁵Though some have seen allegory where it does not exist; e.g., Ronald Hals says that Luther "unashamedly allegorizes" the "day [of Ps 118:24] as the time of the New Testament ("Psalm 118," Int 37 [1983]: 278). However, I do not believe that this is an example of allegorizing, but rather a case of following an exegetical track begun by Christ himself (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:7).

¹¹⁶Scott H. Hendrix, "The Authority of Scripture at Work: Luther's Exegesis of the Psalms," in Encounters with Luther, vol. 2, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Gettysburg: Institute for Luther Studies, Luther Theological Seminary, 1982), 150-52; see also James A. Sanders, "Hebrew Bible and Old Testament: Textual Criticism in Service of Biblical Studies," in Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Roger Brooks

to the Hebrew text as "theological philology."¹¹⁷ Certainly this was one factor. Preus, as already mentioned, attributes the change to Luther's new appreciation for the expectant faith of the Old Testament saints and to his new found ability to relate both the despair and the hope of the Old Testament saints to what was happening in the depths of his own soul; or, in other words, Luther found that he could identify with the Old Testament saints themselves, without having to do so through the prism of the New Testament. In his developing doctrine of justification by faith, he was able to identify with the Old Testament faithful without first having to identify with Christ. I believe there is a measure of truth here, though I would want to modify Preus's theory to some extent. That modification will be examined in the last chapter.

John Calvin

John Calvin (1509-64) has been called "the first scientific interpreter in the history of the Christian Church."¹¹⁸ He was certainly, up to his time, the most judicious. In his commentary on the Psalms, as far as I can

and John J. Collins, *Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity* 5 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 44.

¹¹⁷Hendrix, "Luther Against the Background," 232; "The Authority of Scripture at Work," 150-51.

¹¹⁸K. Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority, 81, cited in Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 57.

tell, only Psalm 110 in its entirety is applied directly and literally to Christ, though many other psalms are seen as typologically referring to Christ. All the psalms, except for Psalm 110, have their literal meaning in the life of David or Solomon or whoever the author of the particular psalm was. Calvin believes in only one literal meaning of the text, but with either prophetic or typological applications to the life of Christ. For example, Psalm 2 is applied first of all to the reign of David, but Calvin says, "All this was typical, and contains a prophecy concerning the future kingdom of Christ."¹¹⁹ Sometimes, Calvin recognizes the Christological nature of a psalm because the psalm, hyperbolically, goes beyond what can be said of David, as is the case with Ps 16:10.¹²⁰ At the heart of Calvin's hermeneutic in the Psalms, however, is what we also saw in Luther, the solidarity of Christ and his members.¹²¹ A good example of this is Calvin's remarks regarding the New Testament use of Psalm 40:

There still remains another difficulty with this passage. The Apostle, in Heb. x. 5, seems to wrest this place, when

¹¹⁹John Calvin, Joshua and the Psalms, trans. Henry Beveridge (repr., Grand Rapids: Associated, n.d.), 125.

¹²⁰Ibid., 216-24.

¹²¹As S. H. Russell ("Calvin and the Messianic Interpretation of the Psalms," SJT 21 [1968]: 42) notes: "It is clear, therefore, that the master-key of Calvin's exegesis of the messianic elements in the Psalms is the solidarity of Christ and His members both before and after the incarnation." See also James L. Mays, "Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms: The Preface as Introduction," in John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 202.

he restricts what is spoken of all the elect to Christ alone, and expressly contends that the sacrifices of the Law, which David says are not agreeable to God in comparison of the obedience of the heart, are abrogated; and when quoting rather the words of the Septuagint than those of the prophet, he infers from them more than David intended to teach. As to his restricting this passage to the person of Christ, the solution is easy. David did not speak in his name only, but has shown in general what belongs to all the children of God. But when bringing into view the whole body of the Church, it was necessary that he should refer us to the head itself. It is no objection that David soon after imputes to his own sins the miseries which he endures; for it is by no means an uncommon thing to find our errors, by a mode of expression not strictly correct, transferred to Christ.¹²²

Also, as in the case of Luther, there was, I believe, a proper recognition of the faith of the Old Testament and an identification of Calvin with the Old Testament saint, a recognition that stands behind Calvin's oft-quoted sentences:

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, "An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;" for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubt, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the mind of men are wont to be agitated.¹²³

The question that needs to be asked, however, even as in the case of Luther, is what effect this identification with the Old Testament faithful had on Calvin's Christological interpretation. Does Preus's theory, that this recognition by Luther caused him to downplay his Christological exegesis, apply to Calvin as well? Did the discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith take away a Christological element from

¹²²Calvin, Psalms, 437.

¹²³Ibid., 115-16.

Calvin's exegesis? Perhaps in one way it did, but in another way, no, as Thomas F. Torrance remarks:

It was this [doctrine of justification by faith] that led Calvin, as it had led Luther, toward such a clear grasp of the essential method we must adopt in interpretation and exposition if we are to be faithful to the actual matter of the Scriptures in their witness to Jesus Christ. Justification by grace alone calls a man so radically into question that he must be stripped of himself, and therefore in all knowing and interpreting he must work from a centre in Christ and not in himself.¹²⁴

This is hard to understand. How did the doctrine of justification by faith result in a hermeneutic in which Calvin worked from a Christological center, and yet departed so radically from the Christological exegesis that went before? And is the same thing necessary for us today? Again, I will attempt to answer this question in the last chapter.

Other Reformers

Like Luther and Calvin, most of the other reformers of the sixteenth century gave more attention to the *Hebraica Veritas*, and along with it, the literal-historical interpretation of the Scriptures.¹²⁵ There was some carry-over from medieval allegorical exegesis, but for the most part the trend was to prepare for the Christological interpretation by

¹²⁴Thomas F. Torrance, The Hermeneutics of John Calvin, Monograph Supplements to SJT (Edinburgh: Sottish Academic Press, 1988), 158.

¹²⁵R. Gerald Hobbs, "*Hebraica Veritas and Traditio Apostolica: Saint Paul and the Interpretation of the Psalms in the Sixteenth Century*," in The Bible and the Sixteenth Century, ed. David C. Steinmetz, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 11 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 83-99.

laying a solid foundation in the historical meaning of the text, as evidenced in the Psalms commentaries of Zwingli and Bucer.¹²⁶ There was always the threat that a strict historical interpretation might exclude a Christological interpretation altogether, and it actually happened in the case of the heretic Servetus.¹²⁷ But for the most part, the recovery of the literal historical-grammatical interpretation resulted in a Christological interpretation which was limited to either a prophecy in those cases where the New Testament called for such an interpretation, or to typology where there was the recognition that the language of the psalm seemed to go beyond the earthly Davidic king. This was the trend that would continue among conservative Christian scholars right up to the present.

From the Reformation to the Present

This section will give a broad, sweeping
characterization of Psalms exegesis up to the twentieth

¹²⁶R. Gerald Hobbs, "How Firm a Foundation: Martin Bucer's Historical Exegesis of the Psalms," CH 53 (1984): 477-91; "Martin Bucer on Psalm 22: A Study in the Application of Rabbinic Exegesis by a Christian Hebraist," in Histoire de l'exegese au XVIe siecle, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel, Etudes de Philologie et D'Histoire 34 (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1978), 144-63.

¹²⁷Servetus even considered Psalm 110 to refer exclusively to David and his son Solomon. See Jerome Friedman, "Servetus on the Psalms: The Exegesis of History," in Histoire de l'exegese au XVIe siecle, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel, Etudes de Philologie et D'Histoire 34 (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1978), 164-78.

century, while focusing more narrowly on some significant twentieth century developments.

"Conservative" Exegesis to the
Twentieth Century

Among Catholic scholars during this time, there was always maintained, at least in theory, the dual sense of Scripture, literal and spiritual.¹²⁸ There were of course those who maintained the importance of the literal sense, and even those who were engaged in textual and "higher" criticism.¹²⁹ But the spiritual sense of the text was always presumed to be there.

In conservative Protestantism, allegorical became, more or less, a thing of the past (except for some of the more pietistic movements). Christ was present in the Old Testament in typology, and he was present in prophecy. For the psalms, this meant that David had to be upheld as type, prophet, and author. Davidic authorship of the psalms was seen as necessary, not only for the ones attributed to him in the superscriptions, but, of course, those assigned to him by the New Testament. David had, at least in some measure, to be regarded as a prophet, for the New Testament so regarded him (Acts 2:30). And for those psalms where there was recognition that the setting of the psalm was one in the life of David,

¹²⁸Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior*," 64-65.

¹²⁹Emil G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (Harper & Row, 1955; repr., New York: Schocken, 1969), 43.

but there was language in the psalm that seemed either to resemble or foreshadow events in Christ's life, David had to be upheld as type. Along with this, of course, it was important to date, at least the psalms attributed to David, to the time period of his reign. Consequently, the dating of a psalm became a very important part of its meaning and interpretation.

With David playing the dual role of author/prophet and type, it became necessary to try to delineate just where in the psalms David played these roles. Thus, more sophistication was needed in putting whole psalms or parts of psalms into categories. Some scholars, such as E. W. Hengstenberg regarded all the messianic psalms as being prophetic, and simply divided them into psalms predictive of the Messiah's sufferings or predictive of his glories.¹³⁰ Other scholars divided the messianic psalms into various classes. Franz Delitzsch used five main categories: typical, typico-prophetic, Jehovic, indirectly messianic, and purely predictive (only Psalm 110 being in this last category).¹³¹ A. F. Kirkpatrick used somewhat similar categories, but had no corresponding category to Delitzsch's purely prophetic.¹³²

¹³⁰E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions (London, 1872-78; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 1.149-52.

¹³¹Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, trans. Francis Bolton (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 3.66-71.

¹³²A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms: With Introduction and Notes, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

It should be mentioned here as well that there were many Psalms commentaries on the more popular level which set forth a messianic interpretation of many of the psalms. For example, Spurgeon's massive, originally seven-volume, Treasury of David has been very influential on large segments of the conservative Christian Church.¹³³ The scholar who would dismiss works such as these as non-scholarly or pre-critical would do well to remember the words of Brevard Childs:

With all due respect to Gunkel, the truly great expositors for probing to the theological heart of the Psalter remain Augustine, Kimchi, Luther, Calvin, the long forgotten Puritans buried in Spurgeon's Treasury, the haunting sermons of John Donne, and the learned and pious reflections of de Muis, Francke, and Geier. Admittedly these commentators run the risk, which is common to all interpretation, of obscuring rather than illuminating the biblical text, but because they stand firmly within the canonical context, one can learn from them how to speak anew the language of faith.¹³⁴

"Liberal" Exegesis to the Twentieth Century

I fully recognize that "liberal" and "conservative" are loaded terms that have probably worn out their welcome. However, I use the term "liberal" as a convenient label to broadly characterize an approach to the Bible that is more critically oriented toward the biblical text than had been the traditional position of historic Christianity for its first

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), lxxvi-lxxxv.

¹³³The work appeared in several editions and has been reprinted many times. The original edition was published in London by Passmore & Alabaster, 1870-1885.

¹³⁴Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 523.

eighteen centuries, and that does not work from the presupposition that the Scriptures are infallible and inerrant.

Among the various elements in the Psalms that came under scrutiny by the critics were: (1) the authenticity of the superscriptions, (2) Davidic authorship of any of the psalms, (3) the unity of the compositions, (4) their antiquity, and (5) their value for Christian theology in light of their troublesome elements (imprecations, confessions, pharisaical righteousness, Jewish nationalism, materialism). Little wonder, then, that these critical scholars, with their rejection of the supernatural, found neither prophecy nor type in the Old Testament psalms. Messianism in the psalms, for these scholars, was a moot point.

Twentieth Century Developments

Much of what has already been discussed continued into the twentieth century. Conservative Protestant scholars still looked at the messianic psalms as either predictive, typological, or a combination of the two. Liberal Protestant scholars continued to deny the elements mentioned above. But there have been some new twists in this century. What follows is a brief discussion of some of these new developments, not necessarily in chronological order. Interaction with many of these developments and their representative scholars will take place in later chapters.

The Early History of Religions School

Comparative studies in the first part of the twentieth century tended to deny to Israel any originality in her religious conceptions. This reached an extreme in the writings of Friedrich Delitzsch and his "pan-Babylonianism." For Delitzsch, the Psalms were totally unworthy of use in Christianity and Christian worship, and bore no relationship to Christ or the religion of the New Testament.¹³⁵ Admittedly, this was an extreme position, and the reaction against it came even from within the religio-historical school; but clearly there was no desire within this movement, as practiced in the first part of the century with all its positivist assumptions, to find any revelation of a future messiah in the psalms.¹³⁶

Form Criticism

Hermann Gunkel's work and the subsequent work of his pupils, especially Sigmund Mowinckel, has had the most profound impact of all twentieth century developments on the study of the Psalms.¹³⁷ Formerly, the key to the interpretation of a psalm had been its date and exact

¹³⁵See Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation, 156-58.

¹³⁶For more on this school see Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research, exp. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 83-118.

¹³⁷See Erhard Gerstenberger, "Psalms," in Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 179-223; Ronald E. Clements, "Interpreting the Psalms," chap. in One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 76-98.

historical situation. Now, the key was to find the correct *Gattung* for any given psalm, and then to determine the psalm's *Sitz im Leben*. This had profound effects on both conservative and liberal exegesis. For both, there was a shift away from the need to find an exact date or historical situation in order to interpret a given psalm. For those more liberally inclined, there was no longer the need to be so radically bent on assigning all the psalms a post-exilic or even a Maccabean date. For at least some of those more conservatively inclined, it was noticed that Gunkel and his followers had found that the *Sitz im Leben* for many of the psalms fit better into a pre-exilic situation rather than a post-exilic, and that the royal psalms, in particular, may have gone back to the days of the divided monarchy, if not, the united monarchy. For many conservatives, it was enough to have the other side recognize that there may have been a Davidic impetus to the Psalter, and they themselves began to back off from the necessity of upholding the authenticity of the superscriptions or the need to defend Davidic authorship of all psalms attributed to him. In other words, form criticism seemed to be, at least in Old Testament and Psalms studies, a rather neutral discipline that both sides could engage in. The conservative could practice form criticism in the Psalms and still hold to both prophetic and typological messianic elements in the psalms. The liberal could practice form criticism and concede that, in a general way, Jesus Christ was

the fulfillment of the messianic hopes in the Psalms, without conceding that there were actual prophecies or intentionally typological elements in them.

It is impossible to trace in a brief survey all the developments that have taken place in trying to find the proper cultic *Sitz im Leben* of the psalms, in particular the so-called "enthronement" and royal psalms. Well known are the hypotheses of Sigmund Mowinckel (enthronement festival), Artur Weiser (covenant renewal), and Hans-Joachim Kraus (royal Zion festival).¹³⁸ Again, I will be interacting with these in later chapters, but in passing, I think it is safe to say that conservative scholars have been much more prone to adopt portions of the Weiser and Kraus hypotheses into their Psalms interpretation, than that of Mowinckel's tie-in to the *akitu* festival and its resemblance to the early pan-Babylonianism. In particular, those who saw the messianic psalms as more typological in nature, rather than purely predictive, have been able to point to various elements in these hypotheses as messianically typological. This holds for the next development as well.

¹³⁸Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 2 vols., trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon, 1967); Artur Weiser, The Psalms, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962); Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 1-59: A Commentary and Psalms 60-150: A Commentary, trans. H. C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988-89); Theology of the Psalms, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986).

The Myth and Ritual School

The scholars in this school, known also as the "Scandinavian school" and the "Patternism school" took Mowinckel's work to another level. Mowinckel had posited the centrality of the king's role in the cult, but had emphatically declared that it was "wholly improbable" that the Israelite king "should have been regarded as identical with Yahweh, or in the cult have played Yahweh's part."¹³⁹ However, those in the myth and ritual school proposed the identification or near-identification of the king with Yahweh in the *akitu* festival, and held that the festival involved a ritual humiliation of the king as representative of the humiliation, death, and subsequent resurrection and exaltation of the deity, and that many of the psalms (such as Psalm 89) reflected this ritual.¹⁴⁰ Several of the representatives of this school advocated that this way of looking at the Psalms more clearly gave a typological picture of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 1.59.

¹⁴⁰For representative works of this school see Aage Bentzen, King and Messiah, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970); S. H. Hooke, ed., Myth and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); ed., The Labyrinth (London: Oxford University Press, 1935); ed., Myth, Ritual and Kingship (London: Oxford University Press, 1958); Ivan Engnell, Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East, 2d ed. (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1943); Aubrey R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955).

¹⁴¹For example, Bentzen, King and Messiah, esp. pp. 33-34, 75-76, 83 (n. 7), 86 (n. 12), 110 (n. 8), 111 (n. 8).

This school, which had considerable success for a while, has been declared to be more or less a thing of the past, and even the hypothesis that Marduk was a dying and rising divinity in Babylonian religion has largely been abandoned.¹⁴² Yet there are still modified remnants in survival today, notably in the work of John Eaton.¹⁴³ And the typological, though not explicitly stated, is implicitly suggested. For example, in the last paragraph of the preface (p. ix) to Eaton's Kingship and the Psalms, a work devoted to showing that most of the psalms are royal psalms, the author says:

I pray that the truth may be served and not hindered by this work, which after its fashion is turned toward the greatest mystery of religion, towards the representative figure that carries all the world's agony and hope.¹⁴⁴

This line of typological exegesis will be further examined in chapter 8.

Sensus Plenior

Among Catholic scholars, and some Protestant scholars as well, one way of explaining the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament has been the *sensus plenior*,

¹⁴²See Karel van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 331-44.

¹⁴³John H. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, SBT 2d ser. 32 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976); The Psalms Come Alive: Capturing the Voice and Art of Israel's Songs (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray, 1984; repr., Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), esp. pp. 116-44.

¹⁴⁴See also Eaton's conclusion (pp. 198-201).

the "fuller sense." Though there is no one authorized definition of *sensus plenior*, the one put forth by Raymond E. Brown, will serve for the present discussion:

The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation.¹⁴⁵

There are points in this definition over which there has been extensive discussion and disagreement. For example, Brown himself admits that the phrase, "not clearly intended by the human author," involves a bit of hedging, for there are some who suggest there must have been some awareness on the human author's part, while others, Brown included, would say that no awareness is required at all.¹⁴⁶ Some would limit the "further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation" only to the New Testament authors, while others would extend it into post-biblical times--even to the present--as well.¹⁴⁷

Again, there will be more interaction with the concept of *sensus plenior* in later chapters. For now, I would just note that this has been one way that Catholic scholarship, in particular, has been able to engage in scientific exegesis of the Psalms, while still holding that there is a meaning, most

¹⁴⁵Raymond E. Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior* of Sacred Scripture", 92.

¹⁴⁶Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," 616.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

often Christological, intended in the Psalms, that is not recoverable by scientific or critical investigation.¹⁴⁸

Neo-Orthodoxy and The Biblical Theology Movement

In 1789 Johann P. Gabler gave the famous address in which he made the distinction between biblical theology and dogmatic theology, and declared that the former should be a purely descriptive discipline. The result was that biblical theology was, in fact, separated from dogmatics and, in the process, theology almost died. Biblical theology soon became nothing more than an investigation of the individual biblical writers' separate and diverse theologies. The practitioners of this new biblical theology came to regard with suspicion all dogmatic or systematic attempts to connect the biblical writings with an overarching unity, and they felt it could only be done by the imposition of philosophical categories

¹⁴⁸For further literature on the *sensus plenior* see Raymond E. Brown, "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," CBQ 15 (1953): 141-62; "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," CBQ 25 (1963): 262-85; "The Problems of the '*Sensus Plenior*'," ETL 43 (1967): 460-69; William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," TynBul 29 (1978): 49-60; "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 260-77; Douglas A. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," Grace Theological Journal 9 (1988): 105-27; James M. Robinson, "Scripture and Theological Method: A Protestant Study in *Sensus Plenior*," CBQ 27 (1965): 6-27; Bruce Vawter, "The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations," CBQ 26 (1964): 85-96.

which were totally foreign to the biblical writers themselves.¹⁴⁹

But the historico-critical investigation of the various books of the Bible left biblical studies cold and sterile. Biblical theology had, in fact, become theologically bankrupt. Karl Barth's commentary on Romans and his Church Dogmatics were written in reaction to this situation, and thus was born a movement, of which one of the goals was the reuniting of exegesis and theology. Barth's particular method of theological interpretation of the Old Testament came to be called Christological exegesis. A passage from the Church Dogmatics shows his thinking:

And now we have only to answer the question whether the Old Testament witnesses understood themselves in the same way, i.e., as called and separated witnesses of the one revelation of the one God in Jesus Christ, as they undoubtedly came to be understood by the men of the New Testament. This is the decisive issue between the Church and the Synagogue. In denying Christ, the Synagogue denies the one revelation of the one God. Its answer is therefore in the negative. But the Church gives an affirmative answer, as does also the New Testament: Christ has risen from the dead, and has revealed the fulfillment of Scripture and therefore its real meaning. In the light of this, how can the Church understand the Old Testament witnesses except as witnesses to Christ? A religio-historical understanding of the Old Testament in abstraction from the revelation of the risen Christ is simply an abandonment of the New Testament and of the sphere of the Church in favour of that of the Synagogue, and therefore in favour of an Old Testament which is

¹⁴⁹See Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in The New Testament Student and Theology, ed. John H. Skilton, The New Testament Student 3 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), 34-35. The biblical theology I am referring to here is not the biblical theology developed by conservative Reformed scholars which deals primarily with God's progressive self-revelation in the Scriptures.

understood apart from its true object, and content. Already, in an earlier context, we have stated the basic considerations which have to be stated in this regard, and all that we can now do is to say once more that this question of the self-understanding of the Old Testament witnesses ultimately identical with the question of faith. If Christ has risen from the dead, then the understanding of the Old Testament as a witness to Christ is not a later interpretation, but an understanding of its original and only legitimate sense.¹⁵⁰

One adherent of Barth's Christological exegesis was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I will be interacting with and appropriating elements of Bonhoeffer's Christological exegesis of the psalms later, but for now an excerpt from one of his writings will give an indication of his basic direction:

According to the witness of the Bible, David is, as the anointed king of the chosen people of God, a prototype of Jesus Christ. What happens to him happens to him for the sake of the one who is in him and who is to proceed from him, namely Jesus Christ. And he is not unaware of this, but "being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:30f.). David was a witness to Christ in his office, in his life, and in his words. The New Testament says even more. In the Psalms of David the promised Christ himself already speaks (Hebrews 2:12; 10:5) or, as may also be indicated, the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 3:7). These same words which David spoke, therefore, the future Messiah spoke through him. The prayers of David were prayed also by Christ. Or better, Christ himself prayed them through his forerunner David.¹⁵¹

Many consider this movement to have reached its Christological and typological extreme in the work of Wilhelm

¹⁵⁰Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, ed. and trans. Geoffrey A. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 1/2.489-90.

¹⁵¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, trans. James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 18-19.

Vischer.¹⁵² Few have followed him. Von Rad was strongly opposed to Vischer's brand of Christological exegesis and typology for failing to appreciate the Old Testament's independent witness and diversity.¹⁵³ Yet he, too, tied the Testaments together by a kind of typology, which he preferred to refer to as "re-actualization" or "eschatological correspondence."¹⁵⁴

He declared that this typology was correspondent to the belief that in the Old and New Testaments "we have to do with one divine discourse."¹⁵⁵ Yet, for all his brilliant insights, his particular conception of typology seems to be emptied of its force when he states that:

typological interpretation has only to do with the witness to the divine event, not with such correspondences in historical, cultural, or archaeological details as the Old Testament and the New may have in common. It must hold itself to the kerygma that is intended, and not fix upon

¹⁵²See his The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ, vol. 1, trans. A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth, 1936); also "Everywhere the Scripture is about Christ Alone," trans. Thomas Wieser, in The Old Testament and the Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 90-101.

¹⁵³See Brevard S. Childs, "Gerhard von Rad in American Dress," in The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honor of James Luther Mays on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Donald J. Miller, PTMS 4 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 82.

¹⁵⁴Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1965), 2.319-87; "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," trans. John Bright, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 17-39.

¹⁵⁵Von Rad, "Typological Interpretation," 36.

the narrative details with the aid of which the kerygma is set forth.¹⁵⁶

The same problem existed for the biblical theology movement in America. This was different from either the biblical theology that was practiced in the nineteenth century as a result of Gabler's essay, or the "history or revelation" type practiced by conservative Reformed scholars like Geerhardus Vos. Rather it was a movement that was concerned, just as Barth, had been, to reunite theology and biblical studies, and was perhaps best represented by the works of George Ernest Wright.¹⁵⁷ It was a movement that depended heavily on a theology of the "Acts of God," and yet, curiously, could deny that many of the acts had actually happened, or would attempt to find naturalistic explanations for them. Brevard Childs summarizes the criticism of Langdon Gilkey on this point:

They used Biblical and orthodox language to speak of divine activity in history, but at the same time continued to speak of the same events in purely naturalistic terms. "Thus they repudiate all the concrete elements that in the biblical account made the event itself unique and so gave content to their theological concept of a special divine deed."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 36-37.

¹⁵⁷In particular, George Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, SBT (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); The Old Testament and Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

¹⁵⁸Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 65, citing Langdon Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," JR 41 (1961): 199.

In addition, the movement sought to emphasize the unity of the two Testaments as witness to Christ who was the "central key to the contents of the Old Testament,"¹⁵⁹ yet gave warnings about getting carried away and dissolving "theology into Christology," and becoming ensnared in the trap of "christomonism."¹⁶⁰ It boldly declared that the Old Testament was the Word of God for the Church, yet warned against drawing the inference "that the Old Testament must be understood christologically."¹⁶¹

Brevard Childs declared in 1970 that the biblical theology movement was in crisis.¹⁶² After describing the "rise and fall" of the movement, he then proceeded to declare that there was a need for a new biblical theology, one that was more properly established in a context suited for studying the Bible theologically.¹⁶³ After rejecting several possible contexts (ancient Near Eastern literature, Northwest Semitic languages, history, culture, etc.,) he then pointed to what he felt was "the most appropriate context from which to do Biblical Theology."¹⁶⁴ A new movement was thus set in place

¹⁵⁹Wright, God Who Acts, 29.

¹⁶⁰Wright, The Old Testament and Theology, 9, 13-38.

¹⁶¹George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond: John Knox, 1959), 7-8.

¹⁶²Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis.

¹⁶³Ibid., 97-99.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 99.

that has sparked great debate and caused a vast amount of literature to arise. For the suggested context was--of all possible things--the canon of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER 2

THE CANONICAL APPROACH OF BREVARD CHILDS

This chapter and the next will consist of examinations of the canonical approach of Brevard Childs and the canonical criticism of James Sanders, respectively. Examination of the work of these two scholars, before I describe my own approach in Part Two, is necessitated by the following considerations: (1) while both men are recognized as the founders and leading scholars in canonical study, their actual approaches are very different; (2) both men have done special work in the Psalms utilizing their approaches; and (3) both men have students and/or followers who have used their canonical approaches in the study of individual psalms or the Psalter as a whole.

Both chapters will begin with a description of their respective approaches, but from that point will proceed somewhat differently. The interaction with Childs in the scholarly literature has been more extensive than that with Sanders. So, while the chapter on Sanders will consist of two parts, description and evaluation, this chapter on Childs will consist of, first, description, then second, an examination of the arguments of his critics. While there will be some of my own evaluation of Childs contained in this second part, I will reserve most of my own criticism of Childs for chapters 5-6

where I set forth my own approach. From the outset I inform the reader that my evaluation of Childs will be guardedly positive, while the evaluation of Sanders will be more negative. In short, I will be arguing that Childs's approach is not canonical enough, and that Sanders's approach is not canonical at all.

A Description of Childs's Approach

In his 1964 article, "Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary,"¹ Childs registered his disappointment with the methodology of most Old Testament commentaries. Childs argued that the supposed objectivity with which a commentator was expected to begin the descriptive task destroyed the possibility of discussing theological issues in the same commentary in any authoritative manner:

The majority of commentators understand the descriptive task as belonging largely to an objective discipline. One starts on neutral ground, without being committed to a theological position, and deals with textual, historical, and philological problems of the biblical sources before raising the theological issue. But, in point of fact, by defining the Bible as a "source" for objective research the nature of the content to be described has been already determined. *A priori*, it has become a part of a larger category of phenomena. The possibility of genuine theological exegesis has been destroyed from the outset.²

¹Brevard S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary," Int 18 (1964): 432-49.

²*Ibid.*, 437.

He thus proposed that the writer of an Old Testament commentary must consciously begin his work

from within an explicit framework of faith. . . . Approaches which start from a neutral ground never can do full justice to the theological substance because there is no way to build a bridge from the neutral, descriptive content to the theological reality.³

Childs suggested that the Christian exegete, in particular, must interpret "the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament and, vice versa, . . . the New Testament in the light of the Old."⁴ This did not mean, however, that the Christian exegete was bound by "theories of sacred language or sacred text which restrict the full freedom of the exegesis and destroy the grounds of precise textual description."⁵ Rather, the exegete, working from a theological framework of the Bible as the Word of God, is free to carry on the exegetical task without having to harmonize historically the biblical texts either with other texts or with extrabiblical evidence.⁶ Thus, we see already Childs's concern that modern biblical exegesis, while done in faith, cannot return to pre-critical naivete. Exegesis, though explicitly done from a context of faith, must be just as explicitly post-critical.

More forcefully, and with a more comprehensive target than just Old Testament commentaries, Childs's 1970 Biblical

³Ibid., 438.

⁴Ibid., 440.

⁵Ibid., 439.

⁶Ibid., 439-40.

Theology in Crisis⁷ unleashed a broadside against what he referred to as the "Biblical Theology movement," particularly in its American setting. Childs contended that the biblical theology movement, with its emphasis on the revelational acts of God in history, an emphasis that was not able to carry the theological weight laid on it, and which, in essence, resulted in a "canon within the canon" (i.e., concentration on the narrative portions of the Old Testament), had begun to die in the 1950s and had, in fact, suffered a fatal blow in the early 1960s.⁸ He also faulted the movement for trying to integrate historical-critical reconstructions of Israelite history with historical-theological categories such as *heilsgeschichte*, as if a reconstructed Old Testament history could have anything to say theologically.⁹

Childs proposed instead that the canon should be made to bear the theological weight of a proper biblical theology:

As a fresh alternative, we would like to defend the thesis that the canon of the Christian church is the most appropriate context from which to do Biblical Theology. What does this mean? First of all, implied in the thesis is the basic Christian confession, shared by all branches of historic Christianity, that the Old and New Testaments together constitute Sacred Scripture for the Christian church. The status of canonicity is not an objectively demonstrable claim but a statement of Christian belief. In its original sense, canon does not simply perform the formal function of separating the books that are authoritative from others that are not, but is the rule

⁷Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

⁸Ibid., esp. pp. 55, 62-66, 83-87.

⁹Ibid., 39-44, 62-69, 84-85, 102, 110.

that delineates the area in which the church hears the word of God.¹⁰

Two things should be noted here. The first is that Childs is already beginning to display a certain vagueness (or, perhaps better, expansiveness) about what he actually means by "canon" or "canonical context." For example, in discussing the doctrine of inspiration, he chides the biblical theology movement for having discarded the doctrine, and then suggests that the canonical perspective offers fresh insight on the doctrine: "In our opinion, the claim for the inspiration of Scripture is the claim for the uniqueness of the canonical context of the church through which the Holy Spirit works."¹¹ In this case, "canonical context" is not the setting of a biblical passage in the context of the entire Bible, but the canon's setting in the context of the Christian community.

Second, it must be remembered that Childs is explicitly post-critical. He is not rejecting historical-critical methods; he is simply saying that historical-critical reconstructions have nothing to say theologically:

The historicocritical method is an inadequate method for studying the Bible as the Scriptures of the church because it does not work from the needed context. This is not to say for a moment that the critical method is incompatible with Christian faith--we regard the Fundamentalist position as indefensible--but rather that the critical method, when operating from its own chosen context, is incapable of either raising or answering the full range of

¹⁰Ibid., 99.

¹¹Ibid., 104.

questions which the church is constrained to direct to its Scripture.

Surely some will object to this line of argument by asserting that the exegete's only task is to understand what the Biblical text meant, and that the critical methodology is alone capable of doing this correctly. The historical reading is exegesis; everything else is "eisegesis." Our response to this type of objection is by now familiar. First, what the text "meant" is determined in large measure by its relation to the one to whom it is directed. While it remains an essential part of Biblical exegesis to establish a text's function in its original context(s), the usual corollary that the original function is alone normative does not follow. Secondly, the question of what the text now means cannot be dismissed as a purely subjective enterprise suitable only to private devotion and homiletics. When seen from the context of canon both the question of what the text meant and what it means are inseparably linked and both belong to the task of the interpretation of the Bible as Scripture. To the extent that the use of the critical method sets up an iron curtain between the past and the present, it is an inadequate method for studying the Bible as the church's Scripture.¹²

In short, Childs accuses those who use the historical-critical method exclusively of theological "tone-deafness."¹³

Childs's next major work was his Exodus commentary.¹⁴ In the first two sentences of the preface Childs set forth the goal and program of the commentary:

The purpose of this commentary is unabashedly theological. Its concern is to understand Exodus as scripture of the church. The exegesis arises as a theological discipline within the context of the canon and is directed toward the community of faith which lives by its confession of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

¹²Ibid., 141-42.

¹³Ibid., 142.

¹⁴Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974).

¹⁵Ibid., ix.

Further, in the introduction, Childs states that he

does not share the hermeneutical position of those who suggest that biblical exegesis is an objective, descriptive enterprise, controlled solely by scientific criticism, to which the Christian theologian can at best add a few homiletical reflections for piety's sake.¹⁶

The commentary dispenses with the usual lengthy critical introduction; Childs feels that those matters are covered sufficiently in other commentaries, but, more importantly, he says, "In my judgment, a false sense of their importance is created."¹⁷ The commentary follows the same sixfold format for each pericope throughout: (1) Childs's own translation from the Hebrew, (2) a treatment of the text's oral and literary development, (3) exegesis of the text in its Old Testament context, (4) a focus on the New Testament's use of the passage, (5) a section on the history of exegesis of the passage, and (6) "a theological reflection on the text within the context of the Christian canon."¹⁸ One might have thought that this last section would be nothing more than a repetition of the material in the fourth section. However, it is important to notice how Childs further defines what he intends to do in this section:

It seeks to relate the various Old Testament and New Testament witnesses in the light of the history of exegesis to the theological issues which evoked the witness. It is an attempt to move from witness to substance. This reflection is not intended to be timeless

¹⁶Ibid., xiii.

¹⁷Ibid., x.

¹⁸Ibid., xiv-xvi.

or offer biblical truths for all ages, but to present a model of how the Christian seeks to understand the testimony of the prophets and apostles in his own time and situation.¹⁹

What Childs does here, in essence, is the same thing we noticed in Biblical Theology in Crisis. "Canonical context," for Childs, can refer to different things: either a particular passage's context in the canon of Scripture, or the canon's context in the Christian church. Or it can refer to both contexts in combination. That is why the last section on "theological reflection on the text within the context of the Christian canon" is more than just an examination of the New Testament's use of a passage, and why the history of exegesis section comes before it: the canon's context is the church, and not just the church of modern times, but the whole church.

Up to this point, Childs had laid out his canonical approach in monograph and commentary form, and also in several articles.²⁰ But in 1979 Childs raised the approach to a new level with the publication of what was at that time his most significant work, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.²¹ It was a brand new way of writing an Old Testament introduction:

¹⁹Ibid., xvi.

²⁰See Brevard S. Childs, "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," CTM 43 (1972): 709-22; "The Exegetical Significance of Canon for the Study of the Old Testament," in Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 29 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 66-80.

²¹Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

This introduction attempts to offer a different model for the discipline from that currently represented. It seeks to describe the form and function of the Hebrew Bible in its role as sacred scripture for Israel. It argues the case that the biblical literature has not been correctly understood or interpreted because its role as religious literature has not been correctly assessed.²²

An important phrase in this citation from Childs's preface to the Introduction is, "sacred scripture for Israel." Childs, while seeking to apply the canonical approach to a larger scope, seems at the same time to have somewhat narrowed the canonical context with which he is working, a narrowing that has caused confusion among critics and reviewers. The canonical context of the Christian church appears to have been dropped. He states that his approach

is descriptive in nature. It is not confessional in the sense of consciously assuming tenets of Christian theology, but rather it seeks to describe as objectively as possible the canonical literature of ancient Israel which is the heritage of both Jew and Christian. If at times the description becomes theological in its terminology, it is because the literature itself requires it.²³

Later in this chapter the question will be asked as to whether or not Childs has either been successful in this delimitation, or if he even had the right to do so, based on the principles he had been espousing for over fifteen years.

The first chapter of Childs's Introduction is devoted to a history of Old Testament introductions. At the end of the

²²Ibid., 16.

²³Ibid.

chapter he sums up the status of Old Testament studies with the following observation and question:

Those scholars who pursued historical criticism of the Old Testament no longer found a significant place for the canon. Conversely, those scholars who sought to retain a concept of the canon were unable to find a significant role for historical criticism. . . .

In my judgment, the crucial task is to rethink the problem of Introduction in such a way as to overcome this long established tension between the canon and criticism. Is it possible to understand the Old Testament as canonical scripture and yet to make full and consistent use of the historical critical tools?²⁴

In the over six hundred pages that follow, Childs seeks to provide an affirmative answer to the question. The success or failure of the attempt will be evaluated later in this chapter. At this point it will be enough to describe how he goes about it. In the second chapter Childs sets out all the problems with canon, ranging from terminology to scope. He says that "it is necessary at the outset to settle on a definition of the term canon."²⁵ Yet he never quite gets around to defining it, though he does make many points about what a definition must include and emphasize.²⁶ In the third chapter he discuss how canonical analysis relates to the various Old Testament critical disciplines. Though he has not yet actually defined canon, he does tell precisely what he

²⁴Ibid., 45.

²⁵Ibid., 57.

²⁶He had, however, defined canon in an earlier article, "The Exegetical Significance of Canon for the Study of the Old Testament." We will look at that definition later.

means by canonical analysis. Several quotes from this section are necessary to see Childs's thinking.

The major task of a canonical analysis of the Hebrew Bible is a descriptive one. It seeks to understand the peculiar shape and special function of these texts which comprise the Hebrew canon.²⁷

Canonical analysis focuses its attention on the final form of the text itself. It seeks neither to use the text merely as a source for other information obtained by means of an oblique reading, nor to reconstruct a history of religious development. Rather it treats the literature in its own integrity. . . . To take the canonical shape of these texts seriously is to seek to do justice to a literature which Israel transmitted as a record of God's revelation to his people along with Israel's response. The canonical approach to the Hebrew Bible does not make any dogmatic claims for the literature apart from the literature itself, as if these texts contained only timeless truths or communicated in a unique idiom, but rather it studies them as historically and theologically conditioned writings which were accorded a normative function in the life of this community.²⁸

. . . the approach seeks to work within that interpretative structure which the biblical text has received from those who formed and used it as sacred scripture. To understand that canonical shape requires the highest degree of exegetical skill in an intensive wrestling with the text. It is expected that interpreters will sometime disagree on the nature of the canonical shaping, but the disagreement will enhance the enterprise if the various interpreters share a common understanding of the nature of the exegetical task.²⁹

In answer to the question as to why the final form of the text is the special focus of this analysis, Childs says:

The reason for insisting on the final form of scripture lies in the peculiar relationship between text and people of God which is constitutive of canon. The shape of the biblical text reflects a history of encounter between God

²⁷Childs, Introduction, 72.

²⁸Ibid., 73.

²⁹Ibid.

and Israel. The canon serves to describe this peculiar relationship and to define the scope of this history by establishing a beginning and end to the process. . . . The significance of the final form of the text is that it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation. Within the Old Testament neither the process of the formation of the literature nor the history of its canonization is assigned an independent integrity. This dimension has often been lost or purposely blurred and is therefore dependent on scholarly reconstruction. The fixing of a canon of scripture implies that the witness to Israel's experience with God lies not in recovering such historical processes, but is testified to in the effect on the biblical text itself. Scripture bears witness to God's activity in history on Israel's behalf, but history *per se* is not a medium of revelation which is commensurate with a canon. It is only in the final form of the biblical text in which the normative history has reached an end that the full effect of this revelatory history can be perceived.³⁰

Childs recognizes that this approach flies full in the face of all that historical-critical, form critical, and traditio-historical disciplines desire to do in reconstructing Israel's history and earlier stages of the text. Childs's answer, however, is that the canon must be recognized as itself serving a critical function.

It is certainly true that earlier stages in the development of the biblical literature were often regarded as canonical prior to the establishment of the final form. In fact, the final form frequently consists of simply transmitting an earlier, received form of the tradition often unchanged from its original setting. Yet to take the canon seriously is also to take seriously the critical function which it exercises in respect to the earlier stages of the literature's formation. A critical judgment is evidenced in the way in which these earlier stages are handled. At times the material is passed on unchanged; at other times tradents select, rearrange, or expand the received tradition. The purpose of insisting on the

³⁰Ibid., 75-76.

authority of the final canonical form is to defend its role of providing this critical norm.³¹

In other words, the earlier stages of a text's history are important only if the canon says they are. The canon is afforded an equal critical status with the critical scholars, not in the reconstruction of the earlier stages of a text's history, but in the assessment of whether or not those earlier stages have any theological value.³²

Then comes one of the more controversial elements of Childs's theory. Even the sociological or historical setting of those responsible for the final form is irrelevant, for the recovery of that setting is also largely a matter of reconstruction, and besides, we do not even know the identity of the canonizers.

But basic to the canonical process is that those responsible for the actual editing of the text did their best to obscure their own identity. Thus the actual process by which the text was reworked lies in almost total obscurity. Its presence is detected by the effect on the text. . . . The canon formed the decisive *Sitz im Leben* for the Jewish community's life, thus blurring the sociological evidence most sought after by the modern historian. When critical exegesis is made to rest on the recovery of these very sociological distinctions which have been obscured, it runs directly in the face of the canon's intention. . . .

It is not clear to what extent the ordering of the oral and written material into a canonical form always involved an intentional decision. . . . But irrespective of intentionality the effect of the canonical process was to render the tradition accessible to the future generation

³¹Childs, Introduction, 76.

³²On this point see also Childs's Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 11.

by means of a "canonical intentionality", which is coextensive with the meaning of the biblical text.³³

As for the relationship between canonical analysis and the various Old Testament critical disciplines, Childs takes special care to distinguish canonical analysis from other "critical" methods.

The approach which I am undertaking has been described by others as "canonical criticism". I am unhappy with this term because it implies that the canonical approach is considered another historical critical technique which can take its place alongside of source criticism, form criticism, rhetorical criticism, and similar methods. I do not envision the approach to canon in this light. Rather, the issue at stake in relation to the canon turns on establishing a stance from which the Bible can be read as sacred scripture.³⁴

This must be one of the most frequently skipped, hastily read, or ignored paragraphs in the Introduction, for many reviews and scholarly interactions with Childs, even several years after the book's publication, still refer to Childs's approach as "canonical criticism." But it is important to note that this is not just a trifling distinction on Childs's part. Childs's very important point here is that while all the other methodologies are qualified to investigate the text from their respective disciplinary stances, none of them are qualified to either ask, or expect answers to, theological questions.

After a fourth chapter devoted to the relationship between the canonical approach and textual criticism, Childs

³³Childs, Introduction, 78-79.

³⁴Ibid., 82.

then applies his canonical analysis to the various sections and individual books of the Old Testament canon. The format is virtually the same in each case. First, he discusses the critical issues in relation to each book, always concluding the discussion by declaring that critical study of the book has reached an impasse because of its failure to consider the book from a canonical perspective. Second, he gives his own analysis of the book's canonical shaping. Finally, he lists the theological and hermeneutical implications of the canonical approach to the section in question.

Childs has published three more volumes since the Introduction that will be only briefly touched on here, though material from these works will be used in the next section to show how Childs interacts with his critics. The first was the New Testament Canon: An Introduction,³⁵ the counterpart to his Old Testament Introduction, and quite a venture for an Old Testament scholar. The second was Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context,³⁶ in which Childs further developed the hermeneutical and theological implications of his canonical approach. Finally, and just recently, he published what may be considered his *magnum opus*, his Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: A Theological Reflection on the

³⁵Brevard S. Childs, The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

³⁶Brevard S. Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

Christian Bible.³⁷ It is only in this last volume that Childs has, in my opinion, returned in a consistent manner to his original program of doing exegesis and biblical theology in the canonical context of the Christian church:

Biblical theology has as its proper context the canonical scriptures of the Christian church, not because only this literature influenced its history, but because of the peculiar reception of this corpus by a community of faith and practice. The Christian church responded to this literature as the authoritative word of God, and it remains existentially committed to an inquiry into its inner unity because of its confession of the one gospel of Jesus Christ which it proclaims to the world.³⁸

There are many elements and nuances to Childs's approach which cannot be sufficiently explored in this brief description. But many of them will be encountered in the discussion of objections by Childs's critics.

Objections to Childs's Canonical Approach

Childs's canonical approach has come under intense scrutiny in book reviews, articles, symposiums, whole journal issues, books, and dissertations. In this section I will look at the objections that are most relevant to my own appropriation of, and yet distancing from, Childs's approach. The objections will be grouped under ten broad headings.

³⁷Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: A Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

³⁸Ibid., 8.

1. The Question of Methodology

The problem raised by critics and reviewers here takes three different, though non-exclusive, forms: (1) Childs has not given a clearly explained methodology for his program of canonical analysis, (2) the program is really nothing more than an extension of redaction and/or form criticism, and (3) even if there is a difference between canonical analysis and redaction criticism, Childs has failed to show how the canonical shaping of a book can be distinguished from the redactional shaping.

First, Childs has been faulted for lack of methodological clarity. This has been expressed understatedly in a recent volume by Mark Brett: "Childs's methodological statements were often not, however, as clear as one would wish."³⁹ More forcefully, Donn Morgan states, not just regarding Childs, but Sanders as well, that "despite numerous publications and the intense debate over canon, there is little if any methodological clarity concerning how one is to study the Bible canonically."⁴⁰

³⁹Mark G. Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis?: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.

⁴⁰Donn F. Morgan, "Canon or Criticism: Method or Madness?" ATR 68 (1986): 84. See also, John J. Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?" in The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters, ed. William Henry Propp, Baruch Halpern, and David Noel Freedman, BJS 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 6; Robert P. Carroll, review of Introduction to the Old Testament, by Brevard S. Childs, SJT 33 (1980): 290.

Second, the canonical approach has been branded as nothing more than an extension of form and redaction criticism. Some of the following statements will show the confusion in this area:

Redaction criticism when applied within Old Testament studies has been variously designated but most often referred to as "canonical criticism" or "canonical analysis."⁴¹

Most of what Childs calls "shaping" the literature into its final form is essentially what has long gone under the name of redactional.⁴²

Could it not, however, count as redaction criticism and thus as an extension of existing historical methods?⁴³

Childs has claimed too much and thus far demonstrated too little. It is possible to call [?] the approach no more than the giving of a new name to traditioning and redaction and then surrounding this process with mystery and certain abstract theological statements.⁴⁴

However, despite his own, probably unguarded, statement: "In one sense, I have simply extended the insights of the form critical method,"⁴⁵ Childs rejects the simple equation of his canonical approach with form or redaction criticism:

⁴¹John H. Hayes and Carl L. Holladay, Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 101.

⁴²Douglas A. Knight, "Canon and the History of Tradition: A Critique of Brevard S. Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," HBT 2 (1980): 136.

⁴³James Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," JSOT 16 (1980): 12.

⁴⁴Walter Harrelson, review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, JBL 100 (1981): 102.

⁴⁵Brevard S. Childs, "Response to Reviewers of Introduction to the OT as Scripture," JSOT 16 (1980): 52.

How does the canonical process relate to the redactional history of a book? The method of redactional criticism seeks to discern from the peculiar shape of the biblical signs of intentional reinterpretation of the material which can be related to an editor's particular historically conditioned perspective. A canonical method also makes use of the peculiar shape of the literature, often in direct dependence upon redactional analysis. However, the models by which the seams in the literature are interpreted differ markedly. Canonical analysis focuses its attention on the effect which the different layers have had on the final form of the text, rather than using the text as a source for other information obtained by means of an oblique reading, such as the editor's self-understanding. A major warrant for this approach is found within the biblical tradition itself. The tradents have consistently sought to hide their own footprints in order to focus attention on the canonical text itself rather than the process.⁴⁶

Again,

I have often made use of redactional criticism in studying the seams within the literature, but I have drawn such different implications from my analysis that I would distinguish my approach from that usually understood by that method. . . . Because the shapers of the material usually hid their identity, ascribing it no theological value, I do not feel that the main focus of critical research should lie in pursuing the redactors' motivations and biases. Rather, the emphasis should fall on the effect which the layering of tradition has had on the reworked text because of its objective status.⁴⁷

It seems here that Childs, for all his desire to distance what he does from redaction criticism, still ends up saying that the only difference is the goal of the analysis and the implications to be drawn as a result.⁴⁸ The goal is to

⁴⁶Childs, "The Exegetical Significance of Canon," 68.

⁴⁷Childs, "Response to Reviewers," 53-54.

⁴⁸In an earlier article ("The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," CTM 43 [1972]: 720), Childs even says that "the canonical redaction shaped the tradition in order to serve as Scripture for the use of later Israel" (emphasis mine).

understand the final text as opposed to the mind of the final redactor. The implications are hermeneutical and theological implications, as opposed to psychological ones that result from probing into the "editor's self-understanding." If that is the case, why not just admit that canonical analysis has no methodology, but is simply a stance from which to interpret the results of all the other critical methodologies? Childs comes very close to doing just that. It will be remembered from a quotation cited previously that Childs himself refuses to consider the canonical approach a "critical technique which can take its place alongside" the other critical methods, but considers it rather to be a "stance from which the Bible can be read as sacred scripture."⁴⁹ There are, however, as I see it, two major problems with Childs's attempted distinction.

The first problem relates most closely to the third line of criticism in regard to the methodology, that Childs has not been able to show how a canonical shaping is any different than a redactional shaping. In a 1977 article Childs listed what he considered to be evidences of canonical shaping. He listed six:

1. A collection of material has been detached from its original historical mooring and provided with a secondary, theological context.
2. The original historical setting of a tradition has been retained, but it has been placed within a framework which provided the material with an interpretative guideline.

⁴⁹Childs, Introduction, 82.

3. A body of material has been edited in the light of a larger body of canonical literature.
4. An original historical sequence of a prophet's message was subordinated to a new theological function by means of a radically theocentric focus in the canonical ordering of a book.
5. The shaping process altered the semantic level on which a passage originally functioned by assigning it a less-than-literal role within the canonical context.
6. Prophetic proclamation has been given a radically new eschatological interpretation by shifting the referent within the original oracles.⁵⁰

The problem with all of these is that it is hard to see from any of the examples how the suggested canonical shaping is any different from a redactional shaping. Morgan asks the question:

What are the methodological guidelines for locating and isolating these canonical signs? It is precisely here that canonical study is dependent upon other critical methodologies. To the extent that these signs are to be found in the peculiar juxtaposition of sources and oracles, the method of redaction criticism is crucial in their identification. To the extent that these signs are to be found in the overall structure of books or sources, the study is really form criticism writ large. Each of these traditional methods does have guidelines or procedures that must be used if canonical analysis is to have any precision. At this point the distinction between canonical study and other methods is very difficult to define and maintain.⁵¹

⁵⁰Childs, "The Exegetical Significance of Canon," 70-75.

⁵¹Donn F. Morgan, "Canon and Criticism," 89-90. See also, James Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 139-40, 146; George M. Landes, "The Canonical Approach to Introducing the Old Testament: Prodigy and Problems," JSOT 16 (1980): 38; Roland E. Murphy, "The Old Testament as Scripture," JSOT 16 (1980): 41. Cf. the criticism of J. Clinton McCann ("Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism" [Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1985], 254): "If Childs would recognize the distinction between the literary-historical reading of a text and

However, the second problem, and for me, the more serious of the two, is that Childs seems to be caught in the very trap which he himself had chided the majority of commentators for getting caught. If in fact, canonical analysis is dependent upon historical, tradition, form, and redaction criticisms for its data, then it seems that Childs has, to use his own words against him, tried "to build a bridge from the neutral, descriptive content to the theological reality."⁵² He has, in essence, made the theological stance of his canonical approach dependent upon critical methodologies and redaction criticism, in particular.

2. The Question of Definition

The second problem focused on by critics is that of Childs's very definition of canon. As we noted earlier, he did not actually give a complete definition of canon in his Introduction, but he has done so in other places.

I am using the term "canon" to refer to that historical process within ancient Israel--particularly in the post-exilic period--which entailed a collecting, selecting, and ordering of texts to serve a normative function as Sacred Scripture within the continuing religious community. In

the theological evaluation of a text, he could then admit that his canonical approach in practice is virtually identical to the application of redaction criticism to whole biblical books." For defenders of Childs's distinction between redactional and canonical analysis, see Mark G. Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 3; Charles J. Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics: The Theological Basis of Implications of the Thought of Brevard S. Childs" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 47-48; Rudolf Smend, "Questions About the Importance of Canon in an Old Testament Introduction," JSOT 16 (1980): 46.

⁵²Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," 438.

the transmission process, traditions which once arose in a particular milieu and were addressed to various historical situations were shaped in such a way as to serve as a normative expression of God's will to later generations of Israel who had not shared in those original historical events.⁵³

I am including under the term not only the final stages of setting limits on the scope of the sacred writings-- canonization proper--but also that process by which authoritative tradition was collected, ordered, and transmitted in such a way as to enable it to function as sacred scripture for a community of faith and practice.⁵⁴

One would have thought, if the term "canon" itself did not actually appear in the first citation, that these were definitions of "canonization," not "canon." And, in a way, this would be correct.⁵⁵ Then why does Childs come under such intense criticism for focusing only on the final form of the text? It would seem entirely unjustified from these two citations. The problem is that this "historical process" whereby the "authoritative tradition was collected, ordered, and transmitted" is almost totally unrecoverable. After a section in the Introduction in which he tells what he knows of this process, Childs then summarizes:

First of all, it should be incontrovertible that there was a genuine historical development involved in the formation of the canon and that any concept of canon which fails to reckon with this historical dimension is faulty.

⁵³Childs, "The Exegetical Significance of Canon," 67.

⁵⁴Childs, The New Testament as Canon, 25.

⁵⁵Note Douglas Knight's ("Canon and the History of Tradition," 138) statement and question: "From this it is apparent that Childs is operating with a broad view of canon, broad in terms of historical scope, nature of literary activity, and theological interpretation. The question is whether it in fact embraces so much that it loses its meaning."

Secondly, the available historical evidence allows for only a bare skeleton of this development. One searches largely in vain for solid biblical or extra-biblical evidence by which to trace the real causes and motivations behind many of the crucial decisions.

. . . the Jewish canon was formed through a complex historical process which is largely inaccessible to critical reconstruction. The history of the canonical process does not seem to be an avenue through which one can greatly illuminate the present canonical text. Not only is the evidence far too skeletal, but the sources seem to conceal the very kind of information which would allow a historian easy access into the material by means of uncovering the process.⁵⁶

The upshot of all this is that even though Childs defines canon so broadly so as to take in what is normally thought of as "canonization" rather than canon, he ends up focusing on the final form of the text because it, rather than any historical reconstruction of the canonization process, is the only thing we have which actually bears the stamp of that process.⁵⁷ However, if that is the case, then why does Childs feel the necessity to define canon so broadly? The answer may be found in several different places, but perhaps the most illuminating one is where Childs interacts with James Barr's criticisms of his definition of canon.

Barr, in his book Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism, accuses Childs of operating with three different definitions of canon which Barr labels "canon 1, canon 2 and

⁵⁶Childs, Introduction, 68.

⁵⁷Cf. on this point Bonnie Kittel, "Brevard Childs' Development of the Canonical Approach," JSOT 16 (1980): 3.

canon 3."⁵⁸ Canon 1 is what we usually think of by canon, "the list of works which together comprise holy scripture." Canon 2 "is the final form, the so-called 'canonical form', of a book, an individual book, as it stands in the Bible." "Canon 3 is more, a perspective, a way of looking at texts, a perception for which the term 'holistic' is often used."⁵⁹ And then, at the height of his satire, Barr states, "Canon 3 is not a canon in any ordinary sense of the word, it is rather the principle of attraction, value, and satisfaction that makes everything about canons and canonicity beautiful."⁶⁰ Childs, in response to another article where Barr had reviewed his Introduction,⁶¹ had criticized Barr and others and said that "some of the misunderstanding of parts of my book stem from replacing my broad use of the term with such a narrower, traditional usage, and thus missing the force of the argument."⁶² Now, in this book, Barr answers the charge and says:

But when one shows that canon 1, though a factual reality, is not as dominant in scripture as it has seemed, one is told that this results from failure to see the new and wider sense of "canon". In other words, at this point

⁵⁸Barr, Holy Scripture, 75.

⁵⁹Ibid., 75-76.

⁶⁰Ibid., 76-77.

⁶¹James Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," JSOT 16 (1980): 12-23.

⁶²Childs, "Response to Reviewers," 53.

canonical criticism depends upon systematic confusion in the use of its favorite word, "canon".⁶³

And again,

Words are no longer to be used in a sense which could provide a common platform with agreed values for contrary views. Rather, they are redefined so that their "new" meanings lead inevitably to the conclusion that canonical criticism is right. As Childs says, "some of the misunderstanding of parts of my book stem from replacing my broad use of the term [canon] with a much narrower, traditional usage, and thus missing the force of the argument". But the new "broad" use of the term has a very simple value: its meaning is identical with the proposition "Childs is right". If, however, one considers that the new broad usage of the term is a result of confusion in Childs's thinking, then of course one cannot express oneself properly in that new broad usage. In other words, the "new" terminology is a terminology which will lead inevitably to the solutions preferred by canonical criticism and will make equal and level discussions with other positions difficult. Thus terminology is no accidental factor in the question. The endless repetition of the word "canon" in canonical criticism is not accident, but necessity: for, as seen from without, the continual reuse of this word is necessary in order to hold together sets of arguments which otherwise would fall apart.⁶⁴

Now, it is in his response to this attack by Barr that one can see why it is that, while Childs focuses on the final form of the text, he still wants to hold on to such a broad definition of canon that encompasses the historical canonization process as well. First, he says, somewhat surprisingly, "Indeed, what I am proposing can be described

⁶³Barr, Holy Scripture, 79.

⁶⁴Ibid., 146-47. See the criticisms of Barr's "misunderstanding" of Childs in Gerald T. Sheppard, "Barr on Canon and Childs: Can one Read the Bible as Scripture?" Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin 7/2 (1983): 2-4; James A. Sanders, review of Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism, by James Barr, in JBL 104 (1985): 501-2.

without immediate reference to the term 'canon.'"⁶⁵ But then, seemingly self-contradictingly, he goes on to tell why he defines canon so broadly and why retention of the term is so important.

I use the term "canon" for this entire theological construal to avoid the pitfalls of Protestant orthodoxy when it spoke of the authority of Scripture. Such authority could be understood as lying in the mind of God without regard for its human reception. I chose the term "canon" because it includes both the concepts of authority and reception in order to express the process and effect of this transmitting of religious tradition by a community of faith toward a certain end in all its various aspects.

I feel that it is important to retain the term "canon" to emphasize that the process of religious interpretation by a historical faith community left its mark on a literary text which did not continue to evolve and which became the normative interpretation of those events to which it bore witness.⁶⁶

In other words, Childs focuses on the final form of the text because the historical processes which shaped the text are recoverable only through that same text. But he defines the term "canon" broadly to include those historical processes to keep his canonical analysis from lapsing into "Protestant orthodoxy," or, even worse, fundamentalism. Some of Barr's criticisms are unjust, but it is hard to keep from concluding that what Childs does is close to running a semantic-

⁶⁵Brevard S. Childs, "Childs Versus Barr," review of Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism, by James Barr, in Int 38 (1984): 67.

⁶⁶Ibid., 68. Cf. a similar statement in The New Testament as Canon (p. 26): "I use the term canon for this entire theological construal to avoid the error of traditional Protestant orthodoxy (cf. H. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 22) when it spoke of the authority of scripture as lying in the mind of God without regard for its human reception (*autopistos*)."

theological shell game. If the customer is a historical critic, he lifts up one shell and shows that the peanut (the canon) was really under the final form of the text. If the customer is an evangelical and points to that same shell, Childs lifts up another one instead and says that the peanut is really under the historical, canonization process, though he has to admit that the process has left no evidence whatsoever except that which is under the shell which the evangelical pointed to in the first place.

3. The Question of Focus

The previous discussion leads us to an investigation of Childs's fixation on the final form of the text. The criticism here is twofold: (1) that to focus on the final form is to suppress the very historical and sociological concerns with which the texts themselves are marked, and (2) that earlier levels of the text should be regarded as having theological value as well. I will present both arguments first and then show Childs's responses to them.

Bruce Birch has well expressed the first concern:

Was the biblical community unaware of the process of tradition development in shaping the canon? Have not levels of the pre-history of some texts been intentionally preserved so that an interaction of those levels is a part of the intended meaning of a book? Will not recovery of the historical context of those levels be necessary in order to apprehend the full range of the intended canonical dialogue?⁶⁷

⁶⁷Bruce C. Birch, "Tradition, Canon and Biblical Theology," HBT 2 (1980): 122.

In other words, it would seem that if the canon itself recognized the value of earlier levels of the text, we should do the same, and there should be theological repayment for the critical work expended in identifying these layers.

The second concern has been most cogently formulated, I believe, by Erhard Gerstenberger:

Looking at the long chain of transmission and tradents of text and meaning, I cannot help but think that each station where a text incorporated itself, from the beginning to the present day, is worth serious consideration. It is difficult to imagine that any particular time or interpretation acquired or set forth a--or "the"--normative meaning. Why is that so?

Each historical situation has its own dignity and importance which may not be used one against the other. Speaking in traditional theological terms we may put it this way: God addresses humanity, taking its situation with utmost seriousness, no matter how humble and restricted the addressee's life might be. In fact, according to the Bible, God prefers the lowly situation of his weak and lost partners. Consequently, there certainly are no situations of power and glory to be singled out as guidelines for the interpretation of others.⁶⁸

In other words, it is not just arbitrarily wrong to take one point in the history of the canon's formation and make it theologically normative, but it is theologically wrong as well: given the Lord's preference for the powerless, it could be considered anti-theological to regard the decisions of a group powerful enough to make and impose canonical decisions,

⁶⁸Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Canon Criticism and the Meaning of *Sitz im Leben*," in Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 22; see also, Robert P. Carroll, "Canonical Criticism: A Recent Trend in Biblical Studies," ExpTim 92 (1980): 76.

as valid for all time. I believe Gerstenberger has overstated his case, but he does present a compelling argument against freezing one canonical moment and making it theologically normative.⁶⁹

Childs's reply to each of these two criticisms would be to affirm the premise but to deny the implication. Yes, earlier textual layers and levels do have theological value, and, yes, the canon bears the marks of these earlier layers as well as the historical and sociological concerns which shaped them. However, the canon must be given its full critical function in its assessment of that theological value. The canon itself informs us of theological lessons that may be gleaned from earlier layers of the text. However, the canon's function is not paradigmatic in this regard. The canon is not an example for us to follow. Our redactional, form-critical, tradition-historical, and sociological analyses and reconstructions of earlier layers and contexts are not allowed to claim theological normativity.⁷⁰ The canon performs that

⁶⁹On this point see also, James L. Mays, "What is Written: A Response to Brevard S. Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," HBT 2 (1980): 161; Sean E. McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" Int 35 (1981): 233.

⁷⁰In this light it is interesting to note the perceptive comment by Sean McEvenue (review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, in CBO 42 [1980]: 535), regarding the sections labeled "Historical Critical Problems" in Childs's Introduction: "These sections are done with grace, erudition, and brilliance. However, as C. [Childs] usually takes no position regarding these differences, an impression is created that either no conclusion can be arrived at in these matters or that the conclusion would make little difference."

function uniquely, for it alone, and not our reconstructions, constitutes the vehicle for revelation.⁷¹

4. The Question of Intentionality

What does the canon mean? Or does it intend to mean anything? And where does its meaning reside? Is it in the mind of the authors? the redactors? the canonizers? God? Or can a text have an intentionality all its own apart from any intentionality that may have been in the minds of the authors, redactors, or canonizers? These are the questions that have been put to Childs's canonical approach over the question of meaning and intentionality.⁷²

An excerpt from the Introduction will show how Childs has engendered these questions:

But irrespective of intentionality the effect of the canonical process was to render the tradition accessible to the future generation by means of a "canonical intentionality", which is coextensive with the meaning of the biblical text.⁷³

⁷¹See the citations from Childs earlier in this chapter. Note also Brett's comment: "Childs's solution is roughly this; if historical reconstruction (whether emic or etic) is too hypothetical, then a type of exegesis is needed that makes such reconstruction largely irrelevant. Such an exegesis will be focused on the 'canonical shape' of the Masoretic text" (Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 62). Childs himself ("Response to Reviewers," 53-54) says, "Still I do not rule out of court the need for investigating the historical influence on the canonical shapers to the extent that they can be determined. Unfortunately, we know so little about their work that many theories have been exceedingly speculative and largely unproductive up to now."

⁷²See Dale A. Brueggemann, "Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism: An Example of a Post-Critical Naivete," JETS 32 (1989): 314.

⁷³Childs, Introduction, 79.

It is almost as if Childs is saying, "whether or not there is an intentionality, there is an intentionality." Barton rightly characterizes Childs's move:

"Canonical intentionality" seems to be used here with a deliberate air of paradox. Childs is saying in effect: if we cannot conceive of meaning without invoking "intention", we shall have to speak as though the canon itself did the intending! In fact, for him, meaning is not a matter of intention at all, but is a function of the relationship of a given text to other texts in the canon.⁷⁴

Childs's handling of a text-critical problem in 1 Sam 1:24 will show how he assigns the canon an intention apart from any author or redactor. Childs admits that a case of haplography has resulted in the difficult reading, *wēhanna ar na ar* ("the boy was a boy"); moreover, what is apparently the correct reading, without the haplography, is preserved in a Qumran manuscript and in the Septuagint. Then he tells how the canonical approach would handle the problem:

It would attempt to assess the range of interpretation possible for this mutilated MT text, both in terms of its syntactical options . . . and its secondary vocalization. Within the parameters of a canonical corpus the method seeks to determine how the meaning of a given passage, even if damaged, was influenced by its relation to other canonical passages. The obvious gain in such an approach is that the continuity with the entire history of exegesis is maintained. Moreover, the means for its critical evaluation is provided rather than arbitrarily setting up an individualistic reading which never had an effect upon any historical community.⁷⁵

⁷⁴John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 224 n. 12.

⁷⁵Childs, Introduction, 105 (emphasis mine). See Ralph W. Klein's criticism of Childs's approach on this text (review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, in CurTM 7 [1980]: 58-59).

An interchange between David Polk and Childs over the problem raised by such an approach is very illustrative. Polk charges:

Central to Childs' position is the understanding that the final edited form of the canonical text is always somehow intentional. . . . Never is the resultant product allowed to be regarded as an accident of transmission or the uncritical solidifying of botched editing. . . .

My point of contention is that Childs considers himself required to treat possible aberrations in the final forms of the text as conscious and motivated because of a theological stance that proclaims the canon unreservedly to be intentional in its shape.⁷⁶

But Polk makes this charge as if Childs were suggesting that even obvious textual errors were always intentional on the part of some redactor. This is exactly what Childs is not saying. He admits that there are accidents in the text: "Certainly in the process of the literature's literary and canonical shaping accidental factors entered in. This observation seems to me to be undeniable."⁷⁷ What he is saying, however, is this: "Nevertheless, a special level of intentionality was assigned to the literature as a whole by virtue of its accepted role as Scripture."⁷⁸

Of course, the question to be asked at this point is restated by Childs himself and then answered: "Frequently the

⁷⁶David K. Polk, "Brevard Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," HBT 2 (1980): 167-68.

⁷⁷Childs, "A Response," 206.

⁷⁸Ibid., 206-7.

response is made: why should the modern Christian church be tied to the errors of the canonical editors?"

However, I have sought to defend the position that to interpret the O.T. as Scripture has its own integrity which is of a different order. It is constitutive of having a canon of Sacred Scripture that the theological "data" on which the Church's identity is grounded does not lie in the events themselves, or in the text itself, but in the canonical text which has interpreted the events and which receives its meaning in the context of a community of faith.⁷⁹

Again, we see here, the importance of the community as context for the canon. Barton's observation that meaning for Childs resides in the relationship of a text to other texts, is only partially correct. Rather, a text has meaning because it has been assigned a place in the canon which has both, been shaped by, and shaped, the community of faith for whom the canon serves as theologically normative.⁸⁰

Unaddressed here, and reserved for another section in this chapter, is the theological problem that is raised by

⁷⁹Ibid., 207.

⁸⁰I believe Brett recognizes this correctly: "Can we, for example, make any sense of the idea that communicative intentions can be attributed to texts, rather than to human agents, or is this, as Barr and Oeming suggest, just a 'mystic' anthropomorphism? And how does the idea of textual intention relate to Childs's claim about the intentions of the actual biblical editors? First we should stress that the idea of canonical intentionality is one implication of Childs's view that the Old Testament is the product of a long communal process of reception. He explicitly opposes the 'modern' idea of books produced by individual authors with the Old Testament books which are 'traditional, communal, and developing' (1979: 574; cf. 223, 236). In this sense, the idea of canonical intentionality is simply a new way of expressing the long familiar idea that Old Testament texts are more often a deposit of tradition than the product of individual authorship" (Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 116-17).

allocating intentionality to the canonical text in its community context, rather than to authors, and in particular, the divine author, when it is claimed that the canon is the vehicle of revelation.⁸¹

5. The Question of Canonical Plurality

The concern here is over Childs's insistence on the Masoretic Text as the final canonical form for the text of the Old Testament, in light of the plurality of canons that existed in ancient Israel, in particular, the Septuagint.

Childs himself notes the problem:

Why should the Christian church be committed in any way to the authority of the Masoretic text when its development extended long after the inception of the church and was carried on within a rabbinic tradition.⁸²

Childs has several reasons for his choice of the Masoretic Text. First there is a practical one: "In order to maintain a common scripture with Judaism I have argued that

⁸¹For other criticisms of Childs's focus on the final form of the text see the following reviews of Childs's Introduction: Bernhard W. Anderson, TToday 37 (1980): 104; Carroll, SJT 33 (1980): 288; Thomas E. McComiskey, Trinity Journal n.s. 1 (1980): 91; Donn F. Morgan, ATR 64 (1982): 388; Barr, JSOT 16 (1980): 12-13. Also, see Barr, Holy Scripture, 161-62; D. Knight, "Canon and the History of Tradition," 140-41; McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 237; Murphy, "The Old Testament as Scripture," 41-43; Bruce K. Waltke, "Oral Tradition," in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 119.

⁸²Childs, Introduction, 89.

the scope of the Hebrew canon has also a normative role for the Christian Old Testament."⁸³ He states that he

would not disparage the claims of those Christians who would follow Augustine in supporting a larger canon. However, the basic theological issue for its inclusion turns on the ability to maintain the crucial relationship between Christian and Jew. Up to now at least I have not seen this canonical argument for the inclusion of a larger canon developed.⁸⁴

While I respect Childs's right to refer to this as a "theological issue," it seems to me to be much more pragmatically oriented.

Second, there are historical reasons. Childs argues that while the Masoretic Text was stabilized by the end of the first century AD, "The Greek Old Testament continued to remain fluid and obtained its stability only in dependence upon the Hebrew."⁸⁵ Also, of all the Jewish communities that had other possible canons, it is only the one that had the Masoretic Text that "has continued through history as the living vehicle of the whole canon of Hebrew scripture."⁸⁶ Furthermore, only

⁸³Ibid., 666; see also his Old Testament Theology (p. 10): "One of the main reasons for the Christian use of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament rather than its Greek form lies in the theological concern to preserve this common textual bond between Jews and Christians."

⁸⁴Childs, Introduction, 666. Though I have not seen this particular argument in the scholarly literature, I suppose Catholics could well inquire at this point as to why Childs is so concerned to use the canon to maintain a "crucial relationship" with the Jews, when it would seem, in the light of maintaining Christian unity, he should be more willing to do so with Catholics.

⁸⁵Ibid., 97.

⁸⁶Ibid.

this Jewish community "was the tradent of the oral tradition of the vocalization of the Hebrew Bible."⁸⁷

Finally, there are reasons that I would refer to as more theological or traditionally apologetic in nature. Childs almost sounds like a conservative apologist in the following excerpt from his most recent Biblical Theology:

From the evidence of the New Testament it seems clear that Jesus and the early Christians identified with the scriptures of Pharisaic Judaism. The early controversies with the Jews reflected in the New Testament turned on the proper interpretation of the sacred scriptures (*hē graphē*) which Christians assumed in common with the synagogue. Although there is evidence that other books were known and used, it is a striking fact that the New Testament does not cite as scripture any book of the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha. (The reference to Enoch in Jude 14-15 is not an exception.)⁸⁸

Also, Childs maintains that early Christian use of the Greek Septuagint as opposed to the Hebrew Bible, was culturally and not doctrinally motivated:

The church's use of the Greek and Latin translations of the Old Testament was valid in its historical context, but theologially provides no ground for calling into question the ultimate authority of the Hebrew text for church and synagogue.⁸⁹

If there has been any response to Childs from A. C. Sundberg in the scholarly literature I am unaware of it. However, most of Childs's critics in this matter of focusing on the Masoretic Text as opposed to the Septuagint have been

⁸⁷Ibid., 98.

⁸⁸Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 62.

⁸⁹Childs, Introduction, 99.

much influenced by Sundberg's work. In his doctoral dissertation Sundberg effectively destroyed the Alexandrian canon hypothesis and laid claim that the larger Septuagint canon should hold normative authority for the Christian church rather than the narrower Jewish canon.⁹⁰ In a subsequent article he presents his case that Protestants (like Jerome a millennium earlier) had wrongly looked to the synagogue rather than to the early church for its authority, and should return to the place from whence they came and embrace the larger canon:

Thus Protestant Christianity, in maintaining its practice of limiting its Old Testament to the Jewish canon, controverts the teaching of the New Testament scriptures that the Spirit of God is to be found in the church. It is evident that both in content and doctrine, Protestantism, in its view of Old Testament canon, has broken away from its spiritual heritage.⁹¹

Most of Childs's critics in this matter have at least partially sided with Sundberg. This is one of Sanders's major points of criticism of Childs:

He focuses almost exclusively, in his work on canon, on the final form of the text. To do that, he has to choose one text, and he has chosen the Massoretic Text. That is already an immense problem for me. It is to read back into canonical history a post-Christian, very rabbinic form of the text. By "very rabbinic" I mean a text unrelated to the Christian communities until comparatively late. . . . Focus on the MT leaves the NT, whose

⁹⁰A. C. Sundberg, Jr., The Old Testament of the Early Church, HTS 20 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964; repr., New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969).

⁹¹A. C. Sundberg, Jr., "The Bible Canon and the Christian Doctrine of Inspiration," Int 29 (1975): 358.

Scripture was the Septuagint, out in the cold for the most part.⁹²

Brett points out that Childs's insistence on the Masoretic Text is almost ironic:

It begins to look as if the golden thread of continuous usage passed into Judaism rather than into early and medieval Christianity, a strange turn of events for a library of books earlier described as Christian scripture.⁹³

And Carroll suggests that adoption of the Septuagint would actually be more advantageous for Childs:

The differences between these two Old Testament canons are often substantial and in many cases it is the Greek canon which carries the more explicit Christian element (e.g., order of books) and is already part of that hermeneutic transformation which elsewhere Childs wishes to incorporate into his motif of canonical exegesis.⁹⁴

My own interaction with this question will come in chapters 5-6.⁹⁵

⁹²James A. Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," HBT 2 (1980): 186-87.

⁹³Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 65.

⁹⁴Robert P. Carroll, "Childs and Canon," IBS 2 (1980): 229.

⁹⁵For other critics of Childs on this point see Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 91-92; H. L. Bosman, "The Validity of Biblical Theology: Historical Description or Hermeneutical 'Childs' Play?" Old Testament Essays n.s. 3 (1990): 143; H. Cazelles, "The Canonical Approach to Torah and Prophets," JSOT 16 (180): 29; D. Morgan, "Canon and Criticism," 87; Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics," 201. Also see the illuminating discussion in John Goldingay, Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation, rev. ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 138-45.

6. The Question of Emphasis

Even among those who basically appreciate his work and agree that the Bible should be read from a canonical perspective, there is criticism that Childs has overemphasized the approach. This criticism runs along four basic lines: (1) Childs has overemphasized the value of the whole canon, (2) he has overemphasized the structure of canon, (3) what he has proposed is not really new, and (4) his results, to use the actual words of reviewers, are "monotonous," "bland," "trivial," and "unexciting."

Knight's main criticism of Childs runs along the first of these lines:

In a word, our argument will be that Childs, like Gunkel and von Rad before him, has identified for serious study a largely neglected phase in the development of the biblical literature but that, also like them, he is overemphasizing the relative importance of this phase.⁹⁶

Brett, also, feels that Childs's approach, "suitably clarified, should become one approach to the Bible among others,"⁹⁷ and argues that

the first problem with the canonical approach is its totalitarian tendency; Childs has sometimes argued as if everyone should become interpreters after his own image. At other times he envisions a more pluralist situation for biblical studies. The argument of this chapter is that the second Childs is to be preferred.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Knight, "Canon and the History of Tradition," 130; see also Murphy, "The Old Testament as Scripture," 44.

⁹⁷Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 5.

⁹⁸Ibid., 11.

It is important to note here that Childs would somewhat accept this criticism; however, Childs has never suggested that his approach is the only way to read the Bible. What he has done is posit that the canonical approach is the only approach that reads the Bible in accord with the Bible's own ontological nature: Scripture of the community of faith.

The second line of critique, that Childs has overemphasized the structure of the canon, is best represented by McEvenue:

The canon's structure is meaningful in some ways, but it is not in others. There is a meaningful criterion of time in the organization of materials, beginning with Genesis and ending with the Apocalypse. There may be meaning in putting the Pentateuch at the head of the Old Testament and the Gospels at the head of the New Testament. There may even be meaning in the lack of an attempt to organize materials in an order which corresponds to date of authorship. I will agree that there is some structure and some meaning to the canon as a whole.

But still, for the most part, the canon is no more than an anthology of inspired books, linked for the most part without altering the meaning of the individual books.⁹⁹

I believe this criticism is somewhat unfair. While Childs has paid a great deal of attention to the canonical ordering of pericopes within individual books, to my knowledge he has paid little attention to the ordering of the books as a whole.¹⁰⁰

In fact in his most recent work, while granting that there was some theological meaning in the way the Christian Old Testament was arranged differently from the Hebrew Bible, he

⁹⁹McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 238-39; see also Sanders, "Canonical Context," 185.

¹⁰⁰Noted also by Brett (Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 19).

specifically states that "caution is in order not to overestimate the conscious theological intentionality of these changes . . ." ¹⁰¹ In fact, he says that "a most striking feature in the juxtaposition of the two testaments is actually the lack of Christian redactional activity on the Old Testament." ¹⁰² Furthermore, he says that

it is historically inaccurate to assume that the present printed forms of the Hebrew Bible and of the Christian Bible represent ancient and completely fixed traditions. Actually the present stability regarding the ordering of the books is to a great extent dependent on modern printing techniques and carries no significant theological weight. ¹⁰³

The third charge, that Childs is not really doing anything new, comes from several fronts. From those who are inerrantists, the reply to Childs is that they have always read the Bible canonically. ¹⁰⁴ From the more liberal wing, the charge comes, in particular from Barr, that the very Biblical Theology movement against which Childs set his program in opposition, was, in fact, "very much a canonical movement even

¹⁰¹Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 75.

¹⁰²Ibid., 76.

¹⁰³Ibid., 74.

¹⁰⁴See Brian Labosier, "Matthew's Exception Clause in the Light of Canonical Criticism: A Case Study in Hermeneutics" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1990), 12; Eugene H. Merrill, review of Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, by James A. Sanders, in BSac 143 (1986): 83; Vern S. Poythress, Science and Hermeneutics: Implications of Scientific Method for Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 128.

if it did not use the word as a whole."¹⁰⁵ To my knowledge, Childs has nowhere attempted to respond to either of these objections.

Finally, the charge is made that the canonical approach is, in the final analysis, monotonous, bland, and trivial. In commenting on Childs's Introduction, Barr notes that at the end of each of the "Historical Critical Problems" sections, the same note is always sounded: "It is like the Book of Kings: for failure to remove the high places, read now failure to read in the canonical context."¹⁰⁶ Harrelson, more harsh even than Barr, says that Childs's approach is very "bland" and then ponders, "I wonder even more why Childs is so eager to straighten out the thought of all prior biblical interpreters, when what comes out at the end is so trivial."¹⁰⁷ Landes, says that he finds Sanders's work "a corrective to and many times more exciting than Childs."¹⁰⁸ And Collins faults

¹⁰⁵Barr, Holy Scripture, 134 (this sentence comes near the end of a discussion [pp. 131-34] in which Barr attempts to show that Childs's analysis of the Biblical Theology movement failed to demonstrate that "lack of attention to the canon was the specific cause of its problems" [p. 134]).

¹⁰⁶Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 12-13. D. Moody Smith criticizes Childs's New Testament introduction similarly ("Why Approaching the New Testament as Canon Matters," review of The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, by Brevard S. Childs, in Int 40 [1986]: 407-11).

¹⁰⁷Harrelson, review of Childs's Introduction, 101.

¹⁰⁸Landes, "The Canonical Approach," 37.

Childs for isolating "biblical theology from much of what is vital and interesting in biblical studies today."¹⁰⁹

Even his supporters and those who are broadly considered to be within the realm the "canonical movement" are sometimes disappointed with the results. Walter Brueggemann, for example, while initially impressed with the potential promise of the Introduction, expressed dissatisfaction with Childs's next step, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context:

Childs' book is enigmatic, because he does not seem to adhere stringently to the notion of canon, which he himself has articulated. He repeatedly insists that we must practice a "canonical construal" of the material. At times, my impression is that he means simply that we should say what the text says, but it must mean more than that. However, the "more than that" is not only unclear, but seems to be quite subjective."¹¹⁰

And on Childs's discussion of "How God Is Known" in chapter 3, Brueggemann says, "I regard this discussion as not only legitimate, but on the whole, persuasive, although I cannot see what makes this a 'canonical construal' any more than many other scholars have done."¹¹¹

For the most part, I find the discussion on this issue primarily to be subjective. For example, in contrast to Landes, I find Childs's work to be a "corrective to and many times more exciting" than Sanders's. However, I would agree

¹⁰⁹Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?" 6.

¹¹⁰Walter Brueggemann, review of Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context, by Brevard S. Childs, in TToday 43 (1986): 284-86.

¹¹¹Ibid., 286.

with Brueggemann that Childs has been inconsistent in the application of the canonical approach.

7. The Question of Tradition

The concern here is over the role of the early church in the canonization of the Scriptures. The argument has been well expressed by Barr (not in direct interaction with Childs):

if one accepts the canon as a sign of the normative function of scripture for the church, on the ground that this canonization is a decision that the church has in fact made, I do not see how one escapes from ascribing a normative function to tradition also, a normative function that in the eyes of the canonizers of scripture would have seemed both right and normal.¹¹²

But Childs does not want to give the early church this normative function. Barton expresses his dissatisfaction with Childs in this respect:

It seems to me, as to many readers of Childs's work, that in this he is trying to have it both ways. On his view it is in principle possible that the very same generation of Christians who fixed the main outlines of the canon is also a hopelessly unreliable guide to the correct way of reading that canon. Indeed, it is more than possible, it is in fact the case, for early patristic exegesis was notoriously given to practices Childs would outlaw, such as allegorization and the exploitation of merely verbal quibbles.¹¹³

¹¹²James Barr, "Trends and Prospects in Biblical Theology," JTS n.s. 25 (1974): 274-75.

¹¹³Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 97. For others who have criticized Childs on this point see Carroll, review of Childs's Introduction, 288; Polk, "Brevard Childs' Introduction," 170; John F. Priest, "Canon and Criticism: A Review Article," JAAR 48 (1980): 266; Frank Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," in Interpreting God's Word for Today: An Inquiry into Hermeneutics from a Biblical Theological Perspective, ed. Wayne McCown and James Earl Massey, Wesleyan Theological

Childs fully recognizes the problem and has two separate responses. First, he gives the historic Protestant response that the period of Christ and his apostles was uniquely revelatory. And while the Christian church did play a part in the canonization of the Scriptures, its primary role was that of recognition:

The Early Church distinguished sharply between Apostolic tradition and later church tradition. It set apart the period of Christ's incarnation as *sui generis*. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was "once for all" The Christian church was grounded on the Apostolic witness whose unique testimony was not to be simply extended.¹¹⁴

The second is more enigmatic. He says, "The *skandalon* of the canon is that the witness of Jesus Christ has been given its normative shape through an interpretive process of the post-apostolic age."¹¹⁵ But why this constitutes a *skandalon* is not entirely clear. The word *skandalon* does have a magical ring to it, but does it really serve any purpose here other than that of permitting Childs to accept the post-apostolic decision regarding canon, but reject whatever other post-apostolic decisions he so chooses? While I appreciate

Perspectives 2 (Anderson, IN: Warner, 1982), 183. Note in particular Dale Brueggemann's ("Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism," 321) perceptive comment: "If the canon that resulted from hermeneutical moves in the early Church has authority, then the hermeneutical moves have authority." It should be noted that Brueggemann's criticism here includes Childs's reluctance to allow hermeneutical normativity to the New Testament authors as well.

¹¹⁴Childs, "A Response," 202. See also Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 66-67.

¹¹⁵Childs, The New Testament as Canon, 28.

Childs's dilemma here, I believe this second argument actually runs counter to his first argument concerning the revelatory uniqueness of the time period of Christ and the apostles. The word *skandalon* was used by the New Testament and the Reformers to refer to Christ's incarnation. To use the same word in regard to post-apostolic activity seems to diminish, if not destroy, that uniqueness.

It should be noted here that Childs does not consider the New Testament authors themselves to be reliable hermeneutical guides either. Childs wants to maintain the distinction we have seen before between canon as revelation and canon as paradigm:

The hermeneutical practice of the New Testament does not in itself provide a theological warrant of the church's imitation of this approach. We are neither prophets nor Apostles. The function of the church's canon is to recognize this distinction. The Christian Church does not have the same unmediated access to God's revelation as did the Apostles, but rather God's revelation is mediated through their authoritative witness, namely through scripture. This crucial difference calls into question any direct imitation of the New Testament hermeneutical practice.¹¹⁶

For me, this is more problematic than the rejection of church tradition. I will give more attention to this in chapters 5-6.

One more thing to be noted before we go to the next section is that the same critics who fault Childs on his rejection of post-apostolic tradition, also point out what

¹¹⁶Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 381.

they consider to be the inconsistency in his paying so much attention to history of exegesis. McEvenue is perhaps the harshest critic on this point:

The New Testament authors and subsequent Christian and Jewish theologians were not trying to illuminate the past. Rather, they were writing a theology, each for his own community and time, and they were using Exodus freely to suit their own purposes . . . Why should one expect the writers of the New Testament to illuminate the Book of Exodus? Childs appears to expect them to do this, and it is his expectation which has led him astray.¹¹⁷

The criticism here is wide of its target, for Childs has never said that the history of exegesis is a guide to the illumination of the text, though he has found a theological depth in some of the older commentators that he looks for in vain today.¹¹⁸ However, what McEvenue does here in this attack, rather than disproving the value of paying attention to history of exegesis, is prove another point that Childs makes: the failure of modern interpreters of Scripture to recognize their own interpretations as being time-conditioned:

The canonical approach to Old Testament theology rejects a method which is unaware of its own time-conditioned quality and which is confident in its ability to stand outside, above and over against the received tradition in adjudicating the truth or lack of truth of the biblical material according to its own criteria.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 232; see also Barr, Holy Scripture, 162-64; and Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 95-96.

¹¹⁸Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 53-55, 139-47; Introduction, 523.

¹¹⁹Childs, Old Testament Theology, 12.

Moreover, to take seriously a canonical approach is also to recognize the time-conditioned quality of the modern, post-Enlightenment Christian whose context is just as historically moored as any of his predecessors. One of the disastrous legacies of the Enlightenment was the new confidence of standing outside the stream of time and with clear rationality being able to distinguish truth from error, light from darkness.¹²⁰

Childs has spoken here both correctly and eloquently.

8. The Question of the Whole Canon

Childs explicitly rejects any canon within the canon approach and insists that the whole canon is the context for exegesis.

The church searches for biblical authority by struggling with the whole canon. It cannot pick and choose what it likes, but by submitting itself to the whole of Scripture, Old and New Testaments alike, it identifies itself with the tradition of the past while keeping itself open to the new and unexpected from the future.¹²¹

Criticism here takes one of three shapes: (1) neither the Jewish nor Christian communities have felt bound by the whole canon, (2) the whole canon should not be considered the context for every exegesis, and (3) the Christian community has always operated with a canon within the canon.

Representative of the first of these tracks is Carroll:

It certainly looks as though neither the Jewish nor the Christian communities felt bound by the canon to such an extent that canon alone shaped their belief and practice.

¹²⁰Ibid., 14.

¹²¹Childs, "The Search for Biblical Authority Today," ANQ 16 (1976): 205; see also, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," Int 23 (1969): 27-28; Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 67-68.

So why should modern scholarship be so bound by canonical considerations?¹²²

Compare here also the comments of Morgan:

The fact of the matter is that, regardless of how beneficial a holistic reading may be, the evidence suggests that the community of faith rarely if ever "reads" the biblical texts in this way! Rather, the text is studied in snippets by scholars and scribes (for which there is surely biblical precedent and mandate) and, more importantly perhaps, is read to congregations in pericopes or other small divisions through lectionary cycles and other selective processes. Indeed, there are some books or sections of books that are rarely, if ever, read within certain communities. Moreover, the tendency in much contemporary Bible study is to concentrate on particular pericopes, even verses, and not to read and interpret a "book" as a whole. The question then becomes, "On what grounds does one justify a holistic reading, when this type of reading has not occurred in the past and does not occur within contemporary communities that see this literature as Scripture and canon?"¹²³

And Sanders even reports that he and his students carried out experiments with New Testament texts to see whether the authors were working with Childs's conception of canonically holistic readings.

But in no case did it work out in Childs' favor. Certainly there was evidence that some NT writers sometimes thought in larger terms than isolated passages: C. H. Dodd had shown that in According to Scripture [sic] But it is not the same.¹²⁴

¹²²Carroll, "Childs and Canon," 221.

¹²³Morgan, "Canon and Criticism," 93; see also, Barr, Holy Scripture, 91-92; Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 174; J. Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?" 6; James A. Sanders, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," USQR 32 (1977): 163; Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 32; review of Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism, by James Barr, in JBL 104 (1985): 502; Spina, "Canonical Criticism," 183.

¹²⁴Sanders, "Canonical Context," 188-90.

I do not know that Childs has responded in the scholarly literature to this charge, but I believe that Scalise has answered well at least part of this charge in responding to Barton's claim that "as a matter of historical fact, the Bible has no `canonical level.'"¹²⁵ Scalise answers,

Such a claim passes over at least a millennium of Christian history in which the Christian canon functioned distinctively (though admittedly precritically) as Scripture in an authoritative manner. How can one hope to make sense of the biblical interpretation of the Fathers, let alone that of the Reformers, without the assumption of a "canonical level" (or levels), which religiously construes all of the Bible as the Word of God?¹²⁶

In answer to Morgan I would suggest that his observations say more about what exegetes, preachers, and teachers have to do by necessity of the fact that no one can say all that can or should be said at one time, than it does about their commitment to the unity, coherence, and therefore the possibility of a holistic reading of Scripture.¹²⁷ As for

¹²⁵Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 174; see also, Barr, Holy Scripture, 1, 59-60, 82-83; Eugene Ulrich, "The Canonical Process, Textual Criticism, and Latter Stages in the Composition of the Bible," in "Sha`arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 267-74.

¹²⁶Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics," 144-45. On a different track, Brett (Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 6, 121-22) suggests that if Gadamer's notion of "the classic" were to be applied to Childs's notion of canon, the charge of anachronism could be largely discounted; on this point see also Frank Kermode, "The Argument about Canons," in The Bible and the Narrative Tradition, ed. Frank McConnell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 89.

¹²⁷See John Murray, "Systematic Theology," in The New Testament Student and Theology, ed. John H. Skilton, The New Testament Student 3 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976),

the experiments of Sanders and his students, it is impossible to answer the charge without knowing their suggested hypotheses and the presuppositions with which they worked. However, I would suggest that the evidence which would have supported Childs's proposal could not have been found anyway, since no New Testament author wrote either a commentary or a biblical or systematic theology.

The second track of criticism is that the whole canon is simply not the context for every exegesis. Interestingly, Childs is attacked here by both more conservative and liberal conservative scholars. Kaiser finds Childs's approach to be in violation of his principle of "antecedent theology,"¹²⁸ and McEvenue, without much solid argumentation (in my opinion), simply declares:

It is important to burst this balloon. Let us distinguish exegesis from biblical theology and say right away . . . the wholeness of the canon is meaningless. It is simply not true that the proper context for understanding one text of the Bible is every text of the Bible.¹²⁹

It will be more convenient to evaluate this charge when I present my own approach in chapters 5-6.

The third track is that the church has always operated with a canon within the canon, and that it is, in fact, right

26 (first published as "Systematic Theology--II," in WTJ 26 [1964]).

¹²⁸Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 82-83 (to be given more attention in chapter 6).

¹²⁹McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 237.

to do so.¹³⁰ Also, Kaiser, without using the canon within the canon terminology, criticizes Childs for being "overly concerned about a `reductionism' which would attempt to locate the essence of the OT message in one formula or key word such as promise, kingdom, lordship or the like."¹³¹ And Carroll suggests that Childs does in fact have his own canon within the canon, the theme of "Israel's encounter with God,"¹³² a charge against which Scalise defends both Childs and Karl Barth (of whose hermeneutics Scalise feels Childs's hermeneutics is an extension).¹³³ I will look at this issue closer in chapters 5-6.

9. The Question of Confessionalism

Childs has been accused of fostering attitudes that promote confessionalism, fundamentalism, orthodoxy, neo-orthodoxy, biblicism, hostility toward critical methods, and a

¹³⁰See Bosman, "The Validity of Biblical Theology," 142; McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 236.

¹³¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., review of Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context, by Brevard S. Childs, Trinity Journal n.s. 8 (1987): 89-90. Kaiser himself opts for the "promise" theme (Toward an Old Testament Theology [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978]).

¹³²Carroll, review of Childs's Introduction, 289.

¹³³Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics," 82; also his "Canonical Hermeneutics: Childs and Barth," SJT 47 (1994): 66-67.

negation of the gains of the critical scholarship.¹³⁴ I

suppose none has been harsher in this criticism than Whybray:

This is in my opinion a new kind of obscurantism, one which while accepting the logic and many of the conclusions of past and present biblical criticism, yet dismisses it as irrelevant, barren and even harmful. Its purpose is praiseworthy, but its effect is likely to be the opposite of what its author intends.¹³⁵

Whybray goes on to say that Childs approach is a "denial of scholarly autonomy,"¹³⁶ and a refusal to regard

as *bona fide* students and interpreters of the Old Testament . . . all those whose aim is the study of the religion and literature of the ancient people of Israel simply as an historical phenomenon without prejudice or religious commitment, and so threatens to disturb, and

¹³⁴Most have done so, however, recognizing that Childs is not a conservative, but arguing that in the final analysis, Childs and the fundamentalists have the same agendas; see Barr, Holy Scripture, 147-51, 168-69; Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 84-85, 98-99, 223-24 n. 4, 230, n. 15; James A. Sanders, review of Biblical Theology in Crisis, by Brevard S. Childs, in USQR 26 (1971): 303; Gerstenberger, "Canon Criticism," 20; Eugene Lemcio, "The Gospels and Canonical Criticism," BTB 11 (1981): 115. On a more theoretical level, Stephen Fowl ("The Canonical Approach of Brevard Childs," ExpTim 96 [1985]: 76) asks whether Childs has the right to use critical methodology: "A crucial question of a more theoretical nature which Childs must answer is whether he can employ a historical-critical methodology in the way he does. If Childs has created a new paradigm (to use the language T. Kuhn employs in a philosophy of science) for understanding the Bible, can Childs continue to use the methodology which is founded on the paradigm he wishes to overturn? If (as Childs says) the canonical approach is not another tool like source, form and redaction criticism, can Childs continue to employ these tools once he has rejected the paradigm on which they are based? Childs often appears to exercise the historical-critical method on one level and then to do biblical theology on a level informed solely by the church's confession of the canon. Here, again, Childs perpetuates the bifurcation between faith and reason he sought to eliminate."

¹³⁵R. N. Whybray, "Reflections on Canonical Criticism," Theology 84 (1981): 29.

¹³⁶Ibid., 30.

indeed, if it wins acceptance, to destroy that happy co-operation among workers in the Old Testament field which has developed since the last century and now flourishes as never before.¹³⁷

Childs himself denies that his approach should be seen as in any way an encouragement for fundamentalists or a return to precritical exegesis.¹³⁸ While some conservatives have embraced Childs's approach as supportive of their position, most have correctly recognized that the program cannot be taken in its entirety.¹³⁹

Since I see the attack on Childs here as substantially an attack on my own approach, I will interact with this dialogue in chapters 5-6.

10. The Question of Theology

This section will deal with what I believe to be the most serious problem for the canonical approach as developed by Childs. The charge here is that, all Childs's protests notwithstanding, his approach is ultimately non-theological in character. There are many nuances and variations in the way this critique is advanced, but I shall try to group them under

¹³⁷Ibid., 30-31.

¹³⁸Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 107-8, 141-42; Introduction, 56 (his discussion of Meredith G. Kline's proposal), 73, 81; "Response to Reviewers," 58; The New Testament as Canon, 26.

¹³⁹D. Brueggemann, "Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism," 311-26; McComiskey, review of Childs's Introduction, 88-91; John N. Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism: A Review from a Conservative Viewpoint," JETS 30 (1987): 317-25. See also Labosier's discussion ("Matthew's Exception Clause," 82 (n. 9), 93, 95.

three basic lines of attack: (1) the approach, rather than being considered theological, should be seen instead as literary, (2) Childs is either unable to give any real theological justification for his position or has not done so, and (3) the theological insights at which Childs arrives are not a result of the approach but his own theology imposed on and through the canon.

The first suggestion is that Childs's approach is ultimately non-theological in character, but instead has more in common with New Criticism and structuralism. To my knowledge this charge was first made by Barr and then received more extensive treatment by Barton.¹⁴⁰ Childs admits the similarity of interests between canonical analysis and the newer literary methods, but vigorously maintains that the theological dimension of his approach sharply distinguishes it from mere literary analysis.¹⁴¹ I believe Barr and Barton have argued their positions well; but I also believe that Childs has rightly maintained that the canonical approach, if carried through consistently, involves much more than literary analysis--it has a theological faith dimension which does not

¹⁴⁰Barr, Holy Scripture, 78 (n. 2), 158-62; Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 100-103, 133, 141-42, 153-54, 160, 167, 202, 206-9. See also, Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," JSTOT 50 (1991): 64, n. 1; McCann, "Psalm 73," 16, 254. Barr also argues (pp. 136-37) that by stressing form over content Childs has, in effect, excluded theology.

¹⁴¹Childs, Introduction, 74; Old Testament Theology, 6, 148; Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, 72.

exist (at least not by necessity) in the New Criticism. The question for Childs, however, is whether he has the right to claim this theological faith dimension in light of the next two lines of critique in this area.

The second charge is that Childs has either failed to provide theological justification for his approach, or is, in fact, unable to do so. Some justification for this charge was found in what appeared to reviewers of the Introduction to be a backing away from the canonical approach as Childs had first described it. Commenting on the Introduction, Polk says,

The full scope of meaning in the phrase "canonical interpretation," initially spelled out in Part III of Biblical Theology in Crisis, goes underground for the first 670 pages and surfaces again only in the final paragraph. . . .

Would canonical Introductions to the Old Testament and to the Hebrew Bible be identical twins? Their different canonical contexts would seem to suggest otherwise, but nowhere in Childs' rich analyses is there a hint of where they might diverge.¹⁴²

And Barr, comparing the Introduction to Childs's earlier books and articles, is equally perplexed:

It is surprising, therefore, when one passes to the Introduction, which is much the fullest expression of canonical criticism thus far, to find how little this sort of insight has been developed. The New Testament, in fact, is comparatively little mentioned; even the concluding chapter on "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Bible" is devoted primarily to the question of the Christian Old Testament and its identity, in view of differing views of its extent and definition. Little or nothing is to be heard of the incarnate Christ as a personality inhabiting the books of Joshua or of Haggai. The discussion seems to stress the kinship of Judaism and Christianity in that the Old Testament is shared by them

¹⁴²Polk, "Brevard Childs' Introduction," 167.

both. But this, while true, is of minor significance in comparison with the fact that the Christian canon contains also the New Testament, the content of which creates a great gulf between the two religions. The canon, far from being a bond holding Judaism and Christianity together, is a force that pulls them strongly apart.¹⁴³

Barr then goes on to say that in light of this, Childs's program seems to have failed: "In other words, the Old Testament has not been interpreted as Christian scripture after all."¹⁴⁴

Childs's response to Barr and others on this point has been categorized as particularly "thin" by Brett.¹⁴⁵ His reply was:

I was not writing a biblical theology but an introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures. Although I still believe that there is justification for treating one portion of the Christian Bible in this way, the larger task clearly needs to be done, and I hope to address these problems in a subsequent work.¹⁴⁶

There was some justification for this answer. In the preface to the Introduction Childs had said that his task was to "describe as objectively as possible the canonical literature of ancient Israel . . ."¹⁴⁷ To be fair to Childs, it must be remembered that the title of the volume was not Introduction

¹⁴³Barr, Holy Scripture, 151-52; see also Robert Morgan with John Barton, Biblical Interpretation, The Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 213.

¹⁴⁴Barr, Holy Scripture, 152.

¹⁴⁵Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis? 58-59.

¹⁴⁶Childs, "Childs Versus Barr," 70. Childs's reply to Polk was no less "thin" ("A Response," 205).

¹⁴⁷Childs, Introduction, 16.

the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. And since the publication of his introductions to the two Testaments, Childs has gone on to do the "larger task" with his Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context and Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments. It must be recognized, however, that this was not the program that Childs had set out in his earlier articles and books. From the beginning he had advanced the thesis that interpretation must be done in faith and that it was impossible to bridge the gap from neutral objective description to theological substance. But in seeking to write neutral introductions as prefaces to his two theologies he has, in fact, tried to do the very thing he said was impossible. As Childs himself said, "The possibility of genuine theological exegesis has been destroyed from the outset."¹⁴⁸ Perhaps Childs would respond that the Introduction was, in fact, done from a faith vantage point. If that is the case, then it was certainly a truncated faith in which the word "Christian" had been bracketed out. And as Childs has said in his Old Testament Theology,

To suggest that the Christian should read the Old Testament as if he were living before the coming of Christ is an historical anachronism which also fails to take seriously the literature's present function within the Christian Bible for a practising community of faith.¹⁴⁹

And this relates to the first line of attack that Childs's approach is more literary than theological. Childs is right

¹⁴⁸Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," 437.

¹⁴⁹Childs, Old Testament Theology, 8-9.

when he says that his approach, as opposed to merely literary approaches is motivated by theological concerns. However, it seems very strange for him to complain that his reviewers have misunderstood the theological character of his proposal, when he himself was working with a very truncated theology. Dale Brueggemann has summed up the problem this way:

For every claim Childs would make to support his canonical approach, an explicit theological claim is the only thing that will give it substance. . . . Agreed, Childs is correct in his assertion that the canon must be taken as a given. One must, however, receive it explicitly as a gift (truly a given) from the Giver.¹⁵⁰

One particular aspect of this theological problem to which I cannot give sufficient attention here, but will address further in chapters 5-6, is the theological rationale for canon for itself. Barton asserts that the inability of Childs or any other advocate of the canonical approach to provide internally biblical, theological reasons as to the extent or the necessarily authoritative status of the canon makes it "theologically neutral at best."¹⁵¹ Scalise, feeling the force of this argument, has suggested that Childs should defend his position theologically either by following Barth's doctrine of Scripture as presented in volume one of the Church Dogmatics, or by arguing for a purely functional view of canon that would accord authoritative status to the canon by virtue of its historic and continuing role in the communities of

¹⁵⁰D. Brueggemann, "Brevard Childs' Canon Criticism," 318-19.

¹⁵¹Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 93-94.

faith.¹⁵² We have already noted Childs's arguments for the extent of the canon. We will investigate later their theological adequacy.

The third line of criticism is that Childs has imposed his own theology on and through the canon, and that the theological gain from canonical analysis has been put there by Childs, not extracted from the canon itself. He has read his own interests into the minds of the redactors and canonizers and has imported extrinsic hermeneutical data into the canonical text. The following comments are typical:

The basic fault in all this is that Childs reads into the minds of the redactors and canonizers his own passionate hermeneutical interest. This is why he lumps together all sorts of process under the vague heading of canon.¹⁵³

Childs' judgment may be correct, but he has in any case made a judgment which is his own and not mandated by the text itself.¹⁵⁴

In practice his interpretation is often an oversubtle interpretation of a point within a book which must then provide a perspective for interpreting a book.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵²Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics," 157-58. In fact, the latter alternative is exactly what John Piper says is the case ("The Authority and Meaning of the Christian Canon: A Response to Gerald Sheppard on Canon Criticism," JETS 19 [1976]: 88).

¹⁵³Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 17.

¹⁵⁴Walter Brueggemann, in "The Childs Proposal: A Symposium with Ralph W. Klein, Gary Stansell, and Walter Brueggemann," WW 1/2 (1981): 113.

¹⁵⁵Carroll, review of Childs's Introduction, 289. See also Jerry Gladson, review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, AUSS 20 (1982): 78; D. Morgan, "Canon and Criticism," 91-92; Spina, "Canonical Criticism," 182-83.

On a more theoretical level, McEvenue maintains that the problem is not just Childs's but any biblical scholar's:

It is simply erroneous to think that one can proceed to truth of any kind using the Bible or a deposit of faith as the sole criterion. Unless you are simply restating the explicit biblical statement, you are always using some criterion outside the Bible.¹⁵⁶

McEvenue's point (as well as those of the others just cited) is well taken and rather than interact with it here I will do so as it reflects on my own thesis in chapters 5-6.

Conclusion

Brevard Childs is a brilliant scholar who has sought to integrate faith and scholarship. Many of his insights will be of great value for my own approach. I have personally been convicted and challenged by many of the penetrating theological statements which are contained in his two most recent books. And in spite of those who would charge Childs with possessing a certain hermeneutical arrogance, I have found a refreshing humility evidenced in statements like the following:

No one can program the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet one can testify to a hope in his guidance by an attitude of expectancy and through willingness to experience the Scriptures coming alive in new and strange ways in the midst of our present, great need.¹⁵⁷

There must be an anticipation, an eager and even restless awaiting the signs of God's presence. One cannot study

¹⁵⁶McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" 236.

¹⁵⁷Brevard Childs, "A Tale of Two Testaments," review of Die Biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik, by Hans-Joachim Kraus, in Int 26 (1972): 29.

the Bible with the detachment in which one scans graffiti on a subway wall and expect these writings to produce great spiritual truths. St. Augustine approached Scripture as a man who had been invited to a banquet table and in sheer delight partook of its richness.¹⁵⁸

There is an important sense in which the church must wait for the outpouring of God's Spirit and no amount of furious activity will avail. Conversely there remains the equally significant task of watching and preparing.¹⁵⁹

I wonder, however, if something that Childs said about von Rad could also in turn be said about him:

As a young student who had fallen under the spell of von Rad, I shared with many others the conviction that his brilliant method held the key to a proper understanding of the O.T. Von Rad saw his approach as one which would revitalize the entire theological enterprise. Significantly, even he, in his last years, began to have second thoughts. . . . The promise had not materialized. . . . Slowly I began to realize that what made von Rad's work so illuminating was not his method as such, but the theological profundity of von Rad himself.¹⁶⁰

Could it be that the appeal in Childs's approach is not really so much in the approach as it is in the theological discernment of Childs himself? Perhaps that is the reason why this chapter, though guardedly so, has been so positive.

¹⁵⁸Childs, "The Search for Biblical Authority," 204.

¹⁵⁹Brevard S. Childs, "Some Reflections on the Search for a Biblical Theology," HBT 4/1 (1982): 10.

¹⁶⁰Childs, "A Response," 208.

CHAPTER 3

THE CANONICAL CRITICISM OF JAMES SANDERS

With the publication of his Torah and Canon in 1972, James A. Sanders joined Brevard Childs in the call for serious attention to the canon of the Old Testament.¹ The two scholars became identified as leading proponents of canonical criticism. It soon became evident, however, that their respective brands of canonical criticism were poles apart theologically. Indeed, as we have already seen in chapter 2, Childs does not like the term canonical criticism at all, perceiving his canonical analysis to be a stance rather than just another methodology. Sanders himself does prefer to think of what he does as a critical methodology, replete with reconstructions of the canonization process. Sanders's particular variety of canonical study was, in fact, accorded the status of a new kind of criticism with the addition to the Fortress Press Guides to Biblical Scholarship series of a volume by Sanders explaining the new method.²

¹James A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

²James A. Sanders, Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

This chapter seeks to describe and evaluate Sanders's canonical criticism. Attention to Sanders, before stating in detail the thesis of this dissertation, is not only warranted but necessitated by the following considerations:

(1) While Childs has been well reviewed in the scholarly literature, there has not been sufficient critical interaction with Sanders. Reviews of his books have been generally sympathetic and have not dealt with matters that are potentially destructive to the very foundations of Christian faith.

(2) Sanders is seen by many as a needed corrective to Childs,³ while the present author feels that the gains won by Childs would be nullified with Sanders's program. It is my contention that while there is much in Childs's program that can be appropriated by those who are theologically conservative, there is little in Sanders's program of comparable value.

(3) Sanders's concentration on canonical criticism seems to have been sparked by his work as editor of 11QPs^a, a Qumran scroll which contains both canonical and non-canonical psalms,⁴ a scroll, the evidence of which we will have to

³For example, George M. Landes, "The Canonical Approach to Introducing the Old Testament: Prodigy and Problems," JSOT 16 (1980): 37.

⁴Sanders, however, would say that the use of "non-canonical" to describe the "extra" psalms in this manuscript prejudices the discussion. Conversely, his opponents say that his denominating it a "psalms" scroll is what prejudices the discussion.

consider in chapter 7 in the examination of the canonical shape of the Psalter.

(4) While some evangelicals who welcomed Childs's approach have begun to see that he was not really the ally they were looking for, Sanders is even less so. He is openly hostile to fundamentalists and expressly states that canonical criticism cannot be practiced by anyone as dishonest as a fundamentalist.⁵ Any claim by those who refer to themselves as evangelicals that they would not be under the condemnation is of no use, since it is precisely in those areas where evangelicals and so-called fundamentalists share convictions about Scripture that Sanders is most hostile.⁶ This is especially important, since I believe that it is precisely those with a high view of Scripture who are most qualified to do canonical criticism.

The chapter will be divided into two major sections: a description of Sanders's approach, followed by a critical evaluation.

A Description of Sanders's Approach

We will look at Sanders's canonical criticism under five major headings: (1) the need for canonical criticism, (2) the agenda of canonical criticism and the assumptions with which

⁵Sanders, Canon and Community, xvi.

⁶James A. Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," in The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honor of James Luther Mays on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Donald G. Miller, PTMS 4 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 145.

it works, (3) Sanders's reconstruction of the canonical process, (4) Sanders's points of contention with Childs, and (5) the assumed gains of canonical criticism.

The Need for Canonical Criticism

Sanders sees the necessity of canonical criticism arising out of the fact that the biblical critics have locked the Bible into the past, or, at the very least, they have chained it to the scholar's desk. So much has this become the case that ordinary pastors are afraid to preach exegetical sermons because there might be some Bible scholar in the congregation who would call them to task for not having been aware of the latest journal article on the passage in question. Or they might be reluctant to preach from a passage that they have been taught is "spurious" or "secondary" or "from a later hand."⁷ Sanders argues therefore, that the Bible must be put back where it belongs, in the context of the believing communities which have both shaped and been shaped by the canon.

Sanders notes that there has been a change in the meaning of canon: in the pre-critical days it referred to authoritative Scripture; since the rise of biblical criticism it has rather come to mean a closed collection of books.

⁷Ibid., 147.

Sanders wants to return to the old view of canon, but with the full advantage of critical scholarship.⁸

Returning therefore to an older view of canon, he desires to ask questions about the canon that he feels are not being asked. Rather than investigate the question of the closing of the canon, or the inclusion or exclusion of books from the canon, Sanders desires instead to ask the more fundamental question as to the very nature and function of canon, and posits that the former questions cannot and should not be answered until the latter question has been investigated.⁹ In essence then, rather than investigate the closing, the endpoint of canon, he desires to ask why there is canon in the first place, the beginning point of canon.

Canonical criticism also exists to answer questions about why there is such a high degree of pluralism in the Bible. Sanders notes that there is not a single idea in Scripture that does not have its "contrapositive."¹⁰ Canonical criticism therefore seeks to discover why such contradictory ideas and traditions were allowed to exist side by side in the same canon.

⁸Sanders, Canon and Community, 1.

⁹James A. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory G. Ernest Wright, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 531.

¹⁰James A. Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," Christian Century, 2 December 1981, 1254.

Only in this manner, then, will the Bible scholar be able to approach the question of closing of the canon and why there are so many different canons (Jewish, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Ethiopic, Protestant, etc.) in existence today.

The Agenda and Assumptions of Canonical Criticism

Canonical criticism as practiced by Sanders assumes that there are several components and characteristics of canon or the canonical process. I will be challenging several of these assumptions later; for now I will simply lay them out as Sanders holds them.

The first component in the process is that of repetition. Sanders posits that no part of the canon ever became such upon its first presentation to the believing community:

The process . . . had actually begun with the first occasion, whenever it was, perhaps in the late Bronze age, that a biblical tradent spanned a generation gap and addressed more than one context.¹¹

The second component in the process is that, along with the repetition, there was also a resignification of the material. In order for the material to span that generation gap, it had to be of value for another community besides the one to which it was originally addressed. Therefore it had to be capable of being resignified to mean something different

¹¹James A. Sanders, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," USQR 32 (1977): 163.

from what it originally meant.¹² This resignification needed to be able to answer two vital questions for the later community: who they were and what they were to do, i.e., identity and lifestyle.¹³ Important to note also here is that what causes the community to look to the canon for these answers are the "historical accidents" which cause the identity and lifestyle crisis.¹⁴

A third component in the process (these components should not be seen as necessarily occurring in chronological order) is that of acceptance by the community:

What is in the text is there not only because someone in antiquity was inspired to speak a needed word to his or her community, but also because that community valued the communication highly enough to repeat it and recommend it to the next generation and to a community nearby.¹⁵

Especially to be noted in this regard is that the individual is more or less reduced to a status of non-importance. It is the community and the community alone which has shaped the canon:

No individual in antiquity, no matter how "inspired," slipped something he or she had written into the canon by a side door! It has all come through the worship and educational programs of ancient believing communities or we would not have it . . .¹⁶

¹²Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1252.

¹³Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 537.

¹⁴Ibid., 541.

¹⁵Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1251.

¹⁶Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," 147.

This means also, that whatever a community decided to do with a "canonical" book which it received and passed on to another community, in the way of additions or alterations of meaning, is what, in the final analysis, is really canonical. Therefore it is important to recognize that it is not Jeremiah or Ezekiel which is canonical, but it is the Jeremiah and Ezekiel books which are canonical. Thus:

If one can understand that it was not the prophet Isaiah who was canonical, but the Isaiah book which is canonical, then modern reputable scholars would not need to insist that the sixty-six chapters stem from a single author.¹⁷

But what if a community is not able to find value for its own particular situation in a canonical book which it has received from a previous generation? Sanders's answer to this question is the fourth component in the process:

Then, once the sanctity of such reputation was transmitted along with community commendation, canon existed for the community and persisted whether or not that value derived was consistent, high, low, or latent for this or that community or generation. At that point when sacredness had been superimposed by the communities, then the survival power of the sacred literature as canon was assured without its having always to prove itself.¹⁸

Canonical criticism, therefore, with these four steps in mind, seeks to reconstruct the canonical process. It assumes that, though the process was a lengthy one, there were two periods of especially "intense canonical process" which are to be investigated to inform the study of the rest of the

¹⁷Sanders, Canon and Community, xvii.

¹⁸Ibid., 34.

process.¹⁹ Those periods are the sixth century BCE and the first century CE. These were the special periods in the history of Israel when there was need for the discovery of self-identity and canon was looked to for that discovery.

Along the way there were even non-Israelite texts which were incorporated into the canon, which Israel borrowed from her surrounding neighbors. These all had to go through a fourfold process of depolytheizing, monotheizing, Yahwizing and Israelitizing.²⁰

Based on these assumptions as to how canon came to us via the canonical process, Sanders posits several properties of canon itself by which it may always be characterized.

The first two characteristics of canon are those of adaptability and stability, with adaptability being the primary characteristic and stability being the secondary.²¹ That Sanders regards the adaptability as the most important characteristic, is highly significant, for it really determines his whole approach to canon. He feels that previous study of canon had focused almost exclusively on the stability factor, i.e., what books are in the canon; but for him, adaptability is the more important quotient, for those texts which were not adaptable, never made it into the canon in the first place. Therefore, while there is a certain

¹⁹Ibid., 30.

²⁰Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 541.

²¹Ibid., 539-40.

stability to the canon (though that stability is manifested in different forms, hence different canons for different branches of Judaism and Christianity), adaptability is the reason why there is a canon at all. Only that which was adaptable became stabilized into a final canonical form. This is why tradition criticism is especially important for Sanders, for only that which is traditional can become canonical.²²

A third characteristic of the canon is that it is multivalent: it is capable of being resignified and made valuable for the different contexts of the different believing communities.²³

A fourth characteristic is that there are within the canon some built-in self-restraints which serve to keep future communities from interpreting the canon any way they please. These constraints are not to be brought in from the outside but are intrinsic to the texts themselves. It is the job of canon criticism to uncover these restraints.²⁴

Closely related to this last is the fifth characteristic, that there are imbedded in the texts "unrecorded hermeneutics."²⁵ The uncovering of these hermeneutics is the special job of canonical criticism. In fact, these unrecorded hermeneutics constitute what Sanders

²²Ibid., 542.

²³Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1253.

²⁴Sanders, Canon and Community, 24.

²⁵Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1253.

calls the "midterm" between the canon's adaptability and stability quotients.²⁶ In other words, the uncovering of these hermeneutics will tell us how the traditions which were in the process of stabilization were made adaptable to the different communities. The uncovering of these hermeneutics may well, in Sanders's view, be more important than the actual content of the canon itself. This is because Sanders views the canon as being more important paradigmatically than it is in substance. Indeed, the hermeneutics of the Bible are to be regarded as more canonical than the canon itself.²⁷

Another feature of the canon is its highly pluralistic nature. I mentioned earlier Sanders's statement to the effect that there is practically no idea or thesis in the Bible that does not also have its "contrapositive." Sanders feels that we should take a cue from the pluralism in the Bible and rather than try to deny it, we should formally recognize it "as a blessing equal to any other the Bible has to offer."²⁸ Therefore, attempts at trying to find a theological center to Old Testament theology or a canon within the canon should be avoided.

In contrast to selecting a canon within the canon on which to base the theological construct of whatever

²⁶Sanders, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," 163.

²⁷Sanders, Canon and Community, 46. Note Eugene Lemcio's perceptive comment ("The Gospels and Canonical Criticism," BTB 11 [1981]: 115): "Here canonization and hermeneutics become almost identical phenomena."

²⁸Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1250.

denomination, canonical criticism eschews efforts at either harmonization or reductionism and admits from the outset that like the awe-inspiring Cathedral of Chartres, the Bible as canon is a glorious mess.²⁹

However, out of all this glorious pluralistic mess, Sanders sees one factor which seems to unite all the parts. It is what he terms the "Integrity of Reality" or the oneness of God.³⁰ Thus the primary characteristic of our particular canon is that it is a monotheizing book. It shows how the people of God have pursued the monotheizing process:

There appears to be only one certainly unchallenged affirmation derivable from it [the canon]: a monotheizing tradition which emerges through the canonical process. It gives the impression that Israel always doggedly pursued the integrity or sovereignty of God, his oneness.³¹

We will return later to discuss this monotheizing process; but first we must look at how Sanders reconstructs the history of the Old Testament canon.

²⁹Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," 148. Sanders explains elsewhere that the Cathedral of Chartres is the result of a "long process. Numerous master masons and builders contributed to it over several generations, and it would be difficult indeed to express adequately what makes all its disparate parts Chartres!" (From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 4).

³⁰Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," 150.

³¹Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 551.

Reconstruction of the Canonical Process³²

Sanders asks the question as to what factor in Israel's existence would have been most responsible for giving her identity and direction. He posits that Israel's source of identity would have to meet four criteria: (1) it would have to be indestructible, (2) it would have to be readily and commonly available, (3) it would have to be highly adaptable, and (4) it would have to be portable. He then analyzes all those things which were seemingly most important for Israel's survival and discounts every one as failing on at least one or more of the criteria: neither temple, nor ark, nor tabernacle, nor monarchy, nor an elaborate cult system measures up to the challenge of answering the problems of identity or survival for Israel. For when the supreme crisis of the nation's history arose, the displacement of the Jews to the land of Babylon (one of those things which Sanders calls "historical accidents"), none of those things were able to constitute a source for life and the survival of the nation. There was one element, however, and only one, which could supply that need, and that was a story. And story is the essence of what Torah is all about. While it is true that there is a great deal of

³²The details of this reconstruction are to be found primarily in three works: Torah and Canon; "Adaptable for Life"; and "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology, ed. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 21-41. Rather than footnote every detail of Sanders's reconstruction I simply refer the reader to these three works and will footnote only specific quotes or references to other works.

law (*ethos*) imbedded in the Torah, this is not its primary characteristic. Rather, it is a *muthos*, a story, which truly comprises the Torah. It is a story which tells Israel who she is, what her roots are, and where she is going.

Now we know that the Torah received its basic shape in the crisis of the Babylonian captivity. An important question to be asked, however, is, Why does the Torah story not contain an account of the conquest of Palestine? We know for certain, that Joshua (the sixth member of the hexateuch) had already been written as well as the rest of the Deuteronomistic history. We also know that in what von Rad refers to as ancient Israel's "credo," and Wright, as Israel's "recitals," there was always a mention of the conquest. Why then did the Torah become truncated? We know that for Judaism, the Torah is her canon within the canon; why then is Joshua not in there? Why does Israel's canon within the canon not fully extend to include what is in all her ancient recitals? Furthermore, why is there no account of the glory days of Camelot (David and Solomon), when the promise of the possession of the entire land was finally fulfilled?

To answer the question, Sanders says that we must go back to the disputes that occurred between the so-called "false" and "true" prophets in the days before Israel's deportation. The classic record of this is found, in Jeremiah 28, in the dispute between Hananiah and Jeremiah. Sanders makes the observation that we must no longer think in terms of

false and true prophets; we should think in terms of how the prophets viewed Israel's traditions:

For it is not [sic, I am sure the word ought to be "now"] abundantly clear that the so-called false prophets relied on the same authoritative traditions as the so-called true prophets in propounding their message of no-change, or status quo, or continuity. They claimed that Israel was serving Yahweh. The utterly engaging aspect of current study of the false prophets is that their arguments, based in large measure on the same traditions from the Exodus-Wanderings-Entrance story, were very cogent and compelling.³³

Thus the difference between the false and true prophets was a matter of hermeneutical perspective. The false prophets used a constitutive hermeneutic in appropriating Israel's traditions in order to assure Israel that the same God who brought her into the land could maintain her there as well. The true prophets used instead a prophetic hermeneutic in appropriating those same traditions to warn Israel that the same God who brought her into the land could just as easily remove her from it.³⁴

When Israel, during the exile, began to reflect on her identity, without tabernacle, or temple, or king, or cult, she was left only with a story. But how was she to read that story? She had been reading it through the eyes of the

³³Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 545.

³⁴In one article Sanders even seems to suggest that the debate between Hananiah and Jeremiah was one that occurred on a purely academic level "between disagreeing colleagues" ("The Integrity of Biblical Pluralism," in "Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative, ed. Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr., Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991], 162.

prophets who preached constitutively. Now she began to look around for anyone in the community who could remember what those great judgmental prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah had said. There was even a resident judgmental prophet among them to whom they turned for answers, asking the all-important question, "How shall we then live?" (Ezek 33:10). And in Sanders's paraphrase, Ezekiel's reply was "Israel lives, moves, and has its being in the judgments of God."³⁵

Out of this crisis, therefore, Israel began to view the Torah through the eyes of the judgmental prophets. It was at this time that some wise editor put Deuteronomy as the last book of the Torah:

Deuteronomy thus wedged itself between the narrative portions of JE found in the book of Numbers and their continuation in Joshua; in effect it displaced Joshua and its conquest narrative as the climax of the canonical period of authority. The wedging and displacement did not take place in any final way until the jarring events of destitution forced the radical review of Yahwism which accompanied the exile. But once it had done so, the Deuteronomic perspective held sway. True authority lay with the Mosaic period only . . .³⁶

And why was Joshua, and for that matter the rest of the Deuteronomistic history, excluded from Israel's inner canon? Because it was more important to see Israel perched on the other side of Jordan as being the true Israel, than it was to see her in the land. The inclusion of Joshua in the Torah

³⁵Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 548.

³⁶Sanders, Torah and Canon, 44-45.

would have tended to suggest that for Israel to be Israel, she had to be in possession of the land. The exclusion of Joshua, precipitated by viewing the traditions through the eyes of the judgmental prophets, was intended to guard against viewing Israel as having her identity in anything except the one true God: "Judaism could be the new Israel anywhere at all."³⁷

It was also at this time that Israel began to acquire a proper perspective on the cult:

It was then that the anti-cultic and anti-royalist stricture of the judgmental prophets made "canonical" sense. What the prophets had kept saying, in effect, was that the cultic and royal institutions and practices did not derive from the Torah *muthos*, that is, they were unauthorized by the tradition the prophets adhered to (Amos 5:25; Hosea 8:4 *et passim*; Micah 6:6-7; Isa. 1:12-17; Jer. 7:22, etc.) as authoritative.³⁸

And that is how things developed in the first great period of intense canonical process. When Ezra returned from Babylon, he brought with him a Torah shaped in hermeneutical crisis which is tantamount to the Torah as we know it today. Also, the prophets, because of their perspective on Torah which had allowed Israel to survive her crisis, began to be collected into an authoritative corpus as well.

The other period of intense canonical process was the first century CE. Sanders has not written quite so conclusively on this particular period, i.e., he has not been

³⁷Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 550.

³⁸Ibid., 549.

able to reconstruct the process. There are four things that may be noted in his writings, however.

First, it should be noted that Sanders has changed his position somewhat on the importance of Jamnia (or Jabneh). When he wrote "Adaptable for Life," he seemed to be taking the conciliar view of what happened, even though he was well aware of Jack Lewis's article.³⁹ Since then, however, he has apparently changed his mind and even warns against thinking of Jamnia as a council.⁴⁰

Second, Sanders seems to be in basic agreement⁴¹ with the work of Sundberg,⁴² and thus views the Writings section of the canon as being in a state of flux in the first century CE. As well, Sanders has an open view of canon, and believes that in a sense, the canonization process is still ongoing.⁴³

³⁹Ibid., 532-33, and 553 n. 7.; see also Jack P. Lewis, "What Do We Mean by Jabneh?" in The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible: An Introductory Reader, ed. Sid Z. Leiman (New York: KTAV, 1974), 254-61. Most recently on this see D. E. Aune, "On the Origins of the 'Council of Javneh' Myth," JBL 110 (1991): 491-93.

⁴⁰Sanders, Canon and Community, 11.

⁴¹Ibid., 35.

⁴²A. C. Sundberg, Jr., The Old Testament of the Early Church, HTS 20 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964; repr., New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969).

⁴³James A. Sanders, "The Qumran Psalm Scroll (11QPs^a) Reviewed," in On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida, ed. Matthew Black and William A. Smalley, Approaches to Semiotics 56 (Paris: Mouton, 1974), 97.

Third, Sanders has especially entered the fray with his books and articles on the Qumran Psalter.⁴⁴ We will look at this issue more closely in chapter 7, but a few words on the topic would be in order now. Sanders worked on the editing of the Large Psalms Scroll from Qumran, 11QPs^a. The Scroll diverges from the traditional Masoretic Text in three ways. First, in the extant portion of the manuscript (roughly the last third of the Psalter) the psalms are in a different order. Second there are several Masoretic psalms which are not only out of order, but not there. Third, there are about seven non-Masoretic psalms in the collection, which Sanders describes as being written in biblical style. Sanders has concluded from this, that the last third of the Psalter at Qumran was open-ended, in a state of flux, and that this Psalter was canonical for the Qumran community. Sanders has come under criticism for these views from several quarters,⁴⁵

⁴⁴Some of the more significant ones are: "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon," in The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible: An Introductory Reader, ed. by Sid Z. Leiman (New York: KTAV, 1974), 37-51; reprinted from McCormick Quarterly 21 (1968): 284-98; The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967; The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a), DJD 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965); "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) Reviewed"; "Variorum in the Psalms Scroll," HTR 59 (1966): 83-94.

⁴⁵Roger T. Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 77-78; Ian H. Eybers, "Some Remarks about the Canon of the Old Testament," Theologica Evangelica 8 (1975): 117; Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a): A Problem of Canon and Text," Textus 5 (1966): 22-33; Sid Leiman, The Canonization of the Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 47 (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1976), 154-

especially from the late Patrick Skehan.⁴⁶ However, Gerald Wilson, who may be considered the foremost scholar today regarding the Psalter's editing and composition, has come to more or less agree with Sanders.⁴⁷

Fourth, as far as the divergence in this time period between Judaism and Christianity, Sanders seems to suggest that the basic disagreement between the two was the way in which they read the Torah. Judaism read it as law (*ethos*) while Christianity read it as story (*muthos*). Thus:

The frustration for Paul did not stem so much from a lack of affirmation of Christ by the majority of Jews of his day, but that he could not get them to read the Torah and the prophets correctly, that is, in the way he read them. For he was certain that if they would review the Torah story with him in the way he viewed it, they would then accept the Christ.⁴⁸

Two things must be noticed about this idea. First, it was Christianity's view of Torah as *muthos* which allowed a new chapter to be added to the Torah story. The Jews of that day, as long they regarded the Torah as basically *ethos*, could not do so.

Second, note that just as in the other period of intense canonical process, it was not a matter of false vs. true, but

55; Shemaryahu Talmon, "*Pisqah Be emsa Pasuq* and 11QPs^a," Textus 5 (1966): 11-21.

⁴⁶See all articles by Skehan in the bibliography.

⁴⁷Gerald H. Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); "The Qumran Scroll Reconsidered: An Analysis of the Debate," CBQ 47 (1985): 624-42.

⁴⁸James A. Sanders, "Torah and Christ," Int 29 (1975): 379.

simply a matter of perspective that caused Judaism to go one way and Christianity to go another. This will be very important for our criticisms later in this chapter.

Differences with Childs

I will simply list here what I believe to be the major differences.

(1) The most obvious difference is that while Childs lays heavy emphasis on the final canonical form, Sanders wants to emphasize the canonical process, both before and after the so-called closing of the canon. Sanders, as has been noted already, is much more interested in the traditioning process that led up to canon and its "unrecorded hermeneutics" than he is in the content of the canon. Further, Sanders assumes that the canonical process is still a process, that "precisely . . . the same thing is going on now in the believing communities as went on back then."⁴⁹ With this Childs strongly disagrees.⁵⁰

(2) In the light of the questions raised by Sundberg regarding the Old Testament canon of the early Church, Sanders finds it particularly troublesome that Childs latches on to the Masoretic Text as the authoritative form of the Hebrew Bible. He feels that it is "to read back into canonical

⁴⁹James A. Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," HBT 2 (1980): 187.

⁵⁰Childs, "A Response," 202. Cf. E. Early Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research, WUNT 54 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 47 n. 158.

history a post-Christian, very rabbinic form of the text . . . a text unrelated to the Christian communities until a comparatively late date."⁵¹ Sanders feels that Sundberg has argued very persuasively and that Childs has not yet satisfactorily answered those arguments. Therefore it would be wrong for the Christian Church to arbitrarily limit itself to the Masoretic Text form of the Hebrew Bible that only at a late date replaced the Septuagint canon for only some branches of the Church.

(3) Sanders pays more attention to the community shaping of the canon than does Childs. He accuses Childs of positing some final "canonical redactor."⁵² While Childs seems to emphasize the redaction of the books so that the final stage becomes the glorified redaction *par excellence*, Sanders wants to emphasize that no redactor ever passed his work off on to the community without that community playing a part in the shaping of that work.

(4) A further problem that Sanders has with Childs is his emphasis on the need to read everything in its full canonical context, which Sanders feels for Childs means "literary" context. In Sanders's view there is no real precedent in the canon itself for a fixation on the final form:

⁵¹Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," 187.

⁵²Sanders, Canon and Community, 30.

To focus exclusively on the final full literary form is simply not what either Judaism or Christianity did. As soon as need be they broke into the frozen text, and made it relevant to the next problem faced: and for the most part they fragmented the texts in order to do so--no matter how much we moderns may regret it.⁵³

Again Sanders writes:

It is not clear that any of the writers of such documents [the Bible texts] derived the hermeneutics by which they read the text from canonical context . . . Childs indicates a canonical shape which few if any subsequent tradents heeded.⁵⁴

Thus Sanders feels that Childs's emphasis on the full context of the canon for interpretation is unwarranted.

(5) Sanders argues also that to focus on that final canonical moment as Childs does, is to focus on what was not very significant for the early communities. Indeed, Sanders asserts that "the overwhelming evidence points to the moment of final shaping as not particularly more important than any other."⁵⁵ Sanders posits that there is actually no evidence to the effect that anyone ever read any biblical book differently because of canonization:

There was no dramatic shift because of canonization and people did not start reading the whole of Isaiah, all sixty-six chapters in a sweep, or all of the Psalter (the whole books on which Childs focuses) in order to apply a theological move or Word derived from a whole book to the next problem they faced.⁵⁶

⁵³Sanders, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," 163.

⁵⁴Sanders, "Canonical context and Canonical Criticism," 188-89.

⁵⁵Ibid., 191.

⁵⁶Sanders, Canon and Community, 32.

(6) Another important difference is that while Childs wants to de-emphasize the historical context of the communities, Sanders wants to underscore those same contexts. He regards it as irrational for Childs to disregard historical context when the shape of the canon seems to demand it, especially on the part of the redactors themselves:

Does not most such editorial work indicate the intense interest of such redactors in date lines and historical contexts? They seem to be saying fairly clearly, if the reader wants to understand the full import for his/her (later) situation of what Scripture is saying, he/she had best consider the original context in which this passage scored its first point. Childs may be right to some extent that the editors of the Psalter wanted their readers to view David as an example of the way God can deal with any leader or man, but the way they did it was to draw attention to historical situations in which David supposedly composed his songs.⁵⁷

(7) Perhaps the basic difference between them is their divergence as to what canonical "shape" really means. For Childs, shape means the final form of the canon; for Sanders, the shape of the canon is not the form but the hermeneutics which are responsible for that form.⁵⁸ Thus, to a large extent, Childs is concerned with what Sanders calls the stability quotient, and Sanders with the adaptability quotient, or rather, the hermeneutics which renders the stable adaptable.

(8) One other difference between Childs and Sanders is one which I have not yet seen anyone point out in the

⁵⁷Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," 191.

⁵⁸Sanders, Canon and Community, 36.

literature: nowhere have I have seen Sanders pay any attention to one of Childs's main points--or at least the one which Childs stressed early on, that is, the need to interpret from a standpoint of faith. Sanders does point out that "with very few exceptions, most biblical critics have been persons of faith, staying within a traditional believing community."⁵⁹ But nowhere have I found a statement tantamount to what Childs first suggested. I am not sure that Sanders, with his own faith reduced down to a "monotheizing pluralism," could really make the statement.

The Gains of Canonical Criticism

In this section I will simply list, without much elaboration, the benefits that Sanders claims for canonical criticism. Sanders himself lists in one place seventeen gains that can result from his particular brand of theocentric, canonical hermeneutic.⁶⁰ We will not examine every item in this list, nor restrict ourselves to this list. Some of the gains are repetitious⁶¹ and neutral at best, and it is hard to see how they actually result from canonical criticism. Also, some of them are irrelevant for our purposes. But we will

⁵⁹Ibid., 3.

⁶⁰Ibid., 74-76.

⁶¹This repetitiousness is a feature of his articles as a whole; as Robert Carroll notes (review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, in SJT 33 [1980]: 285): "Sanders's "many articles appear to be the same article in different guises."

look only at some of the more questionable advantages maintained by Sanders.

(1) Sanders states that "canonical study is criticism's effort to be more scientifically accurate than it has been to date."⁶² He feels, therefore, that his reconstructions of the periods of intense canonical process produce this result.

(2) Sanders believes that we really have "only a small fraction of what was available as religious literature in ancient Israel or in early Judaism."⁶³ His reconstruction shows how what did not serve to meet Israel's needs at a particular point in time, "just didn't make it."

(3) Given Sanders's view of an open canon, one might ask him, therefore, if anything can, in fact, be added to the canon today. His answer is that, given what he considers to be the nature of canon as a paradigm, "nothing need be added."⁶⁴

(4) As a result of his study, Sanders is convinced that there must be proposed now a new model for inspiration:

The new model for understanding inspiration of Scripture is that of the Holy Spirit at work all along the process of formation of Scripture (of whichever canon of whichever believing community--Jewish, Protestant, Roman, Greek Orthodox all the way to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church) as well as through its textual and versional transmission into the ongoing preserving and representational process.⁶⁵

⁶²Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," 1252.

⁶³Sanders, Canon and Community, 34.

⁶⁴Ibid., 68.

⁶⁵Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," 148.

Recently Sanders elaborated on this:

The tacit, or expressed, understanding of inspiration has been God or Holy Spirit (or Shekinah, or Reality) working with an individual in antiquity, whose words were then more-or-less accurately preserved by disciples, schools, and scribes. The more responsible theory, given the data and facts we actually have, would be that of God or Holy Spirit (or Shekinah, truth, or Reality) working all along the path of formation of these texts. This theory of authority could then include all the so-called spurious or secondary passages (which are in the Bible whether we like it or not), all the discrepancies and anomalies, and that fact that more often than not what we have in the beautiful ruins of many passages is what the Reality of later believing communities bequeathed us.⁶⁶

(5) Potentially, however, the most important consequence of Sanders's study is his idea of monotheizing pluralism. He started off with it as an assumption and feels that his reconstruction also supports it.

Throughout her history, Israel pursued the integrity of Reality, the oneness of God. Sanders states that he is under no delusions that Israel was a monotheizing people: "On the contrary, even a cursory reading of the prophetic corpus indicates otherwise."⁶⁷ Yet she did pursue it, as her literature shows.

One of my professors at Westminster, the late Dr. Raymond B. Dillard, upon reading this definition of inspiration, noted that it has some remarkable formal similarities to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

⁶⁶James A. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Studies," in "Sha`arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 334-35.

⁶⁷Sanders, Canon and Community, 43.

The Old Testament canon monotheizes "more or less well."⁶⁸ By that he means that, while there are polytheistic elements in the Bible, the different parts of the Old Testament canon more or less pursue the oneness of God, the monotheizing process. Notice, however, what he says of the New Testament canon:

As the OT writers and thinkers, so the contributors to the NT monotheized more or less well, yet they all monotheized. But Christians have rarely, since NT times, done so at all.⁶⁹

This is highly significant, for in Sanders's view, the pedestal upon which Christians have put Christ is tantamount to polytheism: "Christomonism is Christianity's failure to monotheize."⁷⁰ He accuses Christianity of having somehow come to believe that Christ revealed God, asking with apparent incredulity, "where did such a notion get started anyway?"⁷¹ Indeed, probably the most idolatrous and polytheistic people in the world today are the "hard-core" fundamentalists.⁷² At least three items in Sanders's list of seventeen are taken up with this point:

4. It may challenge the Christian tendency toward a self-serving reading of the Bible, especially of the NT, with

⁶⁸Ibid., 58.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., 59.

⁷¹James A. Sanders, God Has a Story Too: Sermons in Context (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 136.

⁷²Sanders, "The Bible and the Believing Communities," 152.

the tendency to feel that Christ somehow domesticated God for us in the incarnation.

5. It can release Christians to honor Christ and worship him as the Second Person of the Godhead, the Son of God, rather than the idol we grasp by our limited ideas of the incarnation. . . .

15. It may help Christians learn that God revealed his Christ as the climax of his own divine story and discourage the tendency to think that our Christ revealed God.⁷³

The ramifications of this last point are very important for the Christian idea of missions and evangelism. The significance of canonical criticism for evangelism in Sanders approach is expressed thus:

It can release Christians to evangelize canonically and share the Torah-Christ story, not because we think Christ in the incarnation gave us an exclusive hold on God or out of fear that others are lost--but because out of sheer joy we cannot help but share the vision of the Integrity of Reality this canon affords.⁷⁴

We noted earlier that, according to Sanders's approach, Paul was not so much concerned that the Jews affirm Christ than that they learn to read the Torah story as he had learned to read it. The approach of Christians today should be similar:

There is nothing wrong in continuing to hope, as Paul did, that Jews acknowledge the work of God in Christ so long as

⁷³Sanders, Canon and Community, 74-75.

⁷⁴Ibid., 75. In another place Sanders says that the "true Christian does not worry about whether others are lost" ("The Heart of the Christian Faith for Me," in Three Faiths--One God: A Jewish, Christian, Muslim Encounter, ed. John Hick and Edmund S. Meltzer [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989], 186).

we do not go on then to insist that they "become Christian."⁷⁵

Can Christianity be content with this kind of evangelism? I shall try to answer that question in the next section.

Evaluation of Sanders's Approach

My evaluation of Sanders's canonical criticism will focus first on his reconstruction of the canonical process, and then on the assumptions, gains, and benefits of his particular brand of canonical criticism.

Evaluation of Sanders's Reconstruction

James Barr, who in the past decade has been the primary critic of Brevard Childs, has had only a few criticisms for Sanders, but those criticisms are very pertinent. While more or less accepting Sanders's thesis that Deuteronomy has become wedged in between the JE narratives and Joshua,⁷⁶ he has been less impressed with the rest of the reconstruction. He states:

The positive vision of hermeneutics seems to depend very largely on vague wording and *non sequiturs*.

Secondly, the actual handling of the biblical evidence seems to me to be too speculative and too slight in substance to provide a solid framework for what is supposed to be a new movement in criticism. The point about the placing of Deuteronomy within the Torah, and the consequent separation between the Torah and the story thereafter, is, as already mentioned, a point of

⁷⁵Sanders, "Torah and Christ," 389.

⁷⁶Barr, Holy Scripture, 51-52.

importance; but it does not seem to me that Torah and Canon offers any other piece of evidence that has comparable solidity.

Too much seems to depend on very hypothetical arguments: if x has not happened, then how could y have happened, and if y did happen, how was it that z did not happen? Such argument are not very compelling. Moreover, Torah and Canon is much too easy-going in reading into the biblical writers (or documents) its own modern hermeneutic ideas Nearly all the evidence cited in Torah and Canon seems to me to be susceptible of some different interpretation which in fact is not considered.⁷⁷

Barr's criticisms of Sanders are precisely my own.

Whether or not Barr would agree with my precise examples of *non sequiturs* or not, I do not know. I start first with Sanders's reconstruction of the first intense period of canonical process, the sixth century BC.

(1) First, granting for a moment that neither temple, nor cult, nor ark, nor tabernacle, nor monarchy, meet the four criteria that Sanders posits as necessary for Israel's identity source, it must also be pointed out that story (*muthos*) does not meet all the criteria either. Evidently there were stories (traditions) that did get lost in the shuffle. Sanders himself admits and asserts that the majority of Israel's literature has been lost. Are we to assume that there was no story among them?⁷⁸ What Sanders needed to have shown is that this Torah story in particular was indestructible, and that he has not done. Perhaps Sanders

⁷⁷Ibid., 157.

⁷⁸As well, it should be noted that there is, in fact, a considerable amount of *muthos* in the extant non-canonical texts, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

would fall back on the element of repetition, and say that since the other traditions did not get repeated, but the Torah did, his case is proved. But this is an argument from silence. Arguments from silence should be accorded their proper weight, but it seems to me that Sanders needs to show here how the Torah story would have been adaptable in a way other stories or traditions would not have been.

Furthermore, the things that Sanders points to as not being able to hold Israel together during the exile were, in fact, the very things to which Israel turned her attention upon her return to Palestine: the Temple was rebuilt, the cult was reestablished, the monarchy was reinstated with Zerubbabel (in a limited way, of course, given the restraints of the ruling Persians) and the ancient royal psalms were sung in anticipation of a messianic monarch yet to come. And I think it would be hard to support the thesis that in Ezra-Nehemiah it is the Torah (*muthos*) story that takes precedence over the Torah (*ethos*) laws. In other words, the Temple, the law (as law), the cult, the monarchy, and the land were never very far away from the hearts of the exilic community, as evidenced by the actions of the post-exilic community. Certainly, it is true that there were many Jews who were not especially anxious to return from what had become a somewhat comfortable life in the exile, and the Jews who did return had to be prodded into carrying through to completion the rebuilding of the Temple. But all this seems to be one of the

very points that is being made by Ezra-Nehemiah and the post-exilic prophets: that Jews who were not concerned about the land or the temple or the law or the cult or the monarchy were in danger of losing their very identity as Jews and as Israel. Indeed, one of the major points made by the book of Esther seems to be that there were true Jews who had chosen to remain in exile, after all. Sanders's point is correct: Israel could be Israel anywhere. But what Sanders fails to note is that the canonical Scriptures also make clear that Israel could not be Israel without an intense longing for all those things that made her distinctive: a temple where God dwelt, a cult through which God was worshipped, a law through which God's will was made known (laws which he had given to no other nation), a monarchy through which God's will was carried out, and a land God himself had promised to the patriarchs. And Israel's exile from the land was not an existential exercise in self-identity, but the sign of their covenant God's disfavor. There was no identity crisis; rather there was an identity exchange: Israel had gone from being the people of God's favor, to being the people of God's disfavor.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Childs ("A Call to Canonical Criticism," review of Torah and Canon, by James A. Sanders, in Int 27 [1973]: 91) agrees with this point as well: "I suspect that Sanders has prejudiced the historical description of the shaping of the canon by assuming that Israel's search for self-understanding lay at the heart of the process. I am aware that a shattered, exiled community posed to Ezekiel the question: 'How shall we live?' But the prophetic answer given was not in terms of Israel's identity, but rather in terms of the divine claim on Israel both in judgment and redemption."

(2) Second, in assuming that Joshua is in fact a continuation of the Pentateuchal sources, it must be remembered that this is not universally accepted in the critical scholarship, and that Sanders is perhaps perpetuating an already discarded nineteenth-century view. Martin Noth, for example, has shown that the JE sources are not found in the book of Joshua.⁸⁰ In this light, it seems rather important that Sanders, before talking about the wedge that Deuteronomy drove between the Tetrateuch and Joshua, should demonstrate that they were ever actually joined.

(3) Third, it is important to remember, that whether or not false prophets were to be distinguished from true prophets by their hermeneutical approach to Israel's traditions, still the clear *peshat* of the canon, which Sanders himself says must not be violated,⁸¹ does not attribute the difference to that of prophetic perspective on the tradition. If the difference had been one only of hermeneutical perspective, it is very doubtful that the distinction between false and true prophet would have been made. According to the clear *peshat* of the text, the false prophet did not have a word from the Lord.

⁸⁰Martin Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien, 3d ed. (Tübingen: 1967), 1.180-82, cited in Ronald Clements, One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 25-26; cf. William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic Wm. Bush, Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 202-3.

⁸¹Sanders, Canon and Community, 24.

Childs has been particularly critical of Sanders on this point. First, he restates Sanders's position:

He wants to illustrate that there never were any objective criteria by which to determine the true from the false prophet. The same biblical tradition could be applied by various prophets in different contexts with very divergent results. What determined its truth was largely a question of timing. The prophet was thus engaged above all in the hermeneutical issue which turned on how correctly he applied his received tradition to his new situation. A false prophet was one who practised bad hermeneutics. Because he misjudged the historical situation, he did not correctly understand whether the moment at hand was one under the judgment or the salvation of God.⁸²

Childs then goes on to make his own analysis of the Hananiah-Jeremiah debate and comes to the following conclusion:

The passage has nothing at all to do with Jeremiah's ability to time his prophecy correctly, nor does he differ with Hananiah merely in the practice of hermeneutics. No, the content of Hananiah's message is wrong. He speaks a lie in claiming to be sent from God, since he is not in touch with God's revelation . . . The theological issue is the same throughout these chapters, on both the original and redactional levels. The true prophet speaks the word of God, the false prophet only lies . . .⁸³

Nor does Sanders maintain that this false vs. true problem as being only a matter of hermeneutical perspective was only an Old Testament phenomenon. He traces the hermeneutical appropriation of tradition right into the New Testament. Sanders asks:

Can we be surprised to observe that some of the very traditions of the Old Testament that the New Testament calls upon to support its christological claims were called upon by other Jews of the period to reject these claims? There are two observations here: (1) The Bible is

⁸²Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context, 136.

⁸³Ibid., 139.

highly pluralistic; and (2) its traditions are by their very nature as canon adaptable to differing contexts and needs.⁸⁴

Why is it then that the New Testament use of the traditions made it into Christian canon? Sanders's answer for the Hananiah-Jeremiah debate was the "historical accident" of the exile. Would his answer for the New Testament period be the "historical accident" of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, or the destruction of Jerusalem, or the nationalizing of Christianity by Constantine?

(4) Fourth, if, as Sanders believes, the so-called false prophets actually won the day in their pre-exilic debates with the judgmental prophets, why was there still someone around in the exilic age who could remember, substantially, the words of Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah (with Jeremiah, close as he was to the exilic age, it is more understandable that his words would be remembered)? And was there no one at all who would have been willing to preserve the Hananiah book(s)? I believe this constitutes a problem for Sanders's reconstruction.

(5) Fifth, if Ezekiel was as important as Sanders postulates in the shaping of Israel's canon, then why was Ezekiel, alone, of all the prophetic books, subjected to recurring debates over its status in the canon? If it was Ezekiel who gave the proper answer to Israel's identity crisis

⁸⁴James A. Sanders, "The Gospels and the Canonical Process: A Response to Lou Silberman," in The Relationships Among the Gospels: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue, ed. William. O. Walker, Jr., Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion 5 (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1978), 234.

in the exile, then why was that not remembered long enough to assure Ezekiel's place in the canon beyond debate?

(6) Sixth, does it really follow that Israel, in order to find her true identity in the exile, had to truncate her Torah to a point where Israel is perched on the other side of the Jordan, awaiting entrance to the land, rather than actually in the land itself? Was it that kind of mentality that produced Israel's true wailing song?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. (Psalm 137:6)

(7) Seventh, I find it very puzzling that it was at this time that Sanders theorizes that the community finally began to accept the prophetic denouncement of cultic practices, or that he then goes on to suggest that:

The harmonistic efforts, in the recent neo-orthodox period, to see the prophets as moralizing in favor of an ethical cult, are now to be seen as impertinent from the perspective of canonical criticism.⁸⁵

Why was it then that the Torah was canonized in this very same time period when it has so much to say about cultic legislation? Why was Ezekiel the priest the one contemporary prophet Israel listened to during the exilic period if it was only then that they were finally beginning to accept the anti-cult proclamations of the prophets? It just does not follow.

(8) Finally, why is there no mention of the importance of the covenant in the formation of the canon? Any theory of

⁸⁵Sanders, "Adaptable or Life," 559-660 n. 3.

canonical process that ignores the importance of the covenant has to be suspect.⁸⁶ It begins to look as if the only evidence which Sanders excludes from consideration in his reconstruction of the canonical process is that afforded by the canon itself. In conjunction with this point, I think it is a serious flaw as well for Sanders simply to ignore the evidence that Leiman presents for the beginnings of the canonical process.⁸⁷

In short, as J. King West observes, "Such broad ascription of motives to generations of the distant past as Sanders here attempts is, of course, a risky business."⁸⁸

As far as the other intensive period of canonical process is concerned, it is good that Sanders has apparently changed his mind about Jamnia. He seems, however, to accept Sundberg's thesis too uncritically, especially since there are reputable scholars, both Jewish and Christian, who have marshalled substantial arguments against Sundberg.⁸⁹

⁸⁶See Ronald Clements ("Covenant and Canon in the Old Testament," in Creation, Christ and Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance, ed. Richard W. A. McKinney [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976], 1-12) who has recognized this overlooked factor of the importance of the covenant for the canonical process (esp. pp. 9-10).

⁸⁷Sid Z. Leiman, The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 47 (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1976), 16-26.

⁸⁸J. King West, "Rethinking the OT Canon," Religion in Life 45 (1976): 25.

⁸⁹Leiman, The Canonization of the Hebrew Bible; Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church; Eybers,

As far as the Qumran Psalter is concerned, I must frankly admit that the situation is rather perplexing. I think any arguments against Sanders's thesis that depend on the Large Psalms Scroll as being merely a liturgical collection are simply begging the question; the Masoretic Psalter itself is a liturgical collection. Also, several of the non-Masoretic psalms do seem to have been written in a biblical style, as opposed to the Hodayot. Practically, however, there has not yet been a rush to canonize the extra psalms of the newly found psalter. Again, we will look at this issue much more closely in chapter 7.

The most troublesome part of Sanders's reconstruction for the first century AD, however, is his thesis that Judaism and Christianity went their separate ways on account of their disagreement over the *muthos* vs. *ethos* character of the Torah. Nor does it follow that Paul's difference with the Jews was only a matter of perspective. For Paul, it was far more than a difference in perspective that caused Paul to say that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his kinsmen (a true Moses-like statement [Rom 9:3; Exod 32:32]). Paul was not trying to get his kinsmen simply to read Torah the way he read Torah; rather he was trying to save his kinsmen from a certain impending destruction without Christ.

"Some Remarks about the Canon of the Old Testament"; David Noel Freedman, "Canon of the OT," in IDBSup, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 130-36.

In short, then, when it comes to the canonical process, Sanders's canonical criticism, while provocative and perhaps at times elucidating, fails to provide a credible reconstruction of the canonical process.

Evaluation of the Assumptions and Gains of Canonical Criticism

Sanders has made several, not only unwarranted, but dangerous assumptions concerning the nature of canon and the canonical process. Further, he has greatly exaggerated, if not outright misrepresented the gains to be won from his particular brand of canonical criticism. We will examine these now.

(1) First, why is it that only that which is traditional can become canonical? Is there not evidence in the Bible, at least as far as the clear *peshat* of the canon is concerned, that at least some material became canonical on the spot? I am, of course, thinking here of the laws in Exodus and of many of the prophetic speeches. Even if the biblical evidence is disallowed, is this not still the current critical view of Deuteronomy? Was not Deuteronomy, according to the critical consensus, a "pious fraud," in fact, "slipped in through the side door"? Did the community really have a part to play in Deuteronomy's canonization? I do not believe Sanders considers seriously enough the possibility of simultaneous revelation and canonization.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Though still sympathetic to Sanders, Everett Kalin (review

(2) Second is there any really hard evidence that the community played a significant part in the canonical process? If the words of the judgmental prophets could, in Sanders's reconstruction, survive for several decades without community help or recognition, does it really follow that the community was integral to the canonical process. Furthermore, even if it should be evidenced that the believing communities were integral to the process, is there any evidence that they played any part at all in decisions about which text of a book become the canonical one? Was the community really involved in the canonizing of minuscule scribal errors? It seems that these were scribal and not communal decisions.⁹¹

In conjunction with this point, I will say just a word here about the community's role in inspiration. We noted earlier that Sanders put forth a model of inspiration that sees the Holy Spirit at work all along the process, not so much in individuals, but in communities. This view bears a close resemblance, as noted by R. G. Young,⁹² to the model put

of Canon and Community, by James A. Sanders, in CurTM 12 [1985]: 312) questions also Sanders's contention that anything repeated becomes canonical.

⁹¹This is one point on which Bernhard W. Anderson (review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, by James A. Sanders, in RelSRev 15 [1989]: 99) criticizes Sanders. He especially makes reference to Jeremiah 36 and the poems which Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, which "had an authority that was not dependent upon the social situation of their initial proclamation or their final reception by the community as `canonical.'"

⁹²R. Garland Young, "The Role of the Spirit in Texts: James Sanders, Paul Achteemeier, and Process Theology," Perspectives in Religious Studies 13/3 (1986): 229-40.

forth by Paul Achtemeier.⁹³ It also bears some resemblance (though there are important differences) to the view of both Childs and Gerald Sheppard.⁹⁴ Now as John Oswalt, observes, there is nothing about this model that is theologically impossible: "Ultimately inspiration is from God, who can give it where and when he wills."⁹⁵ But as Oswalt also notes, the canon itself does not present this as its own model:

However, the Bible does not speak to us of inspired communities. Rather, it speaks of inspired individuals speaking to the community. "God . . . spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1).⁹⁶

As he further notes, "The community, left to itself, is not a source of regeneration but of degeneration."⁹⁷

I will deal with this matter again in chapters 5-6, but will go on to say here that Sanders's further contention that the canonical process goes on even today must be strongly rejected. Sanders's sees the canonical process as "going on

⁹³Paul J. Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals, Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980).

⁹⁴Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 104; Gerald T. Sheppard, "Canon Criticism: The Proposal of Brevard Childs and an Assessment for Evangelical Hermeneutics," Studia Biblica et Theologica 4 (1974): 17.

⁹⁵John N. Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism: A Review from a Conservative Viewpoint," JETS 30 (1987): 322.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

now in the believing communities as it went on back then."⁹⁸ I suppose it is in this light that Sanders also says,

Hermeneutics, therefore, is as much concerned with the contexts in which biblical texts were and are read or recited as with the texts themselves. It is in this sense that one must insist that the Bible is not the Word of God. The Word is the point that is made in the conjunction of text and context, whether in antiquity or at any subsequent time.⁹⁹

The problem with this is that modern hermeneutical theories and constructs come to be accorded equal canonical status with the foundational documents of the New Testament, as Childs has well recognized:

In sum, there is no privileged time within divine will, there are no special witnesses, there is no unique divine manifestation. Rather, these have been replaced by traditioning process, dynamic transcendence, and monotheistic pluralism!¹⁰⁰

Instead, with Childs and practically the entire Christian Church in its nearly two thousand year history, we believe that "the period of the Christ's incarnation . . . [was] *sui generis*. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was 'once for all'."¹⁰¹ Childs goes on to say, and with this I fully agree:

Of course, the Christ who revealed himself to the Apostles was a living Lord and he continued to address his church

⁹⁸Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," 187.

⁹⁹James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," In IDBSup (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 404.

¹⁰⁰Brevard S. Childs, "Gerhard von Rad in American Dress," in The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honor of James Luther Mays on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Donald J. Miller, PTMS 4 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 81.

¹⁰¹Brevard S. Childs, "A Response," HBT 2 (1980): 202.

and the world, but the role of the Holy Spirit offers a very different understanding of actualization than that described by Sanders. The Holy Spirit appropriates for every new generation, in every new situation, the Christ to whom the Apostles bore witness. The Christ of the N.T. is not an illustration within a traditioning process, but the fullness of God's revelation. The modern Christian church does not function in a direct analogy to the Apostolic church, but through its understanding of Scripture and creed, seeks to be faithful in its own generation to the witness of the Apostles and Prophets on whom its Gospel is grounded.¹⁰²

(3) Third, there is the very important issue of what Sanders calls "historical accidents." Does Sanders really mean to say that had it not been for the exile, we might be reading Hananiah today instead of Jeremiah? And would Sanders be willing to accept Hananiah's constitutive hermeneutics? I think most Christians would rather not place too much faith in an accidental canon.

(4) Fourth, why would Israel need to bring in outside material that needed to go through the fourfold process when it already had depolytheized, monotheized, Yahwized, and Israelitized material that did not make it into the canon? I need to clarify exactly what I am disputing here. I am in full agreement with Sanders that Israel incorporated non-Israelite material into her canon. The book of Proverbs and perhaps several of the psalms are good examples of this. But Sanders fails to tell why material which was original with Israel and therefore, in effect, born full-grown without

¹⁰²Ibid.

having to go through the fourfold process, did not make it into the canon.

(5) Fifth, is it not possible that there were prior periods of intense canonical process before the sixth century BC? If the traditions recorded for us in the Torah bear any resemblance to truth, would it not be fair to suggest that there was a period of rather intense canonical process in the wilderness?

(6) Sixth, when Sanders says that the business of canonical criticism is to uncover the unrecorded hermeneutics of the canon, can Sanders himself, whose exegesis of the canon is filled with *non sequiturs* and avoidance of the *peshat* meaning of Scripture, be trusted as a reliable guide?¹⁰³

Sanders states:

I have spent some twenty years probing the Bible in all its parts ferreting out those hermeneutics by which the biblical authors and contributors themselves read what was biblical or authoritative tradition up to their time--the prophets, psalmists and historians of the Torah and wisdom traditions, and then the evangelists and apostles of the First Testament as it was for them in the first century. There is an utterly remarkable consistency that emerges from honest study of the Bible in all its angularity and pluralism, and that consistency is not in the Bible's contents but in the hermeneutics that lie amongst all the lines of scripture.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Sanders's contention that the clear peshat meaning of the text cannot be circumvented is admirable. However, as Robert Maldonado points out ("Canon and Christian Scripture: Toward a Multi-level, Contingent Understanding of Canonical Value" [Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1988], 82-84), Sanders never explains how one arrives at the clear peshat meaning. More often than not, Sanders simply pontificates on what the meaning is.

¹⁰⁴James A. Sanders, "Fundamentalism and the Church: Theological Crisis for Mainline Protestants," BTB 18 (1988): 46.

However, why should Sanders's reading between the lines be accorded more authority than the lines themselves?¹⁰⁵ For Sanders to suggest that the canonical authority lies not in the canon's content but in its "unrecorded hermeneutics" which he has been able to "ferret" out for the past twenty years, accords canonical status to Sanders's reconstruction and not to the canon itself.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, this, perhaps more than anything else is what separates Sanders from Childs. Childs correctly recognizes that a reconstructed canonical history can never provide a warrant for faith, especially when the major tool in the reconstruction process is speculation:

Brian Labosier ("Matthew's Exception Clause in the Light of Canonical Criticism: A Case Study in Hermeneutics" [Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1990], 43 n. 45) noted that Sanders's recovery of the unrecorded hermeneutics had "become virtually as important as the actual recorded content of the Bible." This last citation from Sanders, written after Labosier's dissertation, shows now that the Bible's content has in fact been surpassed.

¹⁰⁵On this point see Mikeal C. Parsons, "Canonical Criticism," in New Testament Criticism Interpretation, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 274.

¹⁰⁶Anderson (review of From Sacred Story, 99) recognizes this as well: "During the course of these essays, it becomes increasingly clear that it is not the Bible that is canonical but the process of the shaping of the Bible, called the 'canonical process,' or even the hermeneutics that allegedly is at work in the process. . . . If I understand this rightly, authority does not lie in Scripture but between the lines of Scripture in something which can be recovered only by the tools given to us by the enlightenment." Roland E. Murphy (review of Canon and Community, by James A. Sanders, in TToday 41 [1984]: 373) also notes that amidst Sanders's uncovering of the Bible's hidden hermeneutics, "he also records some hermeneutics of his own, which I find congenial but not necessarily flowing from canonical criticism."

I am critical of Sanders' attempt to reconstruct the hermeneutical process within ancient Israel, which appears to be a highly speculative enterprise, especially in the light of the almost total lack of information regarding the history of canonization. He assumes a knowledge of the canonical process from which he extrapolates a hermeneutic without demonstrating, in my opinion, solid evidence for his reconstruction.¹⁰⁷

Exacerbating this situation is the way in which Sanders either ignores or caricatures opposing views, as Charles Wood has noted:

His portrayal of forms of biblical scholarship and theological reflection other than his own often verges on caricature. (One might gather from some passages that the notion that biblical scholarship might be undertaken in the service of the church was original with Sanders.)¹⁰⁸

(7) This last point leads to the next question. Has canonical criticism really put the canon back in the churches? Are the unrecorded hermeneutics, which are more canonical than the canon itself, really discernible by the ordinary lay person? It seems that the rather tenuous reconstructions that Sanders has made about the canonical process are put forth so dogmatically as to keep the people in the pew from believing that they could really interpret the Bible for themselves. Brett has well recognized the problem here:

¹⁰⁷Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress), 57.

¹⁰⁸Charles M. Wood, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, by James A. Sanders, in PSTJ 41/3 (1988): 34. James Barr (review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, by James A. Sanders, in CR 1 [1988]: 141) also criticizes Sanders on this point: "One of his great slogans is that the Bible has a 'theocentric hermeneutic.' It's all about God! How is it that no one ever realized this before Sanders came along?"

J. A. Sanders raises just this kind of issue when he suggests that critical Protestant scholarship created a new type of "priestly" control of religious communities, even though the Reformation had attempted to give the Bible back to the people. He also seems to imply that his own version of canonical criticism is motivated by this Protestant principle. One can only wonder how he reconciles this point with his own stress on the necessity for historical and sociological reconstruction; such reconstruction is clearly dominated by professional biblical scholars. The most one could claim is that professional scholarship has no centralized authority.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, one of the criticisms of Canon and Community, a book that was subtitled A Guide to Canonical Criticism, was that there was no explanation or suggestion as to how canonical criticism was to be practiced, only examples of how Sanders would do it:

Ultimately, this book is a great disappointment. As one who has tried to take seriously both Childs and Sanders and to communicate concerns about canon to his students, I would have found a brief explication of method invaluable, but unfortunately one is not provided here. The examples given represent the results of Sanders's research and do not help others understand how they might do similar things. Moreover, the book is very idiosyncratic. The work of Childs is dismissed for the most part, leaving Sanders as the primary representative of "canonical criticism." . . . The book fails in its task to provide methodological clarity . . .¹¹⁰

In other words, canonical criticism, as practiced by Sanders, fails in its goal of putting the Bible back in the hands of the church. Not even other biblical scholars, much less lay

¹⁰⁹Mark G. Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis?: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 165-66; see also W. Sibley Towner, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, by James A. Sanders, in RelSRev 15 (1989): 102.

¹¹⁰Donn F. Morgan, review of Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, by James A. Sanders, in ATR 67 (1985): 176.

persons, are qualified to do canonical criticism, as put forth by Sanders.¹¹¹

(8) Eighth, why should the fundamentalists be arbitrarily excluded from the category of believing canon-shaping communities? In stating in the prologue of Canon and Community that canonical criticism is not for fundamentalists (or shall we say evangelicals?), Sanders has stated far more than I am sure he ever meant to. Does Sanders really mean to say that there is no process of reinterpretation and resignification and adaptation going on in those communities today? Can Sanders honestly say that the fundamentalists are not trying to uncover the hermeneutics of the biblical writers? He has, without warrant, pontificated against a believing community that at least seeks to read the Bible canonically and faithfully. Also, if the "so-called" false prophets were only citing traditions from a slightly wrong perspective, will not Sanders allow the fundamentalists to do the same?

(9) Ninth, why should Sanders suppose that his agenda of monotheizing pluralism is any less a canon within the canon than any other that has come up in the history of Old Testament, New Testament, or Biblical theology.¹¹² Moreover,

¹¹¹Charles Wood (review of Canon and Community, by James A. Sanders, in PSTJ 38/2 [1985]: 47) correctly notes that "the book is best taken as a statement of Sanders's own program, and not as an attempt to represent a discipline or subdiscipline of biblical studies within which that program might be located."

¹¹²For a criticism of Sanders on this point see John Reumann,

does it really constitute the major theme of the canon? How can Sanders admit on the one hand, that Israel was not a very monotheizing people, and then assert on the other that Israel "doggedly pursued" monotheism? Furthermore, if the Bible monotheizes only "more or less well" should we not find another canon that does a better job? If it is only a paradigm and it does not do the job well, would we not be better off trying to find a new and better paradigm?

(10) Finally, and a question on which I will need to spend some time, does not Sanders's insistence on his monotheistic pluralism cut the very ground out from under Christian theology?

Sanders accuses Christians ever since New Testament times of being flagrant polytheists in their Christomonism, while the New Testament writers themselves monotheized only "more or less well," the fundamentalists being the worst polytheizers of all. He seems to take a special delight in attacks on Christological readings of the Bible. For example, in a review of G. E. Wright's book, The Old Testament and Theology, his words of highest praise are for the first chapter:

The liveliest chapter in the book is the first, a virile attack on Christomonism in which Wright insists, quite rightly, that even Jesus Christ did not exhaust God.¹¹³

"Introduction: Whither Biblical Theology?" in The Promise and Practice of Biblical Theology, ed. John Reumann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 11.

¹¹³James A. Sanders, "Models of God's Government," review of

He says that Christians have a lesson to learn from the Jews who know, much better than Christians do, how to monotheize:

We cannot go on simply as we have in the past with a distorted christocentric singularism. We must learn how to be canonically faithful monotheising pluralists.¹¹⁴

Sanders even suggests that the early Church made some of their canonical decisions on the basis of an incorrect Christology:

Whereas Jesus was historically a prophetic Jew among Jews in the sense that we have described, to the early church he was protagonist and savior. This means, in canonical criticism, that the early church retained some of the teachings of Jesus more or less accurately for quite the wrong reasons.¹¹⁵

However, for every anti-Christological statement that Sanders makes, there are clear *peshat* canonical statements that provide its true "contrapositive." He dares to ask where in the world Christians ever got the idea that Christ revealed God. I would dare to suggest that they arrived at that conclusion from a rather intelligent reading of canon. Does not the Apostle John tell us that Christ did reveal God?

No one has ever seen God, but God's only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known.
(John 1:18 NEB)

The Old Testament and Theology, by George Ernest Wright, in Int 24 (1970): 366.

¹¹⁴James A. Sanders, "A Christian Response to Elliot Dorff: 'This is my God': One Jew's Faith," in Three Faiths--One God: A Jewish, Christian, Muslim Encounter, ed. John Hick and Edmund S. Meltzer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 34.

¹¹⁵James A. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Scrolls--A Quarter Century of Study," BA 36 (1973): 147.

Does not Jesus himself talk about being the only way to the Father (John 14:6)? Does not the author of Hebrews declare that Christ is the "exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3)?

Sanders suggests that Christians are wrong to hold that in some way "Christ exhausted God." But the canon makes clear that

God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1:19-20)

Sanders says that

The Church of Jesus Christ is called with others, Judaism and Islam, to be witness to the Integrity of Reality, to proclaim God's unlimited grace to all who would listen. The true Christian does not worry about whether others are lost but stays her or his mind on the joy of the faith and the pursuit of the Integrity of Reality in her or his life with hope in the promise that that very integrity will be God's ultimate and final gift to the believer and to all humankind.¹¹⁶

But did not the apostles say something about there being no other name by which men might be saved (Acts 4:12)? Does not the plain sense of the text suggest that Jesus and the New Testament writers called on their followers to evangelize the world because the world was lost, and not just to share a new perspective on Torah? Did Paul really intend to stop at getting the Jews to merely "acknowledge the work of God in Christ"? Did he not "go on then to insist that they become Christian"?

¹¹⁶Sanders, "The Heart of the Christian Faith for Me," 186.

Sanders declares that "the heart of the biblical message is not so much that we should believe in God but that God believes in us."¹¹⁷ But it seems to me that at the heart of the biblical message is the fact that God does not believe in us (cf. John 2:24 where Jesus explicitly refuses to believe in those who had believed in him), but has chosen to be gracious in imparting a faith and righteousness to those who had no hope and no righteousness of their own.

Ultimately, Sanders's canonical criticism fails because it explicitly lacks the Christological element which would give it substance. Sanders looks to the text, the community, and the vague notion of the "Integrity of Reality" for canonical authority, but he fails to look to Christ:

It is not Jeremiah who is canonical; it is the Jeremiah books that are canonical . . . If one can understand that it was not the prophet Isaiah who was canonical, but the Isaiah book which is canonical, then modern reputable scholars would not need to insist that the sixty-six chapters stem from a single author. Not even Jesus is canonical; at least I have never heard of him being canonized. The gospels are canonical, and the epistles.¹¹⁸

Maybe Sanders is equivocating on the use of the word "canonical," but at least in the sense that I am using the word, I would assert that Jesus is canonical. God has given Jesus Christ "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18) and has made it clear that other than through Christ, he has nothing more to say (Heb 1:1-2). The New Testament

¹¹⁷Sanders, "Torah and Christ," 390.

¹¹⁸Sanders, Canon and Community, xvii (emphasis mine).

writings have no authority other than that which Christ has invested in them. And the Old Testament is authoritative for the Christian only as it is read through Christ.¹¹⁹

At one time Sanders made a statement that bore a formal similarity to this last one. He said in a 1966 article that Christ "is the Christian's canon of what in the Old Testament is relevant and valid to the life of faith."¹²⁰ I do not know whether he would stand by that statement today. This was back in the days when he was just beginning to enter the canonical dialogue with his editing work on the Qumran Psalms Scroll. I can only observe that I have not seen similar statements in his many books and articles.

Conclusion

The very first article by Sanders that I ever read was his brilliant and eloquent 1978 Society of Biblical Literature Presidential address,¹²¹ an article which every teacher of Hebrew Bible should read in order to appreciate better the work of the scribes and Masoretes. There is great value in the work that Sanders has done, for he is a brilliant scholar, and the world of biblical scholarship is in debt to him for the work that he has done and is still doing as President of

¹¹⁹In Part Two I will discuss the relationship between the Old Testament's authority before and after Christ.

¹²⁰James A. Sanders, "The Vitality of the Old Testament: Three Theses," USQR 21 (1966): 163.

¹²¹James A. Sanders, "Text and Canon: Concepts and Method," JBL 98 (1979): 5-29.

the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center at Claremont. I do not believe, however, that Sanders's program of canonical criticism will result in what he had hoped, a Bible unchained from the scholar's desk and returned to the Church. For in the final analysis, he bids us investigate a canon which, in my opinion, has been stripped of all authority other than that which Sanders's reconstruction will allow.

In the last chapter, I stated that "I will be arguing that Childs's approach is not canonical enough, and that Sanders's approach is not canonical at all." However, it is these two men who are recognized as the leading scholars in canonical study. Therefore I suggest that for evangelicals, who in their study of the Bible put themselves under the full authority, not just of the canon, but also the Christ who gives the canon its authority, it is not enough to declare their approach to the Bible to be canonical. And this is the thesis of this dissertation: The evangelical approach to Scripture today must go beyond "canonical"; it must be explicitly "Christo-canonical."

PART TWO

THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH

CHAPTER 4

THE CANONICAL PROCESS APPROACH OF BRUCE WALTKE

A prediction that was often made by Childs's critics was that, though he himself was certainly not a conservative or a "pre-critical" scholar, his approach would be used by those who were.¹ The prediction has for the most part failed to materialize. One conservative Old Testament scholar who used insights from Childs fairly early, however, was Bruce Waltke. In an article entitled "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,"² Waltke affirmed his indebtedness to Childs while at the same distancing himself from him. Inasmuch as this article provided the impetus for my own desire to write in this area, I will summarize the content of this article in this chapter before going on to outline in chapters 5-6 what I call the Christo-canonical approach.

¹James Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 148; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Canon Criticism and the Meaning of Sitz im Leben," in Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 20.

²Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 3-18.

Assessment of Prior Interpretation

Waltke begins his article by briefly examining the interpretation of messianic psalms since the time of the early church. After discussing the apparently uncontrolled allegorical Psalms exegesis of the Alexandrian school and the more literal, but messianically-minimizing, exegesis of the Antiochene school, Waltke concludes that there are three basic categories of expositors today, all of which continue the exegesis of the Antiochene school. The first group consists of the "precritical or noncritical expositors," who, for the most part, see as messianic only those psalms which are quoted as such in the New Testament. Waltke faults this group (represented by expositors such as E. W. Hengstenberg, A. C. Gaebelien, David Baron, and J. B. Payne) for their proof-texting and lack of consideration for the original historical context of the different psalms, declaring that they "actually discredit the claims of Jesus in the eyes of literary and historical critics."³

³Waltke, "Canonical Process," 5. This is perhaps the only place where I find fault with Waltke's assessment of the situation: (1) It seems a bit unfair to refer to these scholars as either pre- or non-critical. I don't know whether Waltke is referring here to the time period in which they lived or their avoidance of contact with critical issues, but in either case the label seems to prejudicially suggest that no thinking scholar would accept the fruits of their exegesis. (2) It seems that at least part of Waltke's criticism of this group is that they regard these messianic psalms, or at least portions of them, as directly prophetic. While this may indeed be a subject open to debate, we must at least admit that they had a measure of warrant for so doing. David is regarded by Peter as a prophet in Acts 2:30. (3) Waltke's criticism is a little unclear when he says that they ignore the Psalms' historical context and meaning. Yet

The second group consists of those literary-historical critics who deny any predictive element in the Psalter. While this group would tend to be made up of critics who would deny altogether the supernatural element in Scripture, yet in the way in which Waltke has defined the group, it would also include scholars of a much more conservative bent--such as the late Peter Craigie.⁴ While denying the predictive element in the Psalter, this group would still maintain that the

he classes them with the Antiochene school which is committed to the historical context for its exegesis. It does not seem that this group can really be charged with this practice; but, even if they were guilty of ignoring the historical context for those psalms which they consider to be prophetic, again, they may have warrant for doing so. In Acts 2:29 and 34, Peter states that he can use the psalms which he quotes as referring to Christ precisely because they did not have a prior historical referent. (4) Finally, I do not think it is fair to hold these men responsible for discrediting Jesus in the eyes of modern critics. Perhaps the "prooftexting" is indeed to be deplored, but the real issue is whether they are right or wrong. In essence then, though I agree with Waltke in the end that the method used by this group is not the best one, I think it would have been better to show exactly what was unacceptable about their method instead of labeling them as noncritical.

⁴Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC 19 (Waco: Word, 1983). Had Craigie written a full commentary on the book of Psalms, perhaps he would have found a psalm which he would have considered to be messianic in its original intent; but to the best of my knowledge he found none to be so in the first fifty. Note the following statements on psalms which have been historically considered to be messianic: Psalm 16--"the psalm, with respect to its initial meaning, is neither messianic nor eschatological in nature" (p. 158). Psalm 2--"not . . . explicitly messianic (p. 68); Psalm 18--"Like Ps 2, Ps 18 is a royal psalm and refers to the king as the anointed one . . . or messiah. But neither the former nor the latter are messianic psalms in any prophetic or predictive sense" (p. 177); Psalm 22--"Though the psalm is not messianic in its original sense or setting . . . it may be interpreted from a NT perspective as a messianic psalm par excellence" (p. 202); Psalm 45--"In its original sense and context, it is not in any sense a messianic psalm" (p. 340).

idealistic language used in the Psalms, particularly the royal Psalms, became the basis for the messianic hope. Waltke faults this group for "untying, or at least loosening, the bond connecting the New Testament with the original meaning of the Old Testament."⁵

The third group is made up of those literary-historical critics who do allow for a predictive element. In addition to men named by Waltke, such as Charles A. Briggs, H. H. Rowley, Franz Delitzsch, and A. F. Kirkpatrick, I suppose someone like Walther Zimmerli would also fit in this class.⁶ Waltke faults this group for failing to "give a consistent and comprehensive method for identifying the messianic element in the psalms,"⁷ and also, for limiting the messianic psalms, just as the precritical expositors, to only those cited in the New Testament.

Waltke's dissatisfaction with all three approaches is that they fail to give an account for how the New Testament writers used the psalms--for failing to account for why verses like Ps 34:21 and 69:10 are used as references to Christ in the New Testament (in John 19:36 and 2:17, respectively),

⁵Waltke, "Canonical Process," 5.

⁶Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," trans. James Wharton, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 111: "It is repeatedly noticeable how the language transcends contemporary description in the direction of a superlative which is by no means completely realized . . . a language which arouses the expectation of a greater one who is yet to come."

⁷Waltke, "Canonical Process," 6.

whereas verses like Ps 3:2, "How many are my foes," are never used. Waltke concludes that:

In all fairness, it seems as though the writers of the New Testament are not attempting to identify and limit the psalms that prefigure Christ but rather are assuming that the Psalter as a whole has Jesus Christ in view and that this should be the normative way of interpreting the psalms.⁸

A New Proposal

Based on this examination of the data, Waltke sets forth his thesis:

I conclude, therefore, that both the nonhistorical and undisciplined method of interpreting the psalms and the Antiochian principle of allowing but one historical meaning that may carry with it typical significance are inadequate hermeneutical principles for the interpretation of the psalms. In place of these methods, therefore, I would like to argue for a canonical process approach in interpreting the psalms, an approach that does justice both to the historical significance(s) of the psalms and to their messianic significance. Indeed, I shall argue that from a literary and historical point of view, we should understand that the human subject of the psalms--whether it be the blessed man of Psalm 1, the one proclaiming himself the son of God in Psalm 2, the suffering petitioner in Psalms 3-7, the son of man in Psalm 8--is Jesus Christ.

By the canonical process approach I mean the recognition that the text's intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded. Just as redemption itself has a progressive history so also older texts in the canon underwent a correlative progressive perception of meaning as they became part of a growing canonical literature.⁹

The approach is almost revolutionary. Now we are going to abandon the caution of the Antiochenes in their limitation

⁸Ibid., 7.

⁹Ibid.

of messianic psalms, and we are going to stand by the Alexandrians and declare even louder than they, that we are no more going to look for messianic psalms--instead we are simply going to read a messianic Psalter--and, what's more, we are going to do so for better reasons, indeed, legitimate ones. The Alexandrians were right after all; they just used the wrong methods to get there!

There are four things which should be especially noted about what Waltke says that he is attempting to do here. First, he says that he will attempt to show Christ to be the human subject of the Psalms from a literary point of view; i.e., on a reading of the Psalms in the larger literary context of the entire canon of Scripture it should become evident that Christ is indeed the subject of the Psalms. Second, he will attempt to demonstrate this also from a historical perspective, which means that it will be important to show that at each stage of the canonical process there was a messianic expectation inherent in the development. Third, it is interesting to note that at this point Waltke does not mention that he will attempt to demonstrate this process from a theological perspective, though this theological perspective will in fact be very important for the thesis as he develops it. Finally, it should be noted that Waltke claims that the intention of the text became both deeper and clearer. That the text's intention became clearer would not be so terribly difficult for many critics to follow, but that the text's

intention also became deeper is a bit more difficult to accept--given Waltke's thesis that the human and divine intentions are not to be divorced. Each of these points will be discussed further as we begin now to look at how Dr. Waltke unpacks his thesis.

Dependence on, and Distance from, Childs

Waltke readily admits his indebtedness to Childs for his canonical process approach, but is quick to distance himself from Childs in three particular ways. First, Waltke claims that Childs fails to distinguish between the literary and subsequent scribal history of the biblical books due to his lack of a clear definition of inspiration. Waltke on the other hand distinguishes between the two by not giving any real canonical weight to those changes which came into the text by virtue of scribal corruption.¹⁰

Second, Waltke charges that

Childs allows the possibility of a divorce between Israel's religious history and the canonical witness to that history. By canonical process I have no such division in mind and clearly affirm God's supernatural intervention in Israel's history.¹¹

¹⁰I would suggest, rather, that Childs does sufficiently distinguish between the two stages (see p. 104 of his Introduction), but that he purposely makes no distinction between the two on a practical level since both the literary development and scribal corruptions have their meaning in the canon for the community of faith. Thus the difficult reading in 1 Sam 1:24, *wēhanna ar na ar*, is not just to be dismissed and replaced with a conjectural emendation, but it is also to be interpreted by virtue of its existence in the canon for the possible meaning it has for the community of faith.

¹¹Waltke, "Canonical Process," 7-8. Katherine D. Sakenfeld

Third, Waltke distances himself from Childs in that while the latter emphasizes the final form of the Masoretic Text, he emphasizes rather the "meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures within the context of the New Testament." While Waltke's evaluation of Childs is correct, I do not think the difference is all that glaring. Childs does pay a good deal of attention to the issue of the Old Testament in the New Testament context.¹²

Though Waltke does not enumerate it in his list of differences with Childs, he does mention another very important distinction. While "canonical criticism"¹³ as represented in the writings of Childs, Sanders, and Clements, asserts that through canonical process a reworked text can actually lose its original intention, Waltke holds that the earlier intention is not lost and that the text is just as authoritative in its earlier stage as in its final canonical context.

notes also in regard to Childs's Exodus commentary that the reader is left "with the impression that it makes little or no difference whether any of the events took place at all" (review of The Book of Exodus: a Critical, Theological Commentary, by Brevard S. Childs, in TToday 31 [1974]: 276).

¹²Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 659-71; Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 149-219.

¹³Keeping in mind here that Childs does not prefer to use this term to describe what he does. The term is more appropriately used to describe Sanders's approach.

Similarity to, but Distinction from,
Sensus Plenior

While readily admitting the similarity of his approach to that of *sensus plenior*, developed by Catholic biblical theologians, Waltke also distances himself from their approach in three distinct areas. First, Waltke correctly notes that whereas the doctrine of *sensus plenior* teaches that the divine and human authorial intentions are to be divorced,¹⁴ the canonical approach holds that there is no such divorce, but rather that what God meant the human author meant. Oddly enough, Waltke and Walter Kaiser, who are at odds on other hermeneutical issues to be discussed later, seem, at least on the surface, to be at one here. However, I would agree with Darrell Bock that there is a bit of vagueness to Waltke's treatment of this particular issue.¹⁵ While maintaining that the human and divine authors had the same meaning or intention in regards to their co-authored texts, he still ends up positing what must be regarded as new referents for biblical terms in the psalms. Thus, for Psalm 2, Waltke argues that "Zion, my holy hill" becomes in the New Testament the heavenly

¹⁴See the definition of *sensus plenior* as given by Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," JBC, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 616. See also his articles, "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," CBQ 15 (1953): 141-62; "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," CBQ 25 (1963): 262-85.

¹⁵Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament," 2 parts, BSac 142 (1985): 306, 316 n. 2.

Mount Zion.¹⁶ Does Waltke mean that David actually had in mind some other location than the Mount Zion with which he was familiar? Or, what about Psalm 16? Does Waltke's insistence on sameness of divine and human meanings demand that David's hope as expressed in v. 10 is a clear reference to the resurrection?¹⁷ Also in this regard we would want to have a clearer idea of what Waltke means when he says that the text's intention became deeper as well as clearer. Does this mean that the human author's intention became deeper? And how can the text's intention become deeper without, at the same time, undergoing at least a measure of change as well?

Second, Waltke states that while the *sensus plenior* regards

later writers as winning meanings from the text quite apart from their historical use and significance . . . the canonical process approach underscores the continuity of a text's meaning throughout sacred history . . .¹⁸

Later in the paper Waltke argues that, "in brief, the New Testament does not impose a new meaning on these old psalms but wins back for them their original and true significance"¹⁹

This is a valid point, though I would suggest that not all

¹⁶Bruce K. Waltke, "Is it Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" Christianity Today, 2 September 1983, 77.

¹⁷Cf. the discussion on this passage in Elliot E. Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 417, 420-21, 423-25, 427.

¹⁸Waltke, "Canonical Process," 8.

¹⁹Ibid., 15-16.

sensus plenior advocates resort to the idea that there is a new meaning given to the Old Testament text. For some it is indeed true, as, for example, when Jerome Smith approvingly quotes J. Van Der Ploeg as saying about the author of Hebrews, "It is the *sensus plenior, profundior* that interests him most . . . It plays a major role in his exegesis of those texts that do not refer directly and clearly to Christ and to the new economy"²⁰ (emphasis mine). However, I believe the more mainstream advocates of *sensus plenior* shy away from this type of idea.²¹

Third, Waltke states that, whereas the supposed *sensus plenior* depends on a supernatural enlightening of the New Testament writer to find that "fuller sense," the canonical process approach depends on the progressive revelation as it unfolds within the canon of Scripture.²² Again, some caution needs to be exercised here in making this to be a hard and fast distinction. Whereas there are those who would argue for this supernatural "zapping" of the New Testament writers (and even later non-canonical writers), *sensus plenior* advocates such as Raymond Brown make no such claim, and actually talk in

²⁰Jerome Smith, A Priest For Ever: A Study of Typology and Eschatology in Hebrews (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 20.

²¹Cf. Raymond E. Brown ("Hermeneutics," 617): "This criterion is that the SPlen [*sensus plenior*] of a text must be homogeneous with the literal sense, i.e., it must be a development of what the human author wanted to say."

²²Waltke, "Canonical Process," 8-9.

terms that more closely resemble the canonical process approach.²³

In summary then, while I believe that all three distinctions which Waltke makes regarding his approach vs. *sensus plenior* are valid to a point, the methods may in fact have more in common than Waltke would admit.

Four Convictions

Waltke states that his approach rest on four convictions. First, he states that the approach rests on the presupposition that the "people of God throughout history are united by a common knowledge and faith."²⁴ It should be noted here that this is a theme which cannot be clearly sounded by someone coming at the study from the perspective of Childs, for with him the content of the community's faith and knowledge is constantly changing.

Second, for Waltke, God is the "ultimate author of the progressively developing canon."²⁵ This is important in that God is not only the author of the Scriptures which make up the canon, but also author of the "canonical process."

Third, Waltke presupposes "that as the canon developed, lesser and earlier representations were combined to form greater units that are more meaningful than their component

²³Raymond Brown, "Hermeneutics," 616.

²⁴Waltke, "Canonical Process," 9.

²⁵Ibid., 10.

parts."²⁶ If we have learned anything at all from de Saussure's structural linguistics, it is that words have little meaning apart from their relationships with other words. It seems that what Waltke is advocating with this premise is simply that this principle must be carried to its larger logical conclusions. Words have meaning in relationship to other words in a sentence. Sentences have meaning in relationship to other sentences in a paragraph. Paragraphs have meaning in relation to other paragraphs in a chapter or book, etc. It seems then that those who would deny the possibility of exegeting a word, sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, or testament in light of the larger canonical context are denying that this principle can be carried out on a larger plane. It is at this point that the differences between Waltke and Kaiser manifest themselves. It seems to me that a fundamental error in Kaiser's hermeneutics is his unwillingness to interpret older texts in the light of the entire canon. While he allows any text to be informed by antecedent texts, he will not allow subsequent texts to play a part in the interpretation of the antecedent texts. He clearly states that "the whole canon must not be used as the context for every exegesis."²⁷ The much more consistent view however is that of Waltke when he states that "because God is

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 82.

the author of the whole Bible, any piece of literature within it must be studied in the light of its whole literary context."²⁸

Fourth, as the last book of the New Testament was written the canon was closed. This is an important point for Waltke's approach since it defines the final canonical product as the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Does Waltke, however, also mean that this marks the end of canonical process? There may be some problems with this position. Again this will be discussed in detail later.

Four Stages

As Waltke applies his canonical process approach to the Psalms he posits that the interpreter must look at the meaning of an individual psalm as it passes through four distinct stages: (1) its meaning as it comes from the original psalmist, (2) its meaning in the earlier collections in the First Temple period, (3) its meaning in the completed Old Testament canon, and finally, (4) its meaning in the full canon of Scripture with the addition of the New Testament. The rest of the article (pp. 10-16) is taken up with explicating these four stages. These arguments will be examined in greater detail in later chapters of this paper. For now, it will be sufficient to note a few questions that

²⁸Waltke, "Canonical Process," 10.

must be asked in regard to Waltke's reconstruction of this canonical process.

Issues to Be Raised in Regard to Waltke's
Canonical Process Approach

First, with regard to the first two stages, it is important to note Waltke's heavy dependence on the royal element in the Psalter, capitalizing, in particular, on the work of John Eaton in his monograph Kingship and the Psalms.²⁹ Eaton had argued for a much greater royal element in the Psalter, so that his enumeration of royal psalms was higher than any scholars had advocated before. While Gunkel had argued for approximately nine or ten, Eaton expanded the number to approximately sixty-four. Waltke goes further and suggests that

the living king was understood to be the subject of most psalms. . . . We conclude therefore, that most psalms had a royal significance in their cultic use at the First Temple.³⁰

The problem with this, however, is that in spite of the growth of the recognition of the royal psalms from nine or ten, to sixty-four, to "most," we still have not arrived at an "all." It is, therefore, a rather significant jump when Waltke concludes his article by declaring that "the Psalms are ultimately the prayers of Jesus Christ, Son of God," and then approvingly quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "`The Psalter,' he

²⁹John H. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, SBT 2d ser. 32 (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1976).

³⁰Waltke, "Canonical Process," 13.

wrote, 'is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word.'"³¹ One issue to be examined, therefore, will be the legitimacy of this move.

A second issue to be raised concerns the reconstruction of the canonical process itself. Though the general outline of these four stages would probably be accepted by the scholarly consensus, there are "fuzzy boundaries" at the transition points between these stages. For example, when Waltke distinguishes between the meaning of the psalm to the original composer and the meaning of the psalm as it was used in the early collections of the First Temple period, the distinction appears to be a little too neat. Waltke is working here with the assumption that the psalms attributed to David are, in fact, his own compositions. We will look at that issue in greater detail in later chapters, but assuming for now that David is the author of these psalms, this only accounts for slightly less than half the Psalter, and even then, not all the royal psalms. Allowance must be made for the fact that there were royal psalms written during the second stage of this canonical process as well, and perhaps even during the third stage.

Third, another problem with this reconstruction is the nature of the activity that took place during the third stage, and also the actual duration of this stage. On the one hand,

³¹Ibid., 16, citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, trans. John Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 46.

Waltke wishes to argue that the editors of the canon, by including the royal psalms in the Psalter at a time when there was no son of David on the throne, were, in fact, interpreting the psalms

prophetically precisely as we found them interpreted in the New Testament. This prophetic interpretation of these old texts is not a reinterpretation of them away from their original, authorial meaning; rather it is a more precise interpretation of them in light of the historical realities.³²

On the other hand, Waltke also wishes to assert that

The intertestamental literature and the New Testament make clear, however, that the royal dimension of the lament psalms became lost during this period of time, and thus Israel lost sight of a suffering Messiah.³³

Waltke suggests, on the one hand, that those who compiled the canonical Psalter did so with an insight as to their true royal, eschatological, messianic significance. But, on the other hand, he suggests that during this same time period the true royal significance of this same canonical Psalter was lost. What enables him to make both suggestions for the same time period is his assumption that the canon and the canonical Psalter were finished by ca. 200 BC, and that the "royal dimension" was lost between 200 BC and the time of the New Testament. This is, however, a heavily debated assumption, especially with all the controversy surrounding both the date for the closing of the Old Testament canon and the actual form

³²Waltke, "Canonical Process," 15.

³³Ibid.

of the canonical Psalter. Waltke himself makes reference to this:

We cannot be sure how the editors who compiled the final form of the Old Testament interpreted the laments psalms. It seems plausible to me to suppose that they continued to understand them according to their original meaning.³⁴

But can a theory of canonical process, which proposes to provide a hermeneutical guide, rest upon only "plausibilities" at the very stage of canonical compilation? Again, these are issues to be looked at in greater detail in later chapters, but for now it will be sufficient to note that there is probably no scholarly consensus on either one of these issues, and that at present any arguments one wishes to make based on a reconstruction of the actual canonical process at this third stage must, due to the very nature of the case, remain largely speculative. To look at this problem from another angle, part of the reason why Childs advocated a canonical reading and perspective in the first place was to contest the dogmatism that had become attached to scholarly reconstructions. The question to be raised here, therefore, is whether or not this theory of canonical process, conservative though it may be, draws authority away from the canon to the canonical process as reconstructed.

A fourth issue to be raised concerns the activity that takes place in the fourth stage. Waltke devotes only one paragraph to this last stage of the process in his article.

³⁴Ibid., 16.

But it is clearly the most important stage. As Waltke says in another article,

The divine author's intention comes into ever sharper focus through the magnifying glass of progressive revelation until it reaches a flash point in the coming of Jesus Christ.³⁵

This "flash point" needs to be examined more closely and I will do that in later chapters. But it must be noted here that this flash point is all-determinative for the correct interpretation of the other stages; that is, it is not simply stage four of the canonical process, but it is the stage which makes sense of all that came before.

A fifth issue that needs to be mentioned here, but discussed in fuller detail later, has to do not so much with canonical process as with the process of interpretation after the completion of the canon. Since none of the authors of the Bible ever had the whole canon to work with, are we not forced to conclude that only those who have come after are able to arrive at insights from a reading of the Scriptures as a canonical interpretation? We will look at this a little closer in chapter 6.

One last issue which I wish to raise has to do with the matter of what Waltke calls "eggshells." In the next-to-last paragraph of the article, Waltke states,

³⁵Bruce K. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 284.

From this fourth and highest vantage point we win the full significance of the psalms. Jesus of Nazareth, son of David and Son of God, fulfills these psalms. Those elements in each psalm presenting the king as anything less than ideal, such as his confession of sins, are the historical eggshells from the preexilic period when the psalms were used for Israel's less than ideal kings.³⁶

Waltke mentions here only the confessions of sin; but he might easily have also mentioned other "eggshells" such as the apparently self-righteous declarations of innocence and the imprecations that have caused problems for so many interpreters of the psalms. The problem here, however, is that now the "prayer book of Jesus Christ" must be sent through an editing process to make sure the prayers are fit for him to use. Or to use a line from the preface to Isaac Watts' hymnbook regarding his rendering of the psalms into verse, it is necessary "to teach my author [David] to speak like a Christian."³⁷ Can we, however, so easily separate out these apparently non-Christian elements from the Psalms? To play out the metaphor a little further, one expositor's eggshell may well be another expositor's yolk. I suggest, therefore, that more attention needs to be given to this area, as will be done in Part Three.

³⁶Waltke, "Canonical Process," 16.

³⁷As cited in Henry de Candole, The Christian Use of the Psalms (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1958), 34. Thus the reader may understand better the title of Watts' hymnbook, The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, And applied to the Christian State and Worship (as reported by Moira Dearnley, "Expressions, that seem Contrary to Christ," Theology 73 [1970]: 161); see also, George Rust, "Christian Use of the Psalter," in "Letters to the Editor," Theology 73 (1970): 172-73.

Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that Waltke's canonical process approach is nothing short of revolutionary, and I find myself in wholehearted agreement with the basic outline of the approach as proposed in the article. However, the issues that I raised in the last section have led me to believe that this approach by itself, though far superior to the previous approaches that Waltke surveys, still falls short of giving "a consistent and comprehensive method for identifying the messianic element in the psalms." Whether what I am proposing should be seen as a supplement to the canonical process approach, or whether it should be regarded as a new paradigm,³⁸ remains to be seen. I would not have arrived at what I am calling the Christo-canonical approach had it not been for Waltke's own work and theory in this subject. The approach which I wish to describe in the next chapters should not be seen so much as a corrective to anything in Waltke's approach, as a tribute to the scholarship of the man who inspired my investigation in this area.

³⁸Using the language of Thomas S. Kuhn (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970]).

CHAPTER 5

THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT: CHRIST IS THE CANON ABOVE THE CANON

After the survey of messianic psalms exegesis in chapter 1, the last three chapters have been an examination of the current emphasis on canon, canonical process, and canonical context in recent scholarship with a view to ascertaining whether this development should be seen as friend or foe to evangelical biblical interpretation. I closed chapter 3 by remarking that "Childs's approach is not canonical enough, and that Sanders's approach is not canonical at all." Consequently, evangelical biblical scholars who are doing what may be categorized as canonical interpretation should find some way to differentiate between their work and the work of those who also call their work canonical, but do not share the same presuppositions regarding the actual canonical character of the Scriptures. I argued that "the evangelical approach to Scripture today must go beyond "canonical"; it must be explicitly "Christo-canonical." The thesis statement of the Christo-canonical approach may be very simply put forward: "Christ is Canon." This chapter and the next will set forth the basic theses or statements that I believe are contained in this main thesis. This chapter will examine the statements

that predicate the relationship between Christ and the canon. Chapter 6 will examine the statements that predicate the relationship between Christ and those who would interpret his canon.

Thesis Number One:
Christ Is Criterion of Canon

The Christo-canonical approach recognizes Christ as the Lord of the canon. It asserts that Christ is the only criterion of canonicity and, therefore, the "Canon above the canon." In essence, though it would agree with the statement, "Holy Scripture is canon," it asserts that the necessarily prior and more absolute statement is "Christ is Canon."

The search for criteria of canonicity will end either in failure or it will end in a reduction of the biblical canon to something less than canon.¹ There are no other possibilities. Scholars have suggested possible criteria for nearly two millennia and have yet to discover or determine one that demands assent from all, or even most, other scholars. The reason for this is that the moment a criterion of canonicity is adopted, that criterion does not establish the canon--

¹Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, trans. Jack B. Rogers, *Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 81: "The dissatisfied feeling with which each of these attempted solutions leaves us (i.e., the providence of God, the testimony of the Spirit, or the authority of the Church) is continuing evidence for one conclusion: there is no solitary, isolated authority which can, outside of the content and the depth of the canon itself, shed an illuminating light on the formation and the validation of the canon. Furthermore, one cannot escape the suspicion that in each of these attempts the canon itself is devaluated."

rather, it replaces it. It becomes the canon above the canon, more canonical than the canon itself.

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., after examining the suggested criteria for canonicity for the New Testament comes to this conclusion:

In the final analysis the attempt to demonstrate criteria (the necessary and sufficient conditions) of canonicity seeks, from a position above the canon, to rationalize or generalize about the canon as a unique, particular historical state of affairs. It relativizes the authority of the canon by attempting to contain it (*kanōn*) within an all-embracing criterion (*kritērion*).²

He then goes on to assert,

We ought not, then, to try to secure for ourselves an Archimedean point outside or above the New Testament canon. Yet, in another respect, the canon does point back beyond itself--to God, its origin and author. When we think of the idea of canon (supreme authority), we may not think of anything or any other person than God. God is canon; God is supreme authority.³

The attempt to establish criteria, therefore, if done honestly, will result in failure, since there is no Archimedean point outside or above the canon. Any apparent successes at finding such a criterion or criteria, are only apparent, and, in essence, are to be seen not as establishing the validity of the biblical canon, but rather, as seeking to take its place, or even worse, the place of him who alone is

²Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "The New Testament as Canon," in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 171; see also his article, "The New Testament: How Do We Know for Sure?," in Christianity Today, 5 February 1988, 28-32.

³Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 171. For a dissenting view see Klyne Snodgrass, "Providence is Not Enough," in Christianity Today, 5 February 1988, 33-34.

canon, God. Or, to add to an earlier statement in this section, the search for criteria of canonicity will end either in failure or it will end in idolatry.

Gaffin goes on in his article to build what would appear to be a very good case for the intrinsic connection between apostolicity and canon, emphasizing that the apostolic witness "is not merely personal testimony. Instead, it is infallibly authoritative, legally binding deposition . . ." ⁴ But, then noting the books of Jude and Hebrews, he remarks, "Notice, however, how little this undeniable, substantial connection between the apostles and the canon provides a criterion of canonicity, even in a looser sense." ⁵

What Gaffin has shown for the New Testament canon I believe to be the case for the Old Testament canon as well. The search for criteria here has been extensive. Among the suggested criteria are the following: (1) inspiration, ⁶ (2) antiquity, (3) public lection, (4) original composition in Hebrew, (5) orthodoxy (agreement with the rule of faith), (6)

⁴Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 176.

⁵Ibid., 177.

⁶William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 25; Paul J. Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals, Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 119; Ronald Youngblood, "The Process: How We Got Our Bible," Christianity Today, 5 February 1988, 26.

decision of ecclesiastical council,⁷ (7) preservation under Jewish guardianship,⁸ (8) inherent worth,⁹ (9) prophetic authorship,¹⁰ (10) public vindication,¹¹ (11) inner testimony of the Spirit,¹² (12) the usage of Jesus and the New Testament authors (13) what points to Christ,¹³ (14) divine providence, (15) community acceptance, (16) the right balance of stability and adaptability quotients,¹⁴ and (17) covenantal structure.¹⁵

⁷Basically the position of A. C. Sundberg, Jr., The Old Testament of the Early Church, HTS 20 ([Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); "The Old Testament of the Early Church (A Study in Canon)," HTR 51 (1958): 205-26; "The Protestant Old Testament Canon: Should It Be Reexamined," in "A Symposium on the Canon of Scripture," CBQ 28 ([1966): 194-203; "The 'Old Testament': A Christian Canon," CBQ 30 (1968): 143-55; "The Bible Canon and the Doctrine of Inspiration," Int 29 (1975): 352-71.

⁸Norman L. Geisler, "The Extent of the Old Testament Canon," in Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by His Former Students, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 40-41.

⁹Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, Article V.

¹⁰R. Laird Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible: An Historical and Exegetical Study, rev. ed., Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 131-95.

¹¹Robert I. Vasholz, The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church: The Internal Rationale for Old Testament Canonicity, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 7 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

¹²Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, Article V.

¹³Martin Luther's well known "*was Christum treibet*."

¹⁴James A. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory G. Ernest Wright, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 531-60.

¹⁵Meredith G. Kline, The Structure of Biblical Authority, 2d

While all of these suggested criteria have usefulness as perhaps aids to faith, it is fairly easy to demonstrate how none of them can actually serve as criteria. (1) Inspiration is not so much a criterion as a correlative of canonicity which really only pushes the search for criteria one step further back. It is interesting to note here that, even for the New Testament, there may well be inspired books that are not in the New Testament canon, such as the lost letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4), the letter to Laodicea (Col 4:16), and the possible previous letter to the Philippians (Phil 3:1).¹⁶ The same may be true for other books mentioned as source or supplementary material in the Old Testament, such as the book of Jashar (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18) or the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num 21:14). (2) As far as antiquity is concerned, the books just mentioned in the last sentence are no doubt older than some of the books that

ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," in New Perspectives on the Old Testament, ed. J. Barton Payne, Evangelical Theological Society Symposium Series 3 (Waco: Word, 1970), 265-79.

¹⁶See Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 169. It must also be noted here that inspiration may not have been thought of in the early church as restricted to the canonical books; on this see Krister Stendahl, "The Apocalypse of John and the Epistles of Paul in the Muratorian Fragment," in Current Issues of New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of O. A. Piper, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 243-45; Everett R. Kalin, "The Inspired Community: A Glance at Canon History," CTM 42 (1971): 541-49; Bruce M. Metzger, The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development, and Significance (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 255-57; Lee Martin McDonald, The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 157-59.

are in the canon. (3) Though there is ample evidence for many parts of the Old Testament being read in synagogue service, such as the Torah, the Psalms, and portions of the prophets, the evidence is scanty that would suggest that the entire canonical Old Testament was so read. (4) There are books composed in Hebrew which are not in the canon, as well as portions of the Old Testament which are not in Hebrew.¹⁷ (5) The analogy of faith, while being an important hermeneutical rule, does not seem to be a useful criterion for canonicity. There are non-canonical books which could be seen as orthodox even by modern evangelical standards, while at the same time books like Ruth, Esther, the Song of Songs, etc., though not unorthodox, hardly seem to be essential in supporting any orthodox doctrine. (6) To see the decisions of church councils as criteria of canonicity seems to be a failure to "avoid confusing the existence of the canon with its recognition, what is constitutive (God's action) with what is reflexive (the church's action)."¹⁸ (7) Geisler's interesting suggestion that Jewish guardianship of the Scriptures determines canonicity (Rom 3:2) falls for the very same reason as the argument of ecclesiastical determination, a confusing of what is constitutive with what is reflexive. It also

¹⁷The argument was evidently originally introduced to exclude certain Septuagint books which at the time were extant only in Greek, but of which we now apparently have the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

¹⁸Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 171.

assumes that we know the shape of the Jewish canon during this time period.¹⁹ (8) Inherent worth is a criterion which is entirely too subjective. Further, to use such language as that of the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 1, Article V) to describe this inherent worth, "the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style," is to suggest that the language that God uses to communicate must be of the highest literary quality.²⁰ (9) Prophetic authorship fails to provide a sufficient criterion for the very same reason that apostolic authorship fails for the New Testament canon. (10) While Vasholz's very interesting criterion of public vindication certainly holds true for parts of the Old Testament (the Torah, certain fulfillments of prophetic words, etc.) it hardly extends to the entire Old Testament. (11) The inner witness of the Spirit, rather than constituting a criterion, should be seen as testimony to the fact that there are no criteria that can be established. (12) The usage of Jesus and the New Testament authors might seem to be in line with our thesis that "Christ is Canon." There is, however, no canonical list of Old Testament books given in the New Testament; as well, there are

¹⁹Actually, Geisler's argument ("The Extent of the Old Testament Canon," 40-41) seems to be more a reaction against Sundberg's arguments for ecclesiastical determination than a setting forth of a canonical criterion.

²⁰I do not believe the framers of the Confession had this in mind as a criterion. But it should be noted that many have extrapolated from such statements and argued in this way.

citations of non-canonical books (though never explicitly as Scripture)²¹ and there are canonical books which are not cited.

(13) Luther's criterion, "*was Christum treibet*," though it might be seen by some as supporting the thesis, "Christ is Canon," should not be seen as its equivalent. First, it is too absolute an interpretation of the phrase, "all the Scriptures," in Luke 24:27. Second, it is just as much a criterion of Christ as it is a criterion of the biblical canon. It presupposes what Christ must be like based on a portion of the canon (the Gospels) and suggests that the rest of the canon must describe a Christ which lines up perfectly with this picture. Opposed to this, the Christo-canonical approach does not set forth that Christ is in the whole Old Testament, but that the whole Old Testament is in Christ.

(14) Divine providence, like the inner witness of the Spirit, does not prove to be an objective criterion, and therefore not a criterion at all, but a faith statement. (15) The criterion of community acceptance fails for the same reason as that of ecclesiastical decision. In particular, for the Old Testament, it fails because it runs contrary to what actually happened in the historical narratives--the word of the Lord did not always (perhaps not even usually) find acceptance in the community. (16) The stability-adaptability theory of Sanders fails to provide an acceptable criterion because of

²¹Contra McDonald, The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon, 64; and Sundberg, The Old Testament of the Early Church, 53.

the highly speculative reconstruction of the canonical process that comes with the proposal. (17) While I continue to agree basically with Kline that the canonical structure of the Scriptures is broadly covenantal, and while I believe that all the books of the Old Testament were composed in the broad context of the covenant between Yahweh and his people, it still remains to be demonstrated that the different books of the Old Testament can all be shown to correspond to the elements of covenantal treaties.

In short, I argue that there are no demonstrable, objective criteria that have ever been, or can be, discovered to establish the canonical Scriptures as canonical. All the suggested canonical criteria that we have examined can be aids to faith and can be examined in connection with the Church's reflexive action of recognizing and receiving the canon from God. But they must never be seen as constitutive or determinative for canon as criteria. Just as Gaffin has shown for the New Testament, so it is also true for the Old Testament: God is Canon.

I wish, however, to go another step at this point and suggest that not only may we say that God is Canon, but we may also legitimately say that Christ is Canon, as the one to whom the Father has committed all authority (Matt 28:18).

Equivocation is the art of changing the meaning of a word for the sake of elusiveness in argumentation, and perhaps I could here be accused of this elusiveness. But I would

argue that canon in the sense of "norm" or "rule" is more foundational and more theologically appropriate than canon in the sense of "list."²² Though the word canon has certainly come to refer to the list(s) of books that were held by the early church to be inspired and Holy Scripture, it must be recognized that these lists were not compiled merely for curiosity's sake. Rather, they were compiled as reflex actions to the authoritative action of God in manifesting himself as canon. Indeed, as Gaffin remarks concerning the New Testament, but which I believe applies to the Old Testament as well, or better, the Old and New Testaments together, the canon of Scripture "is the historical phenomenon by which God, the sovereign Architect and Lord of history, asserts and maintains himself as canon, that is, by which his supreme authority comes to expression."²³ I especially appreciate the remarks of Gerald Bruns:

The canonization of the Scriptures may be said to have a hermeneutical as well as a textual meaning, for what is important is not only the formation, collection, and fixing of the sacred texts but also their application to

²²Contra Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redescription of Canon," in Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice, ed. William Scott Green, BJS 1 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 11-28; and Eugene Ulrich, "The Canonical Process, Textual Criticism, and Latter Stages in the Composition of the Bible," in "Sha`arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 267-74. I am opting here for "canon 1" rather than "canon 2" as defined by Gerald T. Sheppard ("Canon," in Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade et al. [New York: Macmillan, 1987], 3.64).

²³Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 171.

particular situations. A text, after all, is canonical, not in virtue of being final and correct and part of an official library, but because it becomes binding upon a group of people. . . . The distinction between canonical and noncanonical is thus not just a distinction between authentic and inauthentic texts--that is, it is not reducible to the usual oppositions between the inspired and the mundane, the true and the apocryphal, the sacred and the profane, and so on. On the contrary, it is a distinction between texts that are forceful in a given situation and those which are not. From a hermeneutical standpoint, in which the relation of a text to a situation is always of primary interest, the theme of canonization is power.²⁴

In essence, then, to read a canonical document is to read that which exerts a contractually binding force upon the reader. This being the case, the canon of Scripture is not defined so much by the word "list" as it is by the words "norm" and "rule."²⁵ And the confession of the Christian Church is that Christ himself is the supreme norm and rule over the Church. Or, in other words, Christ is Canon.

Now I am certainly not the first person to suggest that the canon of Scripture derives its authority or normativeness from Christ. This has been a tenet of the historic Christian faith from the beginning of Church history and this conviction is still held today and comes to expression in new and

²⁴Gerald Bruns, "Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures," in Canons, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983-84), 67. He goes on to say (p. 69) that canonization is "essentially a legal process in which 'binding' means binding with the force of a contract; in fact, it means a good deal more, because binding is a political as well as legal metaphor."

²⁵On this see the discussion by Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, ("kanōn," in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel, ET ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3.596-602 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965]).

creative ways. Charles M. Wood writes concerning the relationship between Christ and canon:

We may say that the biblical canon is the *criterion* of Christian witness, the "functional critical instrument" by which the Christianness of the church's witness is to be assessed; but this criterion derives its authority from the true norm of Christian witness, Jesus Christ, the absolute and underivative "author" of God's self-disclosure. The criterion (i.e., the canon) functions properly to authorize witness only when it enables access to the norm by which it is itself authorized and empowered (i.e., Jesus Christ). . . . So, counter to Protestant orthodoxy's tendency to exalt scripture to the status of absolute norm, we must say that it is Jesus Christ, not scripture, who is *norma normans sed non normata*.²⁶

So also writes Willi Marxsen ("There should be no hesitation now with the following statement: The `canon' of the Christian church is not the New Testament but Jesus."),²⁷ and Lee McDonald ("The documents we possess . . . inform us that Jesus Christ alone is the true and final canon for the child of

²⁶Charles M. Wood, The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 101-2. Similar statements may be found in James D. G. Dunn, "Levels of Canonical Authority," HBT 4/1 (1982): 51-52: "Christ is the norm of all that norms"; Schubert M. Ogden, "The Authority of Scripture for Theology," Int 30 (1976): 246: "It is Christ alone who authorizes Scripture as *norma-normans, sed non normata*"; and James D. Wood, The Interpretation of the Bible: A Historical Introduction (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1958), 175-76: "In a profound and simple sense, Jesus is Lord and King of Scripture." Cf. also Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, 86; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, Understanding the Old Testament, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 21; E. G. Selwyn, "The Authority of Christ in the New Testament," NTS 3 (1956-57): 84; Norman T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" Vox Evangelica 21 (1991): 10, 14.

²⁷Willi Marxsen, The New Testament as the Church's Book, trans. James E. Mignard (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 61.

God.").²⁸ And most recently Donald Bloesch has written that "the final norm is Jesus Christ, the living Word of God."²⁹

But, unlike some of the authors just quoted and referred to in the notes, I do not wish to maintain that Christ is Canon at the expense of a devaluation of the normativity of the Scriptures, for the canon as the word of Christ loses no authority simply because we maintain that its authority is derivative. And I also want to suggest that the authority which the biblical canon has is precisely an authority as the normative word of Christ to the Church, and not as list. The biblical canon is canon precisely as it is the authoritative word of God's exalted Christ, and not as a list compiled by the Church. To confuse the two is to confuse what is constitutive with what is reflexive. I fully agree with David Dunbar that canon as list

is a historical-theological idea that views the process of divine revelation as complete or at least in abeyance for the present. Only when the age of revelation is regarded as part of the past does the idea of a definite canon become explicit for the people of God.³⁰

²⁸Lee McDonald, The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon, 170.

²⁹Donald G. Bloesch, Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation, Christian Foundations 2 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 159.

³⁰David G. Dunbar, "The Biblical Canon" in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 301. Cf. also David Demson ("`Justification by Faith': The Canonical Principle," Toronto Journal of Theology 2 [1986]: 65) when he says that the view of the reformers was "that the church's decision about which books to include in Scripture and which books to exclude (a) was a human decision and not a divine decision; but (b) was a human

Furthermore, I am in agreement when he says, "There is no escaping the fallibility of the church, even in connection with the recognition of the canon."³¹

I disagree, however, when he goes on to say,

There is a general consensus among recent interpreters that the idea of canon is a theological construct that must be distinguished from the idea of "Scripture." Canon suggests the ideas of delimitation and selection that are not necessarily included in the term "Scripture."

As a developed theological construct, therefore, canon belongs not to the apostolic period so much as to the postapostolic period. I have no quarrel with this basic interpretation; there seems to be no other way to deal with the patristic materials.³²

Certainly, while "delimitation" and "selection" are terms that are most appropriate when applied to the idea of canon as list, I would argue that canon as norm or rule is the more "developed theological construct"³³ and is more in line with

decision made in relation to a divine decision."

Note that I am also formally in agreement with James Barr on at least this one point, that to speak of canon as list for biblical times is anachronistic (Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], 3-4, 41-42, 49-74 [esp. 49-50, 59-60, 63-66], 82-83; The Scope and Authority of the Bible [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980], 120). I do not believe that Brett's suggestion that regarding the Bible as a "classic" makes Barr's claim of anachronism irrelevant (Biblical Criticism in Crisis?: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 6).

³¹Dunbar, "The Biblical Canon," 354.

³²Ibid., 356.

³³Cf. Metzger, (The New Testament Canon) who also makes this distinction: "The word *kanōn* has an active sense, referring to those books that serve to mark out the norm for Christian faith and life; it has also a passive sense, referring to the list of books that have been marked out by the Church as normative. The two usages may be succinctly designated by two Latin tags, *norma*

the use of the term in the New Testament and the early Church Fathers.³⁴ As the term is used in the New Testament it seems to refer to what is normative for Christian life and conduct.³⁵

normans, that is, 'the rule that prescribes', and *norma normata*, that is, 'the rule that is prescribed', i.e. by the Church" (p. 283); "Discussion of the *notae canonicitatis*, therefore, should distinguish between the ground of canonicity and the ground for the conviction of canonicity. The former has to do with the idea of the canon and falls within the province of theology; the latter has to do with the extent of the canon and falls within the domain of the historian" (p. 284). My only disagreement here is with too sharp of a distinction as to what falls into theology's domain and what falls into history's.

³⁴Jesper Høgenhaven (Problems and Prospects of Old Testament Theology, Biblical Seminar 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 84) would seem to agree: "Theology, then, has to do with the Bible in its normative function. The same thing may be expressed by saying that theology has to do with the Bible in its function as canon. Such a usage of the word 'canon' is current in modern theological literature. It may well be of course, that the term originally had a rather more narrow or formal significance, and that it primarily meant the exactly defined body of writings recognized as Holy Scripture. There would, however, be little point in arguing for a restrictive usage of the word 'canon' in this formal sense. In the theological debate of the twentieth century 'canon' has come to mean the Bible in its function as the basis for the preaching and teaching of the Church." Cf. also, Ian H. Eybers, "Historical Evidence on the Canon of the Old Testament with Special Reference to the Qumran Sect," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1966), 1.3.

³⁵The word *kanōn* occurs in the New Testament only in 2 Cor 10:13, 15, 16; Gal 6:16; and in some manuscripts at Phil 3:16. The use in the Galatians passage certainly carries the idea of normativeness for Christian faith and life. Though it is to be doubted that the occurrence in the Philippians passage is original, the usage there would also fall in line with the idea of normativeness. In the Corinthians passage, there is question as to the sense of *kanōn*. Most commentators would restrict it to the idea of assigned geographical territory within which Paul may work (e.g., Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, WBC 40 [Waco: Word, 1986], 314-26). There are others, however, who would suggest that in some way the use of the term has more to do with Paul's actual apostolic authority; cf. Beyer, "*kanōn*," 3.596-602; Bengt Holmberg, Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 46; Ernst Käsemann, "Die

As used in the early Church Fathers, (to ca. AD 350) this same meaning seems to be predominant as well. The *kanōn* is qualified by the terms "truth," "church," and "faith." It refers to what Christians should believe and how they should act.³⁶ Or, to put it in another, more historic, way, the canon is the "rule of faith and practice." Beyer believes that even in the later Church Fathers, when the word began to be used in phrases like "the canon of Scripture," or simply "the canon" (ca. AD 350), the Church Fathers had more in mind the idea of norm than list or catalog:

The use of *kanōn* in this sense was not influenced by the fact that Alexandrian grammarians had spoken of a canon of writers of model Greek. Nor is the decisive point the equation of *kanōn* and *katalogos*, formal though the use of

Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10-13," ZNW 41 (1942): 59-61; Inge Lønning, "Kanon im Kanon": Zum dogmatischen Grundlagenproblem des neutestamentliche Kanons (Oslo/Munich: Universitets Forlaget/Kaiser, 1972), 17-23; Alexander Sand, "*kanōn, onos, ho*," Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 2.249. C. K. Barrett, while favoring the geographical interpretation, believes that there may be an intimation of the apostolic authority as well (A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, HNTC [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1973; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987], 264-65).

³⁶On this point see Jan Gorak's insightful discussion in The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea, Vision, Division and Revision: The Athlone Series on Canons (London & Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone, 1991), 20-23, esp. the following: "The letters of Paul identify 'canon' with the rules binding on Christians and exemplified in Christ's own life. . . . For Paul, a 'canon' erases rather than transmits established standards" (p. 22); "For classical thinkers, a person possessed a canon; for Paul, the canon possesses a person. In effect, Paul reimagines the canon, transforming it from a classical pedagogic instrument or ritualized Jewish covenant into a dynamic, unpredictable, transcendent mission ultimately identified with Christ himself" (p. 23).

the term may be. What really counted was the concept of norm inherent in the term, i.e., its material content as the *kanōn tēs alētheias* in the Christian sense. The Latins thus came to equate *canon* and *biblia*.³⁷

It would be hard to determine if Beyer is correct on this point.³⁸ But in any case, I would still maintain that although even canon as list has authority, it is an authority comparable to that of a doctrinal statement or confession of faith.³⁹ And while it has a certain type of authority, it is an ecclesiastically derived authority. Canon as norm or rule is also a derived authority, but it is a Christologically, rather than ecclesiastically, derived authority.⁴⁰ Canon as

³⁷Beyer, "*kanōn*," 3.601. For the contrary viewpoint see Barr, Holy Scripture, 49 n. 1: "It is important to observe that 'canon' in the sense of 'canon of scripture' thus appears not to derive from the sense 'rule, standard', which is the New Testament sense of the Greek word."

³⁸It could be suggested that Beyer is guilty of the "theological lexicography" with which Barr has charged the TDNT in general (The Semantics of Biblical Language [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr., London: SCM, 1983], 206-62). In particular, if Barr is right that *kanōn*, when used to refer to the Scriptures "derives from the familiar Greek sense, as used of a table of figures or the like" (Holy Scripture, 49, n. 1), then Beyer's desire to include the idea of normativity could be seen as "illegitimate totality transfer" (Barr, Semantics, 218). As I see Beyer's argument, however, he is suggesting that the derivation was much more likely to have been from the prior use of the word by the Church Fathers to refer to normativity and authoritativeness. This is not so much a question of theological overload, as a question of what was really in the minds of those who first used the word in connection with the Scriptures.

³⁹Cf. John Goldingay (Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation, rev. ed. [Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1990], 145): "Acknowledging a canon of Scripture is a declaration made by faith, not by sight."

⁴⁰Cf. on this point G. C. Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, 86: "We can then say that the question about the canon is not of an ecclesiastical but rather of a Christological nature." This view

list is recognition of what is canonical (authoritative); it is not in itself a canonizing.

Barr does not like this use of the term "canon" to refer to authoritativeness of Scripture as opposed to a list of books that are considered to be authoritative. Arguing that "list" or "catalogue" has "always been the normal meaning of the word in English when applied to Scripture," he argues that using "canon" to refer to authoritativeness is simply confusing:

Such usage is a regrettable innovation, without secure basis in traditional theological language; moreover it is confusing to the point of being nonsensical. If we mean "scripture when seen as authoritative in the community" we should say "scripture when seen as authoritative in the community", and not confuse ourselves by calling it "canon".⁴¹

I would argue, however, that there was, in fact, a "psychology of canonicity,"⁴² a "canonical habit of mind,"⁴³ or

runs counter, of course, to that of those who view the Church's action as constitutive rather than reflexive; cf. Nicolaas Appel, "The NT Canon: Historical Process and Spirit's Witness," TS 32 (1971): 627-46; Thomas A. Hoffman, "Inspiration, Normativeness, Canonicity, and the Unique Sacred Character of the Bible," CBO 44 (1982): 463-64.

⁴¹Barr, Holy Scripture, 49 n. 1.

⁴²Bruce K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," in Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual, ed. R. K. Harrison, Bruce K. Waltke, Donald Guthrie and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 49; cf. also Bleddyn J. Roberts, "The Old Testament Canon: A Suggestion," BJRL 46 (1963): 178.

⁴³Frank Kermode, "The Argument about Canons," in The Bible and the Narrative Tradition, ed. Frank. McConnell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 601.

a "canonical self-consciousness"⁴⁴ which existed, not just in New Testament biblical times, but in the Old Testament time period and throughout the ancient world.⁴⁵ Barr himself admits the same, but then goes on to argue that the very idea of some sort of "pre-canon" is the very thing that demands reconstruction:

Was not this pre-scripture or pre-canon the forerunner of the scripture which was eventually to emerge, to be defined still later by its canon? I would myself very much affirm just these things. But observe the consequences if we do so. We do not have the pre-canon, and we cannot have access to it except through historical reconstruction. Only a critical reconstruction can tell us what was in the pre-canon in the time of Solomon or of Isaiah. The importance of the pre-canon, if it is granted, is a strong reason for the importance of source criticism in the Pentateuch or for the dating of the various prophetic passages and other such critical procedures. If we are to follow this line, the prototype canonical critic is not Childs but Wellhausen. For it was Wellhausen and those like him who were interested in telling us, though they did not use the words, just what was in the pre-canon in the days of Solomon and Isaiah.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Sinclair B. Ferguson, "How does the Bible Look at Itself?" in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 50.

⁴⁵Cf. on this point William W. Hallo, who would still, however, want to suggest that an important element of canon would be a "reasonably fixed number and sequence of individual compositions" ("The Concept of Canonicity in Cuneiform and Biblical Literature: A Comparative Appraisal," in The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective, ed. K. Lawson Younger, Jr., William W. Hallo, and Bernard F. Batto, Scripture in Context 4, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 11 [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991], 1-19). Cf. also W. G. Lambert, "Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity," JCS 11 (1957): 9; Vasholz, The Old Testament Canon, 2-3.

⁴⁶Barr, Holy Scripture, 83. Donn Morgan also suggests that it is "better to speak of 'emerging canon' or 'nascent Scripture' when referring to issues of authority surrounding the final composition of particular biblical texts" ("Canon and Criticism: Method or Madness?" ATR 68 [1986]: 86).

But Barr is guilty here of drawing unwarranted conclusions from the idea that there was a canonical mindset or a "pre-canon" before there was a finalized canonical list: (1) that it is necessary for us to have this "pre-canon," (2) that it is incumbent on us to be able to reconstruct the various canonical forms on the way to the final canon, (3) that it is necessary for us to gain some other avenue to the history of the canonical process other than that provided by the canon itself.

Nor should we see the Church as being in some way God's cooperative partner in the establishment of canon, or relativize the biblical canon's authority by the suggestion that it is only authoritative in the process of interaction between text and community.⁴⁷ The authority of the biblical canon comes from Christ alone. Pinnock correctly says that the notion of canon

suggests a unique normativity over the ongoing developing traditions. Otherwise, the Bible would just melt into human traditions and lose its capacity to bring about change and reform. In opting for the canon, the church seemed to say that the criteria of truth lay outside herself in a text that stood over her and at times even against her. By accepting the norm of Scripture, the church declared that there was a standard outside herself to which she intended to be subject for all time.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Cf. Peter R. Ackroyd, "Original Text and Canonical Text," USQR 32 (1977): 172; Robert David Maldonado, "Canon and Christian Scripture: Toward a Multi-level, Contingent Understanding of Canonical Value" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1988), 214.

⁴⁸Clark H. Pinnock, The Scripture Principle (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 81.

The community is not canonical. There must always be a word that keeps the community in check. It is to be noted that this situation may never be reversed: the word always keeps the community in check; the community never keeps the word in check. In this respect, we should see here a correlation between canon and covenant. Canon, like covenant, is essentially a divinely unilateral document. Canon as list is the Church's response to the authority of Christ manifested in the biblical canon, a response which is analogous to that of the ancient Israelites to the covenant given to them at Mount Sinai: "Everything that the Lord has said we will do" (Exod 19:8). As is well known to the biblical writers, but sometimes forgotten by modern canonical theorists, this correct and appropriate response stands in stark contrast to the subsequent history of Israel.⁴⁹ Just as much to be rejected as the idea that the Old Testament is simply the preservation of documents favorable to the ideology of the party that finally won out in Israel's political power struggles,⁵⁰ is the suggestion that the Old Testament is in

⁴⁹Cf. Edward J. Young, The Study of Old Testament Theology Today (London: James Clarke, 1958), 101: "It is strange that anyone should suggest that Israel had a genius for religion, for, according to the Bible, that for which Israel had a genius was rebellion and apostasy."

⁵⁰So Morton Smith (Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament, Lectures on the History of Religions 9 [New York: Columbia University Press, 1971]); cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins, University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 3 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 142.

some way the result of Israel's dogged determinism to pursue God or monotheism.⁵¹ The Old Testament canon is not to be seen so much as the community's instrument to pursue God, but as God's instrument in pursuit of the community.

Now it might be suggested here that the situation should be seen as different for the New Testament community as the community in whom God has put his Spirit.⁵² As can be seen from nearly two millennia of church history, however, the Church, though gifted with the Spirit, is not to be regarded as authority in the same sense as the biblical canon.⁵³ Furthermore, as noted earlier in chapter 3, we must recognize that the biblical documents are essentially individual and not community compositions, as God uses individuals to speak not only to, but against the community.⁵⁴ The New Testament was not the result of the community's freedom "to compose their own Scriptures over and above what we now call the Hebrew

⁵¹Sanders, "Adaptable for Life," 551.

⁵²Cf. P. Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture, 103-61; Robert B. Laurin, "The Problem of the Canon in the Contemporary Church," Foundations 10 (1967): 327-28.

⁵³Bloesch has a very interesting discussion on this whole issue (Holy Scripture, 141-61). While I affirm much of what he says, I believe he is either going too far, or speaking unguardedly when he suggests that "both Scripture and the church share in the infallibility of the incarnate and living Christ" (p. 148; cf. also p. 154).

⁵⁴Also, as Brian Labosier notes, "The Bible speak of inspired individuals, not inspired communities" ("Matthew's Exception Clause in the Light of Canonical Criticism: A Case Study in Hermeneutics" [Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1990], 93).

Bible";⁵⁵ rather, it was the freedom of God to add to the revelation he had already imparted. Against all attempts to disparage canonization as only "an incident, and no more than that,"⁵⁶ or "an unfortunate freezing of tradition growth,"⁵⁷ we must recognize the canon of Holy Scripture for what it is: that historical document in which Christ exercises his authority as Lord of the canon and Lord of the Church.

Thesis Number Two:
Christ Asserts Himself as Canon by His Spirit

The Christo-canonical approach recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration and production of the biblical canon as a work done under the authority and direction of Christ. And inasmuch as the Holy Spirit, who was the effective agent in the production of the Old Testament, is the Spirit of Christ, the approach recognizes that not just the New Testament, but the Old Testament as well, may be qualified with the words that are usually reserved for the New Testament: "of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

⁵⁵Josephine Massyngbaerde Ford, "The New Covenant, Jesus, and Canonization," in Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 5 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 34.

⁵⁶Samuel Sandmel, "On Canon," in "A Symposium on the Canon of Scripture," CBQ 28 (1966): 207.

⁵⁷Robert B. Laurin, "Tradition and Canon," in Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament, ed. Douglas A. Knight (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1977), 271.

Gaffin has demonstrated that the promises contained in John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15, that the Spirit "will guide you into all truth" and "remind you of everything I have said to you," are not "given directly and indiscriminately to all believers." Rather, they are to be seen as special promises to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would be their divine aid in recalling and testifying to the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ In other words, the promises contained in these verses are nothing less than the promise of the New Testament, a New Testament to be produced by the apostles, under the inspiration of the Spirit, who himself is acting under the authority of Christ.

We must go on to notice, however, that the Old Testament, no less than the New Testament, is also a book composed by the prophets, under the inspiration of the Spirit, who himself is acting under the authority of Christ. This, I believe, is a fair reading of a very important phrase in 1 Pet 1:11. There we read that the Old Testament prophets tried "to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Not many commentators have followed Selwyn in suggesting that the prophets here are actually New Testament prophets and that the sufferings are not those of Christ, but those for Christ by

⁵⁸Gaffin, "The New Testament as Canon," 176.

Christians.⁵⁹ Certainly, it is to be understood that Old Testament prophets are in view here.⁶⁰ And these Old Testament prophets prophesied, not just by the Spirit, but by the Spirit of Christ. Though other interpretations are possible, I would argue that the denomination of the Holy Spirit here as the Spirit of Christ is not a proleptic reference, calling him the Spirit of Christ in light of what he would one day be, but that it is instead an affirmation that even in the time period of the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is properly called the Spirit of Christ, and that the Old Testament, no less than the New Testament, is biblical canon under the lordship of Christ.⁶¹ Ed Clowney rightly notes,

The prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God who inspired them is the Spirit of Christ. "The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." Not only does prophecy bear witness to Jesus, but Jesus bears witness through prophecy. The incarnate Lord is the true witness; the eternal Logos is the source of the prophetic testimony.⁶²

⁵⁹E. G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947; repr., Thornapple Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 134.

⁶⁰Cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, 1 Peter, WBC 49 (Waco: Word, 1988), 43-44; Wayne A. Grudem, The First Epistle of Peter: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 17 (Leicester: InterVarsity; and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 68-71; Leonhard Goppelt, A Commentary on First Peter, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 95-100.

⁶¹I agree with Michaels (1 Peter, 44) that the question as to whether *pneuma* is a reference to the Holy Spirit or the preexistent Christ is from Peter's standpoint "a false alternative because for him the two amount to the same thing . . . "; cf. Grudem, The First Epistle of Peter, 69.

⁶²Edmund P. Clowney, The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the

Further confirmation of this may be had by comparing the language of John 5:36 with that of John 15:26, where both the Old Testament Scriptures and the witness that the Holy Spirit is to bear, do, in Christ's words, "testify about me."

I suggest, therefore, on the basis of Christ's statements in the Upper Room concerning the New Testament, and Peter's statements concerning the Old Testament, that we can declare that the entire biblical canon, Old and New Testaments together, is the one canon of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the authority of the Old Testament is identical to that of the New Testament: the Old Testament, just as much as the New Testament, is that by which Christ asserts himself as canon.

This being the case, it become especially important to notice that, regardless of how well-intentioned they may be, statements to the effect that the Old Testament has been taken over by the Church do not quite give the correct picture.

Bernhard Anderson speaks of how the Christian community

Cross, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester/Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1988), 58. Cf. the, at least formally, similar statement of Peter Stuhlmacher (*Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 27): "When we look for that systematic view of the whole which makes possible a comprehensive biblical canon, we need to note that it can most clearly be seen in Justin Martyr (ca. 110-65), namely, in the shape of his Logos-doctrine. Christ is witnessed to as Logos by the Old Testament and by the apostolic literature, of which Justin gives the Gospels special value. In both Christ is witnessed to as the Logos insofar as the Holy Spirit, inspiring Old and New Testament authors, is not separable from the Christ-Logos, but one of his most important modes of appearance. The Logos-Christology together with the doctrine of inspiration thus embraces the Old and New Testament canon at its very inception, indeed as a constitutive bond."

"appropriated" the Old Testament and "baptized" it into Christ.⁶³ Bultmann refers to how the "Christian faith seizes the Old Testament."⁶⁴ Wilhelm Vischer speaks of how with "complete consistency the early Church took over Israel's entire scripture."⁶⁵ And Harold Bloom refers disparagingly to the "the Christian triumph over the Hebrew Bible, a triumph which produced that captive work, the Old Testament."⁶⁶ More correctly, Gunneweg refers to the Old Testament as a "legacy" which the Church inherited.⁶⁷ Even more insightful is the statement of Woudstra:

The Christian Church did not at some time during its history decide, somewhat belatedly, that it was going to "accept" or "take over" the Old Testament. The Church from the very start realized that its existence was bound up with the Old Testament. The Christ it worshipped, the communion it established, the rites it practiced, the

⁶³Bernhard W. Anderson, Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today, rev. and exp. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 17 (actually, Anderson only refers to the Psalms as being "baptized"). Cf. John Paterson, The Praises of Israel: Studies Literary and Religious in the Psalms (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 7; R. B. Y. Scott, The Psalms as Christian Praise (New York: Association, 1958), 10.

⁶⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," trans. Bernhard W. Anderson, in The Old Testament and the Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 32.

⁶⁵Wilhelm Vischer, The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ, trans. A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 1.26.

⁶⁶Harold Bloom, "'Before Moses Was, I Am'; The Original and Belated Testaments," in Notebooks in Cultural Analysis, 1 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 3, cited in Robert Alter, "Introduction to the Old Testament," in The Literary Guide to the Bible, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 35 n. 1.

⁶⁷Gunneweg, Understanding the Old Testament, 4, 8-9.

gospel it preached were indissolubly linked to and squarely founded upon the salvation history of the Old Testament. Before the Church began to theologize upon its relationship to the Old Testament it had been compelled to submit to it. For it could never have existed without it.⁶⁸

I would go beyond both of these last statements, however, and claim with A. T. Hanson, that there is ample justification, from the perspective of the New Testament authors, for speaking about the "real presence" of Christ in the Old Testament.⁶⁹ Though I agree with F. F. Bruce that Hanson is perhaps more speculative than conclusive in some of his exegesis, as Bruce also points out,

It cannot be denied that more than one New Testament writer thought of Jesus in person, before His incarnation, as delivering the Israelites from Egypt and leading them through the wilderness into the promised land.⁷⁰

I am not so much interested here in passages that may refer to deeds or actions of the pre-incarnate Christ in the Old Testament, but rather with passages that seem to refer to him as the speaker or author of the Old Testament Scriptures,

⁶⁸Marten J. Woudstra, The Continued Recognition of the Old Testament as Part of the Christian Canon (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1963), 24; cf. C. van der Waal, "The Continuity Between the Old and New Testaments," in The Relationship Between the Old and New Testament, Neot 14 (1981): 14.

⁶⁹Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1965). See also his The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), esp. pp. 58-60, 108. I would not go so far as Borland, however, and suggest that all Old Testament theophanies were Christophanies (Christ in the Old Testament [Chicago: Moody, 1978], 3-4).

⁷⁰F. F. Bruce, Tradition Old and New (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 84.

particularly the Psalms. More interaction with Hanson on these passages will follow in Part Three. But for now the point I want to stress is that we must recognize, not so much that Christ is in the Old Testament, but that the Old Testament is in Christ by virtue of his lordship over the whole canon of Scripture, a canon that was produced, not just by the Holy Spirit, but by the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ. As Chimelli declares, "Christ is the center from which one can understand the articulation between past and present," for it could be no other way, since he is the "legitimate center of Scripture as the One who Himself was speaking through these books."⁷¹

Thesis Number Three:
Christ is Lord over the Whole Canon

The Christo-canonical approach, recognizing that Christ is Lord over the whole canon, rejects any form of "canon within the canon," for there is no part of the canon that is not under the lordship of Christ. The Gospels or the New Testament are not more canonically authoritative than the rest of the biblical canon, for Christ who is the authorizer of the canon, performed the ultimate act of authorization of the Old Testament when he placed himself under its authority, even to the death: "The Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49).

⁷¹Claire Chimelli, "The Relevance of the Old Testament to the Christian Faith: A Brief Historical Survey," Theological Review 13/1 (1992): 5.

The previous two theses advanced thus far in this chapter might lead the reader to conclude that I am operating with a "canon within the canon." From one angle, this charge would appear to have some validity. I want to suggest, however, that this is not really the case.⁷² The spatial metaphor that I have chosen to use is that Christ is the Canon "above" the canon. By the use of the word "above" (I could also have used other words such as "behind," "over," etc.), I believe I fully absolve myself, and non-evasively so, of the "canon within the canon" charge. The Christo-canonical approach does not take an element, a principle, a verse, a passage, a book, or even a Testament within the canon, and absolutize it, but rather, based on the theses already given, maintains that if there is such a thing as a canon within the canon, it is the biblical canon within Christ as Canon. Christ is not so much in the canon, as the canon is in Christ. Christ is not an element or principle in the canon that is being abstracted from it and made to serve as a canon within the canon; rather, he is the author of canon and thus

⁷²Cf. Donald Bloesch's self-examination on this same issue ("A Christological Hermeneutic: Crisis and Conflict in Hermeneutics," in The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 98-99: "It can legitimately be asked whether I am operating with a canon within the canon. This is not the case if it means interpreting the whole from the vantage point of select books in the New Testament (in the manner of Käsemann). It is the case if it implies understanding the whole of Scripture in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but this gospel is either explicit or implicit in every part of Scripture." How I both agree with Bloesch's innocent plea, and disagree with his guilty plea, will be seen in the following discussion.

legitimately set forth as the Canon that norms the biblical canon.⁷³ And because Christ is the Lord of the whole canon, no interpreter has the right to regard any part of the biblical canon as more authoritative than another.⁷⁴

Often statements are made to the effect that the Church has always worked with a canon within the canon, that is, those passages or books that are appealed to most often for doctrinal or other purposes.⁷⁵ Laurin states,

In spite of grand affirmations from those who wish to sound orthodox by saying, "We place ourselves under Scripture," no one in fact ever does, or indeed can. Everyone distinguishes in the Bible between what is authoritative and non-authoritative for him.⁷⁶

Dauids, noting that "there is a tendency for each church community to respond selectively to Scripture," defines this reduced canon as the "part of Scripture that really functions as Scripture for a given scholar or group."⁷⁷ For many churches and/or scholars, the New Testament becomes this internal canon, and sometimes it is even openly avowed that

⁷³Thus my approach is different from that of W. D. Davies when he argues that Christ was elevated in Paul's thought "to be part of the `canon'" and thus became the canon within the canon ("Canon and Christology," in The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: In Memory of George Bradford Caird, ed. L. D. Hurst and Norman T. Wright [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987], 35.

⁷⁴Contra Wood, The Formation of Christian Understanding, 106-7.

⁷⁵Laurin, "The Problem of the Canon," 328.

⁷⁶Ibid., 315.

⁷⁷Peter H. Davids, "Authority, Hermeneutics, and Criticism," in New Testament Criticism and Interpretation, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 32.

this should be the case. Dunn states that "the Christian has no choice but to affirm that Christ is the norm of all norms, that the New Testament is the canon within the canon of the Christian Bible."⁷⁸ Norman Wright, comparing the Old and New Testaments and arguing for a canon within the canon approach, suggests that "the Old Testament has the authority that an earlier act of the play would have, no more, no less."⁷⁹ McCurley argues that Christ and the New Testament should be seen as a corrective to the Old Testament:

The canon within the canon principle must be taken seriously if Christ is not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise but also the corrective to some of the testimony to the God of the promise. One must, therefore, be selective in choosing what is appropriate in order to proclaim the Word of God . . .⁸⁰

There are others, such as Ogden, who would go even further and suggest that "not even the New Testament is the canon of the church, but rather, the apostolic witness to Jesus the Christ";⁸¹ that is, "the canon within the canon to which all theological assertions must be appropriate is the meaning to be discerned in the earliest layer of Christian witness, and that means the Jesus-kerygma of the apostolic community."⁸²

⁷⁸James D. G. Dunn, "Levels of Canonical Authority," HBT 4/1 (1982): 52.

⁷⁹Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" 18.

⁸⁰Foster R. McCurley, Jr., Proclaiming the Promise: Christian Preaching from the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 44.

⁸¹Ogden, "The Authority of Scripture for Theology," 256.

⁸²Ibid., 259.

Now the very fact that several of the scholars just quoted are among those who would also in some way advocate that Christ is Canon shows the necessity of stressing just how far the Christo-canonical approach is from any canon within the canon approach. I do not at all deny that every Church and every scholar may and, indeed, does have a "working canon" that is smaller than the biblical canon. But I would deny, along with David Kelsey, that this working canon is the same as a canon within the canon.⁸³ Rather, this working canon is simply the inevitable result of the finitude and creatureliness of the student of Scripture. It is simply an incontrovertible fact, as John Murray has so well stated it, "that we cannot say everything all at once nor can we think of everything that needs to be thought of God and ourselves all at once."⁸⁴ I also agree with Murray, however, that there is nothing inherent in this finitude "that hinders, far less prevents, sustained confrontation with the living Word of the

⁸³David H. Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 104.

⁸⁴John Murray, "Systematic Theology," in The New Testament Student and Theology, ed. John Skilton, The New Testament Student 3 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), 26 (first published as "Systematic Theology--II," in WTJ 26 [1964]). Note Barr's agreement on this point (Holy Scripture, 70): "It is quite possible that the entire matter is a non-question. All exegetes and theologians, as we have seen, organize and structure the material of the text in this or that way; they cannot work unless they do so."

living God."⁸⁵ To have a working canon does not preclude an openness to the whole canon.⁸⁶

I am also willing to concede with Kelsey that

Close examination of theologians' actual uses of scripture in the course of doing theology shows that they do not appeal to some objective text-in-itself but rather to a text construed as a certain kind of whole having a certain kind of logical force. . . .⁸⁷

and that,

In short, the suggestion that scripture might serve as a final court of appeals for theological disputes is misleading because there is no one, normative concept "scripture."⁸⁸

I am not willing to concede, however (though Kelsey is not necessarily insisting on this), that just because there is necessarily some distance between the actual text and any theologian's particular construal of that text, that the construal then becomes a canon within the canon for that theologian. An analogy would be helpful here. No two people have the exact same concept of God, and no one's conception of

⁸⁵Murray, "Systematic Theology," 26. Actually, Murray is not referring to a canon within the canon problem in the statements just quoted, but is arguing for the necessity of a logical treatment of doctrine in the Bible by means of systematic theology. I believe, however, that the rationale of finitude works in both cases.

⁸⁶Cf. John Goldingay, Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 97. On pp. 122-27 the author has an excellent discussion of what various scholars mean when they refer to the canon within the canon (but cf. also the related discussion in the following pages, 128-33).

⁸⁷Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture, 14.

⁸⁸Ibid., 14-15.

God corresponds exactly to God as he knows himself; yet this lack of conceptual correspondence is not equivalent to idolatry. Analogously, just because we necessarily have construals of Scripture that may not exactly correspond to the "objective text-in-itself," it does not follow that we are inevitably guilty of remaking Scripture in our own image. To maintain that there is no canon within the canon, is not to assert that we have reduplicated the precise objective canon in our minds, but that we are open to the whole canon in such a way that our construals are continually subject to revision and reform under the authority of the canon.

To assert that Christ is the Canon above the canon is to insist that there is no place in the biblical canon where Christ is less authoritative than he is in any other place. It is to recognize that, even though we may have our favorite passages of Scripture, Christ still reserves the right to speak to us in passages that are "most distasteful" to us.⁸⁹ It refuses to "silence the more challenging sections of Holy Scripture"⁹⁰ in which Christ speaks. It asserts that every canon within the canon approach is, by its very nature, a refusal to submit to the full authority of the canon as

⁸⁹James D. Smart, The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics (London: SCM, 1970), 149-50.

⁹⁰David S. Dockery, Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 179-80; cf. Goldingay, Theological Diversity, 129.

authoritative under Christ as Canon.⁹¹ Indeed, as Eugene Klug has so eloquently stated in the foreword to a book by Gerhard Maier,

If there really were a "canon within the canon," a "Word of God" which had to be separated from the Scriptural text, then the result would not be only a dividing of the Holy Scriptures apart from the Word of God, but also a setting of Christ Himself apart from the Scriptures (and so also the Holy Spirit) in a way unwelcome to each of them--in fact, one "Christ" from another "Christ."⁹²

And Maier himself says,

If there should really be a canon in the canon, then not only would Scripture have to be divorced from the Word of God, but also Christ from the Scriptures, and the one Christ of Scripture from the other Christ of Scripture. The light of a new docetism would then fall on the event of the Incarnation and on certain parts of Scripture.⁹³

Finally, I would just call attention to the fact that, so far from regarding any one part of the canon being less authoritative than any other part, or the Old Testament as being less authoritative than the New Testament, is the attitude of Christ who regarded the Old Testament Scriptures so authoritative for him that he obeyed them to the point of death.⁹⁴ Christ, here, I would suggest, obeyed the Old

⁹¹Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936 from the Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Volume I, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 313-15.

⁹²Eugene F. Klug, foreword to The End of the Historical-Critical Method by Gerhard Maier (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), 9.

⁹³Gerhard Maier, The End of the Historical-Critical Method, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden, with Foreword by Eugene F. Klug (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), 49.

⁹⁴Cf. Edward J. Young, Thy Word is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

Testament Scriptures, because they were, in fact, his Scriptures. Christ's ultimate act of obedience to death was, in fact, his obedience to his own word and promise. Christ is the Canon above the canon, who put himself under the authority of his own word, and because this is so, there is no canon within the canon.

Thesis Number Four:
Christ Asserts His Authority in Covenantal Canon

The Christo-canonical approach maintains that Christ's canon is, in fact, covenantal canon. As covenant document, the biblical canon, Old and New Testaments together, gives (1) a narrative of God's gracious dealings with his people, (2) the promise of God's gracious presence and protection, (3) and instructions regarding God's will concerning the beliefs and behavior of his covenant people. To put it another way, it gives: (1) a history of redemption culminating in the salvation achieved by Christ, (2) the promise of salvation and eternal life with God, and (3) the charter for the faith and practice of the people of God.

With the recognition of the formal correspondences between the ancient Near Eastern treaties (particularly the Hittite treaties) and the book of Deuteronomy, there was a considerable amount of literature devoted to exploring these correspondences. There was also a renewed interest in approaching theology, particularly Old Testament theology,

from the perspective of covenant, as evidenced by the many Old Testament theologies written from a broadly covenantal perspective.⁹⁵

It was Meredith Kline, however, who first suggested that covenant and canon should be seen as correlative concepts, and that canon is, in fact, primarily covenantal canon.⁹⁶ While wishing to affirm the broad outline of Kline's thesis, I also wish to express some reservations that have to do with very important issues regarding the relationship between Christ and covenantal canon.

First, as mentioned earlier in the discussion under thesis number one, I do not believe that we can take this covenantal character of canon and turn it into a criterion of canonicity. While all the biblical books were written, I believe, with the assumption that the audience was a covenant people living life in the presence of their covenant God, it would be difficult to show that the writers had in mind the express purpose of creating documents that would bear formal

⁹⁵Some of the more important ones are Walter Eichrodt, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1963); O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980); Thomas E. McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985); William J. Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984).

⁹⁶Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); By Oath Consigned (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968); "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," in New Perspectives on the Old Testament, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco: Word, 1970), 265-79; The Structure of Biblical Authority, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

similarities to elements of covenantal treaties (I am thinking in particular here of the wisdom books of the Old Testament). Kline makes a valiant effort in this regard, but fails, in my opinion, to establish anything more than just a general correlation.⁹⁷ Further, there are non-canonical books that I am sure could be squeezed into one of the treaty elements in some way and claim a rightful place in the canon. Formal similarity to elements of ancient Near Eastern treaties may not be seen as criterion of canonicity.

Second, covenant, as prevalent as it is in the Bible, should not be exalted to a position of canon within the canon, and thus devaluing the witness of material that is not so obviously covenantally oriented.⁹⁸ Covenant is metaphor, and extensive as it is in the Scriptures, it is still metaphor and only one of the ways the Scriptures use to portray the relationship between God and his people.⁹⁹

Third, even though it has a certain attractiveness to it in terms of explaining the discontinuity between the testaments, Kline's position that the Old Testament, while it remains Scripture for the Christian Church, is not canon for the Church (i.e., it is good for faith, but not for practice),

⁹⁷Kline, The Structure of Biblical Authority, 62-67.

⁹⁸Cf. William Johnstone's criticisms of John Bright in this regard ("The Authority of the Old Testament," review of The Authority of the Old Testament, by John Bright, in SJT 22 [1969]: 203).

⁹⁹Cf. Tremper Longman III, How to Read the Psalms (Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 56-57.

must, I believe, be rejected for several reasons.¹⁰⁰ (1) First, it absolutizes the way treaties were made and renewed in the ancient Near East and requires that the New Testament, as a "new treaty document," must assume the same relevance as a brand new treaty, that is, a cancellation of the old treaty. While that may be the case for ancient Near Eastern treaties of the second millennium BC, we cannot assume that the New Testament authors were working with this model in mind. (2) Second, we must keep in mind that, while the New Testament may in broad terms be classified as a treaty document, it is not formally so. There is no attempt made in the New Testament to draw up a brand new treaty, as it were, copying everything that still applied from the old treaty and making alterations where necessary. Kline himself admits as much when, almost against his own thesis, he states that the Old Testament still contains material "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness"¹⁰¹ (does this not cover both faith and practice?), and when he states that "There are of course life-norms found in the Old Testament which continue to be authoritative standards of human conduct in New Testament times,"¹⁰² but then goes on to say, "The New Testament, though not legislatively codifying these life-

¹⁰⁰Kline, The Structure of Biblical Authority, 99-110; "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," 273-75.

¹⁰¹Kline, "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," 274.

¹⁰²Kline, The Structure of Biblical Authority, 102.

norms, does presuppose them and didactically confirm them."¹⁰³ Or, in other words, the Old Testament does still contain life-norms for the people of God (thus qualifying as canon by Kline's definition), and the New Testament is not a treaty renewal document in the sense that we may find there everything that still carries over from the old treaty.¹⁰⁴ It is simply asking too much of a document that is formally covenantal only in the loosest respects to repeat all the still applicable elements of the former treaty.

(3) Third, and most importantly, this view must be rejected because it partakes of the canon within the canon approach that suggests that Christ is more authoritative in one part of the canon than he is in another.¹⁰⁵ If our thesis is right that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture, not because it has been baptized or taken over by the New Testament, but because it was, in fact, word of Christ from the very beginning, then I do not see how we can call it anything less than canon for the Christian Church.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Kline, in my opinion, comes dangerously close to the older dispensational position that suggested that only if an Old Testament law was explicitly repeated in the New Testament did it have any validity for Christians today.

¹⁰⁵Kline faults Childs for failing to really "get beyond canon-within-the-canon approaches" because he still makes human subjectivity constitutive in canonical authority" (Structure of Biblical Authority, 100). I fail to see, however, how Kline, who puts himself in the position of having to figure which life-norms in the Old Testament are still valid, though the New Testament does not codify them, fares any better.

With these few qualifications of Kline's thesis, however, it is still important to note just how important the idea of the correlation of these two concepts, canon and covenant, really is, especially in light of the Christological dimension I am trying to emphasize in this dissertation. Kline has not been the only one to have noticed this very important correlation. George Ernest Wright felt that it was very "probable that the idea of canon began in Israel's covenant renewal ceremonies, ultimately stemming from the Mosaic covenant."¹⁰⁶ And Clements has argued that

it is the process of the formation of the Old Testament scriptures into a sacred canon which has done most to relate them to a concept of covenant, and that it is the Sinai-Horeb covenant which is consistently the point to which this reference is made.¹⁰⁷

I would go beyond both these last quoted scholars and suggest that the beginning point of the covenantal character of canon is not to be found in covenant renewal ceremonies (though the canon-covenant correlation is there), or in the redaction process (though I believe the redactors did their work within this frame of understanding), but rather, that it begins with the first inscripturation of God's covenant with his people, that is, with Moses.

¹⁰⁶George Ernest Wright, The Old Testament and Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 179.

¹⁰⁷Ronald E. Clements, "Covenant and Canon in the Old Testament," in Creation, Christ and Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance, ed. Richard W. A. McKinney (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), 4.

The Christological factor (too weak a word) of this canon-covenant correlation; better, the all-pervasive Christological domination of this canon-covenant correlation becomes especially evident in that Christ himself is the very embodiment or personification of covenant. God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, declares of his servant that he will make him "to be a covenant for the people" (Isa 42:6; 49:8). This phrase has been variously explained, often, it seems, with a view to making it say what it does not say.¹⁰⁸ Though I am convinced that there is a corporate element that must be taken into account in the identification of the servant of the Lord in the "servant songs,"¹⁰⁹ I am also convinced that in this particular place there is a necessary distinction that must be made between the servant and the people, and that the people are not to be thought of as covenant.¹¹⁰ Though it is possible that the reference is to

¹⁰⁸One suggestion has been that *bərît* in this verse is not "covenant," but rather the denominative of the Akkadian *barû*, "to see," and would thus mean "vision", thus providing a neat parallel with "light" in the next line of the verse. North, however raises an objection to this in that "*bərît*, 'covenant' occurs some 300 times and it would hardly be obvious even to a contemporary that in this one instance it meant 'vision'." He does, however, allow for the possibility of a double entendre (Christopher R. North, The Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV, rev. ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], 112).

¹⁰⁹H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," chap. in The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 51-60.

¹¹⁰Contra George A. F. Knight, Servant Theology: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 48; also Claus Westermann, Isaiah

covenant instrumentality; that is, that the reference is to the servant being sacrificed like the cut-up animals in Genesis 15,¹¹¹ it is more likely that the idea is that of mediatorship.¹¹² Indeed, Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. It is interesting to note here how we speak of the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, naming them after their mediators; but when we come to the next covenant, we change the manner of nomenclature and simply attach the word "new" as qualifier. I believe that in view of how we designate the previous covenants it would be much more appropriate to refer to the "Christ covenant."

Yet, he is more than just mediator of the covenant; rather, he is the covenant. As Edward J. Young remarks, "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."¹¹³ More recently, Alec Motyer has written,

40-66: A Commentary, trans. David M. G. Stalker, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 99-100. Also to be rejected are suggestions that identify the servant with Cyrus (R. N. Whybray, Isaiah 40-66, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1975], 74-76; John D. W. Watts, Isaiah 34-66, WBC 25 [Waco: Word, 1987], 119).

¹¹¹Cf. A. S. Herbert, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 40-66, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 43.

¹¹²Cf. Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3.119-121; J. Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 322, 391.

¹¹³Young, The Book of Isaiah, 3.120.

But the Servant is more than a covenant officiant or instigator; he is in his own person the Lord's covenant. Here again is the claim that exalts the Servant above any prophet (cf. verse 6). In biblical thought the covenant is a unilateral pledge and consequent work of God. To speak of the servant as covenant means that while, as we know, it is through his work that covenant blessings become available, it is only in him, in the union of personal relationship, that these blessings can be enjoyed. Prophets preached the covenant and pointed away from themselves to the Lord; the Servant will actualize the blessings and point to himself.¹¹⁴

The significance of this discussion for the thesis at hand is the supporting role it plays in showing that the biblical canon is indeed that document whereby Christ asserts his authority as the true Canon. The fact that there is such a close correlation between canon and covenant, virtually approaching that of identification or equation, points to the warrant for regarding Christ as Canon. In particular, I wish to highlight here that even as the covenant is the unilateral, non-negotiable promise and command of the one who is himself the Covenant, even so, the biblical canon is the unilateral, non-negotiable promise and command of the one who is himself Canon.

This also highlights the relationship between canon and community. As Labosier says,

Kline's concept of Scripture as a treaty document naturally fits this idea of the priority of the canon over that of the community. It is the idea of a covenant that creates a covenantal community, but a community acting by itself can never establish such a covenant document.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 391.

¹¹⁵Labosier, "Matthew's Exception Clause," 94 n. 44.

Canon, like covenant, or perhaps better, canon, as covenant, constitutes the authoritative revelation from God to his people. It is not the community talking to itself, but God talking to the community. And the essence of both canon and covenant is the Christ who in his own person embodies the promise and authoritative command of God to the people. And that brings us to the next thesis.

Thesis Number Five:
Christ Has Incarnated Himself in Biblical Canon

The Christo-canonical approach takes seriously the incarnational analogy. Christ, who incarnated himself in flesh, has also incarnated himself in word. The approach recognizes that the *skandalon* of the canon is analogous to the *skandalon* of the Christ.

The incarnational analogy has been variously used to elucidate the character of Holy Scripture. Origen is perhaps the first to have employed it.¹¹⁶ Until the twentieth century it was used without great elaboration simply to explain how that even as Christ is both human and divine, so the Scriptures can be seen as word of man and word of God. There was little controversy attached to this analogy. A corollary attached to this analogy was that even as Christ was fully human, but sinless, so the Bible was fully human, but without

¹¹⁶Origen, On First Principles, Books 1-2, ANF 4, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

error.¹¹⁷ But in the Church Dogmatics Karl Barth also used the analogy to elucidate the character of the Scriptures, without at the same time claiming their inerrancy and infallibility.¹¹⁸ Klaas Runia rightly criticizes Barth in this regard, remarking that "to insist upon biblical fallibility along with its humanity is actually to destroy the whole parallel with the incarnation."¹¹⁹ He then goes on to say, "we can only conclude that, on the ground of the parallel accepted by Barth himself,

¹¹⁷Benjamin B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948, 162-63. Actually, Warfield was very cautious in the use of the analogy, noting that there was a vast difference between the hypostatic union in Christ and the inscripturation of the word. He still, however, felt justified in coming to the following conclusion: "Even so distant an analogy may enable us, however, to recognize that as, in the case of our Lord's person, the human nature remains truly human while yet it can never fall into sin or error because it can never act out of relation with the Divine nature into conjunction with which it has been brought; so in the case of the production of Scripture by the conjoint action of human and Divine factors, the human factors have acted as human factors, and have left their mark on the product as such, and yet cannot have fallen into that error which we say it is human to fall into, because they have not acted apart from the Divine factors, by themselves, but only under their unerring guidance."

Notice that this is the rest of the quotation which Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim fail to cite in asserting that Warfield "took care to reject the analogy of the divine and human natures of Christ as an explanation of the divine and human in Scripture" (The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979], 337).

¹¹⁸Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), I.2.499-501.

¹¹⁹Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 77. Cf. also Frank M. Hasel, "The Christological Analogy of Scripture in Karl Barth," TZ 50 (1994): 49.

there is no room for his conclusion: Human witness, therefore fallible witness."¹²⁰

Paul Wells, though recognizing that the parallel, if it is to be drawn, supports Runia's conclusion, would rather put the analogy to rest.¹²¹ His reasons are as follows: (1) The analogy seems to forget the radical difference between the hypostatic union in Christ and whatever it is that occurs in the union of divine and human processes in the production of Scripture and, if anything, tends to devalue the mystery of the union God and man in Christ. (2) There are no controls on just what elements in the two analogues are to be compared, so though the inerrantist position could draw the analogy between Christ's sinlessness and the Scriptures' inerrancy, opponents to this inference could just as well say that this is a place where the analogy breaks down. (3) The purpose of analogy is to elucidate the unknown by the known, but the mystery of the union of the divine and human in Christ is, in fact, so mysterious, that we really cannot come to any clearer understanding of inscripturation by comparison to the incarnation. (4) The analogy, at best, only identifies the elements to be compared; that is, the divine and human elements in Christ, and the divine and the human elements in the Bible. We have no understanding of how the elements are

¹²⁰Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, 78.

¹²¹Paul R. Wells, James Barr and the Bible: Critique of a New Liberalism (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 15, 340-79.

related in each individual case and, therefore, we just do not have the data from which to draw a proper analogy.

I cannot enter into a full-blown discussion of Well's points here, nor with other points of exception to the analogy raised by different scholars.¹²² I will, however, list a few factors that I feel warrant the use of the analogy.

(1) The Scriptures themselves seem to provide the invitation to draw the analogy, or perhaps better, the Scriptures themselves draw the analogy for us. Christ himself is called the Word (John 1:1, 14). The revelation that comes in his person, though qualitatively different than the previous Old Testament revelation,¹²³ is nevertheless placed on

¹²²Those who have been generally opposed to the use of the analogy include Wells, James Barr and the Bible, esp. pp. 1-43, 340-79; James Barr, "J. K. S. Reid, 'The Authority of Scripture, 1957,'" review of The Authority of the Scripture, by J. K. S. Reid, in SJT 11 [1958]: 86-93; John McIntyre, "Analogy," SJT 12 (1959): 1-20; Markus Barth, Conversation with the Bible (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1964), 143-71; Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, 195-212.

Those who have been generally favorable to the use of the analogy include Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Scripture, 61-80; James I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles (London: Inter-Varsity, 1958), 82-84; "Biblical Authority, Hermeneutics, and Inerrancy," in Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussion on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971), 145; René Pachè, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, trans. Helen I. Needham (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 35-42; Abraham Kuyper, Principles of Sacred Theology, trans. J. Hendrik de Vries (1898; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 477-80.

¹²³This qualitative difference is emphasized, I believe, by the anarthrous *en huiō* in Heb 1:2; cf. William L. Lane, Hebrews 1-8, WBC 47 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 11; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 36 and n. 4; Harold W. Attridge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989),

a time continuum with that prior revelation as in some way being of a piece with it (Heb 1:1-2).

(2) To be sure, there are false inferences that could be drawn from this analogy. But, this is true of any analogy, and I believe that the Scriptures, inviting us to draw this analogy, show that God is willing to take the gamble. To discontinue the use of any analogy simply because false parallels could be drawn would be to discontinue drawing analogies at all. God is compared to a shepherd in the way he cares for his people (Ps 23:1), and yet he is also unlike a shepherd. God is compared to a drunken man awaking out of a stupor to come to the aid of his people (Ps 78:65), and yet he is also certainly unlike a drunken man.¹²⁴ For every analogy that can be drawn, there are illegitimate parallels to be made, but this is not an excuse to refrain from drawing the legitimate ones.¹²⁵ God can only be known by us analogically, and every analogy has the potentiality of devaluing our conception of God, but God is willing to stammer and allow us

39.

¹²⁴Cf. the excellent discussion on the use of analogy in our knowledge of God in John M. Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), 226-32.

¹²⁵Cf. Longman, How to Read the Psalms, 115: "In brief, an image compares two things which are similar in some ways but dissimilar in other ways. The dissimilarity is what surprises us and causes us to take notice. Then we search for the similarity."

to think he stutters.¹²⁶ Perhaps he is also willing to take the risk with the incarnational analogy.

(3) To be sure, the conjoining of divine and human in one person is different from the combination of divine and human effort in the production of the Scriptures. The process of inscripturation is not the same as that of hypostasis. They, are however, not unrelated, and as Nigel M. de S. Cameron has pointed out, there is, in fact, a very vital connection between them.¹²⁷ This point of contact occurs in the words which Christ spoke during his earthly life. In responding to the objections of McIntyre and Wells, de S. Cameron writes,

The suggestion we would make is that in the teaching of Jesus Christ we have that connexion between the prime and the secondary analogates which McIntyre and Wells have requested, such that the analogy is not so subjective in its application to Scripture as they would suppose.

Further, though the inter-connexion of the sinlessness of Christ and infallibility in Scripture may depend upon the efficacy of the analogy, that between his sinlessness and the infallibility of his own teaching does not.¹²⁸

¹²⁶So John Calvin (in Corpus Reformatorum, cited in Runia, Karl Barth's doctrine of Scripture, 69): "Let us therefore remember that our Lord has not spoken according to our His nature. For if he would speak His (own) language, would He be understood my mortal creatures? Alas, no. But how has He spoken to us in Holy Scripture? He has stammered. . . . So then God has it were resigned: for as much as we would not comprehend what He would say, if He did not condescend to us. There you have the reason why in Holy Scripture one sees Him like a nurse rather than that one hears of His high and infinite majesty."

¹²⁷Nigel M. de S. Cameron, "Incarnation and Inscripturation: The Christological Analogy in the Light of Recent Discussion," The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology 3 (1985): 35-46.

¹²⁸Ibid., 43.

Then de S. Cameron goes on to draw a conclusion from this connection:

At all events, we see that the teaching of the Incarnate Son, itself recorded for us in Scripture and thereby taking upon itself the character of Scripture too, provides a point of contact between relations in the two parts of the analogy. The hypostatic union in Jesus Christ gives rise to and is itself analogically related to the teaching of the God-man, in which human words are pressed into divine service. If the consequence of Incarnation is to bring about infallibility in the human language of the Incarnate One, infallibility will be the inevitable product of an analogous divine-human book.¹²⁹

Now this is, in my opinion, a very important point. At least part of the New Testament, the words that Jesus himself spoke, are not so much analogous to the incarnation, as they are a direct result of it. Or, to put it another way, this portion of Scripture is not analogous to the hypostatic union; it is hypostatic union; it is incarnation. And I would suggest that this is not simply a truth that can be predicated of the words which Jesus spoke, so that the words of Jesus become as it were a red-letter canon within the canon, but that it is rather to be attributed to all the Scriptures that have come from him. Though I am not sure they would take this as far as I have, McCartney and Clayton write,

Jesus Christ was here, and interacted with people face to face. If God can reveal Himself truly in the person of Jesus Christ, with all the limitations of being human, then He can certainly reveal Himself truly in language. Jesus Christ was "determined" as an individual in a particular historical context (He even expressed Himself in one or more human languages) and yet even when He was on earth He was truly and unequivocally God. The

¹²⁹Ibid., 44.

incarnation serves as the ultimate foundation for God's linguistic communication with us (Heb. 1:1-3).¹³⁰

The incarnation of our Lord and the inscripturation of his words are not just analogously related; more importantly, they are intrinsically and inherently related. The biblical canon, being the authoritative word of Christ, is not just analogous to the incarnation, but as word of Christ, partakes of the very character of the incarnation. Christ has incarnated himself not only in flesh; he has incarnated himself in his word.

The importance of this understanding of the intrinsic, and not just analogous, character of the relationship between Christ and his word for the Christo-canonical approach to the Scriptures is to be seen in at least three areas.

(1) First, the biblical canon as incarnational word of Christ partakes of the very character of its Lord as authoritative canonical word.¹³¹ Christ is Canon and his words are canon. And while I have already emphasized the point that not Scripture, but Christ is ultimate norm, this does not mean

¹³⁰Dan G. McCartney and Charles Clayton, Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible (Wheaton: Victor, Bridgepoint, 1994), 40-41. Cf. Vern S. Poythress, Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1987), 48-49.

¹³¹Cf. Jacques Ellul, The Humiliation of the Word, trans. Joyce Main Hanks (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 51: "The Word of God is the very person of God incarnate. There is no contradiction in the fact that the word is spoken by God and also incarnate in Jesus, since this word is what reveals God, and God has effectively revealed himself only in the Incarnation of his Son."

that Scripture is any less normative; indeed, just the opposite is the case, for the Christian, the Scriptures are normative precisely as they are the incarnational word of Christ and because Christ's words cannot be separated from Christ himself.¹³²

(2) Second, the biblical canon as incarnational word of Christ partakes of the very character of its Lord as accommodative word. As Nicolaas Appel writes, "The mystery of 'Holy' Scripture is clothed in the human dimension of this world."¹³³

In an important analysis of the role of accommodation in the theology of John Calvin, Battles demonstrates how for Calvin, unlike theologians before him who had touched on the issue, accommodation became for him the "consistent basis for his handling not only of Scripture but of every avenue of relationship between God and man."¹³⁴ For Calvin, accommodation is not just what occurs in Scripture, but within the "whole of created reality to which, for the Christian,

¹³²Cf. Moisés Silva, God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1990), 37-39, esp. n. 22. Silva makes the point that modern theologians, in their separation between personal and propositional revelation, make a dichotomy that "approaches absurdity." See also, Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," WTJ 48 (1986): 252-53.

¹³³Appel, "The NT Canon," 627.

¹³⁴Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," Int 31 (1977): 20.

Scripture holds the clue."¹³⁵ After examining Calvin's perspective on accommodation in the person of Christ, in Scripture, and in the sacraments, Battles then comes to an important conclusion:

We may then conclude that all means of divine accommodation--from the vast reaches of the created universe to the characteristic turn of phrase of a prophet calling a stubborn people to repentance (to all of which Scripture holds the clue)--point to the supreme act of God's intermediation in Christ.¹³⁶

I wonder, then, whether we might not turn this analogy around and suggest that it is the divine accommodation to human understanding in the Scriptures that points to the ultimate act of accommodation in the person of Christ, or, to put it another way, is it possible that Christ is not called the Logos because he is like the word of God, but, rather that the Scriptures are called word of God because they are like the Logos? Without necessarily claiming any support from the following quotation, I would, however, call attention to a certain similarity of idea in this statement of Moisés Silva regarding anthropomorphisms:

The notion that God thereby accommodates himself to our imperfect human understanding contains an element of truth, to be sure, but perhaps we are approaching the issue from the wrong end. Our use of this term reflects our human-centered perspective. Indeed it is not altogether farfetched to say that descriptions of what we are and do should be termed "theomorphisms"!¹³⁷

¹³⁵Ibid., 21.

¹³⁶Ibid., 38.

¹³⁷Silva, God, Language and Scripture, 22; cf. also Vern S. Poythress, Science and Hermeneutics, Foundations of Contemporary

I would suggest that in the same way, the Scriptures are, in their very form as word of God clothed in the word of man, a witness to Christ as Word of God clothed in human form. Any devaluation of the biblical canon is a devaluation of a divinely appointed metaphorical witness to the divinity and humanity of our Lord. This brings to me the last point in this connection.

(3) The biblical canon, in its accommodative role as incarnational word of Christ, partakes of the very character of its Lord as *skandalon*. Even as Christ was, and still is, *skandalon* because he was veiled in human flesh, so the Scriptures are *skandalon* because they are word of God in human form.

Hermann Bavinck emphasized this scandal character of Scripture. He writes,

Christ became flesh, a servant without form or comeliness, the most despised among men . . . and so also the Word, the revelation of God entered creation, in the life and history of men and people in every form of dream and vision of research and meditation, even as far as the humanly weak and ignoble; the Word became Scripture and as Scripture subjected itself to the fate of all writing. . .

Christ carried a cross, and a servant is not greater than his master. Scripture is the maidservant of Christ. She shares his revilement. She evokes hostility from sinful man.¹³⁸

Interpretation 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1988), 111-14.

¹³⁸Hermann Bavinck, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, 1.405, 411, cited in Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, 199, 200. Cf. also Kuyper, Principles of Sacred Theology, 479.

Berkouwer, while sympathetic to Bavinck's desire to honor Scripture, believes that the scandal character of Scripture is not to be found in the divine-human analogy, but simply in the fact that the Scriptures witness to Christ, and in their witness partake of the scandal of the gospel.¹³⁹ But as we have already seen, as word of Christ the Scriptures both analogously and organically partake of the character of Christ, and thus, their despisedness is, in fact, of a piece with the despisedness of their Lord.

This *skandalon* character of the Scriptures does not consist, as some modern theologians imagine, in the human and, therefore, necessarily fallible character, but in their human and apparently fallible character.¹⁴⁰ And it is precisely in this truly human and apparently fallible form that God has chosen to veil himself. Most illuminating in this regard is David Steinmetz's summary of Luther's teaching regarding God's hiddenness in Christ:

One of the most persistent themes in the Dictata is the motif of the hiddenness of God. . . . The text which inspires Luther's reflection on the *absconditas sub contrario* is I Corinthians 1:18-31, where Paul celebrates the wisdom of God in what the world regards as folly and the demonstration of the power of God in what men esteem as the decisive evidence of his weakness. This theology

¹³⁹Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, 208-12.

¹⁴⁰It is to be noted that this apparent fallibility is not to be seen as restricted to just historical and scientific factuality; it is predicated by modern theologians of the Bible's theological content as well. Cf. James Barr, The Bible in the Modern World (London: SCM, 1973), 119-20 (on p. 120 Barr says "there is every reason to believe that theologically also the Bible is imperfect").

of the cross means and implies that hiddenness is the form of God's revelation. The God who reveals himself in the pages of holy Scripture is a God who works contrary to human expectation. The work of God is therefore not visible to sight, since everything which the eye sees provides impressive grounds for distrusting the promises of God. The eye sees weakness not strength, folly not wisdom, humiliation, not victory."¹⁴¹

For Luther, the scandal, the *skandalon* of the gospel, was that in the incarnation, God at the same time both revealed and concealed himself. This can be seen for example in the case of the repentant thief who was crucified with Jesus. He asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom, even though at the moment there was not the slightest bit of empirical evidence to suggest that Jesus was anything more than a common criminal, which was exactly how the rest of the people there that day perceived Jesus. So the scandal of the gospel is the incarnation, that God chose to reveal himself, not in glory, but in the weakness of human flesh. That scandal persists even to the present day as can easily be seen in the liberal lives of Jesus in the last two centuries and in many New Testament theologies: an unwillingness and therefore an inability to recognize that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19).

But this hiddenness is also characteristic of the Scriptures. This is what led Luther to state that not only

¹⁴¹David C. Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," ARG 70 (1979): 47.

did God hide himself in Christ in human form, but that he did the very same thing in the Scriptures:

Holy Scripture possesses no external glory, attracts no attention, lacks all beauty and adornment. You can scarcely imagine that anyone would attach faith to such a divine Word, because it is without any glory or charm. Yet faith comes from this divine Word, through its inner power without any external loveliness.¹⁴²

A. Skevington Wood writes, summarizing Luther, that just as the divinity and power of God are embedded in the vessel of Christ's incarnate body, so the same divinity and power of God are embedded in Scripture, a vessel made of letters, composed of paper and printer's ink. In order to grasp the biblical revelation in its fulness it is necessary to conceive of Scripture in terms of the divine-human nature of Christ.¹⁴³

And, again, Luther writes:

The Holy Scripture is God's Word, written, and so to say "in-lettered", just as Christ is the eternal Word of God incarnate in the garment of his humanity. And just as it is with Christ in the world, as he is viewed and dealt with, so it is also with the written Word of God.¹⁴⁴

Interestingly, these citations, all of which may be found in Rogers and McKim, are used by them to imply that Luther, believing in the human character of Scripture, believed also in its fallibility.¹⁴⁵ But as Wood and Dockery

¹⁴²Rogers and McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture, 78.

¹⁴³A. Skevington Wood, Captive to the Word: Martin Luther: Doctor of Sacred Scripture (Exeter: Paternoster, 1969), 175. Also cited in Rogers and McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, 78.

¹⁴⁴Cited in Rogers and McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, 78.

¹⁴⁵Rogers and McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture, 75-88.

have shown, Luther himself pressed the Christological analogy to its logical conclusion that the Scriptures are inerrant even as Christ was sinless.¹⁴⁶

I suggest that the scandal of the biblical canon is the same as that of the incarnation and cross of our Lord. It is scandalous precisely because in its character as divine word in human form, it presents not the slightest bit of empirical evidence to suggest that it is anything more than human words, and therefore fallible words.¹⁴⁷ Even as Christ came in human weakness (2 Cor 13:4), and was unrecognizable as God, so the

¹⁴⁶Wood, Captive to the Word, 175-78; David S. Dockery, "Martin Luther's Christological Hermeneutics," Grace Theological Journal 4 (1983): 197-98. Cf. also John D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 54.

¹⁴⁷I am undecided as to whether this apparent fallibility should be seen as a designed apparentness, that is, whether God has purposely produced the Scriptures with apparent contradictions as a part of this scandal character. Notice that Maier seems to suggest so (The End of the Historical-Critical Method, 71-72): "If now, on the one hand, the idea of the sovereignty of God associated with the concept of the entire and verbal inspiration of Scripture has been methodologically established, but on the other hand, varying statements in the texts and certain deviations in the handed-down version can be seen, then the conclusion is inescapable that the Revelator wants to meet us just in this way. Should there actually be contradictory statements, and should we be unable to arrive at the true text--which we probably never could say with complete certainty--then God would have put up with them and would have used the `errors' as tools of His Spirit, and it would not have been the mistake of the apostles to have placed them before us. Yes, we go a step further--consciously for a moment we overstep the boundary line of speculation--and we draw out the methodological consequence to the point that even conscious errors of God's emissaries, which He does not correct but lets appear in the text, are protected by God. That is to say, we understand the `infallibility' of Scripture, of which the fathers spoke, in the sense of authorization and fulfillment by God, and not in the sense of anthropological inerrancy."

Scriptures come to us in human weakness and are empirically unrecognizable as divine.¹⁴⁸ As Pinnock correctly notes,

Just as Jesus' sonship was both hidden and revealed, so that some people saw it and others did not, so it is with the Scriptures. They look like ordinary writings; they are interpreted in ordinary ways. Though they shine with glory to the eye of faith, they seem quite unspectacular to unbelief.¹⁴⁹

The scandal of the biblical canon is the scandal of the Christ who is Canon. Just how important this is for viewing the Old Testament, and the Psalms in particular, in canonical perspective in Part Three, is to be appreciated in that the Psalter, of all the books in the Old Testament, is regarded as human speech addressed to God and, therefore, not word of God.¹⁵⁰

Thesis Number Six:
Christ is Lord over Canonical Meaning

The Christo-canonical approach recognizes the lordship of Jesus Christ over the meaning of the text. It asserts that the Scriptures mean what Christ means by them. While

¹⁴⁸Cf. Ellul, The Humiliation of the Word, 56, 235.

¹⁴⁹Pinnock, The Scripture Principle, 97. I only agree with Pinnock in part, however, when, in light of this understanding, he goes on to ask, "Is not the quest for an errorless Bible that once was but is no longer an indication of disordered priorities?" I agree in part, inasmuch as the evidentialist apologetic as a whole is an "indication of disordered priorities." I disagree, however, that the presupposition or declaration of an "errorless Bible" is also an indication of "disordered priorities."

¹⁵⁰The Old Testament as a whole has been regarded as a stumbling-block. See the discussion in Gunneweg, Understanding the Old Testament, 155-59.

recognizing a certain validity to text-oriented and reader-response approaches, and while also recognizing that texts can take on meanings of their own independent of their authors, the Christo-canonical approach asserts that Christ is in complete control of the authorized meaning of his text, and that the text takes on no meaning independent of him.

It could be argued that this thesis properly belongs in the next chapter in a discussion of how the thesis that Christ is Canon relates to the interpretive process and to the interpreter, and it will, indeed, come into play there. But I place it here for two reasons. First, I wish to emphasize especially the relationship between Christ and biblical canon, and to assert that the biblical canon is not a text that has some autonomous existence of its own, but that it remains at all times word of Christ. It is not itself autonomous text, nor does it come under the autonomy of biblical scholars or interpretive communities. It remains always canonical word of Christ and the meaning of the text is at every moment subject only to his sovereign determination.

Second, I place it here because, in a way, this should be considered a pre-hermeneutical consideration. It should have become obvious by now how markedly different the Christo-canonical approach is from approaches that have come under the umbrella of "canonical" in the last twenty-five years. As Mary Callaway remarks, for these approaches,

Characterizing scripture as canon also avoids the idea of an authoritative text whose meaning resides in the mind of

God, for canonical texts imply an authority resulting from transmission and reception of traditions that have been shaped in the communities of faith.¹⁵¹

For the Christo-canonical approach, however, meaning lies, not in interpretive communities, but in Christ. So by calling this a pre-hermeneutical consideration, I am emphasizing what those who call them themselves presuppositionalists have declared all along, and what Richard Gaffin has said so well: "that interpretation of the Bible must understand itself as interpretation of interpretation."¹⁵² In other words, it is important for us to recognize, before we even begin to interpret the text, that our hermeneutical activity is, in fact, post-hermeneutical activity. There is a hermeneutical activity which has preceded ours, and this activity is not only prior to ours, but it also constitutes the authoritative standard by which all subsequent hermeneutical activity on the text is to be measured.¹⁵³ As Royce Gruenler says, "Hermeneutics is first of all the enterprise of God."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Mary C. Callaway, "Canonical Criticism," in To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application, ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 125.

¹⁵²Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," in Studying the New Testament Today, ed. John H. Skilton, The New Testament Student 1 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974), 16.

¹⁵³Cf. McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 283-84; Jung Kyu-Nam, The Task and Method of Old Testament Theology, ACTS Theological Journal 3 (1988): 168.

¹⁵⁴Royce Gordon Gruenler, Meaning and Understanding: The Philosophical Framework for Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

It is in this context, that I wish to address a question posed in an article by Thomas Gillespie. He writes:

The phrase "biblical authority and interpretation" poses a semantic question of considerable importance. How are biblical authority and interpretation related? More specifically, what is the semantic value of the copula and in the syntax of the phrase? Grammatically, the structure suggests that these two topics are coordinate. The "authority" qualified as "biblical," however, belongs to God in the Reformed tradition, while "interpretation" is a human endeavor.¹⁵⁵

Gillespie goes on in the article to discuss different hermeneutical issues, but never does, to my knowledge, come back to his original question as to how authority and interpretation are related. I would suggest that, at least in part, the finding of the correct answer to the question lies in correcting the premise upon which it is built: that authority relates to divine activity, while interpretation relates to human activity. Rather, it is important for us to recognize that interpretation is first a divine activity. And the significance of the copula "and" in the phrase "biblical authority and interpretation" should be to point to the need for human interpretation to conform to the authoritative interpretation of God.

Important also in this regard is Poythress's suggestion of an analogy between current theories as to where meaning

Academie, 1991), xvi.

¹⁵⁵Thomas W. Gillespie, "Biblical Authority and Interpretation: The Current Debate on Hermeneutics," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 192.

resides (author, text, or reader) and the trinitarian nature of God's own hermeneutical activity.¹⁵⁶ That there have been advocates of all three positions is only to be expected in that the suggested loci of meaning correspond to the three persons of the Trinity; that is, God the Father (=author), Jesus Christ, the Word (=text), and Holy Spirit (=reader, or audience, or interpreter). And so, in a way, the modern-day hermeneutical debate as to where meaning is found constitutes an analogue to the actual trinitarian loci of meaning. Even our debates with regard to hermeneutics are unwitting testimony to the prior hermeneutical activity of God in investing the biblical canon with meaning, and the necessity of our recognizing that meaning is to be discovered by conforming our search for meaning to God's own implantation of meaning.

The importance of this last point for the Christocanonical approach is that Christ as Word of God, i.e., the text to be interpreted, can, indeed, on this analogy be regarded as the meaning of the canon. Not only is Christ the criterion, the Lord, the author, and authorized interpreter of the meaning of biblical canon: he is the meaning of biblical canon; the meaning of biblical canon resides in him. Christ is what God has spoken. Christ is what the Spirit has understood and testified to. And supposed canonical

¹⁵⁶Vern S. Poythress, "God's Lordship in Interpretation," WTJ 50 (1988): 43-44.

interpretations that do not find their meaning in Christ as the author of canon are not to be considered true canonical interpretations. The Christo-canonical approach asserts that to say "canonical" and to say "Christological" is to be tautologous. However, since modern-day canonical approaches find meaning in interpretive communities or, canonical intention in "unknown canonizers," it is important to be tautologous when doing canonical analysis from an evangelical perspective. We must be Christo-canonical.

Thesis Number Seven:
Christ is Lord over the Canonical Meaning
of the Old Testament

The Christo-canonical approach asserts that Christ is the authorized interpreter of the Old Testament. Indeed, it is only through Christ that the Church even has access to the Old Testament.¹⁵⁷ If the Church does not come to the Old Testament through Christ, she cannot come at all.

This final thesis in this chapter is simply an extension, but a very important one, of the last thesis in regard to Christ's lordship over the meaning of the biblical text. On the one hand, there is a historical sense in which we may say that the Old Testament is properly an Israelite document. As Paul declares, "Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises" (Rom 9:4). And

¹⁵⁷Cf. R. Lucas, "Considerations of Methods in Old Testament Hermeneutics," DunRev 6 (1966): 21-22.

Gentiles are those who are "excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). But on the other hand, God, in his new work in Christ, has changed the terms of access to the Old Testament covenants, law, and promises. Access is granted, not by way of human ancestry, but by faith in Christ. We "who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). As Martin Kuske writes in summarizing the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "There is for us no direct access to the Old Testament. Christ stands between us and the Old Testament."¹⁵⁸ The Old Testament, therefore, is properly called a Christian document, and I affirm with Daniel Lys that

I cannot be related to an Old Testament text otherwise than through Jesus Christ, because the Old Testament texts express the message of God's grace in an expectation whose fulfillment is Jesus of Nazareth for the Christian faith. To try to appropriate an Old Testament text directly over the centuries would be to ignore the characteristics of this text, to disincarnate it, ultimately to misunderstand it--be it in an ethical left-wing liberalism or in pietist right-wing fundamentalism.¹⁵⁹

For the Christian interpreter, this means that access to the proper meaning of the Old Testament comes only by way of Christ, for it is only by Christ that the interpreter even has access to the documents. This is not to say that the non-

¹⁵⁸Martin Kuske, The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer's Interpretation, trans. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 47.

¹⁵⁹Daniel Lys, The Meaning of the Old Testament: An Essay on Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 156.

Christian interpreter cannot study these documents, deriving historical information, moral truths, and even theological data; but it does mean that the entire study is one that is done through a veil, and even the theological data is veiled data until the veil is taken away in, and only in, Christ (2 Cor 3:14-16). So, for proper interpretation to take place, there must be a pre-hermeneutical understanding that the meaning being sought for in the text is to be found in Christ's own hermeneutical activity on the Old Testament. He is the Old Testament's authorized hermeneutician. As William Johnstone says, Christ

is the God-Man, who is not only the standard of the previous revelations in the Old Testament, the "Word of God", but the standard of the human response, the word of man. In him is the control of the interpretation of the Bible.¹⁶⁰

The Christo-canonical approach rejects the idea, however, that new meanings of the biblical text are created by reading them through Christ, or as mentioned earlier, that the Old Testament is in some way baptized into Christ to give it a Christian meaning. Rather, the true meaning is discovered, for it is only in Christ that the true meaning can be discovered, for he is its authorized interpreter.

On the one hand, there appears to be a certain legitimacy in talking about Christ giving the Old Testament texts new meaning. I affirm to a certain extent what Elizabeth Achtemeier means when she says that "Jesus Christ is

¹⁶⁰Johnstone, "The Authority of the Old Testament," 202.

the final reinterpretation of every major tradition in the Old Testament."¹⁶¹ But I wish to go beyond this and assert that Christ is not just reinterpretation, but God's final word that "recapitulates" the former word and ultimately gives them their proper and, I would dare to say, original interpretation.¹⁶²

It is also important in this connection to note that Christ is a free and sovereign exegete.¹⁶³ His interpretations of the Old Testament are not subject to hermeneutical principles whereby we can, as it were, objectively measure their correctness. I disagree with Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, therefore, when they say of the New Testament authors that "indeed, Jesus' literal fulfillment of OT prophecy was their fundamental principle. In this they followed the example of Jesus himself."¹⁶⁴ That they followed Jesus'

¹⁶¹Elizabeth Achtemeier, The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 163.

¹⁶²Cf. François Dreyfus, "The Existential Value of the Old Testament," trans. P. J. Hepburn-Scott, in How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?, ed. Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan van Iersel, Concilium 30 (New York: Paulist, 1968), 40-41.

¹⁶³Cf. A. A. Van Ruler, The Christian Church and the Old Testament, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 44: "It is already quite plain in the Old Testament that only Yahweh himself can legitimately interpret his promises, and he interprets them by the way he causes them to be fulfilled. Here, then, he remains free."

¹⁶⁴William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, with Kermit A. Ecklebarger (Dallas: Word, 1993), 29.

example is not to be doubted.¹⁶⁵ But that we are to see Jesus as in some way straitjacketed by some hermeneutical principle such as literal interpretation or grammatical-historical interpretation is to be rejected. As McCartney and Clayton write, "No OT prophecy that we know by NT testimony to have been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ reads like a newspaper account of what actually did happen."¹⁶⁶ We do not see meaning in the Old Testament text as Jesus interprets it according to some principle; rather, we see meaning in the Old Testament text as Jesus interprets it.

Conclusion

The Christo-canonical approach asserts that Christ is the Canon above the canon. It is only from this perspective that a truly theological canonical interpretation can be achieved. It is only in this way that there can be a truly theological orientation, as Childs would desire, from the very outset. To confess that biblical canon is Christian canon is to confess: (1) that Christ is criterion of canon and is himself Canon, (2) that Christ asserts himself as Canon in biblical canon by his Spirit, (3) that the whole canon is word of Christ, 4) that the biblical canon is covenantally binding word of Christ who is himself Covenant, (5) that Christ has

¹⁶⁵On this see C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology (London: James Nisbet, 1952; repr., London and Glasgow: Collins, Fontana Books, 1965), 110; Wood, The Interpretation of the Bible, 8, 175-76.

¹⁶⁶McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 209.

incarnated himself in biblical canon, (6) that the meaning of biblical canon resides in Christ, and (7) that the Old Testament as part of biblical canon receives its authoritative interpretation in Christ.

But the Christo-canonical approach does not stop with the assertion that Christ is the Canon above the canon. It also asserts that Christ is the Lord of the would-be interpreter of the canon.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT: CHRIST IS LORD OVER THE INTERPRETER

Included in the statement, "Christ is Canon," is not only the assertion that Christ is the Canon above the canon, but also the conviction that the interpreter who would presume to understand and explain the meaning of the canon must do so under the lordship of Christ. The biblical canon belongs to Christ, and the only ones who can expect to come to an understanding of the meaning of biblical canon are those who surrender their hermeneutical endeavors to the guidance and authority of Christ. This chapter will seek to unpack in seven theses what is constituted in this obedience.

Thesis Number Eight: Christ is Lord over Hermeneutical Methodology

The Christo-canonical approach takes seriously the lordship of Jesus Christ over the hermeneutical process, and not just as a theological tack-on at the end. It believes that hermeneutical methodology must be made captive to Christ. This means that from the outset the theologian or biblical scholar cannot take a position of supposed neutrality, but from the very beginning, his or her exegetical endeavors must be carried out with an eye to pleasing Christ. The approach

recognizes that no interpreter interprets autonomously, and, therefore, the interpreter should from the very beginning declare allegiance to the Lord of the canon. The interpreter must do his or her interpretive work obediently.

Walter Brueggemann recently published a book of essays entitled Interpretation and Obedience, in which he says that

obedience that seeks to act according to the covenantal intentionality of the God of the Bible, attending to Yahweh's nonnegotiable demands, must be an act of interpretation. Interpretive obedience is an act of imaginative construal to show how the nonnegotiable intentions of Yahweh are to be discerned from the situations in which those institutions were initially articulated.¹

While I agree with everything that Brueggemann says here, the book does not really address the issues that I am concerned about when I correlate the two nouns, interpretation and obedience.² Rather, I am highlighting the necessity for every stage of the act of interpretation to be done in obedience to Jesus Christ.³

¹Walter Brueggemann, Interpretation and Obedience: From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 1.

²To be fair to Brueggemann, the book is a collection of essays and addresses that he delivered over a period of a number of years, a collection which he decided to publish under the rubric of interpretation and obedience. His main thrust in the book is with one phase of interpretation, the faithful application of interpretation to the life situation.

³Cf. Vern S. Poythress, Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1987), 21: "I contend that the Bible's own world view should be the one that all theologians adopt for themselves. All their study of the Bible should be in terms of the framework of assumptions about God and the world that the Bible itself supplies. This orientation is very important. Adopting the

In a paragraph that was not meant to be critical, but which I believe ultimately does constitute an indictment of the work being done by Christian scholars, the Jewish scholar Jon Levenson writes,

Most Christians involved in the historical criticism of the Hebrew Bible today seem to have ceased to want their work to be considered distinctively Christian. They do the essential philological, historical, and archeological work without concern for the larger constructive issues or for the theological implications of their labors. They are Christians everywhere except in the classroom and at the writing-table, where they are simply honest historians striving for an unbiased view of the past.⁴

By contrast, I maintain that the Christianity of Christian scholars must extend to the "classroom" and "the writing desk," and that for a Christian scholar to try to achieve an "unbiased view of the past" is an act of disobedience. We are not after an unbiased view of the past; we are after God's view. We are not searching for an objective interpretation; we are seeking, rather, to bring our interpretation into conformity with the authoritative pre-interpretation of the Spirit of Christ. Everything Christians do should be done in obedience to God, and the act of interpretation has not received exempt status. Autonomous interpretation is not neutral, it is disobedient. Indeed, it is important to state here that it could not be otherwise, for as Maier points out,

Bible's teaching is part of a theologian's obedience to God."

⁴Jon D. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 29.

"The correlative or counterpart to revelation is not critique but obedience."⁵

Therefore the Christian interpreter must not only act correctly, he or she must also think correctly; this is simply part of what is involved in being "transformed by the renewing" of our minds (Rom 12:2), not being taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy," (Col 2:8), but rather, making sure that in even in our hermeneutics, "we take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).⁶ Ronald Ray, in summarizing the hermeneutical thought of Jacques Ellul, says it eloquently:

If Christians are always to live under the power of the Holy Spirit, Christian exegetical labor cannot consistently be exempted from the same requirement. And if the purpose of the Christian life is faithful witness to Jesus Christ, Christian biblical scholars cannot consistently be exempted from the commission binding on all Christians.⁷

It is with this understanding that I wish to critique the views of those who suggest that it is not enough to do all our "neutral work" on the text, but that after having done it,

⁵Gerhard Maier, The End of the Historical-Critical Method, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), 22-23.

⁶The reader here will readily see my indebtedness to the writings of Cornelius Van Til, especially in the following works: The Defense of the Faith, 3d ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967); An Introduction to Systematic Theology, In Defense of Biblical Christianity 5 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974); A Christian Theory of Knowledge (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969).

⁷Ronald R. Ray, "Jacques Ellul's Innocent Notes on Hermeneutics," Int 33 (1979): 271-72.

we must then proceed to draw the theological truths out of the text. Some of the following representative quotations set forth this idea:

The christological principle is valid for today's interpreter as a canonical or theological principle. It is a second step beyond the grammatical-historical method.⁸

We assert that critical methods of interpretation also will never do complete justice to Scripture. . . . Historical and rational methods of interpretation have a proper place in unfolding this human dimension; however, they can take us only so far in the interpretive process.⁹

The solution proposed here can be summarized in three statements corresponding to three major steps in the hermeneutical process. The first step is historical interpretation or exegesis. The second step is the derivation of principles of relationship with God. The third step is theological interpretation, or application.¹⁰

I propose a christological hermeneutic by which we seek to move beyond historical criticism to the christological, as opposed to the existential, significance of the text. . . . This approach . . . seeks to supplement the historical-critical method by theological exegesis in which the innermost intentions of the author are related to the center and culmination of sacred history mirrored in the Bible, namely, the advent of Jesus Christ.¹¹

⁸David S. Dockery, "Martin Luther's Christological Hermeneutics," Grace Theological Journal 4 (1983): 203.

⁹William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, with Kermit A. Ecklebarger (Dallas: Word, 1993), 16.

¹⁰S. M. Mayo, The Relevance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith: Biblical Theology and Interpretative Methodology (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), 111.

¹¹Donald G. Bloesch, "A Christological Hermeneutic: Crisis and Conflict in Hermeneutics," in The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 81.

The problem with these positions is that they fail to consider the objections raised by Childs which were discussed in chapter 2. To quote Childs again,

The majority of commentators understand the descriptive task as belonging largely to an objective discipline. One starts on neutral ground, without being committed to a theological position, and deals with textual, historical, and philological problems of the biblical sources before raising the theological issue. But, in point of fact, by defining the Bible as a "source" for objective research the nature of the content to be described has been already determined. *A priori*, it has become a part of a larger category of phenomena. The possibility of genuine theological exegesis has been destroyed from the outset.¹²

The answer to the dilemma that Childs portrays is to understand that even the so-called "descriptive" work must be done in faith. The Christian scholar does not have the right to approach any topic, much less a biblical one, except in full submission and yieldedness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even in so-called "secular" research, or the study of God's revelation in nature, the goal should be to "think God's thoughts after him." How much more, in the study of God's revelation in his word, should our goal be to know God himself. This means that from the very beginning of the scholar's interpretive work on a biblical text or topic, he or

¹²Brevard S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary," Int 18 (1964): 437. Interestingly, A. A. Anderson made a similar comment even before Childs: "It is difficult to see, however, how a theology which is purely descriptive can provide a norm for dogmatic theology or anything else" ("Old Testament Theology and Its Methods," in Promise and Fulfillment: Essays Presented to Professor S. H. Hooke in Celebration of His Ninetieth Birthday by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study and Others, ed. F. F. Bruce [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], 10).

she must in humility seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, not only in the attitude of the heart, but in the methodology of the process. The scholar's study is not a piece of real estate that has been bracketed out of the kingdom of God. It is not sufficient to do all the grammatical, historical, archaeological, philological, linguistic, contextual, sociological, cultural, and literary study of a passage or topic, and then at the end, tack on some theological observations and applications.¹³ Rather, from the very beginning, and at every point along the way, the scholar's study must be bathed in prayer, devotion, humility, worship, wonder, awe, admiration, and surrender to the Holy Spirit, for it is only the Spirit of Christ who "searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10).

To say this another way, there is an "ought" in the work of hermeneutics.¹⁴ Christians ought to come to certain interpretations in their hermeneutical endeavors. Our task is not that of coming up with novel or strikingly new interpretations. We are not just engaged in idle speculation, but in this area, as much as in any other, must regard ourselves as those who "will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word" (Matt 12:36). Packer says its well:

¹³Cf. Vern S. Poythress, "God's Lordship in Interpretation," WTJ 50 (1988): 28.

¹⁴Poythress, Symphonic Theology, 25.

I must be ready to give account of my interpretative encounters with scripture not just to my human and academic peers but to God himself, who will one day require this of every theologian and of me among them. This is to say that I must follow my method responsibly as one who must answer for what I do.¹⁵

He then follows by declaring, "I approach the Bible . . . as the instrument of Jesus Christ's personal authority over Christians (which is part of what I mean in calling it canonical)."¹⁶ The Christo-canonical approach, therefore, more than simply asserting that the Scriptures are set in a canonical context, asserts that the interpretation is also to be set in a canonical context, that of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Having said all this, it is, however, necessary to examine some potential objections to this approach. They are: (1) that it overemphasizes the admitted non-neutrality of most interpretation, (2) that the exegetical results of this approach are not really any different than those achieved by the more supposedly neutral approaches, nor are they necessarily more correct, (3) that it restricts the freedom of scholarly endeavor, and (4) that the approach breaks down the hard-won communications between biblical scholars of all faiths, and with regard to the Old Testament in particular, it

¹⁵James I. Packer, "In Quest of Canonical Interpretation," in The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 44-45.

¹⁶Ibid., 45.

alienates Jewish biblical scholars by reviving an anti-Semitic supersessionism.

Objectivity Is Still the Goal

The statement that there is no such thing as neutrality in interpretation will not raise eyebrows among biblical scholars and students of hermeneutics today. Though logical positivism once reigned supreme, it does not dominate as it did in the earlier part of this century. It is universally recognized among biblical scholars that no one can come to the text without presuppositions, for without them, the process of understanding a text cannot even begin.¹⁷

All the same, however, it seems that as long as one announces up front his or her recognition of the fact that they have presuppositions, that this now becomes a nearly approximate substitute for objectivity. As long as one admits that one has preconceptions, but promises not to let them interfere too much, the reader may, therefore, rest assured that the exegete will try to be as objective as possible. And this approximate objectivity is, in fact, considered to be a worthy goal. In other words, neutrality is still the goal. But I am suggesting that the problem is really much more serious than this. It is not whether one comes as an Arminian

¹⁷Cf. Duncan Ferguson, Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 185; John Sandys-Wunsch, "On the Theory and Practice of Biblical Interpretation," JSOT 3 (1977): 66-74; James L. Kugel and Rowan W. Greer, Early Biblical Interpretation, Library of Early Christianity 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 112-13.

or Calvinist, Feminist or Liberationist, historian or sociologist, structuralist or rhetorical critic; what matters is whether one comes to the text in order to obey or to negotiate, whether one comes in faith or unbelief, whether one comes committed to work under the lordship of Christ or under the autonomy of scholarly endeavor. I am not merely suggesting that one cannot come to the text without presuppositions; but, moreover, that one cannot come to the text without one of those presuppositions being a disposition either for or against Jesus Christ. And to recontextualize the words of our Lord into a hermeneutical arena, "He who is not with me is against me" (Matt 12:36). A declaration of either absolute or approximate objectivity is a declaration against the lordship of Christ in the sphere of hermeneutics.

With regard to interpretive activity carried on in the community of biblical scholars who would more or less regard themselves as liberal, and to a lesser extent in that community that would consider itself to be, at least in some measure, descended from neo-orthodoxy, I would charge that there is still a disposition against the authority of Christ as manifested in biblical canon. As Gordon Fee says,

The difficulty I have with liberal hermeneutics remains. I do not see any hope for a corrective to their autonomy over the text. They may be corrected by reasonable arguments, but reason still prevails, not the text of Scripture itself.¹⁸

¹⁸Gordon Fee, Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 41.

I need to emphasize here that this charge is both serious and yet not decisively condemning. It is serious in that the destructive tendencies and results of supposedly neutral scholarship are well known. With regard to the Old Testament in particular, the observation of James Smart is especially appropriate:

The achievements of scholars such as Herder, Eichhorn, De Wette, Vatke, Wellhausen, and Gunkel were monumental. No one can question that as a consequence of their work the Old Testament was vastly more comprehensible at the end of the century than it was at the beginning, and, compared with the two previous centuries, the difference was like that between light and darkness. Yet the theologians who dominated that century in Germany and shaped the minds of Christians are distinguished by a distaste for the Old Testament.¹⁹

While disagreeing considerably with Smart's assertion that the Old Testament was "vastly more comprehensible" than previously, I believe he rightly notes that these so-called "monumental" achievements created, not love for God and his word, but a "distaste" for it. Wellhausen himself admitted this when he resigned from his position as professor of theology at Greifswald:

I became a theologian because the scientific treatment of the Bible interested me. Only gradually did I come to understand that a professor of theology also has the practical task of preparing the students for service in the Protestant Church, and that I am not adequate to this practical task, but that despite all caution on my own part I make my hearers unfit for their office.²⁰

¹⁹Smart, The Strange Silence, 19.

²⁰Cited in Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, 97.

Perhaps by the use of the word "scientific," Wellhausen was thinking of neutrality or objectivity. But, as has long been noticed, science is not a field where neutrality reigns.²¹ And to try to carry over a scientific objectivity into the field of theological study is to attempt to carry over what does not exist. In other words, there is no such thing as scientific objectivity, much less, theological objectivity. No one can interpret theological texts from a theologically neutral position. All exegesis is inherently theological, and scholars who suppose that they can bracket out their theological biases when doing biblical exegesis, even if they conceive of what they are doing as being only historical or linguistic or sociological or literary, are fooling themselves. Smart puts it well:

The historical scholar who disclaims theological responsibility is simply closing his eyes to the theological aspects and implications of his research. Because the text upon which historical criticism is focused is theological in character, the investigation of it has had profound theological significance even when it has been most avowedly untheological.²²

²¹See Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Vern S. Poythress, Science and Hermeneutics, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academic, 1988), esp. pp. 43-63.

²²Smart, The Strange Silence, 78; cf. Robert Morgan with John Barton, Biblical Interpretation, The Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 274: "The main conclusion, or rather thesis, of this book is that anyone who uses the Bible as scripture engages (whether knowingly or not) in theological interpretation." See also Maier, The End of the Historical-Critical Method, 53.

To set up objective interpretation as a goal is to forget that "human rebellion against God's sovereign interpretation of his creation has radically defaced the noetic ability of human beings to interpret creation correctly,"²³ and that neutral interpretation without a commitment to God is simply a continuation of that same rebellion. This is what I mean when I say that this is a very serious charge.

On the other hand, I also want to emphasize that this charge is not necessarily decisively condemning. The most committed Christians have areas in their lives where they are not fully surrendered to the lordship of Christ. There are areas where so-called liberals, or neo-orthodox, or neo-evangelicals can call evangelicals or fundamentalists to task for inconsistency in their response to the authoritative commands of Christ in this world. All I am claiming is that this is one area where I believe it is the responsibility of evangelicals to call upon biblical scholars in other camps to respond more fully to Christ as he asserts himself as Canon in biblical canon. And the call is to give up pretensions of supposed objectivity or neutrality in biblical interpretation, and to carry out their hermeneutical endeavors with a commitment to the one who is the Lord of interpretation.²⁴

²³Royce Gordon Gruenler, Meaning and Understanding: The Philosophical Framework for Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1991), 170.

²⁴Cf. John F. Johnson, "Analogia Fidei as Hermeneutical Principle," Springfielder 36 (1973): 250; A. A. Anderson, "Old

No Appreciable Difference

The second objection I wish to consider is that even with a faith commitment on the part of the biblical scholar, there is little, if any, appreciable difference in historical, philological, linguistic work, etc., between the results of scholars who "interpret in faith" and those who attempt to maintain a level of objectivity. Further, the commitment does not guarantee the correctness of the position.

James Barr may be used here as an example of one who puts forth this objection:

My own teaching life in biblical studies has been roughly equally divided between teaching in theological institutions and teaching in departments of Hebrew, Semitic languages, religious studies and the like; and for the life of me I cannot see that there is any fundamental difference in exegetical method, logic or criteria of relevance between the one case and the other. The essential difference seems to be that in a theological context certain questions are likely to be asked which in the other context may be left unconsidered.²⁵

Theology in itself has no power to tell us what might be the correct text of a particular verse, or what are the semantic linkages between a group of Hebrew words, or why the Moabites slew all their Israelite captives.²⁶

There is certainly more than just a measure of truth in what Barr says. There is no guarantee that the lexical or

Testament Theology and Its Methods," 10, 12.

²⁵James Barr, "Exegesis as a Theological Discipline Reconsidered and the Shadow of the Jesus of History," in The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honor of James Luther Mays on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Donald J. Miller, PTMS 4 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 19.

²⁶Ibid., 20-21.

historical investigation of a text done by a Christian scholar versus a non-Christian one will produce any different results, either historically, lexically or theologically (hence a major factor in Barr's argument against "theological lexicography"). This is no less than what we should expect, since the scholars who are doing the exegesis are, in fact, people, real people who are made in the image of God, whose thinking processes are analogues to, and reflections of, God. And though we believe that the noetic faculties of humans have been damaged as a result of the fall, they have not been eradicated, and there is every reason to believe that two people, one Christian and one non-Christian, looking at the same piece of data, will, in fact, see the same thing. If they didn't, there would be no way Christians and non-Christians could even communicate with each other. This is simply the doctrine of common grace.

Nor does the confessional or non-confessional stance from which one comes to the text determine the accuracy of the interpretation. This is noted by Moisés Silva in the preface to the first volume of a series on hermeneutics, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*. After noting that all the authors are committed to the authority of the Bible and "assume from the start that a right relationship with its divine author is the most fundamental prerequisite for proper biblical interpretation," he then goes on to state,

The problem is that this theological conviction, while essential for a true understanding of Scripture, does not

by itself guarantee that we will interpret Scripture aright.²⁷

But I would suggest that, all that has been said notwithstanding, there are two very important differences between the two possible approaches to interpretation. First, even as we noted in answering the last objection, biases do get in the way of responsible interpretation. There is no doubt, for example, that a history of Israel written by one who judges the historical trustworthiness of the biblical account by criteria such as the principles of "analogy" or "correlation," will be significantly different from one written by a scholar who judges the historical trustworthiness of the biblical account by the principle of "uniqueness" or "supernatural causality."²⁸ As well for New Testament studies, it is evident how different commentaries or works on New Testament theology, or the theology of Paul, written by evangelical scholars differ from those written by scholars who

²⁷Moisés Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? The History of Interpretation in the Light of Current Issues, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1987), vi. Cf. also David H. Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 215-16.

²⁸Note Gerhard Maier's warning in this regard in The End of the Historical-Critical Method, 51: "While the secular historiographer must apply the basic principle that all events possess an equivalent (analogy) which makes classification with comparable events possible, the Biblical scholar dare not persist in using this principle of analogy in all cases. For it is just what happens only once--the thing that cannot be analogized--that we may anticipate as the living God's way of acting."

apply the criterion of dissimilarity or follow *tendenz* criticism.²⁹

Second, there is a difference that may or may not show up in the actual product, but will always be there just the same. And that is simply that the one approach to interpretation will be an act of obedience and the other will not. The one approach will be pleasing to the Lord and the other will not. The one approach will be an act of worship and the other will not. To tell the difference between the two may be as empirically difficult as understanding why Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's wasn't, but it is just as certain that there will in fact be a difference.

Limitation of Scholarly Autonomy

The third objection with which I wish to deal very quickly is one that was originally raised by R. N. Whybray in opposition to Childs's canonical approach. He writes that Childs's approach

is a denial of scholarly autonomy. It presupposes--though Childs denies this--some kind of religious faith on the

²⁹In this regard it is hard for me to agree with Daniel Fuller ("The Holy Spirit's Role in Biblical Interpretation," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 192) when he says, "Naturally, the conclusion that the Bible is foolishness will not affect the accuracy of the exegetical results of those whose only concern is the academic task of describing what the biblical writers intended to teach. An agnostic or an atheist, whose concern is simply to set forth, say, a description of Pauline thought, can make a lasting contribution to this subject, if he has achieved a high degree of exegetical skill."

part of the scholar, and indeed more than that: it assumes a traditional kind of faith--whether Jewish or Christian--which expresses itself in terms of a "religious community" having the power to require such dogmatic beliefs as the authority of scripture.³⁰

Though I believe that Childs, as Whybray recognizes, would not necessarily agree with the way Whybray characterizes Childs's assumptions, on behalf of the Christo-canonical approach, I will enter a plea of guilty. Scholarly autonomy, in order to be truly free (which is what I suppose Whybray and others mean by autonomy), must submit itself to the authority of Christ. This objection fails to recognize that there is no such thing as scholarly autonomy; every scholar is captive in his or her hermeneutical endeavors, either captive to the one who wishes to keep people from understanding the truth, or, as was Martin Luther, "captive to the Word of God."

Ronald R. Ray, in what he calls a "recontextualized restatement" of John 8:31-36, imagines a conversation between Jacques Ellul and professional biblical scholars, of which I quote a portion here:

Once upon a time, Jacques Ellul got into an argument with the professionals. It began when he had the audacity to quote Scripture against Scripture's custodians. He told the biblical scholars that they would never be able to interpret Scripture properly unless they lived under the power of the risen Lord. He said that only those who are Christ's disciples can know the biblical truth that frees.

The biblically wise took offense at the mutterings of such an unordained and theologically degreeless babe. "That's too simple! We know better than that, for we are the descendants of Wellhausen, Gunkel, and Bultmann. And

³⁰R. N. Whybray, "Reflections on Canonical Criticism," Theology 84 (1981): 30.

besides, we have never been in bondage to anyone. How then can you say that Jesus Christ alone can make us free?"

But being a good Calvinist, Ellul was unswerving in his view that even biblical scholars are sinners in need of deliverance. And so he continued, "Only if the Son makes you free, will you find true freedom in your biblical interpretation."³¹

Biblical scholars need to understand that autonomous interpretation is sinful interpretation. For it is just as autonomous exegesis is confronted with the demands of God's word and the conviction that same word brings when those demands are not met, that autonomous hermeneutical endeavor tends to make the message of the Bible other than what it really is. As Vern Poythress says, "sin perverts interpretation because sinners hate this subjection to God."³² In other words, autonomous interpretation seeks to make God a liar (1 John 1:10; 5:10). Interpretation done under the authority of Christ has as its express goal the declaration of God's truth as it is found in his word.

Supersessionism is Revived

The last objection to be considered is that this kind of canonical exegesis, which claims subservience to Christ, breaks down the ties of scholarly collaboration and, with regard to the Old Testament in particular, smacks of anti-

³¹Ray, "Jacques Ellul's Innocent Notes on Hermeneutics," 268.

³²Vern S. Poythress, "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," WTJ 50 (1988): 306. The entire article is essential reading on this entire point.

Semitic supersessionism. For the first part of this objection, I quote from Whybray again:

It denies the right to be regarded as *bona fide* students and interpreters of the Old Testament to all those whose aim is the study of the religion and literature of the ancient people of Israel simply as an historical phenomenon without prejudice or religious commitment, and so threatens to disturb, and indeed, if it wins acceptance, to destroy that happy co-operation among workers in the Old Testament field which has developed since the last century and now flourishes as never before.³³

For the second part of the objection, that it revives a supersessionist anti-Semitism, one need only consult the volume of essays edited by Roger Brooks and John Collins, entitled, Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity. Brooks and Collins, in the introduction to the book, assert that

the traditional supersessionist claim that biblical religion finds its true fulfillment in Christianity has undeniably led to the denigration of Judaism, ancient, medieval, and modern, and cannot be held innocent of the outrage of anti-Semitism and Holocaust in our century. Concession of this point has considerable implications for Christian theology, for supersessionism is deeply rooted in that tradition. Nonetheless, it is a presupposition of the dialogue presented in this volume that a supersessionist view of the Old Testament is no longer tenable.³⁴

³³Whybray, "Reflections on Canonical Criticism," 30-31.

³⁴Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, "Introduction," in Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 5 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 1. For other statements that call for Christian and Jewish cooperation without presuppositions in the study of Hebrew Bible, see F. F. Bruce, "The Theology and Interpretation of the Old Testament," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study, ed. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979),

First, I think it important, even as Whybray, to preserve that "happy co-operation" among scholars. But I do not think that this means also that the scholars can leave their confessional stances at home, or check them at the door when they attend scholarly meetings. Rather than asking fellow scholars to bracket their presuppositions, would it not be more honest to have them lay all their cards on the table and simply openly admit that their interpretations have been, wholly or in part, guided and influenced by their faith commitments?

Second, in regard to the charge of supersessionism, it is important to note that, strictly, the Christo-canonical approach does not consider the Old Testament to have been taken over by the Church. The approach considers the Old Testament to be the book of Christ from the very start (see chapter 5, thesis number two). But, certainly, from the Jewish perspective, this is just begging the question.

Third, therefore, also in response to the charge of supersessionism, it is important to keep in mind that this so-called "supersessionism" is not just rooted in Christian "tradition"; it is rooted in Christian canon. Jon Levenson

385; Paul D. Hanson, "Biblical Interpretation: Meeting Place of Jews and Christians," in Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 32-47; and the other essays in the Brooks and Collins volume, in particular, the one by Rolf Rendtorff, "Toward a Common Jewish-Christian Understanding of the Hebrew Bible," 89-108.

notes this when he says that Christian developments in Old Testament theology in the last century reflect

Christian supersessionist thinking, such as the insistence of Paul, or at least the early Paul, that it is Christians through faith rather than Jews through birth who inherit the status of Isaac, the son by the promise (Gal. 4:28--5:1).³⁵

Christian reading of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture is not just a "plus" for Christians; it is foundational, it is demanded, it is canonical. For our Jewish scholarly friends to ask us to read the Old Testament without regarding it as Christian Scripture is to ask us to be disobedient to our consciences, our canon, and our Lord. Walter Brueggemann, in the introduction to his Genesis commentary, though claiming no presumptions "that the New Testament is the `resolution' of the Old Testament" or "that the Church is the `fulfillment' of `unfulfilled' Israel" (though I myself would want to claim both these things in some measure), nevertheless goes on to note correctly:

The best faith that can be kept with Jewish brothers and sisters is to be honest and candid about our presuppositions and to hold them in the presence of those

³⁵Jon D. Levenson, "Theological Consensus or Historicist Evasion? Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies," in Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 5 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 116. It is interesting to note that in a revised copy of this article in Levenson's book, The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism, there is a, perhaps significant, change of wording in this citation (p. 87). The phrase, "such as the insistence of Paul," is changed to "which perhaps began with the insistence of Paul." Is this revision perhaps a lessening of the implication that supersessionism is found in Christian canon?

brothers and sisters. Thus we have engaged in no euphemisms about "Hebrew Scripture," for serious Jews know what we Christians are up to in that regard in any case.³⁶

Finally, in regard to the supersessionism charge, I claim that the belief that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture cannot be held responsible for anti-Semitism and/or the Holocaust. There have, no doubt, been so-called Christian groups that have been anti-Semitic, such as the "German Christians" in the Nazi years in Germany. But it must be stressed emphatically that those Christians did not read the Scriptures canonically and were not obedient to the Lord of the canon. In fact, if anything, those groups were the theological descendants of Old Testament scholarship that had denied the Old Testament status as Christian Scripture and had severed the Old Testament from Christ. As Levenson correctly notes, it was the Wellhausen school, the historical-critical school, that set the religious climate for the "final solution."³⁷ But it was Barth and Bonhoeffer and those in the "Confessing Church" who were more truly the descendants of the New Testament and who faithfully read the Scriptures as a canonical whole.

³⁶Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 7. Cf. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., ("The Old Testament and the Christian Faith," CurTM 20 [1993]: 248): "The widespread shift within the Christian community from 'Old Testament' to 'Hebrew Scriptures' is one with large theological implications that I believe have not been thought through sufficiently."

³⁷Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, 41-43.

Vern Poythress, in two of his articles, "God's Lordship in Interpretation," and "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," has contributed greatly to the understanding that our interpretation must be both redeemed and obedient interpretation.³⁸ And as Poythress notes, this only happens as the interpreter comes to the cross of Christ where,

Christ in his death suffered the destruction of his own understanding (Matt 27:46) in order that in his resurrection he might communicate to us perfect wisdom (Luke 24:45). . . . Christ undergoes, as it were, a hermeneutical death and resurrection with respect to his understanding of himself and the OT, in order that we may be freed from our hermeneutical sin."³⁹

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that it must be done by those who have been redeemed by Christ and are seeking to interpret his canon in obedience to the Lord of canon. Therefore, it must go beyond Stuhlmacher's proposal of a "hermeneutics of consent" with a mere "openness to transcendence."⁴⁰ Rather, it must be a "hermeneutics of submission" with a complete vulnerability to the transcendent God.

³⁸Vern S. Poythress, "God's Lordship in Interpretation, WTJ 50 (1988): 27-64; "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," WTJ 50 (1988): 305-21.

³⁹Poythress, "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," 321.

⁴⁰Peter Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), esp. pp. 83-89. As Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. notes, Stuhlmacher's consent is not so much to Scripture as it is to historical-method (review of Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik, by Peter Stuhlmacher, in WTJ 43 [1980]: 168).

Thesis Number Nine:
Christ is Lord over the Disclosure of Meaning

The Christo-canonical approach asserts that the only truly authentic interpretation of Scripture is that which is done in hermeneutical humility and not in hermeneutical arrogance and idolatry. It humbles itself before the Lord of the canon, realizing that the one who is Lord of the meaning of biblical canon is also Lord over disclosure of the same. To say that exegesis must be done canonically is to say that it must be done in humility. And even this humility is no guarantee of correct interpretation. As David Steinmetz says in summarizing the thought of Martin Luther,

Scripture is not in our power. It is not at the disposal of our intellect and is not obliged to render up its secrets to those who have theological training, merely because they are learned. Scripture imposes its own meaning; it binds the soul to God through faith. Because the initiative in the interpretation of Scripture remains in the hands of God, we must humble ourselves in His presence and pray that He will give understanding and wisdom to us as we meditate on the sacred text. Whilst we may take courage from the thought that God gives understanding of Scripture to the humble, we should also heed the warning that the truth of God can never coexist with human pride. Humility is the hermeneutical precondition for authentic exegesis.⁴¹

There are several very important implications of this thesis.

(1) First, it is important to understand that no interpreter may demand satisfaction or product for his or her exegetical labors. Despite all the skill, labor, and time

⁴¹David C. Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," ARG 70 (1979): 41-42.

that may be expended on the sacred text, the Lord alone is in control of the text's meaning and its disclosure. This is simply a part of our confession that God is sovereign. Though there are many factors that will guarantee an incorrect interpretation, there are none, from the human side, that will guarantee a correct one. Thomas Provence, in summarizing the thought of Karl Barth, writes eloquently in this regard:

The understanding of the Bible is a result of the activity of its subject matter, Jesus Christ, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is purely a matter of the sovereignty of this object that he causes an interpreter to know him as the object of the Scriptures. No methodology, no finely honed historical skills can bring about true understanding.⁴²

(2) Second, every interpreter must beware of hermeneutical idolatry, an attitude of pride that comes from the mistaken notion that one has come to the correct understanding of a text because of one's own hermeneutical skills. Rather, every interpreter must refuse to exempt his or her hermeneutical skills or discoveries from the list of things given in answer to the question and subsequent condemnation, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not"

⁴²Thomas W. Provence, "The Sovereign Subject Matter: Hermeneutics in the Church Dogmatics," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 261. Cf. also, other very eloquent statements in this regard in Bloesch, "A Christological Hermeneutic," 101-2; and Bruce K. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 265-66.

(1 Cor 4:7). Further, as Poythress points out, interpreters, just because they live in an age of hermeneutical self-consciousness, should not think that they are incapable of being mired in this hermeneutical idolatry:

Growth in autonomous hermeneutical self-consciousness and sophistication never reveals the radical character of sin or its remedy, but only spreads the cancer of sinful pride. Human beings who have made themselves like gods (Gen 3:22) cannot rectify their mistake, because their gods control their interpretation. Only the foolishness of the cross can save.⁴³

(3) Third, this means that no interpreter, no matter, how careful their exegetical work, may directly equate their interpretation of the text with the actual meaning of the text. Conservatives and liberals alike come under condemnation here. Conservatives have too often equated orthodoxy with conformity to a particular interpretation.⁴⁴ And liberals have been all too quick to dogmatize the "assured results" of biblical criticism.⁴⁵ As Smart correctly notes,

⁴³Poythress, "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," 312; see also his "God's Lordship in Interpretation," 62.

⁴⁴On this point see Moisés Silva, "Old Princeton, Westminster, and Inerrancy," in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 75-79.

⁴⁵Note James C. Howell's censure here ("Jerome's Homilies on the Psalter in Bethlehem," in The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund, Elizabeth F. Huwiler, Jonathan T. Glass, and Roger W. Lee, JSOTSup 58 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 193: "There is an undeniable arrogance and homogeneity to modern biblical criticism." Cf. also Jung Kyu-Nam, "The Task and Methodology of Old Testament Theology," ACTS Theological Journal 3 (1988): 168-69.

Every apprehension of the text and every statement of its meaning is an interpretation and, however adequately it expresses the content of the text, it dare not ever be equated with the text itself. There remains always a significant distance between the interpretation and the text, a distance that counsels humility in the interpreter and excludes the absolutizing of any interpretation as though it were the final truth. It is striking how consistently interpreters of Scripture, ancient and modern, conservative and liberal, have ignored this basic principle of hermeneutics and have identified their interpretations directly with the content of the text.⁴⁶

(4) Fourth, this humility is to be not only vertical, but also horizontal; it is to be manifested, not only before God, but also before one's brothers and sisters. It is God and God alone who determines who may understand his words. And though this does not excuse the biblical scholar from exegetical labor, it does mean that if God chooses to reveal the meaning to someone who has expended no labor, that is his sovereign right. The biblical scholar must always be willing to have his or her interpretations subjected to correction from other members of Christ's body, learned or unlearned.⁴⁷

(5) Fifth, this humility should drive the would-be interpreter to prayer. In his article on Barth's hermeneutics, Provence states that, in the light of the lack of a guarantee that our exegetical labors will produce satisfactory or assured result, and in light of the fact that God is sovereign over the disclosure of meaning, "Prayer,

⁴⁶Smart, The Strange Silence, 53-54.

⁴⁷Cf. Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation," 42-43; Bloesch, "A Christological Hermeneutic," 101-2.

then, is an expression of our dependence upon the sovereign object of the text for understanding."⁴⁸ It

is the confession that it is impossible to finally understand the Bible in our own power through our hermeneutical skills alone. Only God, as the object of the Scripture and so the determiner of its meaning, can graciously bestow meaning upon the biblical text.⁴⁹

We must carefully, however, that, even as important as this aspect may be, it is still no guarantee of correct exegesis or a breakthrough to understanding. Jacob may have wrestled with God all night, and may have prevailed, but he never was told the name of the one with whom he wrestled (Gen 32:22-32).

(6) Sixth, though prayer is to be an important part of our exegetical endeavor, we should not think of the hermeneutical task as being dialogical in character. But as Gaffin has contended, we "must recognize the essentially monological nature" of the relationship between text and interpreter.⁵⁰ We must never conceive of hermeneutics as being in any way a discussion between God and the interpreter where the interpreter suggests to God what God's words mean. Amid all the discussion about the "two horizons" of text and interpreter, we must never think that in some way our horizon has any control over the horizon of the text. Indeed, it is

⁴⁸Provence, "The Sovereign Subject Matter," 261.

⁴⁹Ibid., 262.

⁵⁰Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," in Studying the New Testament Today, ed. John H. Skilton, The New Testament Student 1 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974), 14.

just the opposite: we had nothing to do with the horizon of the biblical text, but the Holy Spirit, who produced the textual horizon, if understanding is to occur, must also operate on our horizon.⁵¹ The emphasis on the interpreter's horizon as being determinative of meaning is, to a large extent, simply another evidence of modern-day hermeneutical arrogance.

(7) Finally, hermeneutical humility demands that the interpreter recognize that the hermeneutical task is not so much to understand God's word as to respond to it, not to criticize the text, but to let the text criticize the interpreter, not to question the text, but to be questioned by the text, not to make the meaning of the text transparent to the reader, but to make the reader transparent to the text. As noted by Ray in regard to Ellul's hermeneutics, probably the reason we ask so many questions of the text is that we think by doing so we will somehow escape the "divine questioning."⁵² The interpreter has a responsibility to come to the word of God, not just as to a window that can be looked through in order to see a vision of God, though that certainly is a worthy goal, but to also come to it as to a mirror, to find out what God thinks about them. This is our

⁵¹For this insight into the problem of the two horizons, see Harvie M. Conn, "Normativity, Relevance and Relativism," in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 201-2.

⁵²Ray, "Jacques Ellul's Innocent Notes," 270.

hermeneutical humility before the mirror of the word of God. Arrogant interpreters, however, walk away and forget what they look like.

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that it must be done in full humility before the Lord of the canon, who alone is sovereign over the disclosure of the meaning of the text.

Thesis Number Ten:
Christ's Canon Is Canonical over All
Scholarly Reconstruction

The Christo-canonical approach presupposes that only the Christ-authorized canon is canonical, and not any purported scholarly reconstruction of events behind the canon. In other words, this approach recognizes the authority of Christ over the canon, and not that of scholars. While recognizing the contribution of scholarship, it does not regard these contributions as canonical. Research and commentaries on the canon remain research and commentaries, not canon.

This thesis really arises out of the last one and zeroes in on one particular form of hermeneutical arrogance and idolatry. It is all too easy for scholars to begin to take their work too seriously, and to begin to believe that their methodology or their key insight into the historical, literary, sociological, or other reconstructions of a passage is, in fact, the key to the interpretation and understanding of the passage. As Provence remarks,

If the interpretation of the Bible is a matter of subjecting the text to human methodologies, then there is the consequent possibility that the methodologies will become masters of the text, and therefore authorities in the church.⁵³

Therefore, just as Childs does for his canonical approach, I would claim for the Christo-canonical approach that it is no more than a stance or a perspective. At the same time, I would also do more than Childs does for his approach, and claim that a Christological-canonical approach is the perspective, the proper stance, the proper angle from which to view the text. And I would suggest that most, and perhaps even all, hermeneutical errors arise from an improper view of the relationship between Christ and canon. And so, on the very point under consideration now, I claim that all attempts to make any one methodology, or any one reconstruction of a text's literary or sociological history to be normative, are attempts to displace the canon from its position under the authority of Christ and to place it under the authority of biblical scholars. This is why I said earlier (1) that Childs's canonical analysis was not canonical enough, for he still resorts to redactional reconstructions to find the canonical meaning of the final form, and (2) that Sanders's canonical criticism was not canonical at all, for it is only the reconstruction that is canonical for him, never the text itself.⁵⁴

⁵³Provence, "The Sovereign Subject Matter," 251.

⁵⁴Of course, this reconstruction can only be accomplished by

This is not to say that historical reconstruction may not be useful as an aid in the interpretation of a passage. All scholars, even conservative evangelicals, do something in the way of reconstruction, if for no other reason than that of harmonization.⁵⁵ The only point being made here is that for all their potential value in elucidating the meaning of a text, reconstructions must never be regarded as authoritative. When they are set forth as authoritative, or allowed to become regarded as such, there is the tacit assumption that God should have spoken to us differently than he did, either in content or in form.

This is simply the confession that there are limits to what can be uncovered by critical, investigative work on a text. And those limits are not simply arbitrary limits set by interpreters themselves, or set by groups of interpreters as a self-critical society, but they are limits that are established by the canon of Holy Scripture. As Porteous says, "The interpreter has no option but to accept the limit set by the intention of the biblical witness and start from what is really there."⁵⁶

biblical scholars. It seems strange, then, that Sanders feels that his approach is a corrective to scholarship that has taken the Bible out of the hands of the people and put chained it to the scholar's desk.

⁵⁵On this, see Moisés Silva, "The Place of Historical Reconstruction in New Testament Criticism," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 110.

⁵⁶Norman Porteous, "The Limits of Old Testament

This is precisely the point made by one of Childs's students, Gerald Sheppard:

To the degree that historical-grammatical exegesis is successful in reviving a "lost" historical context, it effectively de-canonizes the literature by putting it in some other context than the canonical. One can, by critical methodologies, legitimately attempt to get behind the present canonical shape for purposes of studying the history of Israelite religion or that of the early church and for illuminating the formation of canonical traditions. But to use such recovered material normatively for one's faith is to opt for another position of Christian faith than that of the Christian Church in its historical confession of the entire Old and New Testament canon as its Scripture.⁵⁷

Christ has chosen to manifest himself in biblical canon, not in scholarly reconstruction.⁵⁸ This is why I am opposed to

Interpretation," in Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honor of Gwynne Henton Davies, ed. John I. Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond: John Knox, 1970), 15. Cf. also, Gerhard F. Hasel, "Biblical Theology: Then, Now, and Tomorrow," HBT 4/1 (1982): 74: "A canonical biblical theology . . . is limited by the boundaries of the Biblical canon and the canonical form of the Biblical text."

⁵⁷Gerald T. Sheppard, "Canon Criticism: The Proposal of Brevard Childs and an Assessment for Evangelical Hermeneutics," Studia Biblica et Theologica 4 (1974): 13; see also his "Barr on Canon and Childs: Can one Read the Bible as Scripture?" Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin 7/2 (1983): 2. It is to be noted here, that though Sheppard has departed somewhat from his teacher, he is still consistent on this point. For example, in his article "The anti-Assyrian Crisis Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1-39," (JBL 104 [1985]: 213), after a redactional explanation as to how Isaiah 1-39 was shaped and retained in the larger Isaiah work, he then goes on to state regarding his explanation: "Both its speculative nature and its limited scope prevent such analysis from being equated with an answer to what is the 'shape,' as Childs has used the term, of the book of Isaiah. Consequently, such redactional investigations per se can provide no sufficient guide to the reading or constructive misreading of a canonical book as part of a still later scripture."

⁵⁸Cf. Wilhelm Vischer, The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ, trans A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 1.29-

the efforts of scholars like Schubert Ogden, for although he rightly recognizes that Jesus Christ is the ultimate norm for the Church (see chapter 5), he ultimately rejects this authority by refusing to accept Christ's authority as manifested in biblical canon, but asserts, rather, that what is authoritative is "the apostolic witness that is prior to the New Testament, although accessible to us today only by way of historical reconstruction from it."⁵⁹ Or, in other words, as he says even more clearly later in the same article,

Specifically it is the historical procedure of reconstructing the history of tradition of which the writings of the New Testament are the documentation, so as thereby to identify the earliest layer in that tradition, from which alone the true canon within the canon is to be discerned.⁶⁰

In the same way, von Rad, in defending a typological interpretation which, by his own lack of credence in the historical trustworthiness of the biblical text, is basically a typology without substance, states that such typological interpretation

has only to do with the witness to the divine event, not with such correspondences in historical, cultural, or archaeological details as the Old Testament and the New may have in common. It must hold itself to the kerygma that is intended, and not fix upon the narrative details with the aid of which the kerygma is set forth.⁶¹

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⁵⁹Schubert M. Ogden, "The Authority of Scripture for Theology," Int 30 (1976): 252.

⁶⁰Ogden, "The Authority of Scripture for Theology," 258.

⁶¹Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," trans. John Bright, in Essays on Old Testament

What John Stek remarks about von Rad's program applies to Ogden's as well: "With almost arrogant confidence in his own historical method, von Rad pits his radical reconstruction of Israel's history against the biblical witness."⁶² For all the talk about putting forth the "kerygma," the "biblical witness," or the "apostolic witness" of the text, methods such as Ogden's and von Rad's seek only to put forth a reconstruction that robs the biblical text of the very right to say what that witness is.

Far less arrogant, but still reconstructive in its orientation, is the attitude that Scalise finds in criticisms of Childs. After remarking that Childs attracted the same kind of reviews that the early Barth did, Scalise notes that much of the criticism that Childs received was for not paying enough attention to historical and sociological reconstructions:

For example, Walter Brueggemann criticizes Childs for displaying "little interest in the social dynamic behind the text", in contrast to Sanders. Brueggemann falls captive to the questionable view of historical reconstructionism that one can successfully go through the text to the "historical reality" behind it. This reconstructionist view inexorably leads him to psychologize the biblical writers. So, for example, concerning First Isaiah, Brueggemann claims, "The prophet is not driven simply by anger or even by anguish, but has made a cold intellectual assessment of the social processes around him." To read First Isaiah as establishing "critical distance" and offering a "critique

Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 36-37.

⁶²John H. Stek, "Biblical Typology Yesterday and Today," Calvin Theological Journal 5 (1970): 156.

of ideology" may be homiletically powerful, but seems exegetically unwarranted.⁶³

A further problem with Brueggemann's critique is that he seems to equate lack of "interest in the social dynamic" with "refusal to reconstruct sociological context." There is, perhaps, not a single discipline that could not be consulted to provide illumination for the understanding of the text, and certainly, sociology can be helpful as well. A problem occurs, however, when these various disciplines are allowed to become sovereign in their explanations as to how the text came to be in the first place, and when they wish to make extra-textual reality the true reality behind, and explanation for, the text. I am in no way suggesting that the text is not referential, but rather, that it is a consulting of the text itself which must tell us what that extra-textual reference is. The text's own reconstruction takes priority over scholarly reconstruction. Or to put it more bluntly, God's reconstruction of what happened is canonically authoritative, not a scholarly reconstruction of what supposedly "really happened."⁶⁴

⁶³Charles J. Scalise, "Canonical Hermeneutics: Childs and Barth," SJT 47 (1994): 87. Scalise is citing Walter Brueggemann, "Unity and Dynamic in the Isaiah Tradition," JSOT 29 (1984): 90-94. Cf. also, Norman K. Gottwald, "Social Matrix and Canonical Shape," TToday 42 (1985): 315-18.

⁶⁴Walter Brueggemann (Abiding Astonishments: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991, 40) correctly observes that even so-called "objective" historical reconstructions nevertheless "reflect powerful ideological

It is in this light that I would like to close this discussion by briefly addressing the issue of myth in the Bible. Though once the claim that there are myths in the Scriptures was made only by liberal scholars, now even conservative scholars seem to admit that there are mythological elements in the Scriptures.⁶⁵ This issue will not be especially important for the psalms I have chosen to look at in Part Three where I apply the Christo-canonical approach to the book of Psalms. But what I do want to point out here is that if there are, indeed, myths or mythological elements in the Bible, it is important for us to recognize that it is they which are canonical, and not the scholarly reconstructions of the actual historical account which has been mythologized. The canonical representation of what happened is authoritative; the canonical account is how God wishes us to perceive the events narrated.⁶⁶

commitments."

⁶⁵For just a few examples of this, see Donald G. Bloesch, Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation, Christian Foundations 2 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 255-77; Tremper Longman III, How to Read the Psalms (Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 118-21; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter One," Cruce 27/4 (1991): 6-8; Elmer B. Smick, "Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms," WTJ 44 (1982): 88-98.

⁶⁶Though I am not addressing it here because of its only tangential relevance to the Psalms, what I am saying in regard to these myths would hold for much of what is proposed in modern narrative theology as well, in particular, the view that we misread the accounts as history when we should be reading them as "history-like" (Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974]). But as Meir

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that the canon's reconstruction overrules that of the interpreter.

Thesis Number Eleven:
Christ's Canon Is for Christ's Church

The Christo-canonical approach demands that the interpreter of Scripture do his or her work with an eye to the use of that work within the service of the Church. The Scriptures were given to build up the Church and must be interpreted with that purpose in mind. Further, our hermeneutics must be pointedly ecclesiological in light of the vital union of Christ and the Church, a union which almost at times seems to approach identification.

As a corrective to a de-emphasis on the relationship between canon and community in several theses in chapter 5, I now emphasize the importance of the relationship in this thesis. The de-emphasis in chapter 5 was in regards to the idea that canon is a community creation. The emphasis in this chapter is that canon, nevertheless, exists for, and in, community. Therefore it is best interpreted when the interpretation takes place in, for, and by, the community,

Sternberg points out, all indicators in the text itself point to the biblical authors desiring to present not fiction, but historiography (The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 30-35, 81-83). See also John Reumann's criticism of narrative theology's use of the term "history-like" ("Afterword: Putting the Promise into Practice," in The Promise and Practice of Biblical Theology, ed. John Reumann [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 198).

that is, the Church. In this connection, there are three things that need to be stressed.

(1) Interpretive efforts are best undertaken in the sphere of the Church.⁶⁷ I do not necessarily mean by this a particular denomination, local congregation, small group, or similar structure, though any of these could be and probably should be entailed. I do mean by this, however, that interpretation properly takes place within the community of the redeemed. The Christ who gave to the Church the Old and New Testaments by his Spirit has also promised illumination of those Scriptures by His Spirit. And only those who confess Christ as Lord may properly claim that they are being aided in their exegesis by the Spirit.

This does not mean that the Scriptures may not be studied in other contexts besides that of Church, seminary, and Christian college or university. It does mean that it is only in these contexts that there can be put forth the claim that the Spirit of God, "who searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10), is present.

Though I agree with Daniel Fuller that the role of the Holy Spirit is to "change the heart of the interpreter, so that he loves the message,"⁶⁸ I do not agree with him, however,

⁶⁷Cf. James D. Wood, The Interpretation of the Bible: A Historical Introduction (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1958), 175; George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond: John Knox, 1959), 7.

⁶⁸Daniel P. Fuller, "The Holy Spirit's Role in Biblical Interpretation," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation:

that the Holy Spirit's role in illumination is limited to the attitudinal and does not involve the cognitive.⁶⁹ Fuller suggests that for there to be a cognitive illumination, the Holy Spirit would also have to impart new information "beyond the historical-grammatical data that are already there for everyone to work with."⁷⁰ What exactly constitutes "new information" could be debated, but I believe that a proper exegesis of the relevant passages (especially 1 Cor 1:18-2:16) will show that, at the very least, we have to say that this attitudinal change is one that affects the cognitive as well. Because we love the message, we also understand the message.⁷¹ And this cognitive understanding is one which non-redeemed exegesis cannot obtain.

However, it is important to keep in mind, that the Spirit, though imparted individually to each new believer, is the gift of Christ to the whole Church. Therefore, it is important for biblical interpreters to subject their

Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 192.

⁶⁹For a valuable and, I believe, correct evaluation of Fuller's position, see Millard J. Erickson, Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 33-54.

⁷⁰Fuller, "The Holy Spirit's Role," 192.

⁷¹Cf. Erickson (Evangelical Interpretation, 54): "The role of the Holy Spirit in illumination, then, is to convey insight into the meaning of the text. Illumination does not involve the communication of new information, but a deeper understanding of the meaning that is there."

understanding of Scripture to both scholarly and non-scholarly critique in the Church. No interpreter is immune to the arrogance mentioned earlier which would make a direct identification between what the text says and one's interpretation of the text. Therefore, it is necessary, though we each individually have the Spirit of God, to allow our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who also have the Spirit of God, to examine our interpretations, and in this way, exhibit the humility that is needed for authentic exegesis. As Kraus remarks regarding the thought of Calvin in this area, study of the Scriptures should take place "within a community of brothers, in which each one helps the others, corrects them, engages them in a dialogue that leads to a better understanding."⁷² And especially important is the observation of Steinmetz on Luther's thought:

The interpretation of Scripture . . . is not, however, simply a private event, however important the lonely meditation of the biblical scholar may be. The interpretation of Scripture is an activity which takes place in the sphere of the Church. . . . The Church's rule of faith is a hermeneutical landmark which delimits the area within which the exegesis of Scripture may be pursued. . . . The student of Scripture is a member of a community to which he is responsible and from which he receives aid.⁷³

It is in this light, also, that the history of interpretation is to be regarded as a vital part of

⁷²Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," Int 31 (1977): 10.

⁷³Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," 42.

interpretation within the context of the Church. It is not simply a coincidence that Childs's canonical interpretation places such a great value on the history or exegesis; nor is it without significance that Childs has come in for heavy criticism in this area (see chapter 2). For our devaluation of earlier, so-called, "precritical" exegesis is simply a sign of our hermeneutical arrogance in thinking that "what is later in time is necessarily better."⁷⁴ In what I believe is one of the most telling portions of Childs's Introduction, he writes,

One of the major reasons for working seriously in the history of biblical exegesis is to be made aware of many different models of interpretation which have all too frequently been disparaged through ignorance. With all due respect for Gunkel, the truly great expositors for probing to the theological heart of the Psalter remain Augustine, Kimchi, Luther, Calvin, the long forgotten Puritans buried in Spurgeon's Treasury, the haunting sermons of John Donne, and the learned and pious reflections de Muis, Francke and Geier. Admittedly these commentators run the risk, which is common to all interpretation, of obscuring rather than illuminating the biblical text, but because they stand firmly within the canonical context, one can learn from them how to speak anew the language of faith.⁷⁵

The fault of modern hermeneuts is not so much that they think the older exegetes were in error, but in thinking that they themselves are free from it. Rather, the right attitude is to see our consultation of the exegetical work of earlier interpreters as a consultation of the Holy Spirit as he may have illuminated them.

⁷⁴Erickson, Evangelical Interpretation, 79.

⁷⁵Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 523.

To say that one is interpreting canonically is to say that one is interpreting Christ's canon within the sphere of Christ's Church.

(2) It is important to realize that interpretation takes place not only within the Church, but also for the Church. This is a vital part of canonical interpretation: using the canon in the way in which the Lord of the canon intended it to be utilized. Christ's words are to be interpreted with the express intention of encouraging, instructing, unifying, and maturing the Church until it attains "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Landes well remarks,

Any exegesis which refuses to expound the theological dimensions in these writings overlooks their very *raison d'être*. Such a refusal may be deemed satisfactory for the exegete who works outside a theological milieu, but it is totally inadequate for the interpreter in the seminary community of scholars.⁷⁶

It is important to note in this regard the work of the Reformers. As Smart notes, they were not "militant protesters and agitators" but primarily "theologians and preachers"⁷⁷ who saw what they were doing as vital for the life of the Church. Kraus observes,

It is well for us to understand that the Reformers' exegesis of Scripture could not remain detached research and scholarly interpretation of the Bible. We can observe everywhere their direct participation in the life and suffering of the church, the seriousness and urgency with

⁷⁶George M. Landes, "Biblical Exegesis in Crisis: What is the Exegetical Task in a Theological Context?" USQR 26 (1971): 276.

⁷⁷Smart, The Strange Silence, 162.

which they comfort and exhort, the way they debate and instruct.⁷⁸

Especially important to note here is that, in spite of the Reformation principle of the perspicuity of Scripture, the Reformers still recognized that hard exegetical work was still necessary to correctly understand the full import of the text. This hard exegetical work was to be done by scholars who, to recall the earlier quotation from Steinmetz, saw their work as being one of responsibility to the Church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer encapsulated it well: "We study the Scripture vicariously for the community of Christ."⁷⁹

It is no accident, therefore, that now in this century those who are most often associated with "canonical" interpretation are both scholars and preachers. Elmer Dyck notes,

The fact that all of these are both active professors and ordained clergy is of more than passing interest. It is testimony to the inherently theological nature of the approach, to the concern that the Bible be made accessible to both the confessional and academic communities.⁸⁰

The interpreter who wishes to interpret canonically, therefore, while recognizing that his or her ultimate responsibility is to Christ, the Lord of the canon, has at the same time been given a measuring device to determine how

⁷⁸Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," 11-12.

⁷⁹Cited in Martin Kuske, The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer's Interpretation. trans. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 19 n. 86.

⁸⁰Elmer Dyck, "What Do We Mean By Canon?" Crux 25/1 (1989): 18.

responsible that interpretation has been, by evaluating how useful it is for the life of the Church.⁸¹

(3) Finally, a very important reason why the interpreter must relate exegesis to the life of the Church is the vital union between Christ and the Church, a union as we noted earlier, that at times almost seems to approach identification. If the Scriptures have to do with Christ, then they also have to do with the Church. A thesis to be considered later concerns Christological interpretation, so in a way, I am running ahead a bit here. But the point I am trying to make now is simply that if we determine that the Scriptures are to be read Christocentrically, then it is also important to note that in the light of both, this vital union of Christ and the Church, and that of corporate solidarity, that Christocentric interpretation will, of necessity, be ecclesiological as well.⁸²

Steinmetz has observed this as an important principle in Luther's hermeneutics as well:

The third and final hermeneutical device employed by Luther is the so-called *caput-corporis-membra* schema. All Scripture is written concerning Christ. Because of the

⁸¹Note that this is somewhat similar to what Augustine's principle that an interpreter who misunderstands the precise intent of the author and yet still draws out a meaning "that may be used for the building up of love" was not to be held accountable for what he had done (On Christian Doctrine, 1.36, NPNF 2.533, ed. Philip Schaff (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956)).

⁸²On this point see Dan G. McCartney and Charles Clayton, Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible (Wheaton: Victor, Bridgepoint, 1994), 55-58.

union of Christ and the Church as *caput et corpus*, whatever is spoken prophetically concerning Christ is at the same time (*simul*) posited of the Church His body and of every member in it.⁸³

At the same time, I would agree with McCartney and Clayton that reserve needs to be exercised in labeling this exegesis as "ecclesiocentric," as opposed to "Christocentric."⁸⁴ For the direction of significance runs from Christ to the Church, never from the Church to Christ. If the Scriptures have to do with the Church, it is because they have to do with Christ, and not vice-versa.

In regards to the Old Testament, in particular, this approach recognizes that the Old Testament Scriptures point not only to Christ, but to his Church, and that the activity, evangelistic work, etc., of the Christian Church are subject matter of Old Testament prophecy, foreshadowing, and typology (e.g., Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:16-21; Rom 8:35-36; 1 Pet 1:10-12). So in response to Sean McEvenue's criticism of Childs that "he even defends Calvin's position that the literal sense of some Old Testament texts can include Jesus and the life of

⁸³Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," 55.

⁸⁴McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 307, n. 41. This is in reaction to the use of the term in Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), esp. pp. 84-87, 161-62, 184. Cf. also, Robert B. Sloan, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle, ed. G. L. Klein (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 151.

the church,"⁸⁵ I would say, whether Childs would accept the charge or not, we who are evangelicals must plead guilty.

To say that exegesis must be done canonically is to say that it must be done in the context of the Christian Church, for the Church, and will assume that the Scriptures speak, not only to the Church, but of and about the Church.

Thesis Number Twelve:
Christ's Canon is Paradigmatically Authoritative

The Christo-canonical approach believes that the New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament is not just authoritative in terms of content, but also paradigmatically authoritative in terms of exegetical methodology. It is tenuous to regard the interpretations of the New Testament authors as valid while rejecting the methods they used to achieve that exegesis. The New Testament authors did not come to correct conclusions through incorrect methods. This thesis grows out of the last one, in that by adopting the methods of the New Testament authors, we set our exegesis squarely within the context of the pattern of apostolic interpretation.

Whether we may legitimately follow the exegetical methods of the New Testament writers has been a subject for debate and the literature has been extensive. Nor has the answer to this question always been given in absolute terms. As Moisés Silva notes, the answers are on a continuum from

⁸⁵Sean E. McEvenue, "The Old Testament, Scripture or Theology?" Int 35 (1981): 233.

"outright rejection" of apostolic methods to "total acceptance," with views in between perhaps best characterized as leaning toward being "sympathetically negative" or "guardedly positive."⁸⁶ I will define my point on this continuum after a brief survey of some of the positions along this continuum.

The older tactic among those who rejected outright the possibility of apostolic interpretation serving as a pattern for our hermeneutics today, was to denigrate the apostles' exegesis of the Old Testament as lacking in regard for original meaning and context, being eisegetical rather than exegetical, and simply not able to command respect in the modern-day world.⁸⁷ Though there are still vestiges of this

⁸⁶Moisés Silva, class notes for the course "Hermeneutics in the New Testament Period" (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986).

⁸⁷Friedrich Baumgärtel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," trans. Murray Newman, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 142-44; in the same volume, Rudolf Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," trans. James C. G. Greig, 53-55; James Barr, Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 142-46, 154; Joachim Becker, Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament, trans. David Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 94; S. L. Edgar, "New Testament and Rabbinic Messianic Interpretation," NTS 5 (1958): 47-54; "Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament," NTS 9 (1962): 55-62; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, Understanding the Old Testament, trans. John Bowden, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 209; Vernon S. McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scripture," JBL 80 (1961): 143-48; Roland E. Murphy, "Christian Understanding of the Old Testament," TD 18 (1970): 324, 329-30; S. Marion Smith, "New Testament Writers' Use of the Old Testament," Encounter 26 (1965): 246-50.

kind of argument, text-centered and reader-response theories seem to have robbed this approach of much of its force.

Another approach has been to uphold the actual results of the New Testament authors' exegesis, but to deny that they were in any way trying to provide examples for us to follow. This is a "not so much that . . . as this" type of argument. They were "not so much" actually trying to exegete the Old Testament passages they cited, or provide us with a hermeneutical textbook, "as" they were simply trying to preach the Gospel. They were interested in delivering a message, not producing a scientific exegesis.⁸⁸ To me, however, this argument seems to suggest that the apostles were incapable of doing two things at the same time. They could either have come to the right conclusions, or they could have used the right methods, but they could not possibly have done both (but, of course, we moderns can!).

Another tack has been to suggest that the apostles used methods that were, in fact, entirely appropriate for their

⁸⁸Ted Carruth, "The Implications of Proper Principles of Biblical Interpretation for Christian Unity," in Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practices: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis, ed. F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers, and Timothy D. Hadley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 54; Norman R. Ericson, "The NT Use of the OT: A Kerygmatic Approach," JETS 30 (1987): 338; Prosper Grech, "The 'Testimonia' and Modern Hermeneutics," NTS 19 (1973): 319; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 185-86; Lester J. Kuyper, "The Old Testament Used by New Testament Writers," Reformed Review 21 (1967): 13; Richard N. Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" TynBul 21 (1970): 32; George Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, SBT 8 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 59-64.

day, as a proper, as it were, contextualization of the message for their day, but that their methods are inappropriate for ours. Longenecker reasons, in part, along this line:

What the NT presents to us in setting out the exegetical practices of early Christians is how the gospel was contextualized in that day and for those particular audiences. We can appreciate something of how appropriate such methods were for the conveyance of the gospel then and of what was involved in their exegetical procedures. And we can learn from their exegetical methods how to contextualize that same gospel in our own day. But let us admit that we cannot possibly reproduce the revelatory stance of pesher interpretation, nor the atomistic manipulations of midrash, nor the circumstantial or *ad hominem* thrusts of a particular polemic of that day--nor should we try. For various reasons, neither we nor our audiences are up to it. Ours, rather, is to contextualize the gospel in our own day and for our own circumstances, speaking meaningfully to people as they are and think today.⁸⁹

While I certainly believe that the apostles may be paradigmatic for us in demonstrating how to contextualize the Gospel, it seems to me fairly arbitrary on Longenecker's part to suggest that they are paradigmatic for us in contextualization, but not in hermeneutics. Moreover, it seems hard to understand how that if "neither we nor our audiences are up to" the apostolic methods of interpretation, how we can be any more "up to" the results they obtained from those methods. It seems more illogical to me to suggest to our audiences that the apostles stumbled onto correct interpretations through faulty methods.

⁸⁹Richard N. Longenecker, "Who is the Prophet Talking About?' Some Reflections on the New Testament's Use of the Old," Themelios 13/1 (1987): 8.

Another approach has been to suggest that what is really most important is that we have the same presuppositions that the apostles did, and not necessarily their methods. We must share their presuppositions about the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and the necessity to understand the Old Testament in a Christological manner (broadly speaking), but we do not need to follow their methods. We share their faith commitments, but not necessarily their hermeneutics.⁹⁰ In addition to the objections raised to the other approaches, the problem here is that the apostles' presuppositions and hermeneutics are inextricably related. To criticize the one is to criticize the other. We must keep in mind, as well, that the apostles' presuppositions have not exactly escaped critique in the twentieth century, as the whole program of demythologization provides testimony.

Perhaps the most substantial argument is that which suggests that, though in theory we could reduplicate apostolic exegesis, the apostles wrote from a uniquely "revelatory stance." Therefore we should not try to do so, for our

⁹⁰Walter Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" trans. James Barr, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 231. Unless I am misreading him, this also seems to be the position of Klyne Snodgrass ("The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in New Testament Criticism and Interpretation, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 415, 427), though he does also say, "With great fear of possible abuse, however, I would not want to argue that the apostles could be creative because of their context, but that we are confined to more mundane methods" (p. 427).

interpretation does not partake of the same revelatory nature.

This is Longenecker's major reason:

What then can be said to our question, "Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?" I suggest that we must answer both "No" and "Yes." Where that exegesis is based upon a revelatory stance, where it evidences itself to be merely cultural, or where it shows itself to be circumstantial or *ad hominem* in nature, "No." Where, however, it treats the Old Testament in more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historico-grammatical exegesis, "Yes." Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices.⁹¹

Though I admit the necessity of distinguishing between the revelatory era of the apostles and the non-revelatory era in which we must do our exegesis, I still see major problems with this reasoning. The first is that Longenecker's "'No' and 'Yes'" is a rationalistic, though at the same time, arbitrary, distinction. It seems to me that Longenecker is not so much saying that the problem is one of revelatory versus non-revelatory, but pre-critical versus historico-grammatical. That is, we may follow the apostles when they conform to our modern form of grammatical-historical interpretation, but when they depart from it, we may not follow them. McCartney and Clayton, in summarizing Longenecker's position, address the issue well:

⁹¹Richard N. Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 219-20; cf. also his "'Who is the Prophet Talking About?'" 8; "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" 36-38; see also, Carruth, "The Implications of Proper Principles of Biblical Interpretation," 54; Clark H. Pinnock, The Scripture Principle (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 44-45; Sloan, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 155.

That is, as long as the NT writers conform to what we have already decided is correct (grammatical-historical exegesis) we may "follow" them. But this is equivalent to saying, "I will follow you wherever you go, so long as you go in my direction." What kind of "following" is that? What transcendent authority rests exclusively upon the grammatical-historical method of exegesis?"⁹²

Longenecker would answer in reply that we are failing to distinguish here between what is normative and descriptive.⁹³ But that kind of response only begs the question: the very issue under consideration is whether apostolic exegesis should be considered normative or descriptive. And it seems to me that Longenecker has opted for descriptive over normative solely on the criterion of conformity to respectable twentieth-century exegetical methodology.⁹⁴

The second problem is that by not following the pattern of apostolic interpretation we actually fail to follow the pattern that was laid down for them by our Lord. As Longenecker himself says,

⁹²McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 68.

⁹³Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis, 219-20.

⁹⁴Not strictly concerned with hermeneutics, but more so with homiletics, Donald E. Gowan, in a book which is attempts to restore the Old Testament to use in Christian preaching (Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit [Atlanta: John Knox, 1980], 145-46), suggests that the Psalms should be prayed, not preached; but then, after noting that sermons on the Psalms do occur in the book of Acts, says that "This attitude appears as early as the New Testament itself, but nonetheless it must be questioned on form critical principles." Evidently the apostles are not good homiletical models either. I do not know whether Sidney Greidanus was specifically thinking of Gowan, but he addresses this issue in The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 19.

The authority of Christ undergirds the doctrine and practice of the earliest Christians, and is reflected throughout the New Testament. Convinced of his Messiahship and Lordship, the early believers began with Jesus as the "certain and known quantity." And in him they witnessed a creative handling of the Scriptures which became for them both the source of their own understanding and the paradigm for their own exegesis of the Old Testament.⁹⁵

But by admitting this, Longenecker actually undermines his argument in regard to the apostles' "revelatory" interpretation, for he suggests here that their exegesis was not so much revelatory as it was patterned interpretation, with our Lord himself providing the pattern.⁹⁶ Instead, I believe that S. Lewis Johnson has drawn the more correct conclusion based on the data:

I propose that the exegetical methods of the biblical authors are valid for interpreters today. And, furthermore, though we cannot claim the infallibility for our interpretations that the biblical authors could, since they were inspired authors, we must follow their methods. Since they are reliable teachers of biblical doctrine, they are also reliable teachers of hermeneutical and exegetical procedures.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis, 51; also, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, SBT 2d ser. 17 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1970), 9.

⁹⁶Douglas A. Oss ("The Interpretation of the 'Stone' Passages by Peter and Paul: A Comparative Study," JETS 32 (1989): 198-99), also, while placing great value on the New Testament authors' methods, still says, "It would be ungrounded to claim normative status for something that is taught only at the descriptive level and not taught elsewhere in propositional form." I believe, however, that this objection does not fully reckon with the normativeness of the apostles' exegesis, when the pattern for that exegesis was received from the Lord himself.

⁹⁷S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 83.

Patrick Fairbairn also took this view:

For there can be no doubt that the manner in which our Lord and his apostles understood and applied the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was as much intended to throw light generally on the principles of interpretation, as to administer instruction on the specific points for the sake of which they were more immediately appealed to.⁹⁸

To return to a point I made at the beginning of this section, it is only by making the pattern of apostolic interpretation a vital part of our hermeneutical methodology that we may fully claim that our exegesis is being done within the context of the whole Church of Jesus Christ and that we ourselves are at one with the apostles in the interpretation and preaching of the Christian faith. As Beale says,

If the contemporary church cannot exegete and do theology like the apostles did, how can it feel corporately at one with them in the theological process? If a radical hiatus exists between the interpretive method of the NT and ours today, then the study of the relationship of the OT and the NT from the apostolic perspective is something to which the church has little access. Furthermore, if Jesus and the apostles were impoverished in their exegetical and theological method and only divine inspiration salvaged their conclusions, then the intellectual and apologetic foundation of our faith is seriously eroded.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Cited in S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Response to `Patrick Fairbairn and Biblical Hermeneutic as Related to the Quotations of the Old Testament in the New,'" in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II, ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 792.

⁹⁹G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," Themelios 14 (1989): 94. For others who are generally agreed with this position, see T. W. Manson, "The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus," BJRL 34 (1952): 332; David S. Dockery, "Typological Exegesis: Moving Beyond Abuse and Neglect," in Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle, ed. G. L. Klein (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 174-75; Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "Problems of Messianic Interpretation," CTM 35 (1964): 573; McCartney and

Having now declared where my loyalties lie, it is still necessary, however, to make just a few qualifications that may seem to take me out of the "total acceptance" and place me in the "guardedly positive" camp. But this is only apparently so.

First, as already mentioned in the quotes from S. Lewis Johnson, we cannot claim infallibility for interpretations that we ourselves make in following the apostolic pattern, as can the apostles. Their witness is, indeed, uniquely revelatory. But, lest this be seen as a concession to the argument that we cannot follow their pattern, it must be strenuously insisted upon, that our historical-grammatical interpretations are no less fallible, and perhaps even more so. Interpretations that follow the apostolic pattern and appear to be in accord with the general tenor of the New Testament teaching, are to be regarded as more canonically faithful than interpretations that are, perhaps, more historically-grammatically oriented but depart from New Testament teaching.

Second, following the apostolic pattern of exegesis does not mean that we are confined to this pattern. The apostles did not necessarily think in historical-grammatical terms.¹⁰⁰

Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 67-71. In agreement, but more guardedly so, are Pinnock, The Scripture Principle, 44-45; and E. Earle Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity, WUNT 18 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 172.

¹⁰⁰Though I do not necessarily agree with Dan G. McCartney

The apostles are infallible in their interpretation, but not omniscient. Therefore, we may use all the tools that are available to us, including the many critical disciplines that have arisen in the last two centuries. However, they may not be used in ways that conflict with the authoritative pattern of New Testament exegesis.

Third, I readily concede that the New Testament authors did not leave us a hermeneutics textbook. So, to a certain extent, there is measure of subjectivity and speculation in actually ascertaining just what the apostolic methods were. But this concession is as far from supporting the thesis that we should not try to emulate their exegesis, as the fact that there are no systematic theologies in the New Testament should keep us from trying to ascertain what the theology of the New Testament is. I would suggest that there are as many clues in the New Testament as to how to interpret the Old Testament, as there are clues to the Christology or the Pneumatology of the New Testament.

Finally, I need to stress just how distant this approach is from that of James Sanders in "ferreting out the unrecorded hermeneutics"¹⁰¹ that supposedly lie, not in, but in between,

when he says that they did not think in these terms "at all" ("The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate, ed. Harvie M. Conn [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 102-3).

¹⁰¹James A. Sanders, Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia, 1984), 50-51. See the discussion in chapter 3.

the lines of the Bible. Rather, this is an approach that seeks to faithfully correlate the teaching of the biblical writers with their exegetical methodology--not one that seeks, in digging out the unrecorded hermeneutics that lie between the lines, to oppose those hermeneutics to the teaching of the lines themselves.

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that it must be done in conformity to the pattern which the Lord of the canon himself used and imparted to his apostles, who, in turn, used it to interpret the Old Testament in the writing of the New.¹⁰²

Thesis Number Thirteen:
Christ's Canon Is to Be Interpreted in the
Light of Its Canonical Unity

The Christo-canonical approach takes seriously the view of biblical canon as the one unified discourse of the one God. It denies that the unity of the Scriptures comes from the divine author, while their diversity comes from their human authors, but affirms that both come from God, who is, in himself, unity and diversity. It recognizes, at least in theory, the possibility of theology as discourse analysis. It

¹⁰²It is very strange that in a recent hermeneutics textbook, which is far better than most in many ways (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Biblical Interpretation), the authors would exclaim concerning the New Testament writers, "Certainly they use the OT in ways that we do not recommend to students today!" (p. 131). Perhaps that is why they only "concede" that Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 has "validity, though not in the same historically defensible way," the way, which for them, has the greatest authority (p. 149).

asserts that God has progressively revealed himself in biblical canon so that the first word must be interpreted in the light of the last word. The last word is both the best word and, by virtue of being the last word, the all-decisive word for interpretation. Therefore, this approach affirms that the Old Testament must be understood in the light of the New Testament, and that the New Testament has "priority in 'unpacking' the meaning of the Old Testament."¹⁰³

Perhaps no other idea associated with the phrase "canonical approach" is called to mind so much as that of reading any one part of the Scriptures in the light of the whole canon. And the Christo-canonical approach affirms this idea. But it does so for different reasons than some of the recent advocates of canonical approaches have suggested. It is not because the biblical canon is that body of writings which has shaped and been shaped by the community, but because it is that body of writings in which God authoritatively speaks and reveals himself.¹⁰⁴ And it believes that God, more

¹⁰³Bruce K. Waltke, "Is it Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" in "Current Religious Thought," Christianity Today, 2 September 1983, 77. Cf. McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 48.

¹⁰⁴Indeed, this has been the understanding, not only of historic Christianity, but of Judaism as well. Cf. Gerald L. Bruns ("Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation," in The Literary Guide to the Bible, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987], 626-27): "As the rabbis, Augustine, and Luther knew, the Bible, despite its textual heterogeneity, can be read as a self-glossing book. One learns to study it by following the ways in which one portion of the text illumines another. The generation of scribes who shaped and reshaped the

so than any human author, reserves the right to interpret his own words. There are, however, several major objections to this approach. The purpose of this section is to deal with these objections.

(1) The first objection is that this approach tends toward eisegesis rather than exegesis. Walter Kaiser is, perhaps, the most representative spokesperson for this objection. He maintains that

the whole canon must not be used as the context for every exegesis. . . . the Church at large (since the time of the Reformers especially) is in error when she uses the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) as an exegetical device for extricating from or importing meanings to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth most clearly or perhaps even for the first time. It is a mark of eisegesis, not exegesis, to borrow freight that appears chronologically later in the text and to transport it back and unload it on an earlier passage simply because both or all the passages involved share the same canon."¹⁰⁵

He does allow, however, for the canon as a whole to come into play:

Scriptures appear to have designed them to be studied in just this way."

¹⁰⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 82. For other representative criticisms along this line, not just to the canonical approach per se, but also to previous similar formulations such as analogy of faith, etc., see Elliot E. Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II, ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 425-26; Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 183; Willis Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1905; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 9-10; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 11, 171 (note, however, the at least apparently contradictory statement on p. 123).

There is one place where canonical concerns must be introduced, however. After we have finished our exegetical work of establishing what, indeed, the author of the paragraph or text under consideration was trying to say, then we must go on to set this teaching in its total Biblical context by way of gathering together what God has continued to say on the topic. We should then compare this material with our findings concerning the passage being investigated. But mind this point well: canonical context must appear only as part of our summation and not as part of our exegesis.¹⁰⁶

In other words, with what Kaiser calls his principle of "antecedent theology," or "analogy of antecedent scripture,"¹⁰⁷ canonical concerns do come in, but only at the level of systematic theology.

There are, however, several problems with this objection. First, it fails to reckon sufficiently with the divine authorship of the Scriptures. Elliot Johnson, expressing a view similar to Kaiser's, says, "The interpreter must not confuse his own greater knowledge of a subject with the interpretation of an author's meaning. This is not exegesis but rather eisegesis."¹⁰⁸ But Johnson fails to ask how the interpreter acquired this greater knowledge. If it was acquired by reading the author's later interpretation of his own words, then this is not eisegesis, but exegesis in the truest sense of the word. We must recognize the right of the sovereign God to be his own exegete. As Waltke says, "The Christian doctrine of plenary inspiration of Scripture demands

¹⁰⁶Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology, 83.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 134-40.

¹⁰⁸Johnson, "Author's Intention," 425.

that we allow the Author to tell us at a later time more precisely what he meant in his earlier statements."¹⁰⁹ And as he has said more recently,

The classical rule *sacra scriptura sui ipsius interpres* (the Bible interprets itself)--more specifically, the New interprets the Old--should be accepted by all Christian theologians. Is it not self-evident that the author of Scripture is the final exponent of his own thoughts?¹¹⁰

God has communicated to us in his word, and even as we would do for human authors, so we should do for the divine author and interpret his statements in context. This means that we may conceive of the Bible as one unified discourse.¹¹¹ Again, as Waltke remarks,

The canon constitutes a unified linguistic context. We understand the parts of a linguistic stretch in terms of its larger unities. The words of Scripture are understood with its sentences, its sentences within its paragraphs, its paragraphs within its chapters, its chapters within its books and its books within its canon, and this understanding of the whole work qualifies and modifies our understanding of the smaller parts right down to the individual words. The linguistic unity of Scriptures

¹⁰⁹Waltke, "Is it Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" 77.

¹¹⁰Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 264.

¹¹¹For similar statements, see Ronald E. Clements, Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 23, 152-53; "Monotheism and the Canonical Process," Theology 87 (1984): 337-38; Joseph Coppens, "Levels of Meaning in the Bible," trans. Theodore L. Westow, in How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?, ed. Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan van Iersel, Concilium 30 (New York: Paulist, 1968), 136-37; Daniel Lys, The Meaning of the Old Testament: An Essay on Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 109-10; Norbert Lohfink, The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament, trans. R. A. Wilson (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1968), esp. pp. 37-39 (Lohfink speaks of canonization as "an act of authorship").

calls for an interpretation of its parts within the total canon containing both testaments.¹¹²

Therefore, at least in theory, we may conceive of biblical theology or canonical interpretation as a kind of discourse analysis. I say, "in theory," because, while I am metaphorically borrowing a linguistic term to describe biblical theology and canonical interpretation, I am not suggesting that there is any rigid, as it were, "syntactical" canonical arrangement of the various books. But, at the same time, by saying, "in theory," I am referring to our limitations in understanding the mind of God. That God is the author of the Scriptures means that, in God, the canon, anthological though it is, has a greater coherence than a single work by any human author, though that coherence is not ascertainable to us with our limited tools for doing linguistic analysis.

A second problem with this objection, is the way in which Kaiser allows canonical concerns to come in through the back door, i.e., at the point of systematic theology, with his

¹¹²Bruce K. Waltke, "Historical Grammatical Problems," in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II, ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 122-23; cf. also his "Is it Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" 77; and "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 10. See also, Raju D. Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture--Critical Examination of a Theological Construct," Grace Theological Journal 7 (1986): 81-110. Kunjummen suggests that in the light of the biblical books all having one common author, God, that "one may justifiably speak of the intrinsic genre of Scripture as a whole" (p. 94).

principle of "antecedent theology" after the exegetical work has been done. The difficulty here, however, is determining just when this "after" is, and at what point we can declare that the exegetical work has been done. The very first time that an interpreter reads a passage of Scripture exegetical work is being done. How many more times must it then be read before the "after" is allowed to take place? Is a Christian really supposed to keep reading the passage, bracketing out his or her Christianity and knowledge that the passage is part of the larger discourse of the Lord? At what point may the Christian read the passage as a Christian in obedience to the Lord? Is the Christian really supposed to keep reading the passage "as if the New Testament did not exist"?¹¹³ As Sloan says in reference to a historical naivety that would try to read the Old Testament as if the New had not been written, "You cannot 'unread' a story. You can only read it again."¹¹⁴ On purely hermeneutical grounds, Kaiser's "after" is deficient in failing to recognize the existence of the hermeneutical spiral. But on theological grounds, it is deficient in failing to recognize the authority of Christ over the process of interpretation.

¹¹³The way in which John L. McKenzie tried to write his Old Testament theology (A Theology of the Old Testament [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974], 319); cf. the criticism of McKenzie in M. J. Evans, "The Old Testament as Christian Scripture," Vox Evangelica 16 (1986): 27-28.

¹¹⁴Sloan, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 156.

Again, it is important to keep in mind that I am working with a concept of canon that regards biblical canon as a manifestation of the divine Author's authority over his people. If that is so, it is illegitimate to say, as Kaiser does, that "canonical context must appear only as part of our summation and not as part of our exegesis." For that is to say that Christ is Lord over one part of our hermeneutical endeavors, but not over another. Rather, Christ is Lord of the whole process.

(2) A second objection to the canonical approach is that it flattens out the revelation contained in the Bible, that it tries to make the whole canon say the same thing in all its parts, and that it effectively takes the "progress" out of "progressive" revelation. Again, Kaiser is the spokesperson here:

In no case should a later doctrine be used as an exegetical tool to unlock an earlier passage. That would be an extremely serious methodological mistake, for, in effect, all revelation would then be leveled out. Virtually every passage dealing with a particular topic would end up saying almost the same thing as the latest revelation of God on that topic.¹¹⁵

And if someone should respond to this objection by saying that this later doctrine is taught in the New Testament passages, then Kaiser answers:

Should someone plead, "but that is a biblical sense which can be shown from another passage to be fully scriptural," we will reply, "Then let us go to that passage for that

¹¹⁵Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology, 161-62.

teaching rather than transporting it to odd locations in earlier parts of the canon."¹¹⁶

The simple response to Kaiser on this point, however, is that the New Testament itself is exegeting the earlier texts; the New Testament itself bids us to go back to the "odd locations" and read the texts and interpret them in the light of the full canon.

At the same time, I admit that there is a real danger here. Though I believe that the New Testament is a legitimate guide to the understanding of the Old, I, too, believe that we must be careful not to make them to be saying the same thing. God has done a new thing in Christ, and the last word is not the same as the first word. There is a radical discontinuity between "God spoke to our forefathers at many times and in various ways" and "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2). But we must also recognize that there is a radical continuity as well. In both statements it is God who speaks, and the Son by whom he speaks in the New Testament is the same son "through whom he made the universe" (Heb 1:2) in the Old Testament. Or, to import an "antecedent Scripture" (Genesis 1) into our understanding of the Hebrews passage, we may say that in these last days God has "spoken" to us by his Son, the very same Son by whom he "spoke" the

¹¹⁶Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "A Response to 'Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation,'" in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II, ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 445.

universe into existence.¹¹⁷ If this is the case, then we must recognize the radical continuity that exists between the first word and the last word. At the same time, continuity is not identity. I am in no way suggesting that the last word is identical to the first word. If an author's later words were identical to his earlier words, then there would be no need for them to be spoken. But it does mean that the earlier words may not be understood in abstraction from the discourse as if the later words had not been spoken.

In this connection it is important to reiterate what I said in the first paragraph of this section. The Christocanonical approach denies that the unity of the Scriptures comes from the divine author, while their diversity comes from their human authors, but affirms that both come from God, who is in himself unity and diversity. Or, to put it another way, Scripture's discontinuity, as well as its continuity, is a result of its divine authorship. The diversity and discontinuity, as well as the unity and continuity, are part of the divine intention of the author.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments does not

¹¹⁷As said Hugo of St. Victor: "The whole divine Scripture is one book, and this one book is Christ" (cited in Lohfink, The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament, 51).

¹¹⁸On this point I am indebted to Vern S. Poythress, Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1987), 48-51. See also, Douglas A. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," Grace Theological Journal 9 (1988): 107.

constitute a reason why we may not read the Old Testament through the eyes of the New.

(3) A third objection is that the New Testament writers themselves do not provide a paradigm for us to follow, that they did not read canonically, but atomistically and non-contextually. Amidst all the debate concerning the so-called "testimonia" or testimony "books," there began to be in the middle part of this century a higher regard than previously held regarding the New Testament writers' respect for context.¹¹⁹ There was reaction to this, however, and various authors responded by maintaining that the New Testament writers had no real regard for the original historical context.¹²⁰ While Childs's program of canonical analysis does

¹¹⁹Rendel Harris, Testimonies, 2 parts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916, 1920); C. H. Dodd, The Old Testament in the New, FBBS 3 (London: Athlone, 1952; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963) 1952); According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology (London: James Nisbet, 1952; repr., London and Glasgow: Collins, Fontana Books, 1965); S. L. Edgar, "Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament," NTS 9 (1962): 55-62 (Edgar's thesis was that whereas the apostles often showed complete disregard for original context, those quotations which could be reasonably believed as attributable to Christ himself showed profound respect for context); E. Earle Ellis, Paul's Use of the Old Testament (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957); R. Rendall, "Quotation in Scripture as an Index of a Wider Reference," EvQ 36 (1964): 214-21.

¹²⁰R. T. Mead, "A Dissenting Opinion about Respect for Context in Old Testament Quotations," NTS 10 (1964): 279-89 (this article is written in reaction to the one by Edgar mentioned in the previous footnote); A. C. Sundberg, Jr., "On Testimonies," NovT 3 (1959): 268-81; George V. Pixley, "Awareness of Literary Context in Early Christian Use of the Psalms" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 1968); James Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, 142-43. For a more recent statement of this position, see Lee Martin McDonald, The Formation of the

not stand or fall based on whether or not the New Testament writers had regard for the historical context of their Old Testament citations, there was the general supposition that the canonical approach would have seen them as having greater regard. But, indeed, Barr faulted the canonical approach on this very issue, repeating his earlier position that the New Testament writers paid little attention to historical context:

For any kind of strictly canonical principle of exegesis the interrelation of Old and New Testaments must be of great importance, and if the New Testament failed to see things "canonically" that must be a serious objection to any attempt to maintain that the canon is central.¹²¹

And James Sanders reported that

In a genuine effort to test Childs' thesis, and with the hope he was right, my students and I thought precisely of the above kinds of hypotheses about the composition of the NT, and proceeded to probe in that direction. But in no case did it work out in Childs' favor. Certainly there was evidence that some NT writers sometimes thought in larger terms than isolated passages: C. H. Dodd had shown that in According to Scripture [sic] . . . But it is not the same.¹²²

Thus, even an apparent ally in canonical analysis declared that "very few tradents, if any, read Scripture in the way Childs theorizes."¹²³ And, indeed, Childs, who at one time had placed some emphasis on the importance of seeing a certain

Christian Biblical Canon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 66.

¹²¹James Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 82.

¹²²James A. Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," HBT 2 (1980): 189.

¹²³Ibid., 188-89.

respect for context in New Testament citations of the Old,¹²⁴ seems now, himself, to have abandoned this category as having substantial significance for biblical theology (and I take it, canonical analysis).¹²⁵

That the New Testament writers must have made their Old Testament citations with special regard for the original historical context is not necessarily inherent to the Christocanonical approach. However, in conjunction with the last thesis (number five, that the New Testament canon is paradigmatic for hermeneutic methodology) I do believe it can be shown that the New Testament writers did not make their citations of the Old Testament with disregard for context. I agree with Beale when he says,

I remain convinced that once the hermeneutical and theological presuppositions of the NT writers are considered, there are no clear examples where they have developed a meaning from the OT which is inconsistent or contradictory to some aspect of the original OT intention.¹²⁶

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to make a taxonomic investigation of all New Testament citations of Old Testament passages to see whether or not historical context has been respected. In Part Three, in connection with Psalm

¹²⁴Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 114-18.

¹²⁵Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 76.

¹²⁶Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts?" 92.

129, we will examine one very much disputed passage in this regard. But let me suggest finally in regard to this objection, that perhaps the problem so many scholars have in this area, is not the New Testament writers' lack of regard for original context, but rather the scholars' failure to recognize that the New Testament authors were capable of connecting more contexts than the scholars give them credit. Poythress writes in this regard,

I would claim that the NT authors characteristically do not aim merely at grammatical-historical exegesis of the OT. If we expect this of them, we expect something too narrow and with too exclusively a scholarly interest. The NT authors are not scholars but church leaders. They are interested in showing how OT passages apply to the church and to the NT situation. Hence, when they discuss an OT text, they consider it in the light of the rest of the OT, in the light of the events of salvation that God has accomplished in Christ, and in the light of the teaching of the Jesus himself during his earthly life. They bring all this knowledge to bear on their situation, in the light of all that they know about that situation. In this process they are not concerned, as scholars would be, to distinguish with nicety all the various sources that contribute to their understanding. Both they and their readers typically presuppose the context of later revelation. Hence, what they say using an OT passage may not always be based on the OT text alone, but on relations that the text has with this greater context.¹²⁷

In other words, the problem is not with the New Testament authors' lack of regard for the original historical

¹²⁷Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," WTJ 48 (1986): 276-77. Interestingly enough, the following quotation from James Barr is quite similar (Old and New in Interpretation, 27): "In this respect the Old Testament material relates itself to Christ not so much through the meanings directly intended by the original writers of passages, but through the combinations and alterations which these meanings produce when they are associated with other elements under the conditions which actually obtained in post-biblical Judaism."

context. The problem is with our modern-day failure to recognize what the New Testament authors understood: that the original historical context is not the only context for determining the meaning of a passage. Nor is it even the most important context: that honor goes to the canon.¹²⁸

(4) The last objection to be considered is that this approach, in particular, the idea that the Old Testament must be read in the light of the New, comes into conflict with another tenet of the canonical approach, that there is no canon within the canon. How can we say that the New Testament is the final word, the last word, the best word, the determinative word, and yet avoid saying that it, therefore, constitutes for us a canon within the canon? This is a considerable objection, so much so for Childs that he is very reluctant to even speak about progressive revelation for fear that it would give the New Testament a "higher normative value."¹²⁹

Curiously enough, this objection is actually the flip side of the second objection mentioned above. There, the problem was that the canonical approach tended to flatten everything out so that there was no actual progress in

¹²⁸Contra Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Biblical Interpretation, 11, 98, 132, 149-50.

¹²⁹Mark G. Brett, Biblical Criticism in Crisis?: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 28-29, referring to Child's Exodus commentary, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 495-96.

revelation; here the problem is that the approach seems to give the New Testament pride of place in canonical interpretation. It looks as if canonical interpreters want to have their cake and eat it too.

I admit that there is a certain measure of validity to this charge, but I would want to argue that this measure is more apparent than real. The New Testament, by its very position as the end point in God's revelation, has, as do the final words of any discourse, priority in unpacking the meaning of earlier statements. However, this does not mean that the Old Testament does not have a similar function in regard to the New. Sometimes, it is the final words of a discourse that are misunderstood because the hearer fails to relate them to earlier statements. Not only does a speaker have the right to say to those who have misunderstood some of the earlier parts of a discourse, "Didn't you hear what I said at the end?" but the speaker also has the right to say to those who have misunderstood the later parts, "Didn't you hear what I said at the beginning?" Jesus himself, in a manner, does this very thing. On the one hand, he could say, "Are you still standing around waiting for Elijah? He has already been here. Didn't you see him?" (Matt 11:14-15, considerably paraphrased). But on the other hand, he could say "If you were a little more familiar with your Old Testament, you would know more about me" (John 5:39-40, also considerably paraphrased).

What I am arguing for here is the necessity of seeing the relationship between the Old and New Testaments as one that is bi-directional. While it is certainly true that the Old Testament must be understood in light of the New, it is also important that the New Testament be understood in light of the Old. It is not just that we may understand the Old Testament better because of Jesus, but also that we may understand Jesus better in light of the Old Testament.¹³⁰ Usually when this kind of sentiment is expressed, the Old Testament → New Testament direction is thought of simply in terms of background.¹³¹ But I am suggesting a relationship which is much more substantial, one in which the Old Testament provides content and substance which may truly be said to be interpretive for reading the New Testament. I am willing to

¹³⁰Thus, James Luther Mays ("Prayer and Christology: Psalm 22 as Perspective on the Passion," TToday 42 [1985-86]: 323) after remarking that we may understand Psalm 2 in terms of Jesus, then says, "But the canonical relation between passion narrative and psalm invites us also to undertake to understand Jesus in terms of the psalm, that is, to view him through the form and language of this prayer. That would be to follow the example of the apostles and evangelists by using the psalm as a hermeneutical context." See also, his "Historical and Canonical: Recent Discussion about the Old Testament and the Christian Faith," in Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory G. Ernest Wright, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 512-13.

¹³¹Cf. the recent article by George Sabra ("The Old Testament in Twentieth-Century Western Theology," Theological Review 13/1 [1992]: 17-34), where, after reviewing several adjectives that potentially describe the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament ("accidental," "antithetical," "preparatory," "identical"), he opts for a relationship of "alongsidedness," correctly recognizing, I believe, that "preparatory" is not sufficiently descriptive of this relationship.

accept Norman Wright's statement that "the Old Testament has the authority that an earlier act of the play would have, no more, no less,"¹³² as long as it is also understood that the following statement is consequent: "The New Testament has the authority that a later act of the play would have, no more, no less." Furthermore, it is essential to understand both the earlier and later acts as coming from the hand of the same author.

On the one hand, it is to be recognized that the New Testament does, in a measure, relativize certain portions of the Old Testament (dietary laws, sacrificial system, etc.). But, on the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the New Testament still recognizes the authority of the Old Testament and nowhere considers itself as having become its replacement. Unlike a merely human author, who may revise his or her thinking in later writings, so that scholars have to talk about, say, the "early Barth" and the "later Barth," the divine author who speaks in the Old and New Testaments is not to be spoken of as the "early God" and the "late God." He reserves the right to relativize earlier statements, which is simply, as I see it, little more than contextualizing and accommodating his message, but he nowhere repudiates them. The Old and New Testaments together constitute the one biblical canon for the people of God.

¹³²Norman T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" Vox Evangelica 21 (1991): 19.

There are two things that must be underscored before closing discussion on this particular thesis. First, it is important to note just how much the Old Testament really is a different book when not read in light of the New Testament. As Waltke observes, those who read the Old Testament in the light of the New worship in churches; those who do not, worship in synagogues.¹³³ Baker correctly notes that

a correct Christological interpretation of the Old Testament is essential to justify the existence of Christianity, because it was precisely the Jews' different Christological interpretation of their scriptures that led them to execute Jesus for blasphemy and persecute his followers.¹³⁴

And as VanGemenen comments, "The OT must be read in the light of Jesus' coming. The interpreter of the OT who does so must come to different conclusions than those of the rabbis."¹³⁵ This does not mean, as Rendtorff suggests, that reading the Old Testament in the light of the New inevitably leads to the assumption that "the Hebrew Bible had no meaning at all before Christianity appeared."¹³⁶ But it does mean that the Old

¹³³Bruce Waltke, class notes for the course "Psalms," Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986-87. Cf. similar statements in Waltke, "Historical Grammatical Problems," 123-24; Lohfink, The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament, 44.

¹³⁴David Baker, "Interpreting Texts in the Context of the Whole Bible," Themelios n.s. 5/2 (1980): 23.

¹³⁵Willem A. VanGemenen, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II)," WTJ 45 (1983): 270.

¹³⁶Rolf Rendtorff, "Must 'Biblical Theology' be Christian Theology?" BibRev 4/3 (1988): 42; cf. W. E. Lemke, "Is Old Testament Theology an Essentially Christian Theological Discipline?" HBT 11 (1989): 59.

Testament must mean something different to the Christian than it does to others who do not read it through the lens of the New Testament, and that the Christian must regard the New Testament as only rightly read when it is read in connection with the New Testament as one complete story, the Old Testament being, therefore, incomplete without the New.¹³⁷

On the one hand, James Barr would deny this. In arguing that exegeses of Old Testament passages, whether they occur in churches or synagogues, should not necessarily be any different, he remarks,

An objection which has sometimes been raised to suggestions such as I have made here is that they would lead to a Christian preaching identical with synagogue preaching. I find it very hard to take this objection seriously. . . . one may ask whether there is anything in principle against a synagogue sermon anyway. If Jesus went to worship in the synagogue, why should Christians object to a kind of interpretation which will be comparable at points to what is possible also in the synagogue?¹³⁸

But even Barr has to admit that the Old Testament, understood on its own without the New Testament, leads to a different interpretation:

If the authority of the Old Testament had been absolute and final, does it not irretrievably mean that the "Jews" of John 10:33 were in the right, and indeed only doing

¹³⁷Cf. D. Moody Smith, Jr., "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring, ed. James M. Efird (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 39; Lawrence E Toombs, The Old Testament in Christian Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 27. From a Jewish perspective, see Jon Levenson's discussion in The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism, 27-28.

¹³⁸Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, 154.

their duty, in stoning Jesus "because you, being a man, make yourself God"?¹³⁹

And despite Barr's remarks about Jesus' attendance at synagogue worship, we must remember what happened the one time that it is recorded for us that he actually preached a sermon there from an Old Testament text (Luke 4:14-30). The Christian has no choice, in obedience to her Lord, but to read the Old Testament as the book of Christ.

Second, it is important to note that this principle, that any one part of Scripture must be read in the light of the whole canon, has important implications in regard to our theological reflections. In particular, it is important to note that no New Testament writer was able, as we are today, to do hermeneutical work in the light of the whole canon. Vern Poythress, who is in essential agreement with the canonical approach, suggests that "none of the human authors except the very last can survey the entire product in order to arrive at an interpretation of the whole."¹⁴⁰ While Poythress's statement might seem to be the logical deduction to draw from the canonical process, I think that a couple of additional factors need to be considered. First, can we really be sure that the very last author of a New Testament book was totally aware of the rest of the New Testament canon? While this is of course possible, it would be hard to

¹³⁹James Barr, The Scope and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 118.

¹⁴⁰Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 263.

demonstrate, and given the conditions of the early Church and the times in which it began, is rather unlikely. But, even if it could be demonstrated that the last New Testament author was aware of the rest of the New Testament canon, I think we must conclude that even he was not able to arrive at an interpretation of the whole. It is only after the last book has been added to the canon and the canon finally completed, that anyone could have been in a position to interpret any one part of Scripture in the light of the whole. In other words, we do not have anywhere in the New Testament an interpretation of an Old Testament passage in the light of the entire canon of Scripture as we have it today; so in a very real sense, we have a better view of the whole than did any New Testament author. The logical implication of this for the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, is that in the light of our better view of the entire canon, we may be in a position to come to a fuller understanding of the whole than the New Testament writers themselves. Can we go this far? Is this not what theology is all about? This is not to claim that our theology is any more correct, but it may mean that it is more complete.

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that it must be done in the light of the whole canon of Scripture, realizing that he who is the Lord of the canon speaks to us authoritatively in all its parts.

Thesis Number Fourteen:
Christ's Canon Is a "Fuller Sense"

The Christo-canonical approach asserts that biblical canon, as canon of Christ, is, by virtue of its divine authorship, a *sensus plenior*. It does not so much argue that there is a divine *sensus plenior* in the text of Scripture, as that the text of Scripture is a *sensus brevior* of the Word of God. It postulates, not so much isolated cases of *sensus plenior* in the Old Testament, but rather, that at every point the human text of Scripture is a *sensus brevior* of the divinely intended meaning.

I take my starting point for this discussion from a statement by William Sanford LaSor: "Something like a *sensus plenior* is required by many portions of Scripture, possibly by all of Scripture."¹⁴¹ In this statement, even though qualified with the word "possibly," I believe LaSor has really come to heart of the matter in regards to *sensus plenior*. The Word of God is fuller than the text of Scripture, not only in some places, but in every place. This statement is analogous to Barth's famous formulation that at every point the Bible is a witness to the Word of God and yet, at the same time, a fallible word of man. As opposed to trying to separate out what in the Bible were fallible human words and what were infallible divine words, Barth simply declared that at every point we are confronted with a fallible human witness to the

¹⁴¹William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," TynBul 29 (1978): 59.

divine Word. Where the analogy breaks down, however, is in Barth's apparent assumption that fallibility is an ontological component in humanness. Whereas I fully agree that "limitation" and "finiteness" are words that describe man as he is ontologically, I deny that "fallibility" is also such a word. "Fallibility" is ontologically predicated of the fallen human nature, not of human nature as it came from God. So to improve on Barth's formulation, I would suggest that at every point in biblical canon, we have simultaneously the infinite word of God and the finite, limited word of man. At every point in the text there is an infinite gap between what the human author meant and what the divine author meant. This gap is neither reduced nor substantially altered depending on whether the text is one which is verbally dictated by God to the human author with little or no input from the latter, or one in which the human author was a full participant in the actual formulation of the thoughts and words.

This is not, of course, the traditional view of what a *sensus plenior* is. As defined, by Raymond Brown, it is

the deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, that is seen to exist in the words of Scripture when they are studied in the light of further revelation or of development in the understanding of revelation.¹⁴²

¹⁴²Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," *JBC*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 616 (emphasis Brown's).

Though originally the *sensus plenior* was pretty much regarded as being a Roman Catholic formulation,¹⁴³ many evangelicals have also adopted the term to describe their own positions to a greater or lesser extent.¹⁴⁴ For the most part, the only functional difference between the Catholic and Evangelical uses of the term is that the Catholic would say that in addition to the revelation whereby the New Testament authors

¹⁴³For the history of the use of the term and concept, see Raymond E. Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior* of Sacred Scripture" (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary's University, 1955); "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," CBO 15 (1953): 141-62; "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," CBO 25 (1963): 262-85; cf. Coppens, "Levels of Meaning in the Bible," 125-39. For Catholic reaction against the idea of *sensus plenior*, see Rudolph Bierberg, "Does Scripture Have a *Sensus Plenior*?" CBO 10 (1948): 182-95; Bruce Vawter, "The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations," CBO 26 (1964:) 85-96; Biblical Inspiration (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 115. For a Protestant, but non-Evangelical perspective, see James M. Robinson, "Scripture and Theological Method: A Protestant Study in *Sensus Plenior*," CBO 27 (1965): 6-27.

¹⁴⁴See David S. Dockery, Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 176-78; S. Lewis Johnson, The Old Testament in the New, 49-51; William Sanford LaSor, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 49-60; "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*"; McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 153-58; Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 179-211, 397-405; Douglas A. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," Grace Theological Journal 9 (1988): 105-27; "The Interpretation of the `Stone' Passages by Peter and Paul: A Comparative Study," JETS 32 (1989): 199; James I. Packer, "Biblical Authority, Hermeneutics and Inerrancy," in Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971), 148.

were able to perceive it, a *sensus plenior* could also be discovered by church tradition or post-apostolic revelation. Evangelicals, on the other hand, whether they actually adopt the term, or only liken their hermeneutical ideas to it, are usually careful to specify that the *sensus plenior* only exists within the canon of Scripture itself.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, a *sensus plenior*, as used by an evangelical, whether it is so stated or not, usually simply means an interpretation of any one passage in the light of the whole canon, i.e., a canonical interpretation (hence the title of Oss's article: "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics").¹⁴⁶ What I am emphasizing, in addition to this usual evangelical formulation, is just how pervasive this *sensus plenior* really is. McCartney and Clayton declare that "since the NT writers do not cover everything in the OT, we may expect large areas where the typology or *sensus plenior* has not been stated explicitly in the NT."¹⁴⁷ What I am doing here is going beyond this and asserting that this is the case for the entire Old Testament.

¹⁴⁵LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," 59-50; "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," 275; McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 328 n. 14; Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," 106-7; Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 273 (n. 25), 276; Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," 8; "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 284.

¹⁴⁶Oss states as much on p. 107: "*Sensus plenior*, here defined, refers to the recognition of the canon of scripture as a single and unified literary work."

¹⁴⁷McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 157.

To discuss all the arguments for and against the *sensus plenior*, as it is used among Catholics, Evangelicals, or as I am proposing here, is beyond the scope of what I can accomplish in this section and, again, would require another dissertation. Rather, what I will do is list the reasons why this perspective on *sensus plenior* is so important for the Christo-canonical approach to the Scriptures and, in particular, to the Old Testament and Psalms.

(1) First of all, this point is important in reinforcing the earlier thesis (number two) in regard to the need for hermeneutical humility. This idea, that the real meaning of the text is always infinitely more than the text itself, should cause the would-be interpreter a great deal of humility before the Lord of the canon. This is especially important in light of the vast amount of both scholarly and popular literature which abounds on any given book or passage of Scripture. It is this abundance of literature which effectively keeps seminaries, despite the constant cries to do so, from collapsing the Old and New Testament departments into one. And if the seminary is large enough, it is ideal to hire several professors in each department who can complement each other with specializations in Pentateuch, poetry, prophecy, Gospels, Paul, different critical methodologies, etc. On the one hand, this need to specialize should humble the professor as he or she realizes that the literature in the larger field of the two Testaments is so enormous. On the other hand, the

need to specialize can lead scholars to take themselves too seriously and actually believe that they are specialists and masters in their field. We need to remind ourselves frequently that the literature in our respective areas deals, for the most part, with the grammatical-historical meaning of the texts as they come from the human author, and does not exhaust even this area, much less the meaning the text has in the mind of God.

(2) Second, this thesis is critical for a right perspective on the question of whether or not the human and divine meanings of the text are to be equated. The simple answer, in the light of this thesis that I am proposing, is: "Of course not!" The gap between the human and divine meanings of the text is as wide as every other gap between creator and creature. Therefore the hermeneutical goal cannot be simply to understand the words of the text as the original human author and his intended audience would have understood them; rather, the hermeneutical goal must be to know God and his Christ. And this cannot be achieved by merely paying attention to the historical-grammatical meaning of the text, the only meaning of which the human author was aware. The hermeneutical goal must be to press on beyond what the human author may have meant to know as much as possible of the mind of God. As opposed to one of the most recent textbooks on hermeneutics, we must not be content with the suggestion that "the goal of hermeneutics" is

the meaning the biblical writers "meant" to communicate at the time of the communication, at least to the extent that those intentions are recoverable in the texts they produced,¹⁴⁸

or, that

The meaning of a text is: that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers.¹⁴⁹

This is simply too restricted a goal, given the fact that God means infinitely more than the human author could possibly have meant.¹⁵⁰

Aside from all the problems that exist in even equating the meaning of a text with its human author's intention, such as the necessity entailed in this view to predicate of the human authors that they were fully conscious of all the complexities of their thought processes, conscious and unconscious, that went into their utterances and writings,¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 108.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 133.

¹⁵⁰This point completely mitigates the question posed by Jack R. Riggs ("The 'Fuller Meaning' of Scripture: A Hermeneutical Question for Evangelicals," Grace Theological Journal 7 [1986]: 226): "If the human writers wrote beyond what they knew, then has not divine revelation ceased to be a disclosure or unveiling?" That God has revealed himself is not at issue; the issue is whether he has "fully" done so in such a way that the meaning of what God says is exhausted by a grammatical-historical investigation of the text. The question also ignores Scripture's simultaneous concealing function, that God has also "hidden" himself in Scripture.

¹⁵¹For an excellent presentation of the difficulties here, see Philip B. Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," JETS 20 (1977): 243-52. Interestingly, all the reasons that Payne gives as to why meaning

there are major problems with trying to equate the human and divine intentions in the utterances and writings of the Scriptures. Most important is that the human author simply could not have been aware of all the implications and applications that the divine author has for the text.¹⁵² It could be answered in objection here, that this approach to the problem blurs the crucial difference between meaning and significance. This is the major objection of Walter Kaiser, building on the work of E. D. Hirsch.¹⁵³ But, as Poythress argues, significance is implied in meaning, if meaning is to be equated with the author's intention, for God "intends" all the significances, implications, and applications of the text. Using Mal 3:8-12 as an example, Poythress contends that

we may say that, in the light of the rest of the Bible, we know that God intends us to apply Malachi to our proportional giving. But if we say that God intends(!)

may not be equated with the human author's intention, are conversely reasons as to exactly why meaning may be equated with the divine author's intention.

¹⁵²Cf. Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," BSac 142 (1985): 308; George Bradford Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 60; Erickson, Evangelical Interpretation, 30; S. Lewis Johnson, The Old Testament in the New, 50.

¹⁵³Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology, 24-40; The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 25-26, 63-66; "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 112-13; E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967). Surprisingly, this is one area where Waltke is in agreement with Kaiser ("A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," 8, 15-16; "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 284); on this point note the criticism of Darrell Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 219, 306, 316 n. 2.

each valid application of Malachi, then in an ordinary sense each valid application is part of God's meaning (=intention), even if it was not immediately in the view of the human author of Malachi. This seems to break down the idea that there is an absolute, pure equation between divine intention and human author's meaning. Divine intention includes more, inasmuch as God is aware of the all the future applications.¹⁵⁴

Doug Oss has also spoken to this issue:

At this point one can be confident that God has foreseen every historical context, every cultural milieu, the societal mores of all generations, and each individual's personal circumstances, and that he intended the Holy Scriptures to be applied to all of them, indeed, that he has placed application within the very nature of the Bible. Application is a dimension of meaning.¹⁵⁵

Thus we cannot, and must not, restrict the meaning of the text to the human author's intention. To do so would be to bring the human knowledge of God's word on to a plane with God's own knowledge.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 246-47. See, also, Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 59. Thomas W. Gillespie argues that even on a purely linguistic level, "to speak of the meaning of a text, therefore, is to speak of its sense and its significance" ("Biblical Authority and Interpretation: The Current Debate on Hermeneutics," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation, ed. Donald K. McKim [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 197).

¹⁵⁵Oss, "Canon as Context," 126. I believe this also effectively counters Elliot Johnson's proposal of "*sensus singular*" and "*referentia plenior*" ("Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 427).

¹⁵⁶As Ramesh P. Richard remarks, "Surely Kaiser has not forgotten that if the divine became human, it does not mean that the human became divine" ("Levels of Biblical Meaning: Methodological Proposals for Scripture Relevance, Part 2," BSac 143 [1986]: 124).

(3) Third, this thesis is critical for understanding the way that the New Testament authors understood and used the Old Testament. It is imperative that we see that the New Testament writers did not restrict their understanding and use of the Old Testament to the human author's intention, but that they pressed on "beyond intentionality."¹⁵⁷ Now it is necessary to keep in mind that this was not always the case. Moo correctly notes that there are instances where the New Testament authors emphasize the human author's understanding of his own words (e.g., Acts 2:25-28).¹⁵⁸ But it is just as important to understand that they often go beyond to a meaning that could not possibly have been in the mind of the human author. In his book, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New, Kaiser attempts to interpret Old Testament passages in such a way that the meaning of the passage in its original context is identical with the use of that same passage in the New Testament. And, quite frankly, his exegeses are really very sound. And yet, as Erickson points out, it is highly unlikely that we would really come to these exegetical results if we did not have some knowledge of how the New Testament authors had used the passages in question.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, what makes Kaiser's exegeses of these passages so sound, is that he

¹⁵⁷Sloan, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 154.

¹⁵⁸Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 204.

¹⁵⁹Erickson, Evangelical Interpretation, 15, 29.

has, in fact, let the New Testament usage of those same passages influence his understanding of them. And this is as it should be. If the hermeneutics of the New Testament authors are to be in any way a guide for us, then it is necessary for us to understand that their perspective on the text was one that did not see itself limited to a simple understanding of the intent of the human author. At the very least we must note that from their perspective, "the text was not used up by a single event."¹⁶⁰ They correctly perceived that God had more to say in the text than the human author did. And they are to be our guides.

(4) Fourth, this understanding is important for a true appreciation of the uniqueness of the Bible. Kaiser, in holding to the single meaning theory, goes to the point of agreeing with Jowett and Barr that the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book.¹⁶¹ But, as McCartney and Clayton point out, "The Bible is no more like 'any other book' than the death of Christ is like any other death."¹⁶² And Erickson notes that these

antisupernaturalist (or at least nonsupernaturalist) assumptions eliminate any meaning conveyed by a divine coauthor of which the human author would not be

¹⁶⁰Snodgrass, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," 416.

¹⁶¹Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 113-14. See, also, a discussion of this idea in Paul R. Noble, "The *Sensus Literalis*: Jowett, Childs, and Barr," *JTS* n.s. 44 (1993): 1-23; and James Barr, "Jowett and the Reading of the Bible 'Like any Other Book,'" *HBT* 4 (1982-83): 1-44.

¹⁶²McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 81.

consciously aware. This also excludes effectively any role for the Holy Spirit in the interpretational process .
 . . .¹⁶³

To treat the Bible like any other book is to regard it as a text whose meaning is fully discernible by our hermeneutical efforts without the aid or illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Christo-canonical approach, by maintaining that at every point the meaning of the words of the text is less than the meaning which exists in the mind of God, preserves the uniqueness of the Scriptures as God's word.

(5) Fifth, this understanding of the difference in meaning between that of the human and divine authors allows the word of God to be indeed word of God for today. As LaSor states,

If the passage that we are studying means nothing more when we have finished than it meant to the original audience, then it has only antiquarian interest. It is not the word of God to us.¹⁶⁴

By saying that this approach allows the word of God to be word of God for us today, I am not adopting the view that in some way the Bible "becomes" the word of God. Rather, I am arguing that the failure to recognize that God's meaning in a text is more than the human author's meaning is, at the same time, a failure to allow the text to have any meaningful significance for the present situation. The human author's intention almost certainly did not include me, but God's intention did,

¹⁶³Erickson, Evangelical Interpretation, 30-31.

¹⁶⁴LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," 50; also, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," 265.

and this is part of the meaning of the text. By suggesting that the human author's meaning in a text is identical to God's meaning, and that it is only recoverable by grammatical-historical interpretation, we are in essence cutting ourselves off from the full meaning of the text as God would have us understand it today. Therefore, I would put this conception under the indictment that Carson pronounces on a host of modern hermeneutical methods: "Yet the most touted hermeneutical approaches today never enable anyone to hear a sure word from God: indeed, they positively preclude such an eventuality."¹⁶⁵

To see that the divine author's intention in the text is infinitely larger than that of the human author allows the text to be personalized and contemporized. Indeed, it was for this very reason, that Alexandria won out for so long over Antioch. Beryl Smalley answers the question as to why the Medieval theological student preferred the Alexandrian method to that of the Antiochenes: "The former satisfied a paramount emotional need and corresponded to a world outlook while the latter struck him as cold and irrelevant."¹⁶⁶ And it is for

¹⁶⁵Donald A. Carson, "Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends," Themelios n.s. 5/2 (1980): 20.

¹⁶⁶Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 19. Cf. Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? 65-67; David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," TToday 37 (1980): 29-30; Norman K. Gottwald, "A History of Biblical Interpretation for Contemporary Baptists," Foundations 10 (1967): 307; Pinnock, The Scripture Principle, 192-93.

this very same reason that nearly two centuries of grammatical-historical, single-meaning exegesis has proved to be practically barren and sterile, because, as Steinmetz put it,

The medieval theory of levels of meaning in the biblical text, with all its undoubted defects, flourished because it is true, while the modern theory of a single meaning, with all its demonstrable virtues, is false.¹⁶⁷

Charles Wood notes that "'understanding a text' may be no single thing at all. What constitutes understanding depends a great deal on the use one wants to make of the text."¹⁶⁸ If this is so, it is important to note that only the idea that God's meaning is more than the human author's makes possible the true appropriation of the text for a host of uses besides that entailed in the mind of the original human author.

In contrast to John Piper, then, who suggests that defining

the meaning of Scripture not in terms of the human author/redactor's intention but rather in terms of God's intention communicated afresh to each new generation through the Scriptures has resulted in a depreciation of

¹⁶⁷Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," 38. See also his "Theology and Exegesis: Ten Theses," in Histoire de l'exegese au XVIIe siecle, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel, Etudes de Philologie et D'Histoire 34 (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1978), 382, in particular, theses 1, 8, and 9. For reaction against Steinmetz, see T. Raymond Hobbs, "Christology and the Study of the Old Testament," in The Christological Foundation for Contemporary Theological Education, ed. Joseph D. Ban (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 28-29.

¹⁶⁸Charles M. Wood, The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 19.

the once-for-all historical particularity of divine revelation,¹⁶⁹

I suggest, instead that defining the meaning of Scripture in terms of the human author/redactor's intention has resulted in a depreciation of God's intention communicated afresh to each new generation.

I must admit, however, that I am somewhat bewildered by Raymond Brown's admission that,

After having written a doctoral dissertation and several articles on the SP [*sensus plenior*], I find that in teaching Sacred Scripture I virtually never mention the SP in class. (When I jokingly told Mgr. Coppens that his students also report that he rarely ever mentions the SP in class, he reminded me that he teaches exegesis and not theology, and that the SP was advocated more for the benefit of the theologian than for the exegete.)¹⁷⁰

Nor can I understand why Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard draw the conclusion that just because Douglas Moo says that "it is important to insist that this `deeper meaning' is based on and compatible with the meaning intended by the human author,"¹⁷¹ that Moo is, therefore, "at a loss, then, to find any usefulness for the approach in the exegete's interpretive work."¹⁷² Rather, the idea that God's word is not just the what the human author meant, but what God means today, makes

¹⁶⁹John Piper, "The Authority and Meaning of the Christian Canon: A Response to Gerald Sheppard on Canon Criticism," JETS 19 (1976): 96.

¹⁷⁰Raymond E. Brown, "The Problems of the `*Sensus Plenior*,'" ETL 43 (1967): 462.

¹⁷¹Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 210.

¹⁷²Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 139 n. 81.

this an intensely practical concept--if for no other reason, than what is to be mentioned in the next point. But I also hope to show just how practical it is in exegeting the Psalms in Part Three.

(6) Sixth, closely related to this last point, this emphasis highlights the intention God had in producing the Old Testament as a book for use by Christ and his followers. I am particularly indebted to the way in which Glenn Olsen has formulated this:

It should be equally obvious that if Jesus is who he claims to be, the Christ, by definition he has the right to explain how God, that is, he, was working in Jewish history to bring the fulfillment now given in himself. He can draw the most surprising, or illuminating, conclusions he wishes from traditional materials. . . . There is no necessity that everything he says about the meaning of the events of Jewish history be limited to what these events signify to the scientific historian.¹⁷³

The entire Old Testament history was constructed, and the Old Testament as a document written, with a view in God's intention to the use to be made of them by his Son and the followers of his Son. This is why van Ruler's idea of the coming of Christ as "an emergency measure that God postponed as long as possible"¹⁷⁴ is inconsistent, not just with the witness of the Old Testament but with that of the New as well, which views the Old Testament as book of Christ (Luke 24:25-

¹⁷³Glenn W. Olsen, "Allegory, Typology, and Symbol: The *Sensus Spiritualis*. Part One: Definitions and Earliest History," *Communio* (US) 4 (1977): 175-76.

¹⁷⁴Arnold A. van Ruler, The Christian Church and the Old Testament, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 69.

27, 45-47; John 5:39; 1 Pet 1:10-12). To anticipate a portion of the argument to be put forward in Part Three, it makes a considerable difference whether we see Jesus merely appropriating the language of the lament psalms, or whether we see that God's intention in inspiring the human author to write these psalms, was that his Son might turn to them for consolation and comfort in his passion. It makes a difference whether we see the Psalms as prayers that we may pray because of the similarity of the psalmist's situation to our own human situation, or see them as the prayers which God inspired the psalmist to write in order that in our corporate solidarity with Christ, the psalms that he turned to in order to find words of both lament and praise, may be our psalms as well. When Paul says that "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4), I believe he was not merely talking about appropriation by the reader, but intention on the part of the divine author. The Old Testament is a book given by the inspiration of God for the use of his Son and all those who are in corporate solidarity with his Son, that is, those who are "in Christ." And that makes this idea that the meaning of the Scriptures is more than just the meaning of the human author an intensely important and practical concept.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this effectively nullifies the argument that the New Testament

authors would not have appealed to this fuller meaning of Scripture for apologetic purposes. Aside from Moo's observation that "we must be careful not to think that methods of proof not convincing to us would necessarily have been equally unconvincing to first-century Jews,"¹⁷⁵ there is, for the point I am stressing now, his even more relevant comment:

Much, if not most, of the use of the Old Testament in the New is designed to assure or convince Christians, for whom the general relevance of the Old Testament for the church was already assumed.¹⁷⁶

So while there may be some truth to the claim that a "fuller meaning" type of exegesis cannot be used apologetically (even though I believe there are, in fact, examples of it in the New Testament), it must be kept in mind that we are talking about something here that is essentially intra-ecclesiastical, for use within the Church, by the Church, for the Church.

(7) Finally, that the divine meaning and intention is infinitely greater than the human author's is critical to the very character of biblical canon as canon. If the text of Scripture means no more than what the human author means, then the text ceases to be canon. Doug Oss correctly notes that the separation between meaning and application, i.e., the meaning of the text and God's intention as to how he wants the text applied, "results in the loss of normativeness for the

¹⁷⁵Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 202-3; cf. Oss, "The Interpretation of the 'Stone' Passages," 199.

¹⁷⁶Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," 203.

message of the Bible."¹⁷⁷ To restrict the meaning of the text to what only the human author may have meant is effectively to decanonize the text. And so we see how just how important this thesis is to whole the program of canonical exegesis.

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that the interpreter must recognize from the outset that the meaning he or she derives from the text will always be infinitely lower than the meaning that is there, for that meaning is, and always will be, the sole possession of God.

Conclusion

What I am about to say here could be regarded, I suppose, as another thesis, but I think it is seen more appropriately as a summing up all the theses of these last two chapters. The Christo-canonical approach, while focusing on the written canon, does not abstract that canon from its author. Thus, it is not a text-centered approach, but a theologically-, i.e., Christologically-centered approach. This approach notes that a strictly text-centered reading of the Bible, as opposed to an extra-textual referential reading, has in fact served to create a biblicism worse than that ever practiced by so-called fundamentalists. Further, this approach recognizes that the Scriptures are already Christian Scripture by virtue of Christ's ownership of them; thus there

¹⁷⁷Oss, "Canon as Context," 125.

is no need to over-Christologize them in ways that are not prescribed by the Lord of the canon himself.

There is a distinction to be made, as mentioned in the last section, between the apologetic/evangelistic use of the Scriptures and what I referred to as an intra-ecclesiastical use. It is to be granted that this distinction is not necessarily a very sharp one. So, for example, the Lord's Supper would be regarded as being intra-ecclesiastical, a communion between the people of God and their Lord, which the non-believer can only observe as an outsider. Yet, on the other hand, it may have an apologetic/evangelistic function as well, as perhaps suggested by the words of Paul in 1 Cor 11:26. In any case, the point I am making is that to a large extent, the Christo-canonical exegesis I am proposing is an intra-ecclesiastical one as opposed to an apologetic one, at least in the traditional evidential conception of apologetics. In other words, I am maintaining for the Christo-canonical approach what Bonhoeffer did for allegorical interpretation, that it "remains a splendid freedom of the church's exegesis, not as a false means of proof, but as a celebration of the fullness of the witness to Christ in Scripture."¹⁷⁸

Till now I have avoided referring to typological or allegorical exegesis. It is not my desire to make a case

¹⁷⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936 from the Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Volume I, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 321.

either for or against either one at this point, even though I will lay all my cards on the table and declare that, in my opinion, there is abundant evidence for the typological interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament, and a somewhat lesser case for the allegorical, if the allegorical is to be defined as Wolfson does, "the interpretation of a text in terms of something else, irrespective of what that something else is."¹⁷⁹ I hedge here a bit on the allegorical, for in Paul Jewett's opinion, there is an organic relationship between the texts that are used allegorically in the New Testament and the interpretation made of them, which effectively cancels out the qualifying phrase in Wolfson's definition, "irrespective of what that something else is."¹⁸⁰ Also, as Silva notes, "every hour of the day thousands of Christians allegorize the Scriptures,"¹⁸¹ thus it seems strange to try to develop "a hermeneutical approach that works in splendid isolation from the way believers usually read the Scriptures."¹⁸²

Nor has it been my concern thus far to discuss literal vs. spiritual, or literal vs. figurative exegesis. Again, I lay my cards on the table and declare that there are abundant

¹⁷⁹H. A. Wolfson, Philo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1.134.

¹⁸⁰Paul K. Jewett, "Concerning the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture," WTJ 17 (1954-55): 13.

¹⁸¹Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? 66.

¹⁸²Ibid., 67.

examples in the New Testament where an Old Testament promise or prophecy or prediction has been "spiritualized" in the New Testament pronouncement of that Old Testament passage's fulfillment. On the other hand, there are also instances, as Darrell Bock notes, where the figurative in the Old Testament has become literal.¹⁸³

But whether, and to what extent, these methods are to be used is not my concern in this thesis.¹⁸⁴ Rather, the concern is that the Scriptures are to be interpreted Christologically. By this I do not mean that all kinds of allegorical, typological, or spiritualizing exegeses are to be employed, though again, I believe all these to be within the range of the "splendid freedom of the church's exegesis." I do mean, however, that the canon may not be abstracted from its author, and that if Christ has incarnated himself in his word, then an exegesis that misses Christ in the text, has simply failed to accomplish its hermeneutical goal.

This does not mean that we have to look under every "stone, leaf, or door" in the Old Testament in order to find

¹⁸³See his discussion in "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 310. So, for example, the author of Psalm 22 almost certainly did not experience crucifixion; therefore, figurative details in his description of his distress, became literal when Christ was crucified.

¹⁸⁴As Bonhoeffer remarks, "The first presupposition remains that the Scriptures are already given as a unity in Christ; this comes before both literal and allegorical exegesis" (No Rusty Swords, 1.321-22 n. 1).

Christ. There is no compulsion for us to find Christ where he is not. As Poythress says,

We need not practice any artificiality, such as introducing an allegorical meaning on an unpromising Old Testament text in order to force Christ into the text.

For several reasons, no artificiality is needed. Christ is the Word of God and is God. He speaks wherever God speaks in the Old Testament.¹⁸⁵

So it is not a matter of trying to force a Christological exegesis on Old Testament passages, but rather, as David Baker remarks, "The very nature of the Old Testament itself, rightly understood, demands Christological interpretation."¹⁸⁶ The Christological interpretation I am thinking of is not one that tries to turn Mordecai into a type of Christ (though I am not ruling out the possibility that someone might be able to show such a connection), but one that seeks out that interpretation of the Old Testament which accords with the author of the Old Testament, the Christ who has incarnated himself in its pages. Thus it may well be that the correct Christological interpretation of a passage is that there is no allegory, no type, no substantive connection between Christ and the text other than that Christ is the author of the text. Thus, Bonhoeffer was able to remark concerning the Song of Songs

¹⁸⁵Poythress, Symphonic Theology, 39. Cf. Miller, "The Old Testament and the Christian Faith," 248.

¹⁸⁶Baker, "Interpreting Texts in the Context of the Whole Bible," 23.

that he preferred "to read it as an ordinary love song, and that is probably the best 'Christological' exposition."¹⁸⁷

Christological exegesis is not the same as Luther's "*was Christum treibet*," though it does have affinities to it. Rather, what the Christo-canonical approach asserts is that every single word of the Old Testament "shows Christ." This cannot necessarily be demonstrated by a grammatical-historical exegesis which presupposes that either the only or the most important meaning of the text is that which originally existed in the mind of the human author. But it is demonstrable to those who come to the text in faith, seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and fully humbling themselves before the Lord of the canon, who alone reserves the right to disclose the meaning of his words and to reveal himself in Holy Scripture. This demonstration is not necessarily one that will be apologetically satisfying, but it is one that I believe is vital to the life of the Church.¹⁸⁸ To borrow a line from the title of an article by Karlfried Froehlich, "Always to keep the literal sense in Holy Scripture means to

¹⁸⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, rev. ed., ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 176.

¹⁸⁸Cf. François Dreyfus, "The Existential Value of the Old Testament," trans. P. J. Hepburn-Scott, in How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?, ed. Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan van Iersel, Concilium 30 (New York: Paulist, 1968), 39-40: "One thing is certain, that for the Christian there is only one living, vital reading of the Old Testament, only one reading that can answer the question of the meaning of his existence: that which starts from Jesus Christ as its center, in relation to whom every element of the Old Testament must be situated."

kill one's soul."¹⁸⁹ To read the Holy Scriptures in all their parts and fail to meet Christ there would inevitably kill the Church. And for pastors and teachers to exegete and expound the canonical text in abstraction from the Lord of the canon, is to be disobedient to the Lord who gave those pastors and teachers to the Church in order that they might lead the Church to attain "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

David Steinmetz has called attention to how Luther used ancient Church language regarding the eucharist to describe what happens when the Christian reads the Scriptures.¹⁹⁰ Even as the communicant eats the bread and drinks the wine in order to meet Christ in the communion, so the interpreter of Scripture "digests" the text in order to meet Christ in the act of interpretation. Bruce Waltke has picked up on and employed this imagery in an article entitled "Hermeneutics and the Spiritual Life," concluding that just as Christ hid himself in a body in the incarnation, so he has also hidden

¹⁸⁹Karlfried Froehlich, "Always to Keep the Literal Sense in Holy Scripture Means to Kill One's Soul': The State of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century," in Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 21.

¹⁹⁰Steinmetz, "Hermeneutics and Old Testament Interpretation in Staupitz and the Young Luther," 41.

himself "in his textual presence in Scripture."¹⁹¹ Then he comes to the all-important conclusion of the article:

What I am contending for in this paper is that the Bible is not like ordinary literature any more than the eucharist is like ordinary food. To make my point memorable, let me state it absurdly: exegetical theologians who dedicate themselves to instructing the expositor on how to exegete the text by the grammatico-historical method alone are like systematic theologians, who in explaining the eucharist, dedicate themselves to instructing the worshipper on how to masticate the bread and digest it.¹⁹²

Without necessarily depending on a precise analogy between communion and the interpretation of Scripture, I would still maintain that the interpretation of Scripture is a sacred activity, a sacrament. And like communion, it is one in which only those who have pledged allegiance to the Lord of the canon are qualified to participate. In all our dialogue with biblical scholars who are not confessing Christians, it is essential that we put that dialogue in its proper perspective, and always remember, using the analogy of communion again, that it is they who have come to our table, and not we to theirs. And while we have an apologetic responsibility to enter into current hermeneutical discussion, we must keep in mind that the interpretation of Scripture is primarily an intra-ecclesiastical activity. Therefore, while there is a certain point to which we can go in discussing

¹⁹¹Bruce K. Waltke, "Hermeneutics and the Spiritual Life," Cruce 23/1 (1987): 9; cf. also his "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 265.

¹⁹²Waltke, "Hermeneutics and the Spiritual Life," 10.

hermeneutical issues with them, there is also a point beyond which we cannot. According to Richard Gaffin, we who are confessing Christians should see

just how wrong and confusing it is, with an eye to the contemporary scene, to speak of the hermeneutical problem, as if all without differentiation are entangled in the same dilemma. Those who know the text to be the voice of the great Shepherd need not and cannot assume the burden of hermeneutical difficulties created by those who refuse to listen.¹⁹³

To say that exegesis of the Scriptures must be done canonically is to say that it must be done Christologically. So it should be apparent now just how important it is for evangelical believers to differentiate their canonical exegesis from that of those who refuse to submit their hermeneutical endeavors to the Lord of the canon. So I repeat my last words from the end of Part One: I suggest that for evangelicals, who in their study of the Bible put themselves under the full authority, not just of the canon, but also the Christ who gives the canon its authority, it is not enough to declare their approach to the Bible to be canonical. And this is the thesis of this dissertation: The evangelical approach to Scripture today must go beyond "canonical"; it must be explicitly "Christo-canonical."

¹⁹³Gaffin, "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," 14.

PART THREE

THE APPLICATION OF THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH
TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS

CHAPTER 7

THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO THE SHAPE OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Klaus Seybold has noted that for the commentators of the Middle Ages, "the exposition of the Psalms seems to have become a hermeneutical paradigm."¹ Following this medieval tradition, I propose to use the book of Psalms as hermeneutical paradigm for the Christo-canonical approach outlined in the previous chapters. This is especially fitting for two reasons. First, the Psalms, perhaps more than any other book of the Old Testament, has become the focus of attention for those attempting to employ the canonical approach, as will become apparent by the references to the scholarly literature referenced in this chapter and the next. Second, when Brevard Childs sounded the call for a new way of doing biblical theology, it was by the use of a psalm that he first illustrated his "new" canonical approach to doing exegesis.²

This chapter will be devoted to an investigation of what the Christo-canonical approach has to contribute to the

¹Klaus Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, trans. R. Graeme Dunphy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 249.

²Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 151-63.

discussion of the many issues concerning the growth and canonical shape of the Psalter. The next chapter will examine the approach's contribution to understanding the use of the Psalter in the rest of the canon. Chapter 9 will then test the validity of those contributions by looking at three particular psalms. Finally, chapter 10 will look at the hermeneutical implications of this approach for the interpretation and use of the Psalms in the Christian Church.

Does the Christo-canonical approach have anything to contribute to the discussion that has dominated Psalms studies in the last decade in regard to the canonical shape of the Psalter? This chapter will examine this question by starting at the micro-level of psalm superscriptions, and progressing to the macro-level of suggested rationales for the shape of the Psalter as a whole.

The Psalms Superscriptions

Though much speculation surrounds the superscriptions of the Psalms, it is safe to say that the prevailing scholarly view is that the titles are late and originated not with the individual psalms themselves, but with the editors who put the Psalter together as a collection. Among the arguments against the authenticity of these titles are (1) their very loose connection with the actual content of the psalms they head, (2) their third person style, and (3) the tendency of the Septuagint, Syriac, and other versions to either change, substitute, or add titles, possibly reflecting that the same

thing happened in the transmission of these psalms in Hebrew texts.³

More conservative scholars have argued for the traditional understanding of the psalm titles. Among the arguments brought forward in favor of their authenticity are the following: (1) the comparative data suggests that it was not the practice in the ancient Near East for hymns to be circulated without accompanying information of various sorts, (2) the fact that the Septuagint has an unusually hard time of it in translating the technical terms in the titles suggests that they are of great antiquity, (3) that even in rabbinical discussions the meanings of the technical terms seem to have been lost also suggests their antiquity, and (4) there are no Hebrew manuscripts that do not have the titles.

Seeking to cut through the impasse, Brevard Childs, though admitting the titles' secondary character, did not see this as cause for disparagement of them. Rather than viewing the titles as spurious and therefore to be disregarded, he has suggested that these titles, though not original, are nonetheless canonical--an indication of how the unknown canonizers of the Psalms wished us to read them.⁴ The question that the Christo-canonical approach asks at this

³On this tendency in the Septuagint, see Albert Pietersma, "David in the Greek Psalms," VT 30 (1980): 213-26.

⁴Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," JSS 16 (1971): 137-150; Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 512-13, 516-17, 520-22.

point is whether this way of viewing the psalm titles sufficiently acknowledges their canonical status. It offers the following observations to the problem.

First, the canon's reconstruction of the psalm titles must be given its priority in the discussion, and the received canon of the Christian Church has these titles. Whatever the outcome of the debate as to whether the psalms titles are canonical or not, it must be acknowledged that both initial and subsequent readings of the canon suggest that they are. At this point, Childs's thesis, that though the titles may not be original they are nevertheless canonical, is a welcome corrective to the indifference with which the superscriptions were once treated. At the same time, the canonicity that Childs argues for is rooted in the community model of canon-- it is not a theological statement.

Second, not only do the psalms have titles, but there is a tendency for other lyrical compositions in the canon to have something which approximates a title as well. The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5, the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, the song of David in 2 Samuel 22 (parallel to Psalm 18), the prayer of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38, the prayer of Jonah in Jonah 2, and the prayer of Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3, all have introductory notices giving some kind of genre designation to what follows and naming the author/performer of the composition.

Third, there is the matter of the New Testament references to the psalms headings. Leaving till the next section the discussion regarding authorship, it will be sufficient to note here the possibility that Jesus and the New Testament authors regarded the headings of the Psalms as providing accurate information regarding authorship. The evidence is somewhat ambiguous, however, for in two places, Acts 4:25 and Heb 4:7, psalms are attributed to David which have no headings in the Masoretic Text. In the Acts passage, the royal nature of Psalm 2 quoted there may have influenced the Davidic attribution. In the Hebrews passage, the quotation from Psalm 95 is introduced with the words "he [God] spoke through David," (*en dauid*). It is ambiguous whether the author is relying on the Septuagint's attribution of the psalm to David, or whether the *en* should be taken as locative, not instrumental, with David being a reference not to the person, but to the book which came to be called by his name.⁵

Fourth, the canon's voice in the distribution of the psalm headings must be heard along with the comparative data. Gerald Wilson has called attention to the fact that the superscriptions of the psalms play no explicit part in the overall organization of the Psalter.⁶ He did suggest,

⁵Cf. F. F. Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 107-8; William L. Lane, Hebrews 1-8, WBC 47a (Dallas: Word, 1991), 92, 94; Paul Ellingworth, Commentary on Hebrews, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 251.

⁶Gerald H. Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholar Press, 1985), 139-141.

however, that the editors of the Psalter used the genre designations in the titles to "soften" the disjunctions between groups of psalms where there were transitions from psalms of one author to those of another.⁷ I would like to suggest, however, that the distribution of these psalm headings also provides a witness that is corroborated by the comparative data.

Haim M. I. Gevaryahu suggested in several articles that the psalm superscriptions were originally postscripts that were later transferred to the beginning of the psalms with which they are connected. He believed that the earlier postscripts were added to the psalms during the exile under the influence of Akkadian hymnic literature, and then transferred to the beginning of the psalms some time after the exile.⁸ He also argued that the psalms, which were originally anonymous compositions, were given author attributions during the exilic period. Wilson dismissed Gevaryahu's thesis because the content of the psalm superscriptions and the Akkadian and Sumerian colophons were too dissimilar, particularly in that the Akkadian colophons do not contain

⁷Wilson, Editing, 163-67; see also his "Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter," VT 34 (1984): 337-52.

⁸Haim M. I. Gevaryahu, "Biblical Colophons: A Source for the 'Biography' of Authors, Texts and Books," in Congress Volume: Edinburgh, 1974, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., VTSup 28 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 42-59.

authorship information.⁹ And indeed, this is certainly the case, as the work of Lambert has shown.¹⁰

Bruce Waltke has challenged Wilson's dismissal of Gevanyahu's connection between Akkadian hymnic colophons and biblical psalmic superscriptions,¹¹ and in the process has also revived a thesis originally propounded by J. W. Thirtle ninety years ago.¹² Thirtle's thesis was that the phrase *lamnassēah* in the superscript of a psalm was originally a postscript to the preceding psalm. Waltke, then, took the work of Thirtle and Gevanyahu and combined them to arrive at the thesis that over the process of time there was a wholesale corruption in the transmission of the Psalter, whereby the prose colophon of one psalm was conjoined with the prose superscript of the following psalm. Thus he argues that all the information in a superscript to a psalm prior to the genre and author designation should really be seen as a postscript to the previous psalm. He also called attention to the fact that while the Akkadian colophons do not contain author designations, the Egyptian hymn superscripts do contain author designations, as well as genre information. Waltke then went

⁹Wilson, Editing, 145-55.

¹⁰W. G. Lambert, "Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity," JCS 11 (1957): 1-14.

¹¹Bruce K. Waltke, "Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both," JBL 110 (1991): 583-96.

¹²J. W. Thirtle, The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained (New York: Henry Frowde, 1904), 11-12.

on to show how this thesis could well explain certain phenomena in the Psalter. For example, the phrase in the superscript of Psalm 56, "For the director of music. To the tune of `A Dove on Distant Oaks,'" seems to tie in rather well with Ps 55:7-8,

I said, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest--
I would flee far away
and stay in the desert."¹³

I would suggest also that there may even be cases where the information in the superscript concerning genre designation should really go with the previous psalm. Thus, I agree with Torczyner that the phrase in the superscript of Psalm 30, "A song for the dedication of the temple," should really be seen as referring to Psalm 29, to which it would go very appropriately.¹⁴

What I want to focus on, however, is the correspondence between the biblical data and the Egyptian superscripts and Akkadian colophons. Wilson's rejection of Gevanyahu's notion that the biblical superscripts (originally colophons) grew out of contacts with Akkadian literature during the exile is probably justified. I believe, however, that the connection manifests itself in another way. The fact that Egyptian hymnody denotes the author of the composition, whereas

¹³Waltke, "Superscripts," 592-93.

¹⁴Referred to disapprovingly in Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 1-59: A Commentary, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 354.

Akkadian hymnody does not, agrees with the biblical data. The first three books of the Psalter, containing eighty-nine psalms, contain author designations for all but seven, and the number is reduced if the tradition is taken into account that would connect these orphan psalms with the psalms that precede them. By contrast, in the last two books of the Psalter, containing sixty-one psalms, only nineteen have authors designations, and in no case is the designated author a post-exilic figure. Correspondingly, the term *lamnassēah*, which occurs fifty-two times in the first three books, occurs only three times in the last two books, and only in conjunction with the name David in the latter. This leads me to the following conclusions.

(1) During the existence of the monarchy in Israel, when there was a closer association between Israel and Egypt, the biblical psalms, like the Egyptian hymns, generally contained author and genre designations in the headings. During the exilic and post-exilic years, when Israel came more directly under the influence of Akkadian literature, there was a tendency to follow Akkadian practice and not designate the authors of the compositions. Indeed, in the last two books of the Psalter, there are no guild designations; the authors are Moses, David, and Solomon. The fact that the clan guilds, though operative in the post-exilic era, do not have their names attached to any psalms in the last two books of the

Psalter, but are credited with some twenty-seven compositions in the first three books, accords well with this conclusion.¹⁵

(2) The technical musical or liturgical terms used in the pre-exilic psalms do not occur in the exilic or post-exilic psalms. The reason for this is that their precise meaning was lost during the exile. Practically the only terms used in the last two books that are also used in the first three books, are ones whose meaning is relatively clear, *mizmôr*, *šîr*, and *tēpillâ*. The only two other terms that occur in superscripts of psalms in the last two books as well as in the first three, are *lamnassēah* (three times) and *maškîl* (only once), and then only in psalms that are ascribed to David. Interestingly, the technical term *selâ*, whose meaning has eluded scholars for over two millennia, occurs seventy-one times in thirty-nine psalms in the entire Psalter; but there are only four occurrences in two psalms in the last two books, and both of those psalms are ascribed to David.

(3) The psalms in the last two books of the Psalter are not simply compositions that were written after the exile and then attributed to David. Rather, they are compositions that either were already known and had not yet been added to the collection, or they were psalms that were discovered too late

¹⁵On this point, see also Nahum M. Sarna, "The Psalms Superscriptions and the Guilds," in Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (University, AL: University of Alabama Press; and London: Institute of Jewish Studies, 1979), 281-300.

to add to the Davidic collections in the first two books. The fact that the only liturgical terms from the first three books of the Psalter that occur again in the last two books are in Davidically ascribed psalms gives tremendous weight to this conclusion.

This comports well with Gevaryahu's and Waltke's thesis, that during the exile, the technical meanings of the musical and liturgical terms were lost.¹⁶ It also lends support to Wilson's suggestion that in the exilic period there was "a move from performance to meditation" in the use of the Psalter.¹⁷ Indeed, it is even possible that Psalm 137 provides a clue in this regard: the songs of the Lord were not sung in a foreign land.

Fifth, in the light of the foregoing data, I would suggest that the headings of the Psalms, rather than being relegated to the function of providing editorial or redactional information, should instead be recognized as canonical and more properly studied under the disciplines of philological investigation and textual criticism. As Waltke remarks, his thesis that there has been a wholesale corruption in the transmission of the titles, a corruption stemming in part from the disuse of the psalms during the exilic period,

¹⁶Gevaryahu, "Biblical Colophons," 52 n. 36; Waltke, "Superscripts," 594; see also, Sarna, "The Psalms Superscriptions," 289-90.

¹⁷Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992), 137-38 n. 30.

is indeed, a conjecture.¹⁸ But as he also notes, it is a conjecture that accords well with the extra- and intra-canonical data, and I would add, with the implicit witness of the psalm headings themselves. The three witnesses, I believe, are enough to warrant the acceptance of Waltke's thesis, and to cause a revision in our view of the psalm superscripts.

Sixth, even given all this evidence, I call attention to how little hermeneutical gain comes as a result of the debate. Since most of the technical terms of the Psalter are so obscure in their meaning, it makes little interpretive difference whether the psalm headings are regarded as authentic or not. Only in rare cases in recent scholarship have any of these technical terms made a significant contribution to anyone's arguments regarding the meaning of a psalm to which a heading containing any of these terms are attached. Until more philological conclusions are reached on the meanings of these technical terms, the interpretative gains from a study of these titles will be minimal. There are, however, two areas where the acknowledgement of the canonicity of these titles brings significant results. They give far more credence to the recognition of the authenticity of the authorship ascriptions, and of the historical notices contained in the titles.

¹⁸Waltke, "Superscripts," 595.

Seventh, to confirm Wilson's observation referred to earlier, it is interesting to note how few direct implications these psalm headings have for the overall arrangement of the Psalter. Aside from the Songs of Ascents, there is no place where all the songs of one designation, be it genre, authorship, musical performance, etc., are gathered together in one place without exception.

The Authorship Ascriptions

The question of the reliability of the authorship ascriptions of the psalms is one that is complicated by several factors. First, there is the whole problem of the translation of the preposition *lǝ*. Does it mean "by," "for," "to," "on behalf of," "belonging to," "concerning," or just what? Second, there is the problem of just exactly what "David" refers to. Does it ever, or always, refer to the person David? Or could it possibly at times, or even always, refer to the Davidic dynasty, or the king who currently happens to sit on David's throne? Or could it simply refer to psalms written in a Davidic tradition?¹⁹

Without trying to interact with all the possible arguments for or against the interpretation that would see David and other named individuals or groups as the authors of the psalms attributed to them, I will simply list what I

¹⁹Thus suggest Raymond E. Brown and James C. Turro ("Canonicity," in JBC, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968], 531-32).

believe are the contributions the Christo-canonical approach can make to the discussion.

First, I argue that the canon, which contains these ascriptions, must be allowed to testify. Whatever *lēdāwid* means, it should be interpreted as part of the canon, not ignored.

Second, the data from the previous section must be taken into account. That all the authorship notices are pre-exilic comports well with the comparative data in regards to Egyptian hymnody. The convergence of canonical and comparative data supports the position that the titles are authentic, and that the ascriptions of authorship are to be taken seriously.²⁰

Third, the intra-canonical data, I believe, seriously weakens the case that *lēdāwid* means something other than authorship. I briefly list some of this data here.

(1) An internal consistency between the psalm headings should be noticed. Psalm 14 equals Psalm 53 and both are ascribed to David. The last five verses of Psalm 40 equals Psalm 70 and both are ascribed to David. Psalm 108 is made up of portions from Psalms 57 and 60, and all three are ascribed to David. Psalms 8 and 144 are both ascribed to David, and

²⁰For the contrary, but majority view, see Alan M. Cooper, "The Life and Times of King David According to the Book of Psalms," in The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism, ed. Richard Elliott Friedman, HSS 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 117-31; James Luther Mays, "The David of the Psalms," Int 40 (1986): 151-54.

both contain a wisdom meditation which begins with the words "What is man . . ."

(2) A comparison of Psalm 18 with its parallel in 2 Samuel 22 shows that the *l'edāwid* in the psalm was meant to be taken, at the very least, as meaning that David was the speaker of these words. That either this psalm or other psalms were written by others for David to use seems unlikely in light of the passage in the next chapter in 2 Samuel (23:1-7), where David in the first person says, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue."

(3) However one may regard the historicity and accuracy of the Davidic tradition, it is clear that the tradition regards him as a very musically talented person. He is brought into Saul's service because of his instrumental abilities (1 Sam 16:14-23; 18:10). Though the passage is open to varying interpretations, 2 Sam 1:17-27 seems to suggest that, upon the death of Saul and Jonathan, David composed the lament which he then sang and ordered to be sung in memorial of them. Though the passage is somewhat derogatory in its reference, Amos 6:5 also refers to David's musical ability. At the very least, David is regarded as a patron of the musical arts in 1 Chr 23:5 (cf. 2 Chr 29:25-27; Neh 12:36), providing four thousand Levites with musical instruments; it is possible that he is even regarded as the manufacturer or inventor of these instruments. In 1 Chronicles 25, David sets apart the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for musical

service (cf. 1 Chr 15:16; 2 Chr 8:14; 23:18; 35:15; Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:24). When Hezekiah purified the temple, it is recorded that he "ordered the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chr 29:30).

(4) As we have already seen in an earlier section, Jesus and the New Testament writers regard David as the author of many of the psalms (Matt 22:41-45 [par. Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44]; Acts 1:15-20; 2:25-34; 4:25-26; 13:35-36; Rom 4:6-8; 11:9-10; Heb 4:7). In several of these passages, Acts 2:25-34 being the prime example, there is an apologetic used which is rendered void if David is not the author of the cited psalm.

(5) In other places in the canon, *l'ē* + proper name almost certainly refers to the author of the following composition (Isa 38:9; Hab 3:1).²¹

This intra-canonical data puts the matter almost beyond question as far as the witness of the canon is concerned. The authorship ascriptions are authentic and were, indeed, understood as indications of authorship.

Third, in spite of the data just presented, it must be noted that there are still either real or potential ambiguities in the use of these authorship designations.

(1) There are certain psalms which seem to in some way conflict with the authorship inscription. Psalm 20 is

²¹On this point, see Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 206-7.

ascribed to David, and yet contains what appears to be, at least in part of the psalm, a prayer, not of the king, but of the people on behalf of the king. Psalms 18, 122, and 144 are ascribed to David, and yet contain third person references to David in the body of the psalm. It should be noted, however, that in two of these psalms (18 and 144) the reference to David comes in the very last verse of the psalm, perhaps evidence of a liturgical tack-on to an already existent composition. For Psalms 20 and 122, the possibility of a joint compositional liturgical effort between David and his appointed liturgists must be reckoned with. In this case, it could be that as long as part of the psalm is Davidic, the whole psalm was designated thus.

(2) It must be recognized that the preposition *lš* is used in other ways in the psalms. The still not quite understood term, *lamnassēah*, could, based on the argumentation above, be translated as "by" the director of music. There is as much justification for translating *lîdûtûn* in the title of Psalm 39 as "by Jeduthun" as "for Jeduthun." Also, the postscript at the end of the second book of the Psalter, "This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse," comes after two psalms that are not ascribed to David, one of which, Psalm 72, is entitled "to Solomon." If the tradition that untitled psalms should be attributed to the author of the previously ascribed psalm is taken into account,²² then it is possible

²²See Wilson, *Editing*, 173-81; "The Function of 'Untitled'

that the editors considered David as the one praying in Psalm 72 and that the title of the psalm was meant to be taken as, not "by Solomon," but "concerning Solomon."

This data would seem to suggest that, though the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the *l'ē* + proper name formula as being an indication of authorship, syntactical, text-critical, or contextual considerations must be taken into account to allow for other possibilities in individual cases. Nevertheless, that most of the psalms which have the *l'ēdāwid* notice in the heading is indicative of authorship is secured. And the canonical authority of these notices should be given their full weight in the interpretation of the psalms that bear them.

Fourth, though the authorship designations provide, in my opinion, important hermeneutical information, they do little in the way of providing a clue as to the over-arching structure of the Psalter. The psalms of no one author constitute a non-interrupted section of the book. David's psalms, though concentrated in the first two books, occur in the three other books as well. Though Psalms 73-83 constitute a concentration of Asaphite compositions, Psalm 50 has been left out of that collection. The Korahite Psalms (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88) are interrupted by an untitled psalm in the first run, and by a Davidic psalm in the second, and the Korahite psalms themselves are in two different books. Even

the two compositions attributed to Solomon (72, 127) are separate. The evidence for the final canonical arrangement of the Psalter is more indirect, providing, in my opinion, chronological, rather than organizational, data.

The Historical Titles

The historical notices in the twelve or thirteen psalms that have them,²³ have long been discounted by critics as providing any credible historical information. They are seen rather as evidences of scribal and rabbinical midrash. In Childs's canonical approach, however, these midrashic notices are still to be recognized as part of the received canon; they are "not some post-biblical `Jewish distortion', but part of the biblical tradition itself, and must be taken seriously as such."²⁴ They are not original, nor authentic, nor historical; nevertheless, they are canonical. Is this approach sufficiently canonical? The Christo-canonical approach offers the following observations in answering this question.

First, as I have suggested in the two preceding sections, there should be a predisposition toward acceptance of the canon's testimony regarding these historical notices. Given the preceding data concerning the reliability of the titles and the authorship notices within those titles, I

²³I am not counting Psalm 30 in this group, as the title is not making reference to an incident in the life of David, and, as mentioned earlier, it is possible that the phrase there, "for the dedication of the temple," may refer to the previous psalm.

²⁴Childs, "Psalm Titles," 149.

believe we must begin with a presumption of canonicity with regard to these historical descriptions.

Second, the attempts of Childs and Elieser Slomovic²⁵ to find in the content of the psalms the possible linguistic connections which the editors of the Psalms may have seen when they affixed historical notices to them, weakens, in my opinion, the very case originally brought forward against their authenticity. It is much the same situation as Barton describes in regards to the Pentateuch:

The more impressive the critic makes the redactor's work appear, the more he succeeds in showing that the redactor has, by subtle and delicate artistry, produced a simple and coherent text out of the diverse materials before him; the more he reduces the evidence on which the existence of those sources was established in the first place.²⁶

One of the reasons the historical notices were thought to be inauthentic was that there was nothing in the psalm to warrant the suggested tie-in between the particular narrative referred to in the heading and the psalm itself. But now that the reasons why the editors made the connections which they did are discovered, it seems that the underpinnings of the critique against the authenticity of these historical notices have become somewhat loosened. Not that they have become entirely unpinned, for sometimes the connection discovered is a very subtle one indeed, and one wonders why the original

²⁵Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Formation of the Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," ZAW 91 (1979): 350-80.

²⁶John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 57.

author would not have made the connection a little tighter. Nevertheless, the attempt to find the connections tends to weaken the case against the historical titles' authenticity in the first place. In a statement that is almost incredible in its admission, Childs says,

To summarize: the most important factor in the formation of the titles appears to be general parallels between the situation described in the Psalm and some incident in the life of David.²⁷

Third, as Childs has noticed, these notices are fairly formulaic. They consist of (1) the preposition *bē*, (2) an infinitive construct, and (3) an incident in David's life narrated in the third person.²⁸ On the one hand, this observation would tend to suggest that the third person, stereotypical form of these notices marks them as non-Davidic in origin, and most likely stemming from a single person, school, or redaction. On the other hand, this observation does little, if anything, in terms of suggesting who this person, school, or redactor may have been.

Fourth, and to be taken into consideration as a line of converging evidence with the observation just made, is a question Childs raises concerning the placement of the historically titled psalms. He notes that these psalms are clustered between Psalms 51 and 60 inclusive (only Psalms 53,

²⁷Childs, "Psalm Titles," 147.

²⁸Ibid., 138-39. I also agree with Childs that the superscription for Psalm 7, falling as it does outside this formulaic category, is probably not meant to be taken as an historical reference, but is rather of a liturgical nature.

55, and 58 not having them). If Psalm 7 is discounted (see previous note) then there are only three psalms with historical notices prior to this cluster (3, 18, 34), and only two afterwards (63, 142; if we count Psalm 63 as being in the cluster, then only Psalm 142 comes afterwards). The importance of this observation is twofold: (1) There has not been an attempt made to tie every, or even a majority of the psalms ascribed to David into an historical incident in his life. If the cluster, Psalms 51-63, is removed, then only five of the remaining sixty Davidic psalms are so connected. (2) Even in the cluster, the historically titled psalms are not in long strings; beginning at Psalm 51, the pattern between historically titled and non-historically titled psalms is as follows: 2,1,1,1,2,1,2,2,1. If the historically titled psalms ever did exist as a distinct group, in the process of incorporation into the existing canonical Psalter, they have been broken up, scattered, and dischronologized, other organizational factors having taken priority.

Fifth, the foregoing would suggest that the relative scarcity of these historical notices, coupled with their erratic distribution in the Psalter, argues for their authenticity. Not every psalm, and not even psalms that could arguably serve as candidates for a midrashically embellished title--perhaps even more so than the ones chosen--have titles. Why is Psalm 54 historically titled, but not Psalm 109? Why is Psalm 34 historically titled, but not Psalm 35? The

evidence would suggest that whoever the person or persons were who attached the historical titles to the psalms, they (1) had no intention of doing it for every Davidic psalm, and (2) they were not building on only the flimsiest of verbal and linguistic similarities between the passage and some narrative with which they wished to connect it, but rather, were simply attaching to the psalm reliable historical tradition concerning the psalm's original composition.

Sixth, as Childs points out,

It is important to note that the incidents chosen as evoking the psalms were not royal occasions nor representative of the kingly office. Rather David is pictured simply as a man, indeed chosen by God for the sake of Israel, but one who displays the strengths and weaknesses of all men.²⁹

The titles, with possibly only one or two exceptions, show David in distress. And, indeed, the psalms to which these historical titles are attached, are all either laments, or contain within them laments remembered. Against Childs's assertion that the historical titles were added to these psalms in order to remove them from their original cultic context, place them in a historic Davidic context, and thus democratize them,³⁰ I would suggest that the canonical data favors the view that they were already democratized to begin

²⁹Brevard S. Childs, "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms," in Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 384.

³⁰Ibid.

with. The third-person style argues against David titling these psalms himself, but it could certainly have been done by personnel of the cultic/liturgical guilds set up by David to whom he would have delivered these compositions after he wrote them. Indeed, certain members may have been present when David composed these psalms, either in the actual context of the situation described in the historical ascription, or upon David's mature reflection on the same incidents.³¹

Seventh, in the light of the foregoing data, the historical titles, when they are unambiguous in their references, do have a hermeneutical role to play in the interpretation of the psalms to which they are attached. However, they have practically no role to play in determining the over-arching factors in the shape of the Psalter, except in their indirect witness. As I mentioned previously, if they ever did exist as an "incidents in the life of David collection," they have been broken up, scattered, and dischronologized. Other organizational factors have taken precedence.

Earlier Psalter Collections

It has long been recognized that there are earlier collections of psalms that stand behind the present canonical Psalter. Among them are the following:

³¹Note F. F. Bruce's opinion that "some at least of the 'historical' titles to the Psalms probably go back to the time of the monarchy" ("The Earliest Old Testament Interpretation," OTS 17 [1972]: 37-52).

A first Davidic collection (3-41)
 A second Davidic collection (51-70 [-72?])
 Later Davidic groupings (108-110, 138-145)
 Korahite (42-49, 84-88)
 Asaphite (73-83)
 Enthronement (93-99)
 Songs of Ascents (120-134)
 Davidic historical incidents (51-63)
 Hallelujah Psalms (103-106, 111-117, 146-150)
 Psalms of the Enemy (3-13)
 Clusters of Royal Psalms (18-21 [perhaps even larger than this])

Beyond these, there may be other smaller groupings as well. As intriguing as it is to study these various collections and develop theories as to the various stages by which the present Psalter came into existence, it is frustrating as well, and for two main reasons: (1) Despite all the theorizing that may go on, it remains only conjectural whether or not a particular collection existed as such prior to the final collection, or whether it actually became a collection as the Psalter was re-ordered. For example, did the enthronement psalms exist at one time as an independent collection that was incorporated into the Psalter, or did the editors pull together the various enthronement psalms into one place in the Psalter? (2) The fact must be reckoned with that almost always there seem to be one or two psalms that break up a string of psalms of the same type. There are untitled psalms in both of the large Davidic collections. There are non-Korahite and non-Asaphite psalms in both of those collections, as well as an Asaphite psalm removed some distance from that collection. Psalm 94 interrupts the run of enthronement psalms. Several psalms intrude in the

"historical incidents in the life of David" collection."

Psalm 19 interrupts a run of royal psalms. Only the Songs of Ascents stand in the Masoretic Text as an unbroken group, but in 11QPs^a, Psalms 132 and 134 are separated from the rest. Only two observations are to be made at this point from the perspective of the Christo-canonical approach.

First, when it comes to the topic of earlier collections of Psalms, because of the highly conjectural nature of the discussion there is almost nothing theological that can be said. Childs's warnings about the theologically bankrupt character of reconstruction must be heeded here. What we have to work with is the canon in its received form. While it may be attractive to speculate as to the makeup of earlier collections of psalms, such speculations are only for the curiosity shop. They cannot be pressed into the service of theology.

Second, in whatever form previous collections may have existed, e.g., a Korahite collection, an Asaphite collection, etc., the canonical reordering of those collections and re-distribution of the psalms within them is canonical, is authoritative, and is theological. This does not mean that psalms that have been separated from earlier putative collections should not be interpreted in reference to other psalms of that collection; it is an axiom of modern studies of the Psalms that psalms of a particular type or form should be studied together. Most likely, for example, we will learn

more about Psalm 22 as a lament, by studying it in its relationships with other laments, rather than in the context of Psalms 21 and 23. It does mean, however, that the psalms must not be interpreted with reference to other psalms of the same type as if they were a collection. Rather, the collection is the canonical Psalter as it has been handed down to us in its present ordering. Attempts to make theological statements about the psalms must work with the present shape of the canon, and not the putative earlier shape of its various possible earlier groupings. And in this connection, the relationship between Psalm 22 and its surrounding psalms is significant.³² This leads to the next area of discussion.

Earlier Forms of the Psalter

Intriguing as well is the discussion as to what the Psalter may have looked like at its various stages on the way toward its final shape. I am not thinking here so much about the earlier individual collections of psalms, but about the Psalter as a whole as the various collections were incorporated into it. But, again, in my opinion, the discussion here is too speculative to be of any theological significance. We simply do not have these earlier forms of the book of Psalms on its way to completion, but rather, the

³²So, for example, Auffret believes that Psalms 15-24 form a chiasm with Psalm 22 being the counterpart to Psalm 17. See his La Sagesse a Bati sa Maison: Etudes de structures littéraires dans l'Ancien Testament et spécialement dans les Psaumes, OBO 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 407-38.

book at the end of the process. Thus, conjectures that would try to find thematic, theological, or functional changes in the Psalter from beginning to end, must, in the very nature of the case, rest on theories of compilation which simply depend on too many variables.

The Elohist and Yahwistic Psalters

Of special interest to all students of the shape of the Psalter is the problem of the Elohist Psalter. Beginning with Psalm 42 and ending with Psalm 83, there is a marked preference for the use of Elohim over Yahweh. Outside this grouping, there is even more so a marked preference for Yahweh over Elohim. Among the several very interesting phenomena that accompany this problem of the Elohist Psalter are the following: (1) The preference for Elohim that begins Book Two of the Psalter is a phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of the book divisions. The Elohist Psalter extends for a total of twelve psalms past the break between Books Two and Three, but stops short of the break between Books Three and Four by six psalms. (2) Parallel passages provide different witnesses: where Psalm 14 and the last verses of Psalm 40 are paralleled in Book Two by Psalms 53 and 70, on most occasions Elohim is substituted for Yahweh. But in Psalm 108, the designations for the deity are the same as they are in the parallel passages in Psalm 57 and 60. (3) The guild collections are affected somewhat differently. The Asaphite collection is totally enclosed within the Elohist Psalter.

But the Korahite collection is split, with the first part, Psalms 42-49 occurring in the Elohim section, but the second part, Psalms 84-88 coming in the Yahweh section.

This is a fascinating problem, indeed. Several solutions to the problem have been suggested. One is that the predominant use of Elohim in the Elohistic Psalter is a move comparable to that of fencing the Torah--the chances of using the Lord's name in vain are considerably lessened when the name is used less frequently. Another is that there was a conscious move in the Elohistic Psalter to emphasize that Israel's deity was the universal God of all the earth. Another, perhaps to be seen as a corollary of this one just named, is that the move to the predominant use of Yahweh in the last two thirds of the book is the result of a conscious, narrowing, nationalistic particularism that sought to totally discontinue the use of the more general designation for Israel's deity.³³ Also, there is the suggestion that the Elohistic Psalter has a northern, more syncretistic provenance, as opposed to the Yahwistic Psalter, with a southern, more "Yahweh only" provenance.

The Christo-canonical approach only notes here that there is simply not enough data to form a credible hypothesis to account for this phenomenon. None of the suggestions made above would appear to be either proved or ruled out. Given, however, the previous sections that dealt with titles,

³³Wilson, Editing, 197.

authorship, and historical veracity, I believe it would be better to speak of a possible northern redaction of already existent psalms, rather than seeing the psalms in the Elohist Psalter as being northern in origin.

The Five Books

Another intriguing aspect with regard to the collection of the Psalms is the division into five books. Evidence of the lateness of this division is the fact that Book Three is split between the Elohist and Yahwistic Psalters.³⁴ The long-standing consensus, that the doxologies at the end of each of the five books were editorially and artificially tacked on to the psalms that concluded each section, has been contradicted by the work of Wilson. He has demonstrated the possibility that the doxologies at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106 are integral to those Psalms, and that it was not the doxologies, but the psalms themselves that were relocated editorially to close the five books (with Psalms 146-150 being one long doxology).³⁵ The apparently purposeful placement of

³⁴So Wilson ("Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 [Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 77): "The anomalous character of both Psalms 72 and 89 within their respective contexts . . . suggests alternatively that Psalm 72, with its doxology and postscript, may be a late editorial intrusion that has disturbed the original integrity of the Elohist Psalter."

³⁵Wilson, Editing, 182-90.

royal psalms at the seams of the book divisions gives support to this conclusion.³⁶

Motivation for this way of dividing the book obviously came from the desire to create five books on the analogy of the five books of Moses. The artificiality of the results, however, are confirmed by the inability on the part of any scholar to correlate the contents of the five books of the Psalms with the five books of the Pentateuch.³⁷ Particularly devastating to any theory that would try to line up the contents of the respective books with their supposed analogues in the Pentateuch is the emphasis that the fourth book of the Psalter places on the person of Moses,³⁸ an emphasis that would have been far more appropriate in the second or fifth books of the Psalter.

A bit more promising as an explanation as to how the Psalter received its five divisions is the theory that the number of psalms in each book matches up with the *sedarim*, the sections into which the Pentateuch was divided for reading lessons in the synagogue services.³⁹ Two drawbacks to this way

³⁶Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," JOT 35 (1986): 85-94.

³⁷Wilson, Editing, 200, 203.

³⁸Ibid., 187; "Shaping the Psalter," 75-76.

³⁹There are many who have made suggestions along this line; for some of the more recent attempts, see Aileen Guilding, "Some Obscured Rubrics and Lectionary Allusions in the Psalter," JTS n.s. 3 (1952): 41-55; Norman Snaith, Hymns of the Temple (London: SCM, 1951).

of looking at the problem are: (1) there is a discrepancy among the various traditions and biblical manuscripts as to the precise number and location of these *sedarim*, and (2) even though there is a relatively close correspondence between the number of *sedarim* and the psalms in the first three books of the Psalter, in the last two books the numbers are considerably out of line. I reproduce a chart here from Wilson.⁴⁰

	<u>Büchler</u>	<u>Rabinowitz</u>	<u>Arens</u>	<u>Pss</u>
Gn	42	43	44	41
Ex	30	29	31	31
Lv	17	23	25	17
Nu	27	32	30	17
Dt	<u>28</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>44</u>
Totals	144	154	161	150

As can be seen from the chart, none of the proposed enumerations of *sedarim* in the Pentateuch matches up perfectly with the enumeration of the psalms in the five books, though the numbers are fairly close for the first three books of the Pentateuch and the first three books of Psalms. If one takes the suggestion of Westermann, that Psalm 119 was the original

⁴⁰Wilson, Editing, 200-201. Wilson's information for the chart comes from the following sources which I have not had opportunity to research: Adolf Büchler, "The Reading of the Law and Prophets in a Triennial Cycle," JQR 5-6 (1893-94): 5.420-68, 6.1-73; L. Rabinowitz, "Does Midrash Tehillim Reflect the Triennial Cycle of Psalms?" JQR 26 (1935-36): 349-68; Anton Arens, "Hat der Psalter seinen `Sitz im Leben' in der synagogalen Lesung des Pentateuch?" in Les Psautiers, Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensius IV (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1961), 107-31; Die Psalmen in Gottesdienst des Alten Bundes (Trier: Paulinus, 1968).

closing psalm of the fourth book,⁴¹ the numbers match up more closely (using Büchler's enumeration, 27 *sedarim* in Numbers corresponding to 30 psalms in the Book Four, and 28 *sedarim* in Deuteronomy corresponding to 32 psalms in Book Five).

Westermann's theory is also intriguing in that it provides a chiastic arrangement for the first and last psalms of a putative Psalter that once ended with Book Four, i.e.,

Psalm 1 - Torah Psalm
 Psalm 2 - Royal Psalm
 Psalm 3-117 - Main Collection
 Psalm 118 - Royal Psalm
 Psalm 119 - Torah Psalm

This would have definite messianic implications for how the editors viewed the Psalter at one stage of its growth before the addition of the last psalms. Thus the Psalter was a book of God's law and God's king. The first two psalms which, most scholars are now agreed, were added to the beginning of the Psalter for didactic purposes, proclaims that those who wish to be blessed must follow the law of the Lord and render homage to his anointed king. The last two psalms, then, Psalms 118-119, reinforce that message. This is supported by the many parallels scholars have discovered between Psalms 1 and 2.⁴²

⁴¹Claus Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 253. Cf. also, Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, 17; Annemarie Ohler, Studying the Old Testament: From Tradition to Canon, trans. David Cairns (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 351; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Psalms as Instruction," Int 46 (1992): 119-20.

⁴²Pierre Auffret, The Literary Structure of Psalm 2, JSOTSup

As attractive as this thesis is in its messianic implications, and I will be returning to it later to explore them more fully, the data is simply insufficient to say with any confidence that the fourth book of the Psalter at one time ended with Psalm 119. In favor of the thesis is that each new book of the Psalter does, indeed, seem to begin a new collection. Psalm 42 begins the Korahite collection; Psalm 73 begins the Asaphite collection. Psalm 90 begins an emphasis on Moses. If the fifth book of the Psalter started with Psalm 120, the first of the Songs of Ascents, then it, too, would begin with a new collection. The current break after Psalm 106 actually seems to disrupt a trio of psalms, 105-107, that seem to go together in terms of length, similar beginnings ("Give thanks to the Lord"), and similar content and narrative style. Against the thesis, as Wilson has noted, is the fact that Psalm 119 has no doxological ending like that of the other closing psalms of the respective books and, of course, Psalm 106, which does close Book Four.⁴³ It would be easy to

3 (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1977); Gerald T. Sheppard, Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament, BZAW 151 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 136-43; Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "The Beginning of the Psalter," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 83-92; John T. Willis, "Psalm 1--an Entity," ZAW 91 (1979): 381-401. For some implications drawn from these parallels, see James Luther Mays, "The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter," JBL 106 (1987): 10-11; Raymond Jacques Tournay, Seeing and Hearing God in the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, trans. J. Edward Cowley, JSOTSup 118 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 165.

⁴³Wilson, Editing, 202-3.

suggest that somehow the doxology was incorrectly attached to the wrong psalm in the course of transmission, but there is absolutely no textual corroboration either for the doxology's absence from Psalm 106, nor for its presence at the end of Psalm 119. Given the current state of the research, it is hard to reach firm conclusions regarding the rationale behind the placement of the seams between the five books. Whether this five-book schema holds any recoverable hermeneutical or theological significance will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Competing Canonical Psalters?

With the publication of the text and translation of the Dead Sea Psalms Scroll, 11QPs^a, James Sanders entered into a large controversy regarding the form of the Psalter in the last century BC and the first century AD.⁴⁴ The scroll, with several fragments which have been fitted into place by researchers, is comprised of approximately the last third of the Psalter, beginning with Psalm 101. Among the psalms which are in the Masoretic Text, but unattested in the Scroll are Psalms 106-108, 110-117, and 120. There is quite a variance between the traditional Masoretic order and the order in the scroll; e.g., Psalms 146 and 148 come immediately after Psalm

⁴⁴James A. Sanders, "The Scroll of Psalms (11QPss) from Cave 11: A Preliminary Report," BASOR 165 (1962): 11-15; The Psalms Scroll of Qumran (11QPs^a), DJD 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965); The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). See also, Yigael Yadin, "Another Fragment (E) of the Psalms Scroll from Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a)," Textus 5 (1966): 1-10.

105; Psalm 119 comes after the Songs of Ascents, Psalms 133 and 134 come near the end of the scroll, removed quite some distance from the other Songs of Ascents, but still retaining the same superscription. After Psalm 150 there are several non-Masoretic prose and poetic compositions as well as two Masoretic psalms, Psalms 140 and 134. Interspersed among the Masoretic psalms in the body of the scroll are some verses from Sirach, two non-Masoretic psalms, and a portion of Psalm 93. The non-Masoretic psalms and prose compositions in the scroll are the following: (1) "Plea for Deliverance," previously unattested, but now attested in 4QPs^d and 11QPs^b, (2) Sirach 51:13ff; 51:30, (3) "Apostrophe to Zion," previously unattested, but now attested in 4QPs^f, (4) "Hymn to the Creator," previously unattested, (5) 2 Samuel 23:7, (6) A prose piece which Sanders has entitled "David's Compositions," previously unattested, (7) Psalm 154, previously known from the Syriac Psalter, (8) Psalm 155, previously known from the Syriac Psalter, and (9) Psalm 151 A and B, previously known from the Septuagint and the Syriac.⁴⁵ In addition to this large scroll, there are several other fragments and scrolls

⁴⁵For a comparison between the additional Qumran psalms and versions of the same in the Syriac, see David Flusser, "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers," in Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus, ed. Michael E. Stone, CRINT (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 551-77.

which also attest to varying degrees of divergence from the traditional Masoretic form of the Psalter.⁴⁶

Sanders has proposed, both in the publication of the text and translation, and in many articles, that the scroll is, in fact, a competing canonical form of the Psalter, and that the scroll is proof that the last third of the Psalter was still in a state of flux around the time of Christ.⁴⁷

Reaction to Sanders's contentions have been many. In this section, I will try to evaluate the debate from the Christocanonical perspective.

First, both sides have worded their arguments somewhat prejudicially. Sanders has been accused of biasing the case by using the terms, "biblical" and "Psalms scroll," to refer to 11QPs^a, instead of referring to it as a "scroll of psalms."⁴⁸ Detractors of Sanders's hypothesis are more careful

⁴⁶For details on these, see Wilson, Editing, 63-138.

⁴⁷James A. Sanders, "Ps. 151 in 11QPss," ZAW 75 (1963): 73-86; "Two Non-canonical Psalms in 11QPs^a," ZAW 76 (1964): 57-75; "Pre-Masoretic Psalter Texts," CBQ 27 (1965): 114-23; "The Psalter at the Time of Christ," TBT 22 (1966): 1462-69; "Variorum in the Psalms Scroll," HTR 59 (1966): 83-94; "The Dead Sea Scrolls--A Quarter Century of Study," BA 36 (1973): 109-48; "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon," in The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible: An Introductory Reader, ed. Sid Z. Leiman (New York: KTAV, 1974), 37-51; "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) Reviewed," in On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida, ed. Matthew Black and William A. Smalley (Paris: Mouton, 1974), 79-99; "A Multivalent Text: Psalm 151:3-4 Revisited," HAR 8 (1984): 167-84; "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Studies," in "Sha`arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 323-36.

⁴⁸M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a): A

in their wording; thus, Emanuel Tov refers to 11QPs^a as "the so-called Psalm Scroll,"⁴⁹ and even classifies the scroll as being among the "biblical paraphrases and anthologies," and the "various non-biblical scrolls."⁵⁰ At the same time, opponents of Sanders's hypothesis have been prejudicial in their comments as well. Haran refers to the "apparent confusion" which exists in the scroll.⁵¹ Goshen-Gottstein refers to the "selective character and radically different order" of the scroll.⁵² Patrick Skehan talks about the "deviant Qumran Psalms Scrolls,"⁵³ and the "off-beat" non-canonical psalms within it.⁵⁴ Beckwith, in the title of one of his articles on the issue, refers to the "eccentric Psalms Scrolls from Qumran."⁵⁵ Cross refers to the scroll's "bizarre

Problem of Canon and Text," Textus 5 (1966): 24-25, 43; Menahem Haran, "The Two Text-Forms of Psalm 151," JJS 39 (1988): 171-72 n. 3; "11QPs^a and the Composition of the Book of Psalms," abstract in "Sha`arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), xxi-xxii.

⁴⁹Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 386.

⁵⁰Tov, Textual Criticism, 109, 220.

⁵¹Haran, "11QPs^a," xxi-xxii.

⁵²Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a)," 29 n. 32.

⁵³Patrick W. Skehan, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text of the Old Testament," BA 28 (1965): 100.

⁵⁴Patrick W. Skehan, "Qumran and Old Testament Criticism," in Qumrán: sa piéte, sa théologie et son milieu, ed. M. Delcor, BETL 46 (Louvain: Ducolot, University Press, 1978).

⁵⁵Roger T. Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites and the

order."⁵⁶ Talmon speak of the "unorthodox arrangement" in the scroll.⁵⁷ It is important to keep in mind that, regardless of the side one takes in the debate, the Qumran scrolls and fragments do provide our earliest attested Psalter manuscripts.⁵⁸ Even if one wishes to argue that the Septuagint provides witness to the fact that the Masoretic 150 psalms was already known before Qumran,⁵⁹ it must still be recognized that we have no Septuagint manuscripts as early as the Qumran scrolls. Wilson's caution against using our knowledge of the contents, arrangement, and shape of the current canonical Psalter to prejudicially rule out the possibility of the Qumran Psalter's canonical status is a valid one.⁶⁰ We simply cannot take the present shape of the Psalter and hold it up as

Eccentric Psalms Scrolls from Qumran," RevQ 11 (1984): 499.

⁵⁶Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judean Desert," HTR 57 (1964): 286.

⁵⁷Shemaryahu Talmon, "*Pisqah Be emsa Pasuq* and 11QPs^a," Textus 5 (1966): 12.

⁵⁸Israel Yeivin ("The Division into Sections in the Book of Psalms," Textus 7 [1969]: 78) notes that the scroll conforms to traditional scribal practices.

⁵⁹Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites," 503.

⁶⁰Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and the Consecutive Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter," CBQ 45 (1983): 386; "Qumran and the Hebrew Psalter," Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin 8/5 (1985): 11. See also the discussion in Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Open Canon," chap. in Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament (London: SCM, 1987), 209-11 (first published in Colloquium--The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review 3 [1970]: 279-91).

the standard to which ancient manuscripts must be in conformity to have been considered canonical in their own day.

Second, the scroll's supposed liturgical character cannot be used as an argument against its canonical status at Qumran. There are, indeed, many differences between the arrangement in the scroll and that in our current canonical Psalter that could be seen as evidence of liturgical shaping. The prose piece near the end, entitled "David's Compositions," certainly gives credence to this possibility:

And he wrote 3,600 psalms and songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt perpetual offering every day, for all the days of the year, 364; and for the offering of the Sabbaths, 52 songs; and for the offering of the New Moon, and for all the Solemn Assemblies and for the Day of Atonement, 30 songs. And all the songs that he spoke were 446, and songs for making music over the stricken, 4, and the total was 4,050.⁶¹

In addition to this, in the scroll's text of Psalm 145 there is a refrain after every verse, "Blessed be the Lord and blessed be his name for ever and ever."⁶² Psalms 133 and 134 are separated from the other Songs of Ascents. Psalm 118 does not occur in its entirety, but only in a sort of mosaic form, with only vv. 1, 15, 6, 8, 9, and 29 occurring in that order in one of the scroll's columns. These are several other liturgical moves that are noted by those who would argue against the scroll's canonical status at Qumran.⁶³ However, it

⁶¹Sanders, The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll, 87.

⁶²Ibid., 16.

⁶³For these and other suggestions of the scroll's liturgical shaping, see Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites," 503-4, 524;

must be borne in mind, that the current canonical Psalter is itself a liturgical document.⁶⁴ The Masoretic Psalter itself displays many evidences of liturgical shaping. For two examples similar to the objections raised to 11QPs^a, note that the refrain in Psalm 136 is very similar to Psalm 145's refrain in the Qumran scroll; in fact, the similarity between Ps 135:8-12 and Ps 136:10-22 raises the possibility that Psalm

Ian H. Eybers, "Historical Evidence on the Canon of the Old Testament with Special Reference to the Qumran Sect," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1966), 2.165; "Some Remarks about the Canon of the Old Testament," Theologica Evangelica 8 (1975): 117; Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a)," 24-25, 29-32; S. B. Gurewicz, "Hebrew Apocryphal Psalms from Qumran," AusBR 15 (1967): 15; Haran, "The Two Text-Forms of Psalm 151," 171-72 n. 3; R. Laird Harris, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Old Testament Text," in New Perspectives on the Old Testament, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco: Word, 1970), 210; A. Hurvitz, review of The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll, by James A. Sanders, in IEJ 21 (1971): 184; Sid Z. Leiman, The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 47 (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1976), 154-55 n. 183; L. H. Schiffman, "Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scrolls," in The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity, ed. James H. Charlesworth, The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 127; Lawrence A. Sinclair, "11QPs^a: A Psalms Scroll from Qumran: Text and Canon," in The Psalms and Other Studies Presented to Joseph I. Hunt, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, Nashotah House Seminary, on His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Jack C. Knight and Lawrence A. Sinclair (Nashotah, WI: Nashotah House Seminary, 1990), 114; Skehan, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text of the Old Testament," 100. "The Scrolls and the Old Testament Text," in New Directions in Biblical Archaeology, ed. David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 95, 99; "A Liturgical Complex in 11QPs^a," CBQ 35 (1973): 195-205; "Jubilees and the Qumran Psalter," CBQ 37 (1975): 343-47.

⁶⁴James A. Sanders, "Cave 11 Surprises," 44-45; "Text and Canon: Old Testament and New," in Melanges Dominique Barthélemy: Etudes Bibliques Offertes A L'occasion de Son 60e Anniversaire, ed. Pierre Casseti, Othmar Keel, and Adrian Schenker, OBO 38 (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981), 389; Wilson, Editing, 82-83.

136 may have existed at one point without the refrain. A further example may be found in the breakup of the Korahite, Asaphite and Enthronement Psalms; there is certainly the possibility that they were all at one time complete collections, and yet broken up for some liturgical reason, similar to the way in which in 11QPs^a, Psalms 133 and 134 are separated from the Songs of Ascents, while still retaining their titles (at least Psalm 133 does; the place where Psalm 134 would have a title is damaged). The admitted liturgical character of 11QPs^a is not a weighty argument against its canonical status.

Third, a very interesting argument against the canonicity of the scroll has been raised by Shemaryahu Talmon. He makes his arguments based on the *pisqah be emsa pasuq*, spaces in the text which according to ancient scribal tradition "were meant to draw attention to possible biblical or extra-biblical literary expansions for liturgical or homiletical purposes."⁶⁵ These spaces in the text, he suggests, were meant to aim at "supplementary expostulations which are not of a historiographical nature but rather are poetical paraphrases on historical events, such as are found in the Book of Psalms."⁶⁶ He suggests, for example, that one

⁶⁵Talmon, "*Pisqah Be emsa Pasuq* and 11QPs^a," 17; see also, Gurewicz, "Hebrew Apocryphal Psalms from Qumran," 20-21; Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 404-5.

⁶⁶Talmon, "*Pisqah Be emsa Pasuq* and 11QPs^a," 18.

such occurrence in 2 Sam 7:4 (having to do with the Davidic covenant) was meant to direct attention to Psalm 132, and that another one in 2 Sam 12:13 (in the Bathsheba narrative) was meant to call attention to Psalm 51. He then goes on to suggest that another one of these occurrences in 1 Sam 16:7-13 was meant to call attention to Psalm 151 A, that 1 Sam 17:37 was meant to call attention to Psalm 151 B, and that perhaps Psalms 154 and 155 are tied in to *pisqah be emsa pasuq* as well. He then argues, almost incredibly, that this proves the non-canonical nature of these last mentioned psalms:

In concluding we wish to stress that there can be no doubt that the men who introduced the p.b.p. into the MT never considered the extraneous expansions to which they point as integral compositions of the Bible. They were intended to remain outside the authoritative canon, as some kind of appendices to the original Scripture version.⁶⁷

But to use this as an argument against the canonicity at Qumran of Psalms 151, 154, and 155, is to provide an argument against Psalms 51 and 132 as well. As Wilson remarks,

Far from precluding the possibility of "canonicity" for these apocryphal compositions in 11QPs^a, this use of canonical texts (including pss) to expand p.b.p. elsewhere in scripture seems to enhance that possibility.⁶⁸

This argument simply cannot be used against the canonical status of the Qumran scroll.

Fourth, despite the lack of cogency in the previous arguments, there are a few arguments which have a measure of validity to them, even though they are by no means conclusive.

⁶⁷Ibid., 21.

⁶⁸Wilson, Editing, 75.

One such argument is that the scroll's arrangement of psalms and additional compositions may represent specific sectarian concerns. If this argument could be verified, it would carry some weight. It has been suggested that in the prose piece, "David's Compositions," some of the figures there do correspond with the calendar of the Jubilees.⁶⁹ The correspondence does not, however, secure a substantial connection. Beckwith's suggestions as to some liturgical affinities between the same composition, the extra psalms in 11QPs^a, the courses of the Levites, and some notes on prescribed psalms for liturgical use in the Mishnah does nothing to secure a sectarian orientation for the scroll.⁷⁰

Another argument, again based on the numbers in "David's Compositions," notes that the numbers, 3,600 and 4,050, are both multiples of 150. It is then argued that the editor of the scroll was working with a known Masoretic Psalter containing 150 psalms.⁷¹ This reasoning has a certain cogency to it, but it does not really prove that it had to be the Masoretic 150 behind the scroll; it could just as easily have been some other arrangement, or simply a tradition that a Psalter should have 150 psalms. Thus, Wacholder has certainly

⁶⁹William H. Brownlee, "Significance of David's Compositions," *RevQ* 5 (1965): 569-70; Ben Zion Wacholder, "David's Eschatological Psalter 11Q Psalms^a," *HUCA* 59 (1988): 71-72; Skehan, "Jubilees and the Qumran Psalter."

⁷⁰Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites," 499-524.

⁷¹Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites," 503-4; Skehan, "The Scrolls and the Old Testament Text," 95.

overstated the case when he says that "almost all commentators assume that the compiler of this scroll had before him a text more or less identical with that of the traditional Psalter."⁷²

Fifth, when the evidence from 11QPs^a is taken into account along with other Qumran Psalms manuscripts, the matter is still inconclusive. Wilson has written several articles assessing the joint testimony of the scrolls and has found that the evidence, while not decisive, generally supports Sanders's thesis that the last two thirds of the Psalter were still in a state of flux during the time period of Qumran.⁷³ This is based on the fact that there are more contested joins between the psalms in the last two books than for the first three books, and that the earlier the manuscript the less supportive it is of the Masoretic order. Beckwith has countered Wilson's arguments by noting that, even though the evidence for lack of agreement with the traditional Masoretic arrangement is more pronounced in the last two books, this "is all of a piece with the fact that evidence of every kind is fullest for the last two books of the Psalter."⁷⁴ He notes that while there are only five psalms in the last two books which are yet unattested from Qumran, there are twenty-nine

⁷²Wacholder, "David's Eschatological Psalter," 47.

⁷³Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Scroll Reconsidered: An Analysis of the Debate," CBO 47 (1985): 624-42; "Qumran and the Hebrew Psalter," 10-12; "The Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and the Consecutive Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter," 377-88; Editing, 93-138.

⁷⁴Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites," 504 n. 11.

such psalms in the first three books. And though the evidence is meager for the first three books as compared with the last two, there are significant differences from the Masoretic order there as well.

Sixth, it is important to keep in mind the cautionary and sane remarks of Emanuel Tov, who observes that "probably the majority of scholars take as their point of departure the assumption that all Qumran texts reflect the outlook of the Qumran community."⁷⁵ He then goes on to note:

We do not really know whether all the texts found in Qumran were used actively by the community at one of the stages of its history. If most of the texts would have remained locked in a "library", and if in their daily life the sectarians use only one group of texts, we cannot any longer speak of their openness to matters of canon and to textual diversity.⁷⁶

As one of the more recent books on the Psalms states, "Given the paucity of our data, it is impossible to decide for sure what we have before us."⁷⁷ Until there is more data about the function of the Psalter in the Qumran community, it is impossible to make firm statements about the status of the various Psalter texts found at Qumran.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Emanuel Tov, "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts from the Judaean Desert: Their Contribution to Textual Criticism," JJS 39 (1988): 33.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷William L. Holladay, The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 102.

⁷⁸One recent suggestion is that the Qumran psalms scrolls might have a canonical status, but on a different level; see D. Kraemer, "The Formation of Rabbinic Canon: Authority and

Seventh, regardless of the outcome of the debate over the canonical status of the Psalms manuscripts at Qumran, the Christo-canonical approach to the Psalms does not consider the potential canonical status of 11QPs^a or any of the other scrolls to be a threat. That there are fuzzy boundaries as to the exact limits of the canon, or the exact ordering of its contents, is a given of the approach. To reiterate what I said earlier in chapter 5, canon as list is equivalent to a statement of faith; it is not in itself canonical. Moreover, the practicalities of the current situation in the Church with regard to the canon are not going to very easily, or at all, allow for any serious bid to add new compositions to our canonical Psalter. While I believe that the data still favors the thesis that considerably before the time of Qumran, there was a collection of Psalms corresponding to what we consider today to be the canonical Psalter,⁷⁹ such a thesis is not

Boundaries," JBL 110 (1991): 627.

⁷⁹The question of the closing of the canon of Scripture and the time when the Psalter would have been considered canonical and have received its present Masoretic shape are matters which are simply beyond the scope of this dissertation. I will simply say here that I basically agree with a number of scholars who believe that the Old Testament canon was closed by the beginning or middle of the second century, BC, if not long before. On this see Leiman, The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture; "Inspiration and Canonicity: Reflections on the Formation of the Biblical Canon," in Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism in Graeco-Roman Period, ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 56-63; Roger T. Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Eybers, "Historical Evidence on the Canon of the Old Testament"; Duane L. Christensen, "Josephus and the Twenty-Two-Book Canon of Sacred Scripture," JETS 29 (1986): 37-46.

essential for a confessional, Christological, canonical approach to the interpretation of Scripture. And this brings to me to the final issue to be dealt with in this chapter.

The Final Shape of the Psalter:
Theological? Canonical? Christological?

As I begin this last section, there are three questions that I will be trying to answer. (1) Is there a theological rationale that will account, either in whole or in part, for the final shape of the book of Psalms? (2) If there are recoverable rationales, either singular or plural, for the final shape of the book, do they then make the resulting shape of the Psalter canonical? In other words, supposing that we are able to discern the motivations that have provided the Psalter with its present canonical shape, does that motivation plus the shape of the Psalter itself become authoritative for the way the Psalms are to be read? (3) Finally, does this study have any relevance for a Christological interpretation of the Psalms? Does the shape of the Psalter itself either invite or preclude a Christological interpretation?

Is there a Theological Rationale?

The studies that have taken place in the Psalter in the last couple of decades, most recently due to Childs's canonical emphasis, have been very refreshing.⁸⁰ They are a

⁸⁰For a survey more exhaustive than the brief one that I give here, see David M. Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," WW 9 (1989): 274-85; and an updated version of the same article in The Shape and Shaping

welcome change from the cold sterility that locked the psalms into a reconstructed historical or cultic framework that was simply too hypothetical to command scholarly consensus and too distant to be meaningful for contemporary proclamation.⁸¹

First, there have been studies that have explored the connections between the individual psalms on more of a micro-level, examining the relationships between psalms that are either beside each other, or contained in relatively small groupings. Mention was made earlier of studies that have seen the connections between Psalms 1 and 2. In addition to these there have been studies such as Zimmerli's, which explored the connections of some forty psalms which are juxtaposed in pairs.⁸² It has been suggested that the psalms in the fourth book of the Psalter, or at least some of the psalms in it, are arranged around a Moses theme.⁸³ Alternatively, the suggestion

of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 52-70.

⁸¹Cf. J. Gerald Janzen, "The Canonical Context of Old Testament Introduction," review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard S. Childs, in Int 34 (1980): 412: "Whereas the modern hermeneutical axiom has it that a biblical text must be interpreted within its originating *Sitz im Leben*, Childs argues that such an axiom locks such a (reconstructed) text into a narrow particularity of its (reconstructed) *Sitz im Leben*, creating a yawning hermeneutical gap between that text and its situation and the present-day reader."

⁸²Walther Zimmerli, "Zwillingspsalmen," in Wort, Lied, und Gottespruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten: Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler, ed. Josef Schreiner, FB 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 1972), 105-13 (a study actually a bit ahead of its time in its emphasis on intra-Psalter connections).

⁸³David M. Howard, Jr., "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-

of Michael Goulder is that the psalms in the fourth book are very liturgically shaped, with the ordering of the psalms reflecting the alternating pattern of the evening and morning sacrifices.⁸⁴ Joseph Brennan has called attention to what he considers to be three cycles of psalms in the fifth book of the Psalter, 107-119, 120-136, and 137-150, which he believes deal respectively with the theme of Exodus and covenant renewal, pilgrimage to Zion, and the final victorious combat.⁸⁵ He has also called attention to some themes that seem to bind the first eight psalms of the Psalter together.⁸⁶ Leslie Allen has noticed the overlap in vocabulary between Psalms 18 and 19 and how the latter plays a redactional role by its intrusion into a run of royal psalms (18, 20, 21).⁸⁷ It has been noticed that trios of psalms form interlocking patterns, e.g., Psalms 134-136.

Second, on the way to more of a macro-level discussion, several studies have called attention to various parallel,

94," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 108-123; cf. Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 75-76.

⁸⁴Michael D. Goulder, "The Fourth Book of the Psalter," JTS n.s. 26 (1975): 269-89.

⁸⁵Joseph P. Brennan, "Some Hidden Harmonies of the Fifth Book of Psalms," in Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan, ed. Robert F. McNamara (Rochester: St. Bernard's Seminary, 1976), 126-58.

⁸⁶Joseph P. Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," BTB 10 (1980): 25-29.

⁸⁷Leslie C. Allen, "David as Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19," Bib 67 (1986): 544-46.

chiastic, and inclusio patterns in the Psalter, or otherwise suggestive placements of psalms. Mention was made earlier of Auffret's suggestion of a chiastic arrangement for Psalms 15-24. I mention here a few others. John Walton has suggested that the placement of Psalm 53 as the "first of new series of 'enemy' psalms" serves "to draw a parallel between the problems David faced with Saul and those he encountered at the hands of his son Absalom."⁸⁸ McCann has called attention to the rather similar themes that dominate Psalms 42-44 and 73-74 at the beginning of the second and third books, respectively.⁸⁹ Psalms 1 and 2 have been seen as forming chiasms or inclusions with several other pairs of psalms. Psalms 1 and 41 form an inclusio with their use of the *ašrê* formula. Psalm 1 as a Torah psalm is related by Mays to the two other major Torah psalms, 19 and 119; Mays notes that just as Psalm 1 is followed by a royal psalm, Psalms 19 and 119 are preceded by royal psalms.⁹⁰ Wilson sees Psalms 1 and 2 as forming an inclusio with the end of the Psalter, with Psalms 145-150 forming the counter to Psalm 1, and Psalm 144 providing the royal counterpart to Psalm 2.⁹¹ Brennan suggests that it is

⁸⁸John H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," JETS 34 (1991): 26.

⁸⁹J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 95.

⁹⁰Mays, "The Place of the Torah-Psalms," 10-11.

⁹¹Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 80.

Psalm 149 which corresponds to Psalm 2, with Psalm 150 matching Psalm 1.⁹² Wilson also suggests that Psalm 41 at the close of Book I, corresponds to Psalm 2.⁹³ Gerald Sheppard suggests that the placement of Psalm 90, immediately after the close of Book III, casts Moses into his role of intercessor and makes all the previous laments in the first three books Moses' laments.⁹⁴

Finally, there have been suggestions at more of the macro-level which try to suggest either a single rationale or sets of rationales for the final shape of the Psalter. Walter Brueggemann has put forth the suggestion that the beginning and end points of the Psalter set the parameters for a discussion of the message of the Psalms.⁹⁵ Psalm 1 stresses the need for obedience to receive the blessing of the Lord, and Psalm 150 emphasizes the praise the Lord should receive from his creation, but a praise that is not tied to blessing or any particular motivation. Brueggemann then suggests that the theological theme of the Psalter is "the crisis and resolution of God's *hesed*," and "the route of Israel's faith from the obedience of Psalm 1 to the praise of Psalm 150."⁹⁶

⁹²Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," 26.

⁹³Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms," 94 n. 13.

⁹⁴Gerald T. Sheppard, "Theology and the Book of Psalms," Int 46 (1992): 150.

⁹⁵Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," JSOI 50 (1991): 63-92.

⁹⁶Ibid., 79 n. 2.

The problem, however, is that on the way from the first psalm to the last, there are many laments and psalms of crisis:

In order to move from Psalm 1 at the beginning to Psalm 150 at the end, one must depart from the safe world of Psalm 1 and plunge into the middle of the Psalter where one will find a world of enraged suffering.⁹⁷

This path is not unlike Brueggemann's earlier renaming of the traditional form-critical categories of hymn, lament, and thanksgiving song as psalms of "orientation," "disorientation," and "reorientation."⁹⁸ Complicating the journey, however, is the fact that "obviously the Book of Psalms is not arranged to trace that route in a clear, direct and simple way."⁹⁹ Thus Brueggemann sees the endpoints of the Psalter as suggesting its main theme, but notes that the internal arrangement does not trace that theme in a straight path. As a slight corrective to Brueggemann's earlier work regarding the path from orientation to disorientation to reorientation, John Goldingay suggested that because the Psalter does not collect these various psalms into their own places in the canon, that we should take a clue from this and recognize that this path is a cyclic one: "Israelite psalmody is cyclic, in that the end of one psalm can be the beginning

⁹⁷Ibid., 72.

⁹⁸Walter Brueggemann, "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," JSOT 17 (1980): 3-32; The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary, Augsburg Old Testament Studies (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

⁹⁹Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise," 79 n. 2.

of another."¹⁰⁰ He goes on then to note that this very cycle reflects the life of faith: "Thus the believer's life with God is lived in an ever-repeated alternating of praise and prayer, prayer and praise as he lives by this cycle."¹⁰¹ Perhaps this cycle could be seen as a corrective to Brueggemann's more recent idea as well, explaining why the journey from obedience to praise is not a clearcut straight path.¹⁰²

Wilson has argued that though the evidence clearly suggests that Books I-III have had a redactional history separate from that of Books IV-V, still, there are some moves that affect the shape and interpretation of the whole. The prefixing of Psalm 1 to the front of the entire collection, for example, turns the Psalter from a hymnbook, a performance oriented collection, to a book to be used in meditation and

¹⁰⁰John Goldingay, "The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer in the Psalms," JSOT 20 (1981): 86.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 87.

¹⁰²I believe that Brueggemann's thesis has important implications for the modern day presentation of the gospel, where all too often the grace that is offered is "cheap grace." Brueggemann remarks in another article ("Response to James L. Mays, 'The Question of Context,'" in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 [Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 37 n. 2), "I am aware of the theological problem for conventional Christianity with the affirmation that faith begins in obedience. The canonical arrangement of the Psalter may require us to rethink our conventional notions of 'grace-law' which perhaps belong to particular historical crises." For many in the conservative Reformed camp today, this rethinking has already occurred.

contemplation.¹⁰³ I concur, at least in part, with his opinion that

the clear evidence of organization evident in the book, and the apparent shift of function away from public performance to private meditation and appropriation, render "hymnbook" an inadequate and misleading designation.¹⁰⁴

More controversial, in my opinion, are his suggestions as to the redactional function of the last two books. After noting that the first three books have to do with the rise and "declining fortunes of the Davidic monarchy,"¹⁰⁵ Wilson suggests that the last two books are a move away from this Davidic emphasis:

Books Four and Five take a decidedly different approach to the question by shifting emphasis away from hope in human, Davidic kingship back to the premonarchic period with its (supposed) direct reliance on God's protection and the individual access guaranteed by the Law (Pss 90, 119). These books look to the establishment of the direct divine rule which is most clearly expressed in the YHWH MALAK psalms, 94-99, which become the theological "heart" of the expanded final Psalter.¹⁰⁶

In a later article Wilson asks the question,

Are the final editors seeking to counter the lamentation associated with the collapse of the Davidic hopes in the first three books with a call to praise the only true and eternal King--Israel's only hope? As a result of its

¹⁰³Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," 137-38; "Shaping the Psalter," 72; Editing, 204-7.

¹⁰⁴Wilson, "Shaping," 81-82. Cf. Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, 24-25; John Alexander Lamb, The Psalms in Christian Worship (London: Faith, 1962), 7-8; Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., The Psalms in Christian Worship: A Practical Guide (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1976), 19-27.

¹⁰⁵Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms," 91.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 92.

final form, the Psalter counters continuing concern for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and kingdom with the wise counsel to seek refuge in a kingdom "not of this world"--the eternal kingdom in which YHWH alone is king.¹⁰⁷

I find Wilson's argument less convincing here. First, it seems to fly in the face of the joint message of the first two psalms, that the path of blessing is found in obedience to God's law and paying due homage to his anointed king.¹⁰⁸ Second, it seems to ignore the royal psalms that occur in the last two books of the Psalter, in particular, Psalms 101, 110, 118, 132, and 144. Wilson counters here by suggesting that the Davidic collections in the last book of the Psalter show David "modelling an attitude of dependence and trust in Yahweh alone."¹⁰⁹ But I fail to see how this is any different from the royal and Davidic psalms in the first three books. Indeed, the last psalm in the third book, Psalm 89, clearly shows that the human king's reign is nothing more than the analogue of Yahweh's reign. Third, it seems that if Wilson's suggestion for the redactional purpose of this last third of the Psalter is correct, it was entirely lost on future

¹⁰⁷Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 81-82. McCann seems to support this thesis as well ("Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," 95-99; A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah [Nashville: Abingdon, 1993], 42-44).

¹⁰⁸Indeed, as Miller notes ("The Beginning of the Psalter," 88), the linkages between Psalms 1 and 2 suggest that the people should hear, in all the psalms that follow, the voice of the king. See also, James L. Mays, "In a Vision: The Portrayal of the Messiah in the Psalms," Ex Auditu 7 (1991): 3.

¹⁰⁹Wilson, Editing, 227.

generations of Israelites who awaited the one who would raise up the fortunes of the fallen Davidic dynasty. It seems to go against the grain of the rest of the canon.

John Walton, using Wilson's work, envisions the Psalms "as a cantata around the theme of the Davidic covenant."¹¹⁰ Though there are many points of interest that Walton raises, and though the general thesis was in essence already shown to be true by Wilson, at least for the first three books,¹¹¹ I find his rationales for the placement of individual psalms, other than for those at the seams, not to be very cogent.¹¹² Also, I believe Wilson has shown that the first three books were redacted on a different design than were the last two; it would be hard--and Walton himself seems to admit the difficulty--to extend the cantata into the last two books.

There are other suggestions that I can only just mention. Terence Collins, from a structural perspective, tries to show that the Psalter, irrespective of the intentions

¹¹⁰Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," JETS 34 (1991): 21-31.

¹¹¹Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms."

¹¹²Wilson comes to the same conclusion; he states ("Understanding the Purposeful Arrangements of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 [Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 44), "The thematic connections and linkages he suggests are tenuous at best and, while occasionally apt, are not ultimately convincing." Interestingly, the one example Wilson uses (p. 45 n. 1) to show the tenuousness of Walton's connections, his suggestion that the references to old age in Psalm 71 coming at the end of Book II are meant to show David near the end of his reign (pp. 24, 26), seems to me to be one of his more defensible suggestions.

of its authors, collectors, or editors, gives out its most basic message at the "implicit subconscious level."¹¹³ Leslie Allen suggests that the royal psalms were all at one time in a single collection, and that they have been distributed throughout the Psalter, functioning "like the fruit in a well-made cake, ensuring that with every slice of psalmody testimony to the royal hope is present."¹¹⁴

Is there a theological rationale for the shape of the Psalter? I believe there may well be, but, in my opinion, studies on the shape of the Psalter are still in an infancy stage. Many connections have been noticed; many chiasms, inclusios, linguistic parallels, etc., have been uncovered. But for now, the question is perhaps best seen as being in the same category as the search for a center for Old Testament theology. While many interesting suggestions have been made concerning the shape of the Psalter, I doubt if there is going to emerge one that will command a scholarly consensus very soon. It is certainly an intriguing question, one that should occupy the Psalms Group at SBL for some time to come. There are, however, a few things that I believe should be kept in mind during this search.

(1) I would suggest that we must be very careful about superimposing a predetermined grid on the Psalter and making

¹¹³Terence Collins, "Decoding the Psalms: A Structural Approach to the Psalter," JSOT 37 (1987): 41-60.

¹¹⁴Leslie C. Allen, Psalms, Word Biblical Themes (Waco: Word, 1987), 114.

the Psalms fit into all the right slots. Wilson has made the point eloquently (even if somewhat allegorically):

We now stand on the borders of the promised land. Like Moses' spies, we need to take care to learn the lay of the land and to acquire an intimate knowledge of its inhabitants, lest we be misled by our own preconceived notions to see giants where there are none and lest we, because of our misconceptions, fail to take the land.¹¹⁵

(2) I believe we must be very careful about letting the search for the shape of the Psalter become a reconstructive exercise. Roland Murphy cautions:

Hypothetical historical reconstruction is as inescapable in contextual interpretation as it is in the usual historical criticism that is applied to the Psalter. This is a cautionary observation, lest the new contextual studies of the Psalter in the context of canon or book might seem more "objective" than other approaches.¹¹⁶

I believe that, while there is a certain validity to Murphy's warning, the search for the shape of the Psalter does not necessarily have to become involved in these reconstructive efforts. Statements and observations can be made about how a psalm functions at a particular location in the Psalter, without suppositions as to where it originally was or why it was moved to its current location. If we can avoid this, then we are simply working with the canon's reconstruction, which, as I have argued previously, is much to be preferred to the scholarly reconstruction.

¹¹⁵Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangements of the Psalms," 51.

¹¹⁶Roland E. Murphy, "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 21.

(3) Finally, I suggest that we need to be very careful in making statements about the canonical function of a psalm or groups of psalms, that would negate other emphases in the Psalter. This was the problem I had earlier with Wilson's contention that the last two books of the Psalter, and especially the *Yahweh-malak* psalms at the beginning of Book IV, in their emphasis on Yahweh's kingship, were at the same time a devaluation of the Davidic dynasty. Suggestions of editorial purpose should not be used to offset or nullify contentual statements and emphases.

Is the Psalter's Shape Canonical?

In the same article in which Walton attempts to show that the Psalter is a cantata on the theme of the Davidic covenant, he asks the following questions:

When we consider the issue of authority, how would the editor's agenda be considered? Should we speak of an inspired author of the individual psalm or be more concerned with the inspired agenda of the editor? Is only one of them inspired (author or editor) or, if both are, do both carry equal weight? If the editor is to be considered inspired, did he convey enough of his rationale for us to identify it with any degree of objectivity?¹¹⁷

Or, to use the wording of James L. Mays,

Can the mentality that turned the collection of cultic pieces into literature be deduced in sufficient specificity to provide a guide to the way the psalms were being understood and composed, a kind of *geistige Heimat* of the Psalter in its final stage of formation?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata," 23.

¹¹⁸James L. Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield

In response to these questions, I make the following observations. First, our oldest manuscripts of psalms show affinities to the Masoretic arrangement, and perhaps a knowledge of the Masoretic order on the part of the editor(s), but by no means identity with it. Whether these scrolls were canonical or not is, at this stage, impossible to tell. But the possibility that they were should caution us against assuming too readily that the Masoretic arrangement is the only arrangement that could have been canonical.

Second, it is the Masoretic arrangement with which the Christian Church works today. It is the Psalter which the Church has received. Therefore, it is right that we should explore this arrangement for what the editors of the Psalter may have been trying to tell us.

Third, it is necessary to remember that the Psalter is one of the few books in the canon where the separations between pericopes are well defined. Unlike the narrative, historical, and doctrinal books in the Bible, or even the prophetic books, except for a handful of instances, it is fairly easy to tell where one composition ends and the next one begins. Therefore, unlike studies in the structure of books like Genesis, Samuel, Matthew, or Romans, we will never be able to expect the same kind of results or regard for the structure of the Psalter as for the former. As Murphy notes,

Academic Press, 1993), 14.

too many of our ideas about what message is being sent by the shape of the Psalter are, though insightful, nevertheless, hypothetical.¹¹⁹ While the purposeful placement of many of the psalms has, in my opinion, been demonstrated to satisfaction, it is possible that the location of other psalms is best explained simply by the fact that that is just where the scribe happened to put them. It is all too easy for us in this day of computer technology, to forget that the scribes were not working with word processors, and probably did not perform very many cut and paste operations.

Fourth, it is important to keep in mind that, even if we should decide that the structure of the Psalter is canonical, that is still a long way from taking our observations about the theological rationale for that structure and turning them into dogma. I venture to say that we will not be able to make any theological deductions from the structure of the Psalter, that do not appear in the content of the Psalter itself.

Given the preceding observations, I believe that whether the shape of the Psalter is canonical or not is probably an unresolvable question. And inasmuch as I am stressing canon as authority or rule, rather than canon as list, I would suggest that rather than talking about the "canonical shape of the Psalter," it would be better to refer to the "shape of the canonical Psalter." This would avoid giving the impression that the shape or structure of the Psalter is on the same

¹¹⁹Murphy, "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation," 22-23.

level of authoritativeness as its contents. Theological deductions and statements may still be derivable from the shape or structure of the book, but their role will most likely be that of support for the content that is already in the psalms themselves. Also important, however, they may aid in calling attention to overlooked content as well.

Does the Psalter Have a Christological Structure?

Given what I have said in the previous sections, the answer to this question should probably be apparent. I believe that the studies on the shape of the Psalter make it more than just probable that the book of Psalms has received a structure that calls attention to its messianic elements. The prefixing of Psalms 1 and 2 and their multiple chiastic relationships with other portions of the Psalter (Psalms 18 and 19, Psalms 118 and 119, Psalms 144 and 146-50, Psalms 149 and 150) call attention to the fact that the Psalter is not only the Word of God but also the word of his anointed king. That the seams of the Psalter are generally sewn with royal psalms (2, 72, 89, and perhaps even 41 and 144) most likely means that there was an intention on the part of the editor(s) to trace the fortunes of the Davidic reign and subsequent dynasty in the placement of these psalms. This is all the more likely due to the work of John Eaton in showing, his detractors notwithstanding, just how pervasive the royal

element is in the Psalter.¹²⁰ Indeed, the very presence of these royal psalms in the Psalter, as many have suggested, arranged thus at a time when there was no Davidic king on the throne, testifies to the way in which they were being read, not so much historically as eschatologically and hopefully, awaiting the coming of him who would fulfill the hopes and dreams of the people for a king who would reign in righteousness.¹²¹

I believe all these things are real and present in the shape of the canonical Psalter. At the same time, their role is one of support. They are aids to our faith that when God inspired holy individuals to write the Psalms, he did so with his Son in mind. The belief that the Psalms are messianic and Christologically oriented, though strengthened by these

¹²⁰John H. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, SBT 2d ser. 32 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976).

¹²¹James Luther Mays, "The David of the Psalms," 153-55; Bernhard W. Anderson, Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for us Today, rev. and exp. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 191-92; F. F. Bruce, "The Theology and Interpretation of the Old Testament," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study, ed. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 413-14 n. 30; Ronald E. Clements, Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 151; Delmar L. Jacobson, "The Royal Psalms and Jesus Messiah: Preparing to Preach on a Royal Psalm," WW 5 (1985): 192-95; Samuel Terrien, The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today, (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), 91; Claus Westermann, The Living Psalms, trans. J. R. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 59; Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," trans. James Wharton, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 111; Tournay, Seeing and Hearing God in the Psalms, 229; Allen, Psalms, 114-15; Roland E. Murphy, The Psalms, Job, Proclamation Commentaries, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 33.

matters of shape and form, is best secured by the use of other evidence which is more properly called canonical. A few years ago, Gerald Sheppard wrote an article in which he proposed to

concentrate on textual warrants for a Christian, theological interpretation of the Book of Psalms. These warrants will be drawn from implications of the "shape" of the book and its intertextual function within Christian scripture as a whole.¹²²

In this chapter we have done something similar, and found that the warrants to be drawn from the "shape" of the Psalter are considerable, but perhaps not necessarily conclusive. We now turn to look at the second line of evidence, their "intertextual function within Christian scripture as a whole."

¹²²Sheppard, "Theology and the Book of Psalms," 143.

CHAPTER 8

THE CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO THE PSALMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WHOLE CANON

Canonical interpretation is inner-biblical exegesis with authority. It is intertextuality with the understanding that the interplay between texts must ultimately, if it is to have any meaning, be situated in God as the author of canon and text. This chapter, then, will be an investigation of the meaning of the Psalms as they are used in the rest of the biblical canon. Primarily, "the rest of the biblical canon" means the New Testament, though the Old Testament will be investigated as well. However, before looking at this usage, it is necessary to examine three unresolved issues that were raised in chapter 4.

Three Lines of Evidence

Bruce Waltke, in the article that was the original inspiration for this dissertation, argued for a "canonical-process approach" that would trace the meaning of the psalms through four stages: (1) the time of the original composition, (2) the First Temple period and initial collections of psalms, (3) the Second Temple period and completion of the canonical

Psalter, and (4) the time of the New Testament.¹ Of great importance to Waltke's thesis, that the tracing of this process results in an interpretation that sees the whole Psalter as messianic, are: (1) the pervasiveness of the royal element in the Psalter, (2) the fairly uniform process of the Psalter's growth, and (3) the continued recognition of this royal element in the Psalter's growth, shaping, and canonization in the intertestamental period.

This raises, then, three important questions: (1) can the Christological interpretation of the Psalms be based on a royal interpretation of the Psalter? (2) can it rely on the reconstruction of a four-stage process? and (3) can data for the canonical interpretation of the Psalms be taken from the intertestamental period? In the pages that follow, I will deal with the first of these questions at some length, and with the last two more briefly.

Royal Interpretation of the Psalms

Waltke's article, in part, was based on John Eaton's work in his book, Kingship and the Psalms.² Eaton argues in this monograph for a much more pervasive presence of the royal elements in the Psalter than had previously been acknowledged.

¹Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 3-18.

²John H. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, SBT 2d ser. 32 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976).

Gunkel had argued that there were perhaps nine or ten royal psalms, with other psalms preserving somewhat obscured royal elements as well. His pupil Mowinckel and, in turn, Mowinckel's pupil Birkeland, had acknowledged a much larger royal presence in the Psalter.³ Eaton, at the end of the process, as it were, then identifies some sixty-four psalms as royal.⁴ Since many of these psalms are not ascribed to David, Waltke, then, goes on to add to Eaton's number all those that are so ascribed and several others as well, and postulates that well over the half the Psalter is comprised of royal psalms and was understood throughout the period of collection and canonization as a royal hymnbook.⁵

I find myself in basic agreement with the positions of both Eaton and Waltke. There are, however, several complicating factors that must be taken into account which somewhat qualify my wholehearted use of this line of evidence in support of a Christological interpretation of the Psalms.

(1) It must be kept in mind that influencing Eaton in this area are his affinities toward both the myth and ritual, or "patternism" school, and also the Uppsala school. Both of these somewhat related ways of looking at the Psalms in the context of the ancient Near East have been generally rejected by Old Testament scholars today. Though these are really

³See Eaton, Kingship, 1-20, for details of this process.

⁴Ibid., 27-85.

⁵Waltke, "Canonical Process," 9-15.

distinct schools, they have both been very much involved in the discussion regarding the close relationship between God, king, and cult.⁶ The myth and ritual school, in particular, has been faulted for several reasons, first, for generally assuming that the "pattern" of relationships in this area could be simply imposed on the Israelite institutions.⁷

Indeed, the whole anthropological model which formed the basis for the application has been abandoned by contemporary anthropologists.⁸ Second, the whole interpretation of the *akitu* festival, not just how it might have affected Israelite practice, but even what it meant in Babylon is a subject of considerable debate.⁹ Third, Israel's late acceptance of the

⁶Arthur L. Merrill and John R. Spencer, "The 'Uppsala School' of Biblical Studies," in In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer, JSOTSup 31 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 20-21. See also, G. W. Anderson, "Some Aspects of the Uppsala School of Old Testament Study," HTR 43 (1950): 239-56; A. S. Kapelrud, "Scandinavian Research in the Psalms after Mowinckel," ASTI 4 (1965): 74-90.

⁷John W. Rogerson, Myth in Old Testament Interpretation, BZAW 134 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 66-84; Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation--Principles and Problems," in Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977, VTSup 29 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 320-56. See also, Robert A. Oden, Jr., "Theoretical Assumptions in the Study of Ugaritic Myths," Maarav 2/1 (1979): 43-63.

⁸Denise Dombrowski Hopkins, "New Directions in Psalms Research--Good News for Theology and Church," Saint Luke's Journal of Theology 29 (1986): 273; Karel van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 343-44.

⁹van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival," 331-44.

kingship, as well as the many indications that despite the king's status as "son of God," he was nevertheless regarded as fully human, make the thesis that the king was a stand-in for Yahweh in cult ritual highly unlikely.¹⁰ Fourth, any suggestion that the Israelite king was in some way regarded as either the physical or metaphysical son of the deity and therefore divine, or the deity incarnate, has been discouraged in light of the much more defensible adoptionistic view.¹¹ Fifth, the use of the psalmic literature to draw and secure the connections to religious festivals in the ancient Near East, when neither the legal codes nor monarchical narratives

¹⁰Martin Noth, "God, King, and Nation in the Old Testament, ." chap. in The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 161-75; Erhard Gerstenberger, "Psalms," in Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 192; Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "Old and New Testament Traces of a Formula of the Judaeen Royal Ritual," NovT 5 (1962): 237-38; Terence Kleven, "Kingship in Ugarit (KTU 1.16 I 1-23)," in Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, JSOTSup 67 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 52-53.

¹¹Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh, trans. G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 37; Gerald Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," ZAW 73 (1961): 202-25; Gerhard von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," chap. in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 226-27; Noth, "God, King, and Nation," 172-73; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings, ConBOT 8 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 259-66; Shalom M. Paul, "Adoption Formulae: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses," Maarav 2 (1980): 175-76; Leonidas Kaligula, The Wise King: Studies in Royal Wisdom as Divine Revelation in the Old Testament and Its Environment, ConBOT 15 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1980), 102.

make reference to such practices, seems methodologically unsound.¹²

(2) Eaton also relied heavily on Birkeland's very influential The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms.¹³ Birkeland argued that, since the evildoers in the Psalms were described in the same way throughout the Psalter, and the enemies in some twenty of the Psalms were clearly to be identified as Gentiles, unless there were other considerations to prove differently, the enemies should be regarded as Gentiles throughout. Moreover, he argued, since it would make the most sense to regard the King as the one whose enemies would be the Gentile nations and powers, psalms that pertained to these enemies were to be identified as royal psalms. Birkeland's thesis has not gone unchallenged, however, most recently by Steven Croft.¹⁴ And though there has been the suggestion that Birkeland deserves another hearing,¹⁵ the consensus today is that his generalizations are too sweeping.

¹²W. Stewart McCullough, "Israel's Kings, Sacral and Otherwise," ExpTim 68 (1956): 145; Noth, "God, King, and Nation," 161; William J. Dumbrell, The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 208.

¹³H. Birkeland, The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms (Oslo: I. Kommissjon & J. Dybwad, 1955).

¹⁴Steven J. L. Croft, The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms, JSOTSup 44, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 15-48; see also, G. W. Anderson, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms," BJRL 48 (1965-1966): 18-29; W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Psalmody and Prophecy, JSOTSup 27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 28-29; Gerstenberger, "Psalms," 199.

¹⁵T. Raymond Hobbs and P. Kenneth Jackson, "The Enemy in the Psalms," BTB 21/1 (1991): 22-29.

(3) Third, Eaton's own arguments have been considered methodologically unsound. Bellinger, in particular, has answered Eaton point for point and concluded that

though at first glance Eaton's arguments for his position look impressive, when considered individually, they do not show as much as he claims for them; they do not assure the royal interpretation.¹⁶

In my opinion, however, the strength of Bellinger's answers to Eaton lie, not so much in disproving Eaton's thesis, but in simply demonstrating that Eaton has not proved his case beyond a reasonable doubt.¹⁷

All these points notwithstanding, Eaton's work and those of both the myth and ritual, and Uppsala schools have, in my opinion, done a great service in calling attention to the very important role of the king in the cult and the life of the nation. The following points, in particular, I believe should be related to the Christological interpretation of the Psalter, though I am not at the same time claiming that such a Christological interpretation is secured by them.

First, as Murphy correctly notes, "The central role of the king in the life of the nation is almost beyond our

¹⁶Bellinger, Psalmody and Prophecy, 31. See also, David J. Plein, The Psalms: Songs of Tragedy, Hope, and Justice, The Bible & Liberation Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 194.

¹⁷For what I believe to be a fairer critique of Eaton's position, see Croft, The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms, 73-132.

comprehension."¹⁸ Aubrey Johnson makes reference to Lam 4:20 and the lament so plaintively put forth there:

The breath of our nostrils, the Messiah of Yahweh,
Was caught in their pits,
Of whom we had said, "In his shadow
We shall live (i.e. flourish) amid the nations."¹⁹

A passage such as this surely must surely be reflective of how much the fortunes, hopes, and desires of the people were bound up with their king. Several psalms certainly show this close relationship (Psalms 20, 84, 89), and there are many others that would do the same if recognized as royal (e.g., Psalms 22, 118). This would tend to provide justification, therefore, for drawing a line to Christ, in whom the lives and fortunes of his people are entirely taken up.

Second, it is important to recognize, however little we may know about specific aspects, that the king certainly played a central role in the cult. There is no evidence to suggest that the king ever took on the role of Yahweh in the cultic drama. It is still only speculation that he ever underwent a mock humiliation, though this would certainly be one way of explaining the apparently exaggerated description of the distress in so many of the laments. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence from the monarchical narratives that demonstrates, not only the king's central role in the

¹⁸Roland E. Murphy, The Psalms, Job, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 31.

¹⁹Aubrey R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, 2d ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 2.

cult, but also his ultimate responsibility in seeing that the cult functioned properly. We need only call attention here to narratives concerning David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah, and, in a more negative light, Manasseh. Certain royal psalms would seem to highlight this connection as well. If Psalm 22, for example, is, indeed, a royal psalm, then we see there how even the seemingly personal cultic actions of the king have implications for a host of others, the "great assembly," the "poor," even "all the ends of the earth," and "all the rich of the earth." Even "posterity" and "future generations" seem to be included among those who benefit from the king's fulfillment of his vows of praise.²⁰ While it is probably going too far to suggest that the king in some way suffered vicariously for the sins of the people, though there are several who would still hold to this idea,²¹ it is important to

²⁰Cf. John H. Eaton, Psalms: Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1967), 71.

²¹For the older suggestions of this possibility see Johnson, Sacral Kingship; Helmer Ringgren, The Messiah in the Old Testament, SBT 18 (London: SCM, 1956), 54-66; Ivan Engnell, Studies in the Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 35, 127; A Rigid Scrutiny: Essays by Ivan Engnell, ed. and trans. John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 41, 89, 105, 221-230. For more recent holders of this position see J. A. Soggin, "Notes for the Christian Exegesis of the first part of Psalm 22," chap. in Old Testament and Oriental Studies, BibOr 29 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975), 163-65; Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, ix; "The Psalms and Israelite Worship," in Tradition and Interpretation: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study, ed. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 270-71; The Psalms Come Alive: Capturing the Voice & Art of Israel's Songs (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984), 129-44; and with some moderation, Aage Bentzen, King and Messiah 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 46-48.

remember the priestly functions that seem to have belonged to the kingly office.²² In addition to all that David did to establish the cult (appointing Levites, singers, and other liturgical personnel; writing and commissioning psalms; providing and manufacturing instruments) he seems to have even performed priestly functions (1 Chr 15:27; 16:2-3; 21:26; cf. also for Solomon, 2 Chr 6:3, 13).²³ This data, plus the titling of the king in Psalm 110 as a "priest in the order of Melchizedek," provides justification for drawing a line from the sacral ministry of the king as it may be portrayed in the Psalms to the New Testament and the sacral ministry of our Lord.

Third, the term "anointed" (*māšîah*) should be given its full significance as providing a crucial link to the Christology of the New Testament. Just under sixty years ago, the then newly elected president of the Society of Biblical Literature could, in his presidential address, castigate the scholarly world for what he perceived to be their failure in this regard:

There seems to be abroad a strangely perverted and sadistically exaggerated sense of honesty in estimating our sacred writings, according to which one ought always to choose the less worthy and less religious of two

²²See most recently on this, Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BSac* 150 (1993): 50-61.

²³The Masoretic Text of 2 Sam 8:18 also notes that David's sons served as priests. The text appears to be corrupt there, however, and the parallel in 1 Chr 18:17 refers to them as royal attendants (*hāri šōnîm lēyad hammelek*).

possible interpretations of any given passage. Whenever in the Psalms the word "Messiah" appears, every nerve is strained, and every device of a forced exegesis utilized, in order to make it refer merely to the secular king and his mundane affairs. Even where the whole context is saturated with the characteristic motifs of Israel's dynamic and intensely religious Messianic expectation, one must never admit that the Messiah is meant.²⁴

Today, it would be almost unthinkable for such an address to be given at SBL, with the scholarly consensus being that the term refers only to the currently reigning king. Regardless, however, of whether or not the term "messiah" is ever used in the Old Testament to refer to an eschatological figure--and I am not convinced that it is not²⁵--it is nevertheless appropriate to see the term in its various texts both as a reference to the reigning historical king, and as foundational for the characterization of the future eschatological king.²⁶

I disagree with J. J. M. Roberts when he says

A discussion of the Old Testament's contribution to the development of the later messianic expectations can hardly be focused on the Hebrew word for messiah, *māšîah*. In the original context not one of the thirty-nine occurrences of *māšîah* in the Hebrew canon refers to an expected figure of

²⁴George Dahl, "The Messianic Expectation in the Psalter," JBL 57 (1938): 2 (presidential address delivered December 28, 1937).

²⁵For the suggestion that, though the word refers primarily to the reigning king, there may nevertheless be idealistically future-oriented expectations, see I. J. du Plessis, "The Relation Between the Old and New Testaments from the Perspective of Kingship/Kingdom--Including the Messianic Motif," Neot 14 (1981): 47; Keith R. Crim, The Royal Psalms (Richmond: John Knox, 1962), 60-61; Heinz Kruse, "Psalm cxxxii and the Royal Zion Festival," VT 33 (1983): 291; John I. Durham, "The King as 'Messiah' in the Psalms," RevExp 81 (1984): 430.

²⁶Mettinger, King and Messiah, 14.

the future whose coming will coincide with the inauguration of an era of salvation.²⁷

Even if some of the passages where *māšîah* occurs were later understood as prophetic predictions of the Messiah, as happened for example with Ps 2:2, such passages provide an inadequate base from which to discuss the Old Testament contribution to the development of messianic expectations.²⁸

Such statements, though they may be accurate in terms of the non-eschatological character of these occurrences, seem to completely disregard the foundational character of these references for the later understanding of the concept. It seems incongruous that in the post-biblical period the term "messiah" was picked out of thin air to describe some kind of eschatological deliverer without any reference at all to the biblical use of the term. It would be strange indeed that the term, which so far has only been attested in Israelite literature, even though the practice of anointing kings was common in the ancient Near East,²⁹ would be used in post-biblical literature with no remnants of its historical usage. Nor does it seem credible that Christ was so described by his followers without some kind of understanding of what the term meant in the Old Testament. As Ringgren states,

²⁷J. J. M. Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations," in The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity, ed. James H. Charlesworth, The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 39.

²⁸Ibid., 41.

²⁹Shemaryahu Talmon, "Kingship and the Ideology of the State," chap. in King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 36.

As a matter of fact, the Christian belief in Jesus as the messianic King and Saviour would be unthinkable and unintelligible apart from the background of the Old Testament kingship ideology as expressed in the royal psalms.³⁰

The simple claim I am making here is that the Old Testament information in regard to "messiah" should be recognized as forming a foundation for the later concept of "the Messiah" and that attributes of the former are understood to be also attributes of the latter. Or, in other words, we may use the Old Testament texts about the messiah to help us understand the Christ.

Fourth, it is important to understand the special relationship which existed between God and his "anointed." Though, as mentioned above, the idea that the Israelite king was regarded as God's son in some physical or metaphysical sense, as though he were deity incarnate, is almost unthinkable, it must be recognized that the king's status as adopted son of God was no less real. As Shalom Paul remarks,

The concept of the king as the offspring of a deity is a well-known feature of ancient Near Eastern literature and iconography. In Israel, however, where no claims were ever made for the deification of the king, this idea, though literally rejected, was nevertheless reinterpreted metaphorically to signify divine election and

³⁰Helmer Ringgren, The Faith of the Psalmists (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 114; cf. Ronald E. Clements ("Messianic Hope in the Old Testament," JSOT 43 [1989]: 10-11), who says that the work of Bentzen, Mowinckel, and others has "established beyond question that the imagery and titles accorded to the messiah were drawn from earlier titles applied to the reigning king of Israel."

legitimation, thereby establishing a personal intimate relationship between God and king.³¹

As God's anointed and adopted son, the king was especially endowed with the Spirit of God (1 Sam 16:3).³² He was also a supernaturally wise king, one who was to rule not by his own wisdom, but by wisdom that was given to him.³³ Though not to be considered divine, he was nevertheless the Deity's viceregent. Indeed, as Mettinger remarks, "One is almost tempted to speak of the king as 'the image and likeness of God' on earth."³⁴

It is in this light that the question as to the relationship between the royal psalms (psalms about the human king) and the enthronement psalms³⁵ (psalms about the kingship

³¹Paul, "Adoption Formulae," 175-76.

³²Johnson, Sacral Kingship, 15-16.

³³Thus remarks Kaligula (The Wise King, 132): "A king could not perform his duties without divine wisdom--consequently royal wisdom was esteemed in the kingship ideology of the ancient Near East. By wisdom a king could obey the will of his god(s) with humility and thereby rule successfully. . . . A king therefore was expected to seek wisdom through prayer. . . . Laws, plans of temples, information about success or failure in war, etc. were mediated to a king by divine revelation." Note in this connection that Solomon prayed for wisdom (2 Chr 1:10), and that David received the plans for the temple from the Spirit (1 Chr 28:11-19).

³⁴Mettinger, King and Messiah, 263.

³⁵The bias towards the cultic ritual view of the enthronement psalms is evident in the very name given to them. I agree with Wendell Bowes who suggests that "a more appropriate name should be sought for the enthronement psalms such as the 'Kingship psalms of Yahweh'" ("The Basilmorphic Conception of Deity in Israel and Mesopotamia," in The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective, ed. K. Lawson Younger, Jr., William W. Hallo, and Bernard F. Batto, Scripture in Context 4, Ancient Near

of Yahweh) should be viewed. Psalm 89 provides the clue in this regard. J.-B. Dumortier has called attention to the close similarities between the hymn to Yahweh in vv. 2-19 and the oracle of Yahweh concerning his servant David in vv. 20-38.³⁶ The parallels are indeed striking. Does the Lord have a strong arm (v. 14)? Then so does the king (v. 26). Is the Lord characterized by covenant lovingkindness (vv. 2-3, 15)? Then so is the king (v. 20). Is the Lord characterized by faithfulness (vv. 2-3, 6, 9)? Then so is the king (v. 38). Is the Lord incomparable to his in the heavenly council (vv. 7-9)? Then so is the king incomparable to his own people and all the kings of the earth--even to the point where he can be given a name which is usually reserved for God, *elyôn* (vv. 20, 28).³⁷ Is the Lord mighty (v. 9)? Then so is the king (v. 22). Is the Lord exalted (v. 14)? Then so is the king (vv. 20, 25). Does the Lord rule over the proud waters (vv. 10-11)? Then the king also is ruler over the sea and the rivers (v. 26). Will the Lord defeat all his enemies (v. 11)? Then even so will the king be victorious over all his foes (vv. 23-

Eastern Texts and Studies 11, [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991], 262).

³⁶J.-B. Dumortier, "Un Rituel D'intronisation: Le Ps. LXXXIX 2-38," VT 22 (1972): 176-96.

³⁷On this point Herbert G. May ("Aspects of the Imagery of World Dominion and World State in the Old Testament," in Essays in Old Testament Ethics, ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis [New York: KTAV, 1974], 68) notes, "As Yahweh is incomparable with the members of the heavenly court, so David (= the king) is the highest (Elyon) of the kings of the earth."

24). Is the Lord's faithfulness established in the heavens, *baššahaq* (v. 7)? Even so is the king (or his throne) established as the faithful witness in the skies, *baššahaq* (v. 38). In short, then, everything that is true of Yahweh in vv. 2-19 is true also of the earthly king in vv. 20-38. And though the glory of the earthly king does not come close to the splendor of the heavenly king, at the same time his dominion is nonetheless one that can be described in cosmogonic proportions. Thus vv. 2-19 and vv. 20-38 come together to describe the one great world kingdom of the Lord Almighty and his co-regent and earthly representative and witness--David the son of Jesse. The implications this has for the psalm are tremendous. The psalmist has established a formidable case for the lament to come in the last part of the psalm: if the earthly kingdom of the Davidide falls, then so must the kingdom of Yahweh; the kingdoms stand or fall together. The Lord simply cannot allow the king to continue to undergo the degradation described in vv. 39-52 without being untrue to himself, without lying to David, without violating the covenant, and without endangering his own reputation as sovereign ruler of the universe. As Clifford notes, these verses "actually describe a single event, the acclamation in heaven and on earth of Yahweh's world-establishing victory, which includes the commissioning of the Davidide as earthly regent of the new order."³⁸ The royal

³⁸Richard J. Clifford, "Psalm 89: A Lament over the Davidic

psalms are nothing more than reflections of the Psalms of Yahweh's kingship.³⁹

Attention has been called to the risk that God took in allowing himself be thought of in terms of human kingship.⁴⁰ Attention needs to be called as well to the risk that he took in establishing a human monarchy in Israel as a reflection of his own kingship. However, it is precisely this risk that provides the justification for our drawing a line from the Davidic king, the adopted son of God, as he is so described in the Psalms, to God's greatest "risk," the incarnation and sacrifice of the last Davidide, who was, indeed, the very Son of God.

Taking all these factors into account, I believe the case that Eaton has made for recognizing many more royal psalms in the Psalter than had previously been thought is a very sound one. And I believe as well that Waltke's extension of Eaton's arguments to cover all the Davidically attributed

Ruler's Continued Failure," HTR 73 (1980): 36.

³⁹In this light, therefore, it seems that the seemingly extravagant language in the royal psalms should not be attributed to mere "court style" (e.g., David J. A. Clines, "Psalm Research Since 1955: I. The Psalms and the Cult," TynBul 18 [1967]: 125), as recognized by Mettinger (King and Messiah, 102-5).

⁴⁰Thus N. Q. King ("Kingship as Communication and Accommodation," in Promise and Fulfillment: Essays Presented to Professor S. H. Hooke in Celebration of His Ninetieth Birthday by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study and Others, ed. F. F. Bruce [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], 142-43): "It was the very antiquity and widespread nature of Kingship ideas which made Kingship a most dangerous symbol of communication regarding the God of Israel." On the commonality of perceiving deity as king, see Bowes, "The Basilmorphic Conception of Deity," 235-75.

psalms is correct as well. It may well be that many more psalms could prove capable of a royal interpretation. In particular I am thinking here of the article by Barre and Kselman in which they demonstrate convincingly the royal character of Psalm 23.⁴¹ The fact that some psalms are not so easily recognizable as royal could be due to several factors, among them being a democratization process that some psalms may have gone through, revision into cryptic forms so as to avoid the wrath of the Persian king in the post-exilic period,⁴² and the ambiguity that exists in poetic expression as a matter of course.

Coupled with the evidence mentioned in the previous chapter regarding the Psalter's chiastic or, at least, inclusio shape that highlights the royal element, it is very possible that the Psalter should be seen as a royal collection, at least in its initial impetus and in the first three books. As Mowinckel remarks,

All this points to the fact that in Israel, as in Babylonia and Egypt, the psalms--together with the corresponding august cultic dispositions--were originally intended, not for all and sundry, but for the king and the great.⁴³

⁴¹Michael L. Barre and John S. Kselman, "New Exodus, Covenant, and Restoration in Psalm 23," in The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freeman, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, American Schools of Oriental Research Special Volume Series 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 97-127.

⁴²Cf. Kruse, "Psalm cxxxii," 290.

⁴³Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 2 vols., trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon, 1967), 1.77.

All this notwithstanding, the fact that the royal element is not necessarily demonstrable for all the psalms in the Psalter, coupled with the New Testament's Christological use of psalms that are not conclusively demonstrable as royal, stops me short of claiming that a canonical approach, in order to arrive at a Christological interpretation, must presuppose an entirely royal Psalter. In other words, the royal interpretation of the Psalter, though supporting Waltke's thesis that all the psalms should be understood as referring ultimately to the person of Christ, "that the Psalms are ultimately the prayers of Jesus Christ,"⁴⁴ does not, in my opinion, ultimately provide the rationale for the way in which the New Testament authors connected the Psalms to Jesus Christ. While I believe the data definitely supports the theses of Eaton and Waltke, and should be utilized in the interpretation, exegesis, and proclamation of the Psalms and the New Testament passages that use them, the canonical approach sees more going on in the New Testament's Christological use of the Psalms than simply the recognition of their royal character.

Canonical Process

As mentioned earlier, Waltke seeks in the canonical process approach to trace the meaning of the Psalms through a four-stage process whereby the Psalter received its final

⁴⁴Waltke, "Canonical Process," 16.

shape, from the individual psalm as it came from the psalmist, to the usage of the Psalms in the First Temple period, the Second Temple period, and then finally to the time of the New Testament. There are, however, in my opinion, at least two problems with this postulated four-stage process, which I will deal with very quickly.

First, not all psalms fit the process. This is perhaps, only a minor point, and yet one that needs to be taken into account. There are Davidic psalms that were, perhaps, never used in the First Temple period, and may have only been added to the collection in the Second Temple period; this is at least one explanation for the Davidic psalms in the last two books. Conversely, there are, perhaps, psalms that were incorporated into the collection as soon as they were composed, in either the putative second or third stages. Also, Waltke's tracing of this process only deals with the Davidic psalms, and does not account for the other compositions.

Second, the whole matter of the third stage is very unclear. As discussed in the previous chapter, complicating the whole discussion is the data from the Qumran scroll 11QPs^a. The actual shape of the Psalter in this time period, the rationale for the shape that it received, whether there were competing canonical psalters, and even when the Masoretic canonical Psalter was put in its final form are all problems to which we do not have firm answers. In other words, the

whole theory of a four-stage process and what the editors of the Psalter were thinking at each of the stages is a reconstruction, and one for which there is just not enough evidence to establish it. And even though I believe Waltke's reconstruction is, in fact, the most credible reconstruction of those that have been proposed, I am not prepared to use it as foundational for a Christological approach to the Psalms any more than I would be willing to grant theological relevancy to Sanders's reconstructions. It is impossible to use reconstructions that are not provided by the canon itself as a base from which to make authoritative proclamation. The gap from reconstruction to authoritative theological statement is a chasm that cannot be bridged.

The Intertestamental Period

Connected to the previous discussion is that of the messianic expectation in the intertestamental period and whether any of this information can be used to advance the cause of a canonical approach to the Psalms. Waltke actually seems to go both ways on the subject. On the one hand, he suggests that "the royal dimension of the lament psalms became lost during this period of time, and thus Israel lost sight of a suffering Messiah."⁴⁵ On the other hand he says,

We cannot be sure how the editors who compiled the final form of the Old Testament interpreted the lament psalms.

⁴⁵Ibid., 15.

It seems plausible to me to suppose that they continued to understand them according to their original meaning.⁴⁶

Perhaps Waltke is assuming here that the Psalter's final form was reached before the close of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the intertestamental period. But this is by no means a foregone conclusion, especially in light of the possible canonical status, for at least one Judean community, of 11QPs^a. And while I do not agree with Marvin Tate that we should no longer even think in terms of an intertestamental period,⁴⁷ I believe there are fuzzy boundaries here, and that no definitive statement can be made as to which period it was that saw the Psalter receive its final form.

So even though I believe with Waltke that the Psalter does show signs of being put into its final form by editors who still understood its messianic significance, the possibility that this may have happened in the intertestamental period, even late in that period, precludes basing a canonical approach to the Psalms on that data. For, as has been satisfactorily demonstrated, there was no one unified view of messianic expectation in this time period.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷Marvin E. Tate, "Promising Paths Toward Biblical Theology," RevExp 78 (1981): 175.

⁴⁸James H. Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects," in The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity, ed. James H. Charlesworth, The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 5-6, 28-29, 31-32; in the same volume, Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Concept of Mashiach and Messianism in Early Judaism," 79-115; also his earlier article,

It has been shown, as well, that the rabbinic materials are either silent or ambiguous in this area, and that the use of them may well be anachronistic.⁴⁹ The canonical approach, in order to be a truly theologically authoritative approach, must rest on the use of canonical texts by other canonical texts. It is to that evidence that we now turn.

The Use of the Psalms in the Old Testament?

The reader will notice that I have put a question mark at the end of the heading for this section. Though I certainly appreciate the emphasis that has been placed on inner-biblical exegesis in the last few years, in particular, the distinguished and fascinating work of Michael Fishbane,⁵⁰ I

"Types of Messianic Expectation at the Turn of the Era," chap. in King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 202-24.

Though I agree with Charlesworth on this point, I disagree when he states, "The term 'the Messiah' simply does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures (or Old Testament). The last group of scholars to acknowledge this fact were the conservative Christians, and now the very conservative New Testament specialist [the late] Professor George Eldon Ladd states without qualification, that 'the simple term "the Messiah" does not occur in the Old Testament at all'" (p. 11, emphasis mine). Ladd, however, in the very next sentence says, "The word always has a qualifying genitive or suffix such as 'the messiah of Jehovah,' 'my messiah,'" and then goes on to suggest that the term may, indeed, be used eschatologically in certain places in the Old Testament (A Theology of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 136).

⁴⁹Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," JBL 81 (1962): 9; Jacob Neusner, "The Use of Later Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First-Century Pharisaism," in Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice, ed. William Scott Green, BJS 1 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 221; "Mishnah and Messiah," BTB 14 (1984): 3-11.

⁵⁰Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient

still have reservations about the conclusions that can be drawn from such studies.

First, there are problems with regard to the dating of the biblical books and the disagreement among scholars on this dating. There is no scholarly agreement as to the chronological order of the different biblical books, especially between liberals and conservatives. Second, even if it could be shown that one book is earlier than another, it cannot be simply assumed that citations from one in the other are, in fact, citations. The possibilities of the relationship between a citation and its supposed source are numerous: (1) one text could be using the other one, (2) they could both be dependent on another source, (3) one text could be citing a different *Vorlage* of the other text, (4) the phrase, sentence, or paragraph in question could be part of a common stock, (5) the citation could be from an auditory recollection rather than a written version of the other text, (6) the parallel passages could, in fact, be quite independent of each other. And, of course, allowance must always be made for the possibility of scribal attempts to bring either the citing text or the cited text into closer conformity with the other, or perhaps to nuance things a little differently.

Israel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); also, before him, Nahum M. Sarna, "Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," in Biblical and Other Studies, ed. Alexander Altmann, Studies and Texts 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 29-46.

In light of this, it would be better in many cases to talk about inner-biblical connections, rather than inner-biblical exegesis. I believe this is especially important in the case of the Psalms. The most likely potential use of material from the Psalms lies in Chronicles and the prophets. And even though I myself would work with the supposition that the Davidically attributed psalms would predate both of these, I realize that is a minority position. And even if I were granted this assumption, that would still not preclude the possibility that psalmic material has been reworked into its current form in the Psalter. As for the other psalms, it is practically impossible to say in which direction the line of usage lies. In any case, the discussion in this section will limit its assumptions to one of inner-biblical connection, and not inner-biblical exegesis.

Inasmuch as the concern of this dissertation is with the Christological usage of the Psalms, there are only two relevant sets of passages: those places where the Chronicler appears to be citing the Psalms, and those where there is a messianic connection in the prophetic material. What the Chronicler does is of some importance, for considerable portions of the Psalms seem to appear in his texts. However, the use of the Psalter by the prophets is not of the same nature. If there is any use at all it is only by way of allusion, or perhaps, the following of a similar pattern. For example, Ringgren has called attention to striking

similarities between Psalm 2 and the Servant Song in Isaiah 49.⁵¹ Indeed, those of the myth and ritual and Uppsala schools have drawn parallels between the laments and/or royal psalms and the Servant Songs in Isaiah.⁵² Keith R. Crim has noted the similarity between the titles in Isa 9:6-7 and phrases in the Psalms.⁵³ However, one is hard pressed to really find any kind of extended use of a pericope from the Psalms in the prophets.⁵⁴ For the prophets, then, it will be sufficient to say at this point that the prophetic parallels to passages in the lament and royal psalms support the messianic, royal interpretation discussed earlier in this chapter. I turn now to look at the extended use of the Psalms in the Chronicler.

There are two places in Chronicles where there appears to be an extended quotation from the Psalms. In 1 Chr 16:8-36 there is a psalm apparently composed of Ps 105:1-15; 96:1-13;

⁵¹Helmer Ringgren, "Psalm 2 and Belit's Oracle for Ashurbanipal," in The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freeman, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, American Schools of Oriental Research Special Volume Series 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 94.

⁵²For example, Bentzen, King and Messiah, 48-67.

⁵³Crim, The Royal Psalms, 63-65. The correspondences are: "Wonderful Counselor" (Ps 20:4; 72:18; 89:5); "Mighty God" (Ps 20:6; 21:13); "Everlasting Father" (89:26, 29; 21:4, 6); "Prince of Peace" (72:3, 7; 89:14; 101:1).

⁵⁴John Day ("Prophecy," in It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, ed. Donald A. Carson and Hugh G. M. Williamson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 47-48), in a section where he refers to the usage of the Psalms in the prophets, makes reference to "theological echoes," "linguistic echoes," etc., but there are not really any quotations extensive or close enough to persuade me that the prophet was necessarily quoting from the Psalms.

106:1, 47-48. The psalm is said to be a composition which David committed to the Levites upon the occasion of the ark's being brought to Jerusalem. In 2 Chr 6:41-42 there is a citation from Ps 132:8-10. The citation concludes a long prayer of Solomon on the occasion of the ark's being placed into the newly built temple. The passages raise a host of questions. In the 1 Chronicles passage why does the Chronicler put the songs in the mouth of David when none of them are so attributed in the text of the Psalter?⁵⁵ Why did he choose these particular psalms? Why is there no reference to the ark in any of the cited material, when the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem is the very occasion being celebrated, and the corresponding account in 2 Chronicles does use a citation which seems more appropriate?⁵⁶ Why did the Chronicler use only a portion of Psalm 105, stop at the place he did, and cite all of Psalm 96? In the 2 Chronicles passage why does the Chronicler cite a much shorter passage than he did in the 1 Chronicles passage? Why did he use this citation

⁵⁵Gerald T. Sheppard ("Theology and the Book of Psalms," Int 46 [1992]: 147), however, overstates the problem when he suggests that "when the editors of Chronicles used Psalms from the Psalter, they did so in a manner that the superscriptions do not anticipate . . ." None of the psalms which the Chronicler used have superscriptions.

⁵⁶If it is assumed that the Chronicler took this material from the Psalter, then, as Trent C. Butler notes ("A Forgotten Passage from a Forgotten Era (1 Chr XVI 8-36)," VT 28 [1978]: 143), "The significant question is why the writer chose portions of three psalms which had no claim to belong to the Davidic tradition and which required removal of anachronisms to accommodate them to the context."

to replace the recorded ending of the prayer in 1 Kings 8:50-53? And why did he use a prayer which requests that the ark might come to its resting place, apparently forgetting that the ark is already there?⁵⁷ I cannot possibly address all these questions, though some may be touched on in the discussion which follows. What I do wish to do, however, is to make a few observations relevant to the question of the purpose served by these citations.

First, it is important to reiterate what I said earlier and emphasize that we should not simply assume that the Chronicler is citing from the Psalms. While this is certainly a possibility, it is equally possible that the author had before him a single, intact composition which he cited in its entirety.⁵⁸ In fact, I am more inclined to think that this is the actuality.⁵⁹ This may well account for the Chronicler's

⁵⁷Kruse, "Psalm cxxxii and the Royal Zion Festival," 291. One possible answer to this question is that too much has been read into this liturgical petition, and that the ark was not part of an annual procession.

⁵⁸So Peter R. Ackroyd, "Some Notes on the Psalms," NTS n.s. 17 (1966): 398 n. 5; I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah: Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1973), 64-65. When Butler ("A Forgotten Passage," 142 n. 1) says that "the recent attempts to deny dependence upon the canonical Psalms must be rejected in light of the practice of the Chronicler of relying so heavily upon other literary sources," he is not really responding to Ackroyd's suggestion. The question is not whether the Chronicler used sources; the question is what sources he used.

⁵⁹Though Andrew E. Hill would not go so far as to suggest that this could have been an original composition he still suggests that the Chronicler's "labor in combining three Psalms into a new composition was consciously governed by Hebrew poetic device and structure ("Patchwork Poetry or Reasoned Verse?

attribution of these psalms to David: his *Vorlage* so attributed them (or rather, attributed "it"). At the same time, it must also be kept in mind that the Chronicler does not specifically say that David was the author; the text simply says that "on that day, then, David gave at first (or, "at the head") to praise the Lord by the hand of Asaph and his brothers" (1 Chr 16:7). In fact, though it would have served the Chronicler's purpose to do so, he does not even specifically say that David sang this song. In the 2 Chronicles passage, again, I do not believe we may simply assume that the Chronicler has borrowed this from Psalm 132. It may well have been common liturgical stock from which the Chronicler drew. In any case, I am not willing to talk about the Chronicler's use of the Psalms, but more guardedly, about his use of psalmic material.

Second, rather than trying to discover the Chronicler's purpose in these two passages separately, I believe it is more important to see how they function together. With this in mind, the following commonalities seem especially significant.

(1) Both passages have to do with the bringing of the ark into a construction built especially for it, constructions whose building was directed by the king.

(2) In both passages, the king has a central role to play, not just in the directing of the transfer of the ark,

Connective Structure in I Chronicles XVI," *VT* 33 (1983): 98). Could not the same labor have produced this composition from the beginning?

but in the very words that are used. In 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon is definitely the speaker; it is less clear in 1 Chronicles 16, but David nevertheless has something to do with the commissioning of the words to be sung on that occasion.

(3) On both occasions the king performs duties that are tantamount to those of a priest (1 Chr 16:2-3; 2 Chr 6:12-13).

(4) Both accounts use the formula "his love endures forever" (1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3, 6). Mark Shipp observes that the only other time the phrase occurs in Chronicles is at 2 Chr 20:21, and that there it occurs in connection with Jehoshaphat's appointment of men to sing it. Thus, every time it is used in Chronicles it is connected with an act of loyalty on the part of the anointed king.⁶⁰

(5) In both passages, the recitation of psalmic material contains the word "anointed" (1 Chr 16:22; 2 Chr 6:42). If, indeed, the Chronicler was the one who composed this psalm in 1 Chronicles out of three independent texts, it is especially significant that 1 Chr 16:22 is the last verse quoted from the Psalm 105 text. Interestingly, then, this psalm has a formal connection with Psalm 89 which we discussed earlier. In Psalm 89, a hymn in praise of Yahweh's kingship is followed by the dynastic oracle in which Yahweh declares his faithfulness to his anointed. In 1 Chr 16:8-36, the order is reversed; the oracle of Yahweh, in which he warns kings not to touch his

⁶⁰Mark R. Shipp, "'Remember His Covenant Forever': A Study of the Chronicler's Use of the Psalms," ResQ 35/1 (1993): 30-32.

anointed ones, is followed by a hymn in praise of Yahweh's kingship.

Given this data, I would suggest that the psalms in Chronicles function in the Chronicler's post-exilic setting to reinforce the need for, hope for, and expectation of, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. I agree with a number of scholars who suggest that the message of Chronicles is both eschatological and messianic. Williamson's conclusion on this issue is worth quoting:

Our contention, then, is that, with the completion of the period of Davidic-Solomonic rule, the Chronicler intends his readers to understand that the dynasty has been eternally established. We have not found evidence to justify the view that with Solomon's building of the temple the content of the promise was exhausted, but rather that the completion of the temple was a contributory factor to the establishment of the promise.⁶¹

And as Newsome remarks:

The possibility must also be entertained that the eschatological expectation of the Chronicler was . . . in fact, messianic, or at least royalist, in that he looked for the immediate restoration of the house of David, quite possibly in connection with the continuation of the cult of the Second Temple.⁶²

If this interpretation is correct, it is interesting to note the referential shift that takes place between Psalm 105:15 and 1 Chr 16:22. When the term "anointed ones" occurs in the Psalm, it is, in fact, one of the very few places where

⁶¹Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Eschatology in Chronicles," TynBul 28 (1977): 142-43. Cf. W. F. Stinespring, "Eschatology in Chronicles," JBL 80 (1961): 209-19; Robert North, "Theology of the Chronicler," JBL 82 (1963): 369-81.

⁶²James D. Newsome, Jr., "Toward a New Understanding of the Chronicler and His Purposes," JBL 94 (1975): 208.

its referent is not a king or kings. In fact, its exact referent is somewhat ambiguous. It could be referring to the entire population of Israel, or it could be a reference to the patriarchs, or to Abraham in particular. But the Chronicler, by quoting the verse and omitting all that follows in regard to the subsequent history of Israel, both in Psalm 105 and Ps 106:2-46, changes the referent so that now it is the Davidic dynasty.⁶³ David and his sons become the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs. As Sara Japhet remarks,

Read as one continuous psalm, its message is unequivocal: the covenant with the patriarchs is consummated in their time. There is no break, not even any "history," between Jacob and salvation!⁶⁴

Similarly, Ps 132:8-10 is used in 2 Chr 6:41-42 to replace 1 Kgs 8:50-53 in the prior parallel account of Solomon's prayer. Instead of concluding with a reference to Moses and the Exodus as the grounds for the answering of the prayer, now the motivation supplied is the faithfulness of David and a plea to the Lord that he would remember his covenant with his anointed ones. Raymond B. Dillard calls attention to this:

What ground can be offered that God should grant Solomon's requests? In the Kings account of the prayer, the ground for God's answer is his unique relationship to Israel deriving from the Exodus (1 Kgs 8:50-53). The Chronicler, however, omits these verses from his *Vorlage*, as he does with other material pertaining to the Exodus . . . instead he grounds the expectation of God's favorable response to

⁶³Cf. Butler, "A Forgotten Passage," 144.

⁶⁴Sara Japhet, "Conquest and Settlement in Chronicles," JBL 96 (1979): 218.

Solomon's prayer in the divine promises to David. In place of the theme of election and redemption in the Exodus, the Chronicler introduces a free citation of Ps 132:1, 8-10.⁶⁵

The psalms in 1 Chronicles 16 and 2 Chronicles 6 are used to reinforce the eschatological messianism of the Chronicler's message for the post-exilic generation. Lest the people reckon the construction of the Second Temple to be a complete fulfillment of the Lord's promise to be faithful to his covenant, the Chronicler reminds his readers that the Temple, its cultic personnel, and its liturgy and sacrifice will yet be under the direction and supervision of the anointed of the Lord. It is a reminder that there is a Davidic king yet to come. The glory that was "Camelot" will, indeed, return. And the Psalms play an important role in the Chronicler's delivery of this prophetic message. This return, however, did not occur for another four hundred years.

The "Flash Point":
The Use of the Psalms in the New Testament

In an article written several years after his "Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," Waltke wrote that in this

⁶⁵Raymond B. Dillard, 2 Chronicles, WBC 15 (Waco: Word, 1987), 51. I also agree with Dillard's conclusion (pp. 51-52) that *hasdê dāwîd*, at least in this passage, is to be taken as a subjective, rather than an objective, genitive; for the same view, Sara Japhet, I & II Chronicles, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 604-5; Shipp, "'Remember His Covenant Forever,'" 39. For the contrary view see Hugh G. M. Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 220-21; "'The Sure Mercies of David': Subjective or Objective Genitive?" JSS 23 (1978): 31-49; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Unfailing Kindnesses Promised to David: Isaiah 55:3," JSOT 45 (1989): 91-98.

canonical process "the divine author's intention comes into ever sharper focus through the magnifying glass of progressive revelation until it reaches a flash point in the coming of Jesus Christ."⁶⁶ I argued earlier in this chapter that the canonical "process" itself plays a supportive role, but not necessarily one that is canonically authoritative. This "flash point," however, I wish to argue, does play such a role. Therefore, it is especially important for the canonical approach to understand how the Psalms are used at this stage.

Though the ideal would be to look at all the uses of the Psalms in the New Testament, I will deal at length with the use of Ps 22:23 in Heb 2:11-13 and then attempt to extrapolate from that usage some rationales for the use of the Psalms in the New Testament, particularly in regard to those places outside the Gospel accounts in which the author places a passage from the Psalms on Christ's lips, for I believe it is these passages that most clearly provide a hermeneutical entryway into an understanding of how the New Testament writers conceived of the relationship between Christ and the Psalms. I will not be looking specifically at other messianic uses of the psalms, though I believe the findings will have implications for those as well.

⁶⁶Bruce K. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 284.

The Use of Psalm 22 in Hebrews 2:11-13

A most intriguing case is the use of Psalm 22:23 in Heb 2:12. The author uses the quotation to support the preceding argument in v. 11 that Jesus, the sanctifier, and those whom he sanctifies are "of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Immediately, then, to support this assertion, the author introduces the citation from Psalm 22 followed by two other quotations which it will be necessary to examine as well:

He says,

"I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the presence of the congregation I will sing your
praises.

And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again he says,

"Here am I, and the children God has given me."

The third quotation comes from Isa 8:18. It is uncertain as to whether the second quotation comes from Isa 8:17; 12:2; or 2 Sam 22:3. I prefer to see it as coming from Isa 8:17 for reasons which I will give later. The more important problem, however, is that there is no place in the Gospel accounts where it is recorded that Jesus spoke these words. The question then is what hermeneutical move was employed by the author of Hebrews in making this quotation. The author of Hebrews has been accused more than once of stepping out of

bounds hermeneutically in his over-zealousness to see Christ in the Old Testament.⁶⁷ Is that what he did here?

Suggested Explanations

To account for the author's use of these passages, several suggestions have been made which I deem unsatisfactory. The problem is not that the explanations carry no weight at all (for some I do mean exactly that), but rather, that the explanation does not sufficiently explain the author's motivation for the use of these passages, his interpretation of them, or how he could have expected the quotations to convince his readers of the point he was arguing.

Septuagint influence

One suggestion is that the wording of the Septuagint is what drew the author to these passages. Kenneth J. Thomas notes that in Hebrews "only 56 variations of any kind from LXX a/b are found in direct quotations from the O.T."⁶⁸ The implication of the word "only," I suppose, is that this variation is not all that significant; but it seems to me that this actually calls for closer scrutiny in the assertion of

⁶⁷So, e.g., Theodore H. Robinson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, MNTC (London: Harper & Brothers, 1933), 25: "The citations are not particularly apt; we should not imagine that the author found no little difficulty in discovering Old Testament passages which would suit his case."

⁶⁸Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," NTS 11 (1965): 306.

dependency in any one passage. George Howard comes to a quite different conclusion from Thomas. He asserts that "it is now probable that the text used by the author of Hebrews is, on occasion, closer to a Hebrew recension more ancient than the Masoretic text."⁶⁹ I am not sure whether Howard is trying to suggest that the author was actually using a Hebrew text, or that he was using a Greek translation based on a Hebrew text other than the Masoretic Text, though I believe that he must mean the latter, since the majority opinion is that the author did not even know Hebrew.⁷⁰ In any case, more caution needs to be used in asserting Septuagint influence.⁷¹

In the first quotation from Ps 22:23, the renderings of the Septuagint (Ps 21:23) and the Masoretic Text are almost identical. The only difference is a significant one, however, since it is the first word of the quotation. Where the Septuagint has *diēgēsomai* for the Hebrew *āsappērâ*, Hebrews has *apangelō*. Various theories have been put forward to account for the difference. To the suggestion that the author may have quoted the passage from memory and simply forgot the

⁶⁹George Howard, "Hebrews and the Old Testament Quotations," NovT 10 (1968), 208.

⁷⁰Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 105.

⁷¹As J. C. McCullough remarks ("Some Recent Developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews--II," IBS 3 [1981]: 29-30), "The Codices A and B are just two codices of the LXX which happen to have been preserved. It would be a rare coincidence indeed if history happened to preserve the precise LXX manuscript used by the author of Hebrews."

Septuagint wording, McCullough points out that it would have been especially strange for the author to have forgotten the very first word of the quotation.⁷² Others have suggested that by the use of *apangelō* the author was subtly reinforcing his previously made point of Jesus' superiority to the angels (*angelos*) and is also playing on the word *euangelizomai*.⁷³ But as McCullough again points out, *euangelizomai* has not yet been used.⁷⁴ As far as *angelos*, it does not follow how the use of *apangelō* would really serve to highlight the contrast here. The author surely considers Christ superior to the angels, but he is not trying to polemicize against them. Another suggestion is that *apangelō* is the more common word. Again, McCullough notes that, while that may be so, nevertheless, the author does use the less common *diēgēsomai* in Heb 11:32.⁷⁵ McCullough's own solution is that *apangelō* is simply a Septuagintal variant.⁷⁶ While this is certainly a possibility, there is, in fact, no corroborating text. Ellingworth suggests that the author was influenced by the use of *anangellō* in Ps 22:32 (LXX 21:32) and the very similar Ps

⁷²J. C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," NTS 26 (1980): 368.

⁷³Thomas, "Old Testament Citations," 306; H. J. B. Combrink, "Some Thoughts on the Old Testament Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews," Ad Hebraeos: Essays on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Neot 5 (1971): 29.

⁷⁴McCullough, "Old Testament Quotations," 368.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

78:3-6 (LXX 77:3-6) which uses *diēgēsomai*.⁷⁷ While this is possible, it seems to me unlikely, since the author is not citing Ps 22:32, but Ps 22:23. I will save the explanation that I favor for later in the chapter. For now, it should simply be noted that both the Septuagint and Hebrews provide rather straightforward translations of the Hebrew. It would be hard to imagine how either the wording or the syntax of the Greek in either case could have come any closer to approximating that of the Masoretic Text. It is unnecessary, therefore, to suppose either that the author is following the Septuagint, or that there was anything in particular about the Septuagint's translation of this passage that caused him to be drawn to this verse in order to prove his point.

There is some debate as to which passage the author is citing in the second quotation. The consensus seems to favor Isa 8:17, though some have argued for 2 Sam 22:3 or Isa 12:2. The motivation for suggesting a passage other than Isa 8:17 is the *kai palin* which separates it from the third quotation, the reasoning being that if the author had had Isa 8:17 in mind at the start, he would not have separated it from his citation of Isa 8:18 with the phrase "and again." Bruce answers by positing that the author made the separation because he was trying to make two different points.⁷⁸ Wherever the citation

⁷⁷Paul Ellingworth, Commentary on Hebrews, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 168.

⁷⁸F. F. Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, rev. ed., NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 83-84. William L. Lane (Hebrews 1-8,

is from (I favor the Isa 8:17 passage), it is interesting to note that though the vocabulary is the same, the Hebrews passage changes the word order slightly. There is nothing, therefore, particularly distinctive about the Septuagint rendering of the passage that would have caused the author to be drawn to this passage.

The third quotation come from Isa 8:18. It has been suggested that the Septuagint's rendering of this verse, which turns what is a single clause in the Hebrew into two clauses in the Greek, is what drew the author of Hebrews to this text.⁷⁹ Additionally it is suggested that the Septuagint's use of *ho theos* to render the tetragrammaton in v. 18 allowed the author of Hebrews to reckon that not Isaiah, but *ho kyrios*, previously mentioned in v. 13 of Isaiah 8, is the speaker in Isa 8:17-18, especially since the Septuagint begins v. 17 with the word *kai erei*. The reasoning then is that the author took *ho kyrios* and *ho theos* in Isaiah 8 to be two different persons, and that the speaker in Isa 8:17-18 is not Isaiah but *ho kyrios*, that is, Jesus.⁸⁰ The first argument holds little

WBC 47a [Dallas: Word, 1991], 59) notes that in Hebrews 10:30 "contiguous quotations from Deut. 32:35-36 are separated by the same formula"; cf. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 109.

⁷⁹Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, 84.

⁸⁰Donald Hagner, Hebrews, Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 31-34; Combrink, "Some Thoughts on the Old Testament Citations," 30; James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 33.

weight, in my opinion, for it is not at all uncommon for only part of a sentence to be quoted in the New Testament. The author simply quoted as much of Isa 8:18 as served his purpose. The second argument seems a bit more substantive, but not compelling. *Theos/kyrios* interchanges are very common in the Septuagint, and usually without any material explanation.⁸¹ The *kai erei* at the beginning of Isa 8:17 may have enhanced a messianic interpretation, but I do not believe it would have initiated it.

There seems, therefore, not to be any substantive differences in the Septuagint in any of the three passages that would have particularly pointed out these passages as messianic.

Philonic influence

Philonic influence has been suggested for this passage, mainly because of the author's use of *kai palin*, comparable to Philo's use of the same as a literary device.⁸² Also it is claimed that since "in Philo trustful hope towards God is the essential mark of humanity," that the author's use of these verses to show Jesus as one who had to trust God like ordinary humans, shows Philonic influence.⁸³ As far as the *kai palin* is

⁸¹Henry B. Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, rev. ed., ed. Richard R. Ottley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902; repr. New York: KTAV, 1968), 327.

⁸²Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 33.

⁸³Ibid.

concerned, Ronald Williamson has shown that there is no great significance in the use of the same phrase in Hebrews (*kai palin* also occurs in John 19:37; Rom 15:10-11; and 1 Cor 3:20).⁸⁴ As far as the philosophical connection is concerned, borrowing from Philo, especially in this particular passage, seems extremely improbable. As Ronald Nash remarks, "Philo's philosophical system was totally incompatible with the notion of incarnation."⁸⁵

Qumran influence

Simon Kistemaker has claimed that the *pešer* style of exegesis found at Qumran, such as in 1QpHab, "is the method adopted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews."⁸⁶ After making this blanket statement, however, he admits that the features of this *pešer* style of exegesis are seen in particular in the citations of four psalms (Ps 8:5-7; 95:7-11; 110:4; 40:7-9).⁸⁷ While I cannot find in his discussion a clear-cut definition of *pešer*, it seems that he does see the primary characteristics as being (1) the substitution of words, (2) the quotation of a lengthy passage followed by an

⁸⁴Ronald Williamson, Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews, ALGHJ 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 509-10.

⁸⁵Ronald H. Nash, "The Notion of Mediator in Alexandrian Judaism and the Epistle to the Hebrews," WTJ 40 (1977): 106 (emphasis his).

⁸⁶Simon, Kistemaker, The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), 11.

⁸⁷Ibid., 12.

interpretation, and (3) the repetition of particular words or phrases from the quotation, accompanied by commentary.⁸⁸ It seems then that our passage should not come under the *pešer* classification since none of these characteristics are evidenced here.⁸⁹

Rabbinic midrash

The claim that the author of Hebrews used midrash is a rather common one.⁹⁰ Midrash has been variously defined.⁹¹ At the very least, however, we would have to characterize it as a somewhat embellishing style of interpretation. This granted, it seems that there is not enough justification to include this passage in the category. The quotations are simply

⁸⁸Ibid., 74-75.

⁸⁹I would not have even mentioned this, except that later in the chapter there will be a discussion of Heb 10:5-7 and its use of Ps 40:6-8. On that passage Dan McGaughey remarks (The Hermeneutic Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews [Th.D diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1963], 41) that it is introduced in "typical pešer" style. Yet, the quotation in this passage is introduced in essentially the same way. Contrast Irvin W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Direction," in Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich, ed. Eugene Howard Barth and Ronald Edwin Cocroft (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 22.

⁹⁰James W. Thompson, The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews, CBQMS 13 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 3; cf. George Wesley Buchanan, To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions, AB 36 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), xix.

⁹¹See Renee Bloch, "Midrash," trans. Mary Howard Callaway, in Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice, ed. William Scott Green, BJS 1 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 29-50.

introduced with a brief introduction and there is no embellishment.

The "Testimony Book" Hypothesis

This theory, in its most developed form, was presented by Rendel Harris in the early part of this century.⁹² The theory was that there was circulated in the first century Church a Testimony Book containing a list of Old Testament passages to be interpreted messianically of Jesus Christ. F. C. Synge advanced the theory further and claimed specifically that Hebrews 2:12-13 was evidence of the thesis.⁹³ In fact, in explaining the second *kai palin* in this passage, he compares it to the similar occurrence in Heb 10:30 and says that in both places, "The simplest explanation is that he is quoting from a book of texts. Here, it appears to him, are two texts. He has no notion that they come from the same chapter," and "the context is unknown to the author."⁹⁴ The testimony book hypothesis has all but disappeared from the scene.⁹⁵ The charge that the context was unknown to the author will be dealt with later.

⁹²Rendel Harris, Testimonies, Parts I & II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916, 1920).

⁹³F. C. Synge, Hebrews and the Scriptures (London: SPCK, 1959), 2, 17.

⁹⁴Ibid., 53.

⁹⁵See Hugh Montefiore, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 64.

Sensus plenior

It has been suggested that the author of Hebrews is dependent on revelation and that his use of the passages which he cites constitute a *sensus plenior*.⁹⁶ I have dealt with this idea earlier in chapter 6, where I argued that all of Scripture is a *sensus brevior* of the word of God, and that therefore, all of Scripture may be said to contain a *sensus plenior*. I believe, however, that this fuller sense is not to be uncovered by revelation, but by canonical exegesis. I will argue later that the author of Hebrews understood these passages as he did, not because he had been supernaturally "zapped," as it were, but because he interpreted them canonically. Suffice it then to say for now that while I am sympathetic to the idea that the author saw a fuller sense in these Old Testament texts, he came to that realization by hermeneutical extrapolation, and not by special revelation.

The "Redeemer" myth

Ernst Käsemann asserts that the author of Hebrews was acquainted with the Gnostic "redeemed redeemer" myth, and that one of the important characteristics of this myth, the *syngeneia*, "which describes the relation of the family to the world of light as a sonship, and that of souls to each other

⁹⁶Jerome Smith, *A Priest For Ever: A Study of Typology and Eschatology in Hebrews* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 20.

as a brotherhood," is what influences his use of quotations here.⁹⁷

If Käsemann has correctly represented this particular Gnostic idea, then it must be admitted that this idea of *syngeneia* is closely parallel to what the author of Hebrews is driving at in chapter 2. But I do not believe that Käsemann has convincingly demonstrated that the author must have derived this idea from Gnosticism. The author in no wise appeals to it, but he does appeal to the Old Testament, where he apparently finds the idea already laid out for him.

Hierophany

One last theory which I wish to mention before going on to give what I consider to be the most plausible explanation, is that of Paul Minear. His idea is that at least part of the book of Hebrews is made up of what he calls a "theopoetic."⁹⁸ He says that "the basic perception of theopoetic is the insistence that creative poetic vision must be accorded a major role as a prelude to theological construction."⁹⁹ The particular relevance the theory has for this passage is that Minear feels that just as "these texts [Ps 22:23; Isa 8:17-18]

⁹⁷Ernst Käsemann, The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 87, 94-95.

⁹⁸Paul S. Minear, "An Early Christian Theopoetic?" Semeia 12 (1978): 201-14.

⁹⁹Ibid., 202.

were poetic; so was the exegesis."¹⁰⁰ He then suggests that the author of Hebrews experienced a hierophany, a vision of Christ in the temple as the "unseen liturgist" leading the congregation in praise to God, and that it was this vision which prompted the author to see these texts as messianic.¹⁰¹ Minear further states that the author of Hebrews "witnessed to his awareness of the presence of the living Jesus standing among his brothers at worship. How few modern treatments of the resurrection include this quiet testimony!"¹⁰²

This is probably the most radical of the theories discussed thus far; but Minear does make some rather interesting points that I feel must be taken into consideration in coming to the correct conclusion as to how the author came to his use and interpretation of the two passages. These points are: (1) the poetic texts which the author had before him were recognized as such by him, and he gave them a poetic exegesis, (2) the texts were, indeed, dramatically relevant to the author's point, (3) the texts were interpreted by him liturgically, and he had in his mind's eye a vision of Jesus as the liturgist, and (4) the texts were interpreted by him in the context of the resurrection of

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 203.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 203-4.

¹⁰²Ibid., 210.

Christ.¹⁰³ With these points in mind, we now look at another proposed solution, which I believe is the correct one.

Towards a Solution

There are several factors which in their convergence caused the author of Hebrews not only to view Ps 22:23 and Isa 8:17-18 as messianic, but also to put those texts on the lips of Christ as first-person speaker of those texts. And what I wish to demonstrate is that those factors were all of a canonical nature.

The use of Psalm 22 in the New Testament

While the verse in question is not used anywhere else in the New Testament, its surrounding context certainly was. In particular, this usage was connected with the passion of our Lord. Ps 22:8 ("All who see me mock me; they hurl insults shaking their heads") seems to be alluded to in Matt 27:39; Mark 15:39; and Luke 23:35. Ps 22:9 ("He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him") may be seen reflected in Matt 27:43. Ps 22:19 ("They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing") is clearly reflected in Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:24; and John 19:24. There may even be an allusion to Ps 22:15 ("I am poured out like water") in John 19:34, though the majority of commentators have preferred to see there a connection to other passages. Some have even suggested a connection between Ps 22:32 ("for he has done it")

¹⁰³Ibid., 203-4, 210.

and John 19:30 ("It is finished"). But of course, the one that comes most readily to mind is the cry of our Lord from the cross as he expressed his suffering and anguish in the words of Ps 22:2 as recorded in Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" I am not willing to agree with those who would suggest that Psalm 22 influenced the Gospel writers to create some of the details of Christ's crucifixion,¹⁰⁴ though I do believe they certainly structured and worded their accounts to highlight the correspondences between the psalm and the crucifixion. So I would suggest that this is at least part of what is going in the mind of the author of Hebrews as he takes this quote from Psalm 22. So much of it was already applied to Christ in the Gospels (or in the Gospel traditions) that he concluded that Christ was the speaker in the whole psalm.

The context of Psalm 22:22

It is also important to take into consideration the original context of the verse quoted in Heb 2:12. The verse which the author of Hebrews quotes is the first verse in an extended vow of praise section in the psalm. Common to almost all the lament psalms is the abrupt change from either pleading for help or describing the distress, to suddenly praising God or vowing to praise him. Psalm 22 is no different, except perhaps in the disproportionately large

¹⁰⁴Contra Hartmut Gese, "Psalm 22 and the New Testament," TD 18 ((1970): 242.

amount of space given over to this vow, approximately one third of the psalm. Though it should not be thought that the author of Hebrews was in any way a modern-day form critic, it seems very probable that both he and the early Christian community found it preposterous to think that Jesus could be lamenter in the first part of the psalm, but not the giver of the vow of praise in the last part.¹⁰⁵ In connection with this it is also important to note that there is only one time in the Gospel accounts where it is recorded that Jesus referred to his disciples as "brothers." This is in Matt 28:10 where Jesus appears to the women on the morning of the resurrection and says to them, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."¹⁰⁶ Of special interest in this connection is that the word for "tell" in this verse is *apangellō*, the same word with which the quotation in Heb 2:12 begins. It is possible that this could have influenced the author of Hebrews, either consciously or subconsciously, to substitute this word for *diēgēsomai* in his citation of Psalm

¹⁰⁵Cf. Edmund P. Clowney, The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 161; Simon J. Kistemaker, Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 72.

¹⁰⁶Many have called attention to this; cf. Claus Westermann, The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message, trans. Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 126; Donald Guthrie, The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 90; Robert H. Smith, Hebrews, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 49.

22.¹⁰⁷ In any case, it is certain that by putting the words of the vow or praise portion of this psalm on Jesus' lips the author of Hebrews was thinking specifically of the resurrected and exalted Christ.¹⁰⁸ Thus, while I consider it extremely doubtful that the author of Hebrews experienced some kind of hierophany, I believe Minear correctly understands that the author sees Christ fulfilling a liturgical role as the "archetypal lamenter"¹⁰⁹ who, having been raised from death, now leads those whom he came to redeem in a great chorus of praise to God.¹¹⁰ This becomes all the more convincing in

¹⁰⁷Interestingly, the somewhat parallel John 20:17 has *legō* rather than *apangelō*, yet emphasizes the idea of brotherhood even more sharply, "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Interestingly, Graham Hughes (Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation, SNTSMS 36 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 168 n. 114) makes a similar argument for the substitution, but based on a different passage, Luke 8:20. It is also possible that the substitution of *apangelō* for *diēgēsomai* could have been for the purpose of achieving phonetic assonance; see Karen H. Jobs, "Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Psalm 40," Bib 72 (1991): 392.

¹⁰⁸Cf. John Brown Hebrews, (1862; repr. London: Banner of Truth, 1961), 118: "These words are plainly a description of what the Messiah was to do after his sufferings."

¹⁰⁹Leslie C. Allen, Psalms, Word Biblical Themes (Waco: Word, 1987), 127.

¹¹⁰Several commentators have pointed out the possible importance of a liturgical understanding of this and other passages in Hebrews; see Kistemaker, The Psalm Citations, 59; B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays, 3d. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1920), 476; F. J. Schierse, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of St. James, New Testament for Spiritual Reading (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), xv; Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews, An Essay in Biblical Interpretation," in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in

light of the importance the author attaches to the theme of Christ's priesthood.

Also to be taken into account is how the context of Psalm 22 accords with the context of the addressees in the epistle. The context in the psalm is that of the righteous sufferer, one who has put his trust and hope in God, and yet is beset with horrible afflictions. He is persecuted, mocked, surrounded by enemies, divested of his clothing, his dignity, and his very humanity. Similarly, the addressees of the epistle are those who, though having put their trust in God, are yet beset with horrible afflictions. They have been persecuted, mocked, insulted, and divested of their property (Heb 10:32-34). The context of Psalm 22 would remind the readers of how fully their humanity and their plight is shared by their "elder brother."

New Testament use of the context of Isa 8:17-18

Not only the context of the passage quoted from the psalm, but also that of the quotation from Isaiah must be taken into account as well.¹¹¹ C. H. Dodd believed that the whole of Isa 6:1-9:7 may have been seen by the early

Honor of Otto A. Piper, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 73.

¹¹¹Isa 8:17-18 is not used anywhere else in the New Testament, though C. J. A. Hickling ("John and the Background of Hebrews 2.10-18," NTS 29 [1983]: 113) sees possible allusions in John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 24; 18:9.

Christians as a "single complex unit of prophecy."¹¹² This larger context was, indeed, richly used in the New Testament. Isa 6:9-10 is echoed in Matt 13:13-15; John 12:37-41; Acts 28:25-27; and Rom 11:7-8. Isa 7:14, as well as 8:8 is seen as fulfilled in Matt 1:23. Isa 9:1-2 is regarded as fulfilled in Matt 4:15-16. I believe it should also be seen as reflected in Jesus' answer in John 9:12 to the question put to him earlier in John 8:53.¹¹³ Isa 8:14-15 is reflected in Matt 21:44; Luke 2:34; Rom 9:32-33; and 1 Pet 2:6-8. The very next phrase in Isa 8:18, declaring that Isaiah and his children would be for signs and symbols, though the author of Hebrews did not quote it, nevertheless may have also played a part in his seeing messianic overtones in the passage.

As with the context of Psalm 22, so the larger context of Isa 8:17-18 should be seen in relationship with the context of the original readers of the epistle. This context would have called up images of suffering, in particular, that of Isaiah, who was destined to prophesy to deaf ears and blind eyes, and who, according to legend died a martyr's death, to which Heb 11:37 may be a reference. The sign-prophet and his sign-children were living in days of apostasy, when the royal kingdom of David could be described as having been reduced to

¹¹²C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology (London: James Nisbet, 1952; repr., London and Glasgow: Collins, Fontana Books, 1965), 81.

¹¹³Which is another argument for the position that the story contained in John 8:53--9:11 has, in fact, been dislocated.

little more than a stump. As Bruce points out, we may have here in this passage the beginning of the remnant doctrine.¹¹⁴ How important then for the struggling believers to whom the author writes, that they are not a remnant alone, but that Christ is one with them. Thus both citations, as Westcott notes, have to do with righteous sufferers who identify themselves with their people.¹¹⁵ The context of the Isaiah quotation, like that of the Psalm 22 citation, seems also especially relevant in light of his emphasis on the need for faith. The believers to whom the author writes, though, as we noted before, had already displayed great courage in the midst of tribulation, had begun to waver to the point that the author had to describe their situation in terms of regression (Heb 5:12). The fact that they were a suffering wilderness congregation was not enough; after all, Isaiah's congregation was a suffering wilderness people as well (Isa 8:21). What would make the difference would be faith or the lack thereof. To those who would believe among Isaiah's hearers, the Lord would be a sanctuary; but to those who would not believe, he would be a "stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" (Isa 8:14). So it was also for the congregation of the author of Hebrews; they were not allowed to rest on their wilderness laurels:

¹¹⁴Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, 83-84; cf. Geerhardus Vos, The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews, edited and re-written by Johannes G. Vos (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 60-61.

¹¹⁵Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 51.

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And with whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Heb 3:16-18)

Thus the context of Isaiah was especially important for the establishment of the author's point of the necessity of faith in his hearers.

So we see that it was the context of the passages which actually provided meaning for the quotations in the new contexts in which the author makes the reference, and that the original contexts were called up in the minds of his readers by the literary device of "securing maximum of meaning with economy of word."¹¹⁶ The author did not use the Old Testament passages simply because the rest of the New Testament interpreted the texts messianically, but also because the contexts of those messianic passages were especially relevant for the context of his day as well.

Linked contexts

Not only did the author have an eye on the contexts of the passages which he cited, but he also had an interest in the way in which those contexts were connected to each other.¹¹⁷ Raymond Watrous well recognizes that "the context of

¹¹⁶Robert Rendall, "The Method of the Writer to the Hebrews in Using Old Testament Quotations," *EQ* 27 (1955): 214. In the same place the author notes that the epistle "is a masterpiece of condensed reference."

¹¹⁷Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Christ and His People: An Exegetical

a particular quotation often provides the relation to a specific complex of ideas which explains the transition to another quotation."¹¹⁸

Besides the connection already noticed, that both persons in the cited texts are righteous sufferers, there are others that may be seen. Bruce has noticed that both contexts bring out the theme of the hidden face of God.¹¹⁹ In Psalm 22 God's face is hidden from the psalmist; but in the last part of the psalm he rejoices that the Lord "has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help" (v. 25). In Isa 8:17, immediately preceding the words cited in Hebrews 2, the prophet says, "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob." Another link is provided by the expression of trust that occurs in both contexts (Ps 22:5-6, 10-11; Isa 8:17).

So we see that there is, in fact, in the author's use of these citations, an intricate interplay of contexts. The passages cited are linked to each other and to their respective contexts. The contexts are linked to each other as well. In addition, uses made by other New Testament writers provide a further set of connections. And, as well, the

and Theological Study of Hebrews 2.5-18," Vox Evangelica 6 (1969): 62.

¹¹⁸Raymond Langworthy Watrous III, "The Hermeneutics of Hebrews" (Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1979), 18.

¹¹⁹Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, 83.

passages and their respective contexts are connected to the situation of the readers.¹²⁰

Rather than suggesting that the author simply picked verses out of the air, on the one hand, or that he was in some way supernaturally "zapped" with these passages, on the other, it seems that the more feasible explanation is that he was simply doing proper canonical exegesis. He read the older texts in the light of the added revelation to the canonical corpus. He considered this newly added canonical material to indeed be canonical, that is, authoritative for the way in which he was to read the older texts. And yet, the verses were not simply lifted out of their original contexts carelessly, but rather, those contexts come into play in

¹²⁰Though it is not part of my canonical argument for the author's hermeneutical method, perhaps another factor that accounts for the author's placing of Old Testament passages on Christ's lips is something the author says in the first part of the epistle: that God now speaks by his Son. It seems that the author could not very well make a statement like that at the very beginning of his epistle and then let Christ be silent throughout the entire letter. Graham Hughes (Hebrews and Hermeneutics, 57) seems to allude to this when he writes that our failure to understand the hermeneutics of Hebrews is a "failure to understand the author's 'theology of the Word of God,'" and that what we have in Hebrews is the "working out of this theology in which the inescapable conviction that Jesus is the final form of God's word has to be reconciled with God's former modes of Speaking. The exact way this is seen to happen is that the previous form reaches its fullest meaning, and only reaches it, in the context of the new and final event of God's Address. . . . all previous forms now have their fullest significance within this Christian context. We are to understand, first, that the writer's conviction about the Christological form of the Word of God operates as the first and largest hermeneutical consideration in his handling of the Old Testament texts." Cf. also, George B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," CJT 5 (1959): 45; Ronald E. Clements, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews," Southwestern Journal of Theology 28 (1985): 38.

helping to understand how the cited passages apply to their new context. Was he fully aware of all the connections we have been able to uncover in this investigation? I am not absolutely convinced that he was, though it would certainly be possible. It depends in part on the model one envisages for how the author composed the epistle: was it a letter that was written very hastily, or was it a carefully crafted composition in which the author actually thought through all the possible connotations and images that a citation would raise in the minds of the readers. I am inclined toward the latter; but even if he did not see all the connections, that is not a problem, for I am convinced that we have not seen them all either. In every passage of Scripture, God always means infinitely more than what the human author had in mind when writing the text.

This is canonical interpretation. And my thesis is that this method of interpretation should be seen as setting a canonically authoritative hermeneutical paradigm for us to follow.

Other Passages in Which Christ is the Psalmist

The use of the Heb 2:12 citation of Ps 22:22 in the preceding section as an example of canonical exegesis was a fairly safe one. Though many would doubt that the author necessarily saw all the possible connections which I and many others have suggested, there are few today who would contend that he had no regard at all for context in his choice of this

verse as a text. This is not the case, however, with other passages in which a New Testament author seems to portray Christ as the speaker of a psalm.

Though there is disagreement as to which passages would actually belong in this group, I would include the following:

Matt 13:35 (Ps 78:2)
 Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34 (Ps 22:2)
 Luke 23:46 (Ps 31:6)
 John 2:17 (Ps 69:10)
 John 13:18 (Ps 41:10)
 John 15:25 (Ps 35:19; 69:5)
 John 19:24 (Ps 22:19)
 Acts 2:25-28 (Ps 16:8-11)
 Rom 15:3 (Ps 69:10)
 Rom 15:9 (Ps 18:50 [2 Sam 22:50])
 Rom 15:11 (Ps 117:1)
 Heb 10:5-7 (Ps 40:7-9)

It is impossible for me to give any kind of full discussion to these passages, but I will very briefly touch on each one. For the purpose of this dissertation, which is to explore the possibility and value of canonical exegesis, it will not be necessary to discuss variations between the Masoretic, Septuagint, and New Testament texts unless specifically warranted by canonical concerns.

Matthew 13:35 (Psalm 78:2)

The quoted words from Psalm 78 are not actually attributed to Jesus, but are rather considered by Matthew to be fulfilled in Jesus' ministry of teaching in parables. The fulfillment, however, only makes sense if Jesus is regarded as first-person speaker in the psalm. Similarity of contexts is, again, to be taken into consideration. (1) In both Psalm 78

and Matthew 13 the teacher of parables is concerned with the rejection of God's word and the stubbornness of those who refuse to listen. (2) Both Jesus and the Psalmist are ultimately interested in kingdom issues: the Psalmist ends his long historical recital with the establishment of the Davidic monarchy (78:70-72); Jesus' parables are, specifically, parables of the kingdom. (3) In both passages, this teaching about the kingdom also has to do with the kingdom being taken away from those for whom it was apparently originally intended and given to others: in Psalm 78 the Lord rejects Ephraim and chooses Judah (vv. 67-68); in Matthew 13, for those who refuse to listen, even what they do have will be taken away (vv. 11-12). (4) In both passages the speakers deal with God's law (Ps 78:5-10; Matt 13:52). (5) Finally (not to imply there could not be more), in both passages the teaching which has to do with things "from of old" is nuanced with "new" things. In Psalm 78 the new thing is the rejection of Ephraim and the choosing of Judah, David, and Mount Zion. In Matthew 13, Jesus, "who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old" (v. 52), seems to be emphasizing in the parables a new view of the kingdom, one which is "already but not yet," the kingdom that has come in the person of the teller of parables himself. These correspondences warrant, I believe, the use that Matthew makes of this psalm, and the placing of its words on Christ's lips.

Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34 (Psalm 22:2)

There is no need to spend much time on the relevance of Psalm 22 to the passion narrative. No one has ever accused Jesus of quoting out of context here. Moreover, these are not words that the Gospel author quotes, but ones that he records Jesus as quoting. As the very Son of God, suffering for sins that were not his own, enduring an alienation from God from whom he had never been separated, and experiencing an agony and an anguish that should not have been his, the Savior gave to these words a depth of meaning they had never before known.¹²¹

Luke 23:46 (Psalm 31:6)

Since this is an utterance which, again, is reported to have actually been spoken by our Lord, I will not spend much time here. It is to be noted, however, that there are several elements in Psalm 31, as in many other psalms, that match up well with the new situation into which Jesus transports these words. The desire to be delivered from shame (v. 2), the pleas for deliverance from the trap (v. 5), the "anguish" of the soul (v. 8), the mention of the enemies (v. 12), the slander, terror, and conspiracy (v. 14), the desire to enjoy

¹²¹Cf. Hans Walter Wolff, "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," trans. Keith Crim, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 193-94; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, trans. James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 36-37.

once again the light of God's face (v. 17), all correspond to some facet of Jesus' passion.

John 2:17 (Psalm 69:10)

Like the reference in Matt 13:35, this is not said to have been spoken by Christ. Rather, John states that at some point the disciples remembered the quoted phrase, "Zeal for your house consumes me," and connected it with Jesus' cleansing of the temple. We are perhaps supposed to infer from a similar statement in v. 22 about the disciples remembering after the resurrection the words which Jesus spoke in v. 19, that the remembering in v. 17 took place after the resurrection as well.¹²² Whatever the case, to be applied to Jesus, the quotation must be regarded as being a first-person utterance.

There does not seem to be much in the context of Psalm 69 that matches up very easily with the situation in John 2. There are, however, a couple of parallels which do take on a special significance. First, Raymond Brown calls attention to the fact that in Ps 69:9, just before the verse which John cites, it reads, "I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons." Brown then connects this with the mention of Jesus' brothers in John 2:12, and with Jesus'

¹²²For the opposite view, see Bruce G. Schuchard, Scripture Within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John, SBLDS 133 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 18 n. 5.

subsequent estrangement from his brothers (John 7:3-5).¹²³ Second, there is the matter of just what the quoted phrase means in its context in the psalm. Marvin Tate's opinion is that "the context suggests deep concern about the behavior of some in the community whose actions are contrary to those appropriate for the 'house' of God" (whether "house" refers to the temple or to the people of Yahweh).¹²⁴ These two factors, plus the extensive use this psalm receives in other places in the New Testament, certainly provide reason to believe that John did not just arbitrarily connect this passage with the cleansing of the temple.

John 13:18 (Psalm 41:10)

Discussion of this citation will be reserved for the next chapter.

John 15:25 (Psalm 35:19; 69:5)

In this passage Jesus is the quoter. After noting that the world hates both him and his Father, he then says, "But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without cause.'" The exact source of the citation is not certain. Most commentators opt for Psalm 69 on account of the extensive use the psalm receives in the rest of the New Testament. Also favoring Psalm 69 is John's account of how

¹²³Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii), AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 124.

¹²⁴Marvin E. Tate, Psalms 51-100, WBC 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 196.

Jesus, during the crucifixion, uttered the words, "I thirst," consciously setting in motion an event that would fulfill the words in Ps 69:22. That both contexts show Jesus' concern with the idea of fulfillment would support the possibility that it may have been the same psalm being thought of in both places. However, there is an argument to be made for Psalm 35 as well.¹²⁵ Not only is it a lament psalm, with many of the same motifs as Psalm 69, but interestingly, if the citation was reckoned as coming from this psalm, then it is significant that the previous verse in this psalm (v. 18) reads,

I will give you thanks in the great assembly;
among throngs of people I will praise you.

This verse is very similar to the Ps 22:23 citation in Heb 2:12, as well as some others that we have yet to look at. Of course, Psalm 69 has a vow of praise section as well (vv. 31-37), but somewhat removed from the verse cited in John 15. It may well be that it was this passage that was in the mind of our Lord.

John 19:24 (Psalm 22:19)

Unlike the synoptics, which mention the dividing of Jesus' clothing, but do not explicitly connect it with Ps 22:19, John, after describing the event, introduces the quotation, and uses a fulfillment formula to do it. Since the original context of the citation has already been discussed, there is no need to do so here. I only wish to note that,

¹²⁵Cf. Schuchard, Scripture Within Scripture, 122-23.

again, in order for the citation to fit its new context, we should consider John as having reckoned the quotation as a first-person reference finding a first-person fulfillment.

Acts 2:25-28 (Psalm 16:8-11)

Important to an understanding of Peter's use of Psalm 16 as an apologetic on the Day of Pentecost are three crucial points. First, Peter's apologetic is valid only if, in at least some respect, the verses cited do not apply to David. Second, David was in some way conscious that this psalm did not ultimately have to do with himself. Third, to be applicable to Christ, the citation must be conceived of as a possible first-person utterance of Jesus.

There does not seem to be anything in the context of Psalm 16 that would correspond in more than just a general way with the context of the situation in Acts 2. While I do not deny Kaiser's argument that the word *hāsîd* in Ps 16:10 would have supported a messianic inference on Peter's part, at the same time there is no reason to believe that Peter would not have been drawn to this passage if the word had not been there, or that "the reason this passage should ever have been linked to the Messiah along with the Davidic speaker rests on the proper understanding of the term *hāsîd*."¹²⁶ There are too many other psalms that are used messianically in the New

¹²⁶Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 32-33; also, Donald Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis: The Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2," CBO (1981): 548-49.

Testament that do not have any specific messianic terminology, to suggest that it is the occurrence of this term on which Peter's argument rests, especially when the word, Kaiser's arguments notwithstanding, is not a messianically reserved term.¹²⁷

There is a point of contact, however slight, between the context of the citation and another psalm cited in the Acts passage. In Acts 2:34 Peter cites Ps 110:1 to prove a similar point: David has not ascended to heaven, Jesus has; therefore the Psalm more specifically applies to him. Interestingly Ps 110:1 and Ps 16:2 are the only two verses in the Psalter where both the words Yahweh and Adonai occur in conjunction with a speech reference (Ps 110:1, *nəum YHWH la dōnî*; Ps 16:2, *āmart laYHWH ādōnāy*). The Ps 16:2 text seems to be textually corrupt and most translations have opted for reading a first person singular instead of the Masoretic Text's second feminine singular, though there have been attempts to make sense out of the consonantal text as it stands.¹²⁸ It is possible that they may be more contentually similar than would appear on the surface. In any case, it is possible that these psalms became connected by the principle of *gezerah shavah*.

¹²⁷Kaiser's use of an argument along the lines of corporate solidarity to explain the many times when the term occurs in the plural is not convincing (Kaiser, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New, 34).

¹²⁸For one such attempt which amends only the Masoretic vocalization to second masculine singular, see Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC 19 (Waco: Word, 1983), 154-58.

Giving strength to this suggestion is the fact that both psalms have the phrase "at my right hand."¹²⁹ There is a difference, however, in that in Psalm 16 Yahweh is at David's right hand, whereas in Psalm 110 it is the king who is at Yahweh's right hand. Interesting as well is the possibility that there may be an allusion to Psalm 132 in Acts 2:30 between the two psalm citations. If so, it is interesting to note that this psalm is one of those that has a dialogical character to it: David speaking to the Lord, and the Lord speaking to David.

So on the one hand, there does not seem to be any specific element in the context of Psalm 16 that corresponds to anything in the situational context in Acts 2. The two psalms that are cited, however, along with the one to which there may be an allusion made, do form an interesting trio: Psalm 16 is David talking to the Lord; Psalm 132 is a dialogue between the Lord and David; and Psalm 110 is the Lord talking to David. The lack of a specific relationship between the context of the citation from Psalm 16 and the situation in Acts 2 is more than made up for by the intertextual connections of the Psalms that are either cited or alluded to. I am not willing to say dogmatically that Peter was aware of all these intertextual connections. I do believe, however, that God has woven these intertextual connections into the

¹²⁹Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 9.280.

fabric of Scripture, and that canonical exegesis, working on this presupposition, can uncover them.

Romans 15:3 (Psalm 69:10)

The citation here consists of the second half of the verse which was quoted in John 2:17 with reference to the cleansing of the temple. In the Romans context Paul cites the verse in order to hold up before his readers Jesus as an example of one who did not please himself, even as Paul encourages his readers to bear with the weaker brothers since "we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves" (v. 1). It has been suggested that the quotation is not particularly apt, for in Psalm 69 the psalmist is speaking of how he bears the reproaches of those who reproach God. In Romans, however, the concern is not to offend the weaker brother. It is interesting to note, though, that in Psalm 69 the concern of the psalmist is not just with his relationship to God, but he also pleads in vv. 7-8 for others who, like him, have also put their hope in God:

May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me,
 O Lord, the Lord Almighty;
 may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me,
 O God of Israel.

So in the midst of his service and suffering for God, he is also concerned that the insults that are falling on him will not weaken the faith of those who are devotees of Yahweh. Perhaps Paul is thinking of this passage as well when he holds up Christ as the ultimate example of one who was seemingly

unconcerned for his own welfare. This, plus the rich usage this psalm receives in the New Testament, seems to show that there was, indeed, a larger context of references at work.

Romans 15:9 (Psalm 18:50 [2 Samuel 22:50])

Following on the heels of the previous citation from the Psalter is this quotation from Psalm 18. Having encouraged his readers to "accept one another, just as Christ accepted you" (v. 7), he then goes on to declare in v. 8 that one of the goals of Christ's ministry was "that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy." He then quotes Ps 18:50 and three other passages in support of this last statement. He introduces this first quotation with the "it is written" formula. In spite of the way it is introduced, however, I believe it is best, to consider Paul as regarding these to be Christ's words. First, as Cranfield notes, the omission of *kyrie* from the Septuagint may have been deliberately done so as to present Christ as the speaker.¹³⁰ Second, as Hanson points out, the very next verse of the psalm says,

He gives his king great victories;
he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

To extrapolate from this and regard Christ as the speaker of the previous verse would have been no great leap, especially

¹³⁰C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 2.745-46.

since the psalm is Davidically attributed anyway.¹³¹ Third, of the four quotations that Paul introduces, only the last is introduced by naming the speaker, in this case, Isaiah. Since the quotation from Isaiah is about the Messiah, "the Root of Jesse," and not words that could be put on the Messiah's lips, it makes sense that for this one alone of the four, he must introduce it by naming the speaker. Fourth, the liturgical connection should be considered: just as in Heb 2:12, if Christ is the speaker, then he would be regarded as leading people in praise to God.

Aside from these items, however, there does not seem to be anything in the context of the psalm, other than the reference to Gentiles, that would have called Paul's attention to this psalm.

Romans 15:11 (Psalm 117:1)

This citation is the third of the four that Paul uses to support the statement in v. 8 that Christ has come so that the Gentiles may glorify God. The psalm is the shortest in the Psalter, and otherwise unused in the New Testament. If there is a rationale that may be active in putting the psalm on Christ's lips, I would again suggest that it may be the liturgical connection.

¹³¹Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1965), 157.

Hebrews 10:5-7 (Psalm 40:7-9)

The interesting thing about this citation is that, other than the passion accounts where the verses from the psalms that are spoken by Jesus occur in narrative, this is the only place other than Heb 2:12 where the author explicitly remarks that Christ is the speaker of a psalm. All the places we have just looked at imply as much, but only these two passages in Hebrews make it explicit. Interesting as well is the contrast between the potentiality for contextual factors in the two psalms having been taken into account by the author. While there is abundant evidence for the Heb 2:12 citation that the context of Psalm 22 was taken into account, there is practically none that the same was done for Psalm 40 in the Heb 10:5-7 citation. The psalm is not quoted anywhere else in the New Testament, and there is nothing in the context that seems to correspond in any special way with the context of the citation in Hebrews 10. Kaiser's study of some of the key words in the context of the cited verses in Psalm 40 is very illuminating,¹³² but, in my opinion, does little if anything to show what may have drawn the attention of the author of Hebrews to the passage as having messianic import. If we take into account, however, the liturgical nature of some of the previous psalm citations, then this may well provide the clue, for the very next verses after the ones that are quoted read,

I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly;

¹³²Kaiser, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New, 123-41.

I do not seal my lips,
 as you know, O Lord.
 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
 I speak of your faithfulness and salvation.
 I do not conceal your love and your truth
 from the great assembly.

I believe this may have been the influencing factor. As we have seen several times before, the quotation from the psalm is often either a vow of praise, or in the vicinity of such a vow. It may well be that we should take a clue from this pattern to help us understand the New Testament authors' understanding of the relation between the Psalms and Christ.

Besides the citations we have looked at in this section, there are others where there is a citation or possible citation, and, even though we cannot be sure that the words are regarded as Christ's by the author, it would certainly make sense if they were regarded as such. In Acts 4:25-30, Psalm 2:1-2 is quoted in the context of a prayer by the Jerusalem believers in praise to God for the release of Peter and John. But important to note is the fact that the words quoted are spoken, as is clear from Ps 2:7, by the one who is referred to as the "Anointed one" in v. 2. In 2 Cor 4:13, Paul quotes Ps 116:10 ("I believed; therefore I have spoken") and then follows with these words:

With that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us in his glorious presence. (vv. 13-14)

The context does not demand that Christ be regarded as the speaker of the words cited, but the corporate solidarity of

Christ and his people in the resurrection would tend to suggest that Paul, when he says, "that same spirit of faith," was perhaps thinking of the faith Christ had that he would rise from the dead.¹³³ Another place where Christ himself may be citing a psalm is Matt 26:38 (par. Mark 14:34) where, as Douglas Moo has shown, there may be at least a partial quotation of Ps 42:6.¹³⁴ There is also the very interesting view of A. T. Hanson that the quotation of Ps 82:6 in John 10:34-36 is to be considered, as far as John is concerned, as the words of the pre-existent Word.¹³⁵

¹³³Hanson argues that Paul is, indeed, quoting the Psalm as words of Christ (Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, 145-47).

¹³⁴Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 188-89; Joel Marcus, The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 173.

¹³⁵Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII: John X.33-36," NTS 11 (1965): 158-62; "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII Reconsidered," NTS 13 (1967): 363-67; Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, 164. For alternative views see James S. Ackerman, "The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John. John 10:34," HTR 59 (1966): 186-91; J. A. Emerton, "The Interpretation of Psalm 82 in John 10," JTS n.s. 11 (1960): 329-32; "Melchizedek and the Gods: Fresh Evidence for the Jewish Background of John x. 34-36," JTS n.s. 17 (1966): 399-401; Richard Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," CTM 35 (1964): 556-65; M. De Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11QMelchizedek and the New Testament," NTS 12 (1966): 301-26; Gerald W. Vander Hoek, "The Function of Psalm 82 in the Fourth Gospel and History of the Johannean Community: A Comparative Midrash Study" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1988), 241; Jerome H. Neyrey, "I Said: You are Gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," JBL 108 (1989): 647-63; Stephen L. Homcy, "You are Gods'? Spirituality and a Difficult Text," JETS 32 (1989): 485-91.

Having made this survey of all the places in the New Testament where Christ either is, or could be viewed as the speaker of the Psalm which is cited, I now make some observations which will be fundamental for an understanding of what I wish to do in the next two chapters.

First, for some of the passages, it was relatively easy to understand, not just how the portion of the psalm fit the situation into which the authors had transported it, but also to understand how the original context of the citation fit as well.

Second, in several of the cases, the connections were established, not just between the cited psalm and the context of the passage where it is quoted, but at times between the psalm and a third text or set of texts, usually from the psalms, but sometimes from other portions of the Old Testament.

Third, it is possible that in some cases it was not the context of the psalm that so much influenced the citation, but rather, the prior use of that psalm in other New Testament passages or traditions.

Fourth, in some cases the connections discovered are very subtle, certainly raising a question as to whether the author was actually aware of them.

Fifth, there are some cases where there is simply not enough in the context to see how the author could have been drawn to the passage.

Sixth, for most of the citations that are in this last category, one thing that could tie them together is the liturgical connection, and in particular, the vow of praise.

Conclusions

In the light of this study of citations from the Psalms where the author considers Christ to be the speaker of the psalms, I make the following deductions concerning the hermeneutical moves which the New Testament writers employed in their use of the Psalms.

First, I believe it has been demonstrated that the authors of the New Testament were, in fact, working with a regard for the context of the citations which they used. Donald Patience came to the same conclusion in a dissertation several years ago:

An initial aim of this study was to demonstrate that the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament psalms without regard to context. The results of this investigation have indicated the reverse conclusion. Not one psalm investigated could have been said to have been used merely as a proof-text. All the psalms which were investigated were used quite appropriately to the context.¹³⁶

I am not suggesting that this can be demonstrated in every case, but I believe it can be in the majority of cases. And even in those cases where it cannot, I believe there are

¹³⁶Donald G. Patience, "The Contribution to Christology of the Quotations of the Psalms in the Gospels and Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969), 193. Interestingly, another dissertation done a year earlier came to quite different conclusions (George V. Pixley, "Awareness of Literary Context in Early Christian Use of the Psalms," [Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 1968], 347-48).

factors that come into play that are not unrelated to this first point.

Second, I believe the evidence bears out that the New Testament writers assumed that if Christ was, in fact, the speaker in one part of the psalm, he was in fact the speaker in the entire psalm. Over a century ago, another commentator on the Psalms, John Brown of Haddington, said the same thing:

If the speaker in a psalm, or if the subject of a psalm, is obviously the same from the beginning to the end, and if a portion of such a psalm is, in the New Testament, expressly referred to the Messiah, the whole is to be considered as applicable to him.¹³⁷

I believe Brown's observation in this regard is in agreement with the canonical witness of the New Testament. Now there are some problems with this to be sure, for many of the psalms that we have just investigated contain confessions of sin and imprecations. I will deal with this objection in the concluding chapter. But for now, I simply note that I believe the evidence shows that the authors of the New Testament were, indeed, operating on such a principle.

Third, I believe this study demonstrates the truth of a point I made in an earlier chapter; that is, that the New Testament authors were capable of working with more than just one context at a time. The connections which they draw are not always based on just the immediate context of the verses they cite, but many times are based on the connections between

¹³⁷ John Brown, The Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah: An Exposition of Psalm 18 and Isaiah 52:13--53:12, (1852; repr., Byron Center, MI: Sovereign Grace, 1970), 27.

several contexts. Not only this, but they were working with an assumption that these multiple contexts were divinely ordered. They believed in a canonically authoritative intertextuality.

Fourth, I believe the evidence also bears out that, even though they were surely not twentieth-century form critics, they nevertheless extrapolated from the use of one psalm of a particular genre to the whole genre. They were able to recognize the formal similarity between the elements of the different psalms. The citing of the vow of praise from several different psalms warrants this conclusion.

Interestingly, the already-quoted John Brown came to a similar conclusion as well:

Many of the Psalms plainly refer to the same subject, and are composed on a common plan; so that when you satisfactorily establish that one of such a class of psalms is Messianic, you cannot reasonably doubt of the reference of those which obviously stand in the same class.¹³⁸

I suggest that this may account for the use of those psalms in which there is nothing in the context of the psalm itself that seems to warrant its use. In those cases, psalms of the same genre have, in fact, become the larger context. The author of Hebrews can use Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10 because he has already used Psalm 22 in Hebrews 2. After all, Psalm 22 contains a vow of praise, and the cited verses from Psalm 40 immediately precede the vow of praise portion in that psalm.

¹³⁸Ibid., 27.

And this leads me now to my final conclusion. There is no genre or class of psalms in the Psalter which is not used messianically in the New Testament. Be it lament, thanksgiving psalm, hymn, royal psalm, Zion psalm, wisdom psalm, there is a representative of each with a Christological usage in the New Testament. May we say then, that, rather than thinking in terms of messianic psalms, we should think instead of a messianic Psalter? Though I do, indeed, regard this as a proper conclusion, perhaps this is put a little too strongly for some to give their assent. So I will reword it: The New Testament writers considered the book of Psalms to be a messianic reservoir. They regarded it as a book from which they could draw phrases, sentences, images, metaphors, and liturgical expressions to help them better understand this person they called the Christ.¹³⁹ And what they knew of the person of Christ helped them better understand the content of the Psalms. The mentality behind this recognition of the Psalms as a messianic reservoir was not that of an atomistic proof-texting, but one that reasoned from the recognition that any one passage in the Psalter was to be understood in an expanding circle of contexts. And standing in the middle of the circle was the divine liturgist himself. I believe that this perspective on the book of Psalms should be canonically, that is, authoritatively, paradigmatic for us. In the next

¹³⁹Cf. what I believe to be a similar understanding in Durham, "The King as 'Messiah' in the Psalms," 425-26, 433-34.

chapter I will try to show how this thesis may account for what has been considered to be the unwarranted Christological use of some psalms in the New Testament. I will then attempt to demonstrate how even psalms that are not used by the New Testament may be interpreted Christologically.

CHAPTER 9

THREE MESSIANIC PSALMS

In illustrating the use of canonical analysis in his new proposal for doing biblical theology, Brevard Childs began with a psalm as an example.¹ I wish to do the same in this chapter.² The three psalms that I have chosen are Psalms 8, 41, and 129. The choice was motivated by several considerations. Psalm 8 was chosen because (1) it was the psalm that Childs used for his paradigm, (2) it belongs to the genre of hymn, and (3) it is quoted often in the New

¹Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 151-63. This chapter in Childs's book is basically the same material as in his slightly earlier article, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," Interpretation 23 (1969): 20-31.

²Some other psalm studies have been done in light of the Childs's canonical analysis; see e.g., James Luther Mays, "Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis," in Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs, ed. David L. Peterson, Gene M. Tucker, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 299-311. See also James A. Sanders's canonical reading of this same psalm, but, of course, with his own particular brand of canonical criticism ("A New Testament Hermeneutic Fabric: Psalm 118 in the Entrance Narrative," in Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee, ed. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 177-90).

Evangelicals have been doing canonical analysis all along under the rubric of biblical theology. See Tremper Longman III, "Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Victory Song," JETS 27 (1984): 267-74; "The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif," WTJ 44 (1982): 290-307.

Testament. Psalm 41 was chosen because (1) it has not, to my knowledge been given an intentional canonical analysis, (2) it is used only once in the New Testament, and (3) it belongs to the genre of lament. Psalm 129 was chosen because (1) to my knowledge, it, too, has not received a canonical analysis, (2) it is not used at all in the New Testament, and (3) it belongs to the category of thanksgiving song, thus rounding out the coverage of the basic form-critical classifications. As far as their original contexts are concerned, Psalms 41 and 129 will be treated more extensively than Psalm 8, primarily because, for this particular psalm, the New Testament usage is fuller. Textual, grammatical, philological, and other such matters will only arise as seem warranted within the parameters set by the focus of the discussion, that is, how these psalms function in the context of the Christian canon.

Psalm 8

This psalm is probably best classified as a hymn in praise of the Lord, specifically, a hymn in praise of the Lord as creator, though v. 5 does seem to have some wisdom connections.³ There are several problems in the psalm of a textual, syntactical, and semantic character. For the

³Though this is the consensus, many also consider the psalm to be a mixed type; for discussion, see Erhard Gerstenberger, Psalms: Part 1: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry, *Forms of Old Testament Literature* 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 67-72.

purposes of understanding the psalm in the rest of the canon, there are only four that need to be touched on here.

First, there is a syntactical problem with regard to the phrase translated "from the lips of children and infants" in v. 3. Dahood regards it as connected to what precedes rather than with what follows,⁴ though most commentators have opted for the more traditional rendering.⁵ In any case, the Septuagint and New Testament syntactical representation is credible.

Second, there is the problem of how the word *ōz* in v. 3 should be rendered. The Septuagint translates the word with the verb that precedes it as "you have perfected praise." But the word *ōz* is usually translated as "strength" or "stronghold." It is true that there are occasions where people are called upon to "ascribe" (*nātan*) strength to the Lord (Ps 29:1; 68:34; 96:7); but there is no indication in the Hebrew Bible that the noun by itself ever came to mean "praise." Probably we should not regard this as an instance where the Septuagint translators were attempting to give a literal meaning of *ōz* as "praise," but rather as an instance where they struggled with trying to understand how it was that utterances from infant lips could establish strength. Perhaps they were right. Robert Gundry has made a very interesting

⁴Mitchell J. Dahood, Psalms 1-50, AB 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 48-50.

⁵See Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC 19 (Waco: Word, 1983), 105, 107.

case for the translation "praise." He suggests that the Hebrew psalmist used the word *ōz* because of its parallelism with "song" (*zimrāt*) in Exod 15:2. He notes that rabbinic midrash connects the singing of the children in the Psalm with a tradition regarding children singing at the crossing of the Red Sea. Gundry also remarks,

As in Rev 4:11; 5:12, 13, the divine attribute praised becomes so identified with the act of praise that it comes to mean the praise itself. In Ps 8:3 the Lord silences the hostile speech of his enemies by the praise of children, *z* being chosen because the other side of its double meaning, "strength," emphasizes Yahweh's might working through the weakness of children. No other meaning than "praise" will stand with *mpy*."⁶

Third, there is the problem of how *ēlōhîm* in v. 6 should be translated. Possible meanings are "God," "gods," "angels," and "divine beings." The Septuagint's rendering of "angels" is certainly a valid option.

Finally, there is the problem of the translation of *mē at* in v. 6, rendered in most translations as "a little lower." In Hebrews 2:7, 9, where part of this psalm is quoted, there seems to be an allusion to this verse and the "little" is there made to refer to time. The suggestion has been made that the author of Hebrews could only have done this based on the Greek text, which leaves open the question as to what "little" refers to, but that in the Hebrew text, no such

⁶Robert H. Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope, NovTSup 18 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 121-22. Cf. R. T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 34, 251-52.

time reference is possible. Kidner's suggestion that the word can refer to time is true, but in the passages where it does so there are other words to indicate the time reference. While the time reference in Ps 8:6 is not impossible, it seems unlikely. I will deal with the rendering in Hebrews when we discuss the usage of this psalm in that passage.

Now we will look at the psalm as it used in the rest of the canon. The focus will be on two passages, Matt 21:16 and Heb 2:6-9, where longer citations of parts of the psalm are given. Other places where the psalm is alluded to, 1 Cor 15:27 and Eph 1:22, will be touched on in the discussion of the two main passages.

Matthew 21:16

In this passage, Ps 8:3 is quoted by Jesus to reply to the objection of the chief priests and scribes to the children shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David" when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and into the temple area. Though I have no illusions that we have in this account the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, I do not believe there is any justification for dismissing this account as having been "spun out of Ps. 8:3 and the quotation put in Jesus' mouth."⁷

As the story is told in Matthew, when Jesus enters the city, the crowds spread coats and palm branches on the road in

⁷The words in quotes are those used by Robert Gundry in reference to those who hold this view. See his arguments against this position in The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel, 200.

front of him. In Matt 21:9, the crowds, using language adapted from Psalm 118:25-26, shout,

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!

As he proceeds to enter the temple area he drives out the money changers and heals blind and lame people who are brought to him. While in the temple area, some children keep up the cries that had been shouted out earlier. All that is recorded that they said was, "Hosanna to the Son of David"; but presumably, this is only a shorthand to refer to the other things that had been said earlier. Upon hearing this the chief priests and scribes indignantly ask Jesus whether he hears what the children are saying ("Jesus, are your auditory faculties working?"). Jesus replies in the affirmative and then asks them a question quoting Ps 8:3, "Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" ("Chief priests and scribes, are your visual and memory faculties working?"). Then Jesus leaves, with apparently no reply coming from his interrogators.

What I wish to call attention to here is the fascinating set of intertextual connections that are evoked by Jesus' quotation of the passage from Psalm 8, inviting his listeners to make connections between Psalm 8 and Psalm 118. The cries of the children in welcoming Jesus to the city of Jerusalem and to the temple, taken from Psalm 118, are now equated with the cries of the children and infants in Psalm 8 in praise of

the Lord. In a very subtle way, Jesus identifies himself with the God who is praised in Psalm 8.⁸ Not only this, but it must be remembered that the one being welcomed so gladly in Psalm 118 fills the capacity of a worship leader. In the psalm, the "I" is, almost beyond doubt, the king. He has been given a great victory, and because of his victory, the whole nation rejoices with him in the Lord who has become his strength (*ōz*) and his song, (*zimirāt*) (v. 14).⁹ There seems to be a procession through either the city or temple gates, at the end of which the "I" of the psalm promises to give thanks to the Lord (vv. 19-21). He is welcomed with shouts of "Hosanna" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (vv. 25-26). There is a festal procession, at the end of which the "I," the king, again pledges his vow of praise and thanks to the Lord. Thus, by connecting the cries of the children to those in Psalm 118, Jesus effectively announces that the children's chorus is under his direction. Their praises are not just for the Messiah, but for the Lord, and Jesus is their leader. In essence he is saying, "You ask me if I hear what they are shouting? Why, I'm their director; I'm the one who has called them here; they're singing under my supervision."

⁸France, Jesus and the Old Testament, 151-52.

⁹See the remarks above regarding the connection of these words to Exod 15:2 and possibly to Ps 8:2.

The context of the situation in Matthew 21 should also be noted in this regard. Jesus has just driven out the money changers, quoting Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 while doing it. The Jeremiah passage condemns the people of Judah for the evil practices, even Baal worship, which they had allowed to take place in the temple. The Isaiah passage called attention to how the temple should become a place of prayer. And that is just what the children were doing in the temple courts, praying to, and praising God. Thus the mention of Psalm 8 becomes a condemnation of the chief priests and scribes. They had condoned evil practices which had turned the temple into a den of robbers, but sought to stifle the prayers and praises of the children, who, by welcoming the one who came in the name of the Lord, were, in fact, praising the Lord.

There is another very interesting effect of the move to quote Psalm 8 in connection with the shouts of the children. Not only the words cited from Psalm 8, but also the context of the psalm must be taken into account. It is interesting that Jesus only quotes half of the sentence from Psalm 8:3, leaving it for the chief priests and scribes to fill in the rest: "because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." By quoting Ps 8:2 to answer the objections of the chief priests and scribes, Jesus effectively casts them into the role of God's enemies, who now need to be silenced.¹⁰ They had

¹⁰Cf. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 109-110; R. T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament, 34.

already shown themselves to be the enemies of the one who comes in the name of the Lord; now they show themselves, by their opposition to the cries of the children, to be God's enemies as well. This seems to be further confirmed by the fact that the very next day, Jesus makes another "Have you never read" address to them. And this time, the portion he accuses them of being ignorant of comes from Psalm 118: "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.'?" So on two consecutive days he makes these "Have you never read" addresses to them, and in both cases the address effectively condemns the addressees. They are the Messiah's enemies in Psalm 118; they are God's enemies in Psalm 8.

Thus we see how the citation of Ps 8:2 evokes a host of intertextual connections.

Hebrews 2:6-9

It was on this passage that Childs focused in his examination of Psalm 8. The first thing he called attention to was what he considered to be significant differences between the Hebrew and Septuagint texts, in particular, the same differences we noted earlier in regard to the translation of *ēlōhîm* and *mē at*. The fact that the Septuagint renders these two words, respectively, as *angelous* and *brachu* (capable of being interpreted "a little while" as opposed to the more restricted possibilities for the Hebrew word), plus the fact

that the synonymous parallelism of man/son of man was lost on the author of Hebrews, made possible exegetical moves on his part that allowed him "to read into the psalms a full Christology."¹¹ In summarizing his conclusions Childs states:

The New Testament writer, working on the basis of the Greek Old Testament text, has been able to move his interpretation into an entirely different direction from that of the Hebrew Old Testament. The psalm becomes a Christological proof text for the Son of Man who for a short time was humiliated, but who was then exalted by God to become the representative for every man.¹²

There are some other things Childs has to say in this section that I do agree with, but I believe he has erred in his conclusions here. First, the *angelous* translation of the Hebrew *ělohîm* is not, in my opinion, particularly significant for the author. As Childs himself admits, the Septuagint translation "does not in itself do an injustice to the Hebrew."¹³ Second, *brachu* is, in fact, ambiguous, having either a spatial or temporal reference. It may well have a temporal reference, and most modern commentators seem to agree that it does.¹⁴ But I find it hard to follow Childs's

¹¹Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 156.

¹²Ibid., 157.

¹³Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 156.

¹⁴Paul Ellingworth, Commentary on Hebrews, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 154; William L. Lane, Hebrews 1-8, WBC 47a (Dallas: Word, 1991), 42-43, 48; Harold W. Attridge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 76; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 85, 89-90. For the opposite view, see F. F. Bruce, The Book of Hebrews, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 72.

reasoning that it was the possible temporal force of the Greek translation that made possible a Christological interpretation of the passage. If it was translated in terms of degrees rather than duration, that would not change the text's applicability to Christ. Finally, the evidence is not very compelling that the author failed to understand the Hebrew parallelism in the terms man/son of man. For sure, there is an emphasis on Jesus as the "Son" in the epistle, but there is no place where the author refers to Jesus as the Son of Man. And even here in this passage, in my opinion, he does not do it either. There is debate among the commentators as to the exact point in the passage at which the author begins referring to Christ, whether at some point in vv. 7-8, or not till Christ is actually named in v. 9.¹⁵ I believe the latter position is the more defensible one; even Childs seems to agree.¹⁶ But in any case, few commentators see the "son of man" phrase as a direct reference to Christ in v. 6, and the author does not repeat the phrase when he does name Jesus in v. 9, a perfect opportunity to have used the phrase there as a

¹⁵Opting for the former are Hughes, Commentary, 85-87; and Ellingworth, Commentary, 150-52. Opting for the latter are Lane, Hebrews, 47; Bruce, Hebrews, 75 n. 35; L. D. Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2," in The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: In Memory of George Bradford Caird, ed. L. D. Hurst and Norman T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 153.

¹⁶Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 157: "The writer of Hebrews makes the point that man in his actual state has not fulfilled the promise of the psalmist. Taking this then as his clue, he moves into his christological confession: We see rather . . ." (emphasis mine).

Christological title. None of the points Childs makes for hermeneutical moves on the part of the author seem to be especially significant.

What does seem to me to be significant, however, are the intertextual connections that are being made in citing the psalm. And here, it will seem that I am going to reverse myself by now pointing out just how significant the phrase "son of man" is in this quotation. The author has already cited Old Testament passages in the first chapter to show Christ's superiority over the angels as a Son (1:5-6, citing Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14). In the very next chapter he will comment on Jesus' superiority to Moses as being that of "a son over God's house" in contrast to that of a "servant in all God's house" (3:3-6). It seems then that the quotation of Ps 8:5-7 in regards to the "son of man" connects with these other passages, but emphasizing a much different point. In chapters 1 and 3, Jesus is a Son who is superior to the angels and Moses. In Hebrews 2 he is also a Son, but the emphasis there is not on superiority to some other group, but rather on the Son's solidarity with those who corporately come under the title, "son of man." This is why I would suggest that everything from Heb 2:6 up to the actual mention of Jesus by name in v. 9 is descriptive of man in general. The author was not unaware that the phrase "son of man" was a Christological title;¹⁷ rather, by using it as he does, perhaps even being

¹⁷Contra Attridge, Hebrews, 74.

intentionally ambiguous, he sets in motion a series of thoughts and supporting quotations that will impress on his readers just how real the solidarity is between Jesus and those who are now called his "brothers." The reference to Psalm 8 in 1 Cor 15:27, in the context of a discussion on Christ as the Second Adam, validates the solidarity focus of the use of the quotation by the author of Hebrews.¹⁸

A second thing that happens in this citation is that the author, whether consciously or unconsciously, calls up the possible connections that exist between Psalm 8 and Psalms 1 and 2. Patrick Miller has explored these, remarking that in Psalm 8 "We encounter one of the clearest collections of royal motifs outside the explicitly royal psalms."¹⁹ He then goes on to note how Psalm 8 contributes to allowing us to see that "the *îš* of Psalm 1 is as much a ruler as the ruler of Psalm 2 is an *îš*."²⁰ This assertion of Miller's is consonant with the recognition that Psalm 8 has taken the statements of Gen 1:26-28 regarding the dominion man was to have over the earth and clothed them in royal language.²¹

¹⁸Cf. Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 207.

¹⁹Patrick D. Miller, Jr. "The Beginning of the Psalter," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 92.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Cf. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings, ConBOT 8 (Lund:

This ties in interestingly with the possibility that the term "son of man" may either have had or taken on royal connotations in Israel. Walter Wifall has advanced the interesting thesis that

David and his family were called "man" or "son of man" in the dual sense of the heavenly origins of ancient near eastern kingship on the one hand and of Israel's covenant belief that her rulers shared a common humanity with the rest of "mankind" on the other.²²

In setting forth this thesis, Wifall makes reference to several studies that have attempted to demonstrate that the David story has been projected backwards onto Genesis 1-4. Thus, e.g., David = Adam; Bathsheba = Eve; Absalom and Amnon = Cain and Abel.²³ Wifall then argues that the story may be projected forward as well, noting the correspondences between the story of David and the book of Ezekiel (e.g., Ezekiel, just like David, receives the blueprints for the new temple). Wifall suggests that Ezekiel's being named "son of man" was as the result of the loss of the title by the Davidic dynasty at the Exile.²⁴ Reaching into New Testament times, Wifall then argues that just as

CWK Gleerup, 1976), 269; Aage Bentzen, King and Messiah, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 17, 40. On p. 40 Bentzen remarks, "In my opinion both Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 speak of the 'First Man' and the 'First King.'"

²²Walter Wifall, "David: Prototype of Israel's Future?" BTB 4 (1974): 96.

²³Ibid., 94-95.

²⁴Ibid., 96-98.

Ezekiel had adopted the royal term "son of man" in the temporary absence of David . . . In a similar manner, Jesus may have adopted Ezekiel's royal description "son of man" to proclaim the advent of God's kingdom.²⁵

All this points to the very real possibility that Psalm 8 should be regarded as a royal psalm, using the royal term "son of man."²⁶ Psalm 80:18, in my opinion, almost certainly uses the term in reference to the king.²⁷ Also lending credibility to this suggestion is that Psalm 144, with language in v. 3 almost perfectly paralleling that of Ps 8:5, is not only a Davidically attributed psalm, but one that mentions David by name (v. 10).

To complete the picture, mention must be made of the citation which most immediately precedes Psalm 8 in Hebrews, and that is Ps 110:1 in Heb 1:13. Barnabas Lindars has made the striking observation that there is no place in the New Testament where Psalm 8:7 is either quoted or alluded to without Psalm 110:1 being in the surrounding context.²⁸ Besides the occurrence here in Hebrews 1 and 2, Ps 8:7 is

²⁵Ibid., 102.

²⁶Wifall himself suggests this ("David: Prototype," 104). Francis J. Moloney ("The Reinterpretation of Psalm VIII and the Son of Man Debate," NTS 27 [1981]: 656-72) has argued that the Targumic rendering of this psalm also considers it as royal.

²⁷Cf. Anthony Gelston, "A Sidelight on the 'Son of Man,'" SJT 22 (1969): 189-96; David Hill, "'Son of Man' in Psalm 80 v. 17," NovT 15 (1973): 261-69; France, "Jesus and the Old Testament," 185.

²⁸Barnabas Lindars, New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations (London: SCM, 1961), 50.

quoted in 1 Cor 15:27, with what appears to be a fairly obvious allusion to Ps 110:1 in v. 25. The same thing appears to happen in Eph 1:20-22, with Ps 110:1 being alluded to in v. 20 and Ps 8:7 in v. 22. Lindars claims that both verses are represented in 1 Pet 3:22, though I am not so convinced of the allusion to Psalm 8 in that instance.²⁹ But in any case, it is certain that a connection was meant to be made between Psalm 110 and Psalm 8. That Psalm 110 is a royal psalm serves to reinforce the connection noted earlier between Psalm 8 and Psalm 2. Markus Barth, taking his cue from the Scandinavian scholars, has suggested that a royal festival stands behind most, and perhaps all, the Old Testament citations in the first two chapters of Hebrews.³⁰ Whether or not we see a royal festival background here or not, I believe we must definitely recognize the employment of the royal motif. And the use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 serves to carry this royal motif back to creation, where it, indeed, properly belongs.³¹ If it is, indeed, true that man being made in God's image is to be correlated with the concept of the royal figure being the

²⁹Cf. Terrence Callan ("Psalm 110:1 and the Origin of the Expectation that Jesus Will Come Again," CBQ 44 [1982]: 622-36), who argues for the close connection between Ps 110:1 and the Son of Man in Dan 7:13-14.

³⁰Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews, An Essay in Biblical Interpretation," in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 72-73.

³¹Cf. Gerard Van Groningen, Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 99-105.

image of deity, then it becomes all the more significant that in Hebrews 1:3 Christ is set forth as the very image of God.

Thus Psalm 8 is part of a complex intertextual weaving of motifs and contexts that serves to highlight the solidarity of Christ and his people and the royal character of the solidarity. Christ, the Son of God, the royal King, the very image of God, has come as Son of Man that the sons of men may become what they were meant to be, kings who represent God as his image on this earth.

So the canonical function of Psalm 8 is not demonstrated by pointing out how the author of Hebrews capitalized on minor changes in the text that occurred in the translation from Hebrew to Greek. Rather, it is demonstrated by listening carefully to what the text has to say as the Author of canon clarifies earlier words by putting them in new contexts, and making them speak to new situations.

Psalm 41

Unlike the previous case, Psalm 41 is used only once in the New Testament, in John 13:18. Before we look at that usage, however, there are a number of challenging difficulties which confront the would-be interpreter of the psalm itself.

First, there is the problem of genre. It would probably be fair to say that a majority of commentators categorize the psalm as a song of thanksgiving.³² I am inclined, however, to

³²Artur Weiser, The Psalms: A Commentary, trans. Herbert Hartwell, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 343; Willem A.

side with those who would categorize it as belonging more appropriately to the lament genre.³³ Though the first-person singular perfect, *āmartî*, in v. 5 does suggest the possibility that the psalmist is recounting his lament than rather than actually delivering it, it may well be that the perfect here should be taken as a present.³⁴ Decidedly against the thanksgiving classification, in my opinion, is the lack of

VanGemenen, "Psalms," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 5.325; James Luther Mays, Psalms, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 171; Leopold Sabourin, The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning (New York: Alba House, 1969), 2.127; Klaus Seybold, Introducing the Psalms, trans. R. Graeme Dunphy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 161-62; Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalms 1-59: A Commentary, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 430-31; Loren R. Fisher, "Betrayed by Friends: An Expository Study of Psalm 22," Int 18 (1964): 20-38.

³³Steven J. L. Croft, The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms, JSOTSup 44 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 137-38, 179; A. A. Anderson, The Book of Psalms (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 1.321-22; Bernhard W. Anderson, Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for us Today, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 240; John W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, Psalms 1-50, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 196-97; John H. Eaton, Psalms: Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1967), 116-17; Kingship and the Psalms, SBT 2d ser. 32 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976), 44-45; Dahood, Psalms 1-50, 249; Claus Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1965, 1981), 193; Gerstenberger, Psalms, 174-77.

Still basically under the category of lament, Mowinckel classifies the psalm as a psalm of sickness (The Psalms in Israel's Worship, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon, 1967), 2.1-2, 6, 9. Craigie (Psalms 1-50, 319) follows suit and further regards it as a liturgy for the sick.

³⁴See the discussion on the different varieties of the perfect in Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 479-95. Gerstenberger (Psalms, 175) suggests that it simply serves as a quotation mark.

any actual word of thanksgiving in the text. The only such note comes in the doxology in v. 14, and in spite of Wilson's arguments to the contrary,³⁵ I believe the evidence still favors the view that the doxologies at the end of psalms occurring at the seams of the Psalter are attachments to the psalms and not part of the original composition.

A second problem has to do with the *Sitz im Leben*. It would appear from vv. 4-5 and v. 9, that the psalmist's lament arises out of a time of illness. But attempts to be more specific, such as the suggestion of a cultic setting, with vv. 11-13 being an utterance based on the prior assurance of a priest that the psalmist's petition would be answered, are more tenuous.³⁶ While a cultic *Sitz im Leben* for the psalm is certainly a possibility, it does not seem very helpful in terms of exegesis to explain words that are recorded by words that are not.

Another problem has to do with the function of the wisdom material that occurs in vv. 2-4, and the function of the verb *māśkîl*, which seems to be used unusually here. The usual position has been to regard these words as lending force to the psalmist's plea: those who "have regard" for, or "pay attention" to the poor are blessed because, when they themselves are in trouble, the Lord will come to their aid;

³⁵Gerald H. Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 182-86.

³⁶Cf. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 319.

the psalmist himself has been one who has such regard for the poor, therefore the Lord should heal him.³⁷ Following this same track, Craigie argues that the words in these verses are those of the priest, and that the supplicant does not speak till v. 5.³⁸ Going in a different direction, Weiser argues that the weak (*dal*) in v. 2 is the psalmist himself, and that he is addressing a congregation of worshippers whom the psalmist encourages to "pay attention" to him, "because by doing so they will share his joyful gratitude for God's help, which he is about to praise and which will reveal to them also the grace of the Lord."³⁹ Others have made textual emendations which seem unnecessary in a text that can be made sense of as it stands.⁴⁰ The majority view here is most likely the correct one. The wisdom utterance in these verses is motivation for the Lord's answering of the psalmist's prayer. And *māskîl el*, though usually used in a more reflective type wisdom context, or a business context, simply means to "pay attention to," or "have regard for," similar to the way it is used in Neh 8:13.

Somewhat less of a problem is the proper translation of the imperfects in vv. 2-4. Are they simple futures, or should

³⁷For example, Eaton, *Psalms*, 116-17.

³⁸Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 320.

³⁹Weiser, *Psalms*, 343-44.

⁴⁰Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l'homme: Etude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale*, 3 vols. (Gembloux: Duculot, 1975-79), 1.821.

they be translated as jussives? Either one is certainly possible, but based on Janzen's study of the word *ašrê*, which convincingly demonstrates that it is not a wish but a description of a person's enviableness, it makes more sense in the context to regard them as futures, further describing this enviableness.⁴¹

Though there are several other problems in the text that could be discussed, there are only two others that I believe have particular importance for interpreting the psalm in the larger canonical context. One has to do with the meaning of the word *bēliyya al* in v. 9, and the phrase *higdîl ālay āqēb* in v. 10. The former I will discuss in the next section on the meaning of Psalm 41 in its context in the book of Psalms and in the Old Testament, for I believe the use of the word is particularly significant in this connection. The latter I will discuss in the examination of the use of the psalm in John 13:18, since this phrase is quoted there.

Psalm 41 in the Context of the Book of Psalms and the Old Testament

As mentioned above, I believe the occurrence of the word *bēliyya al* is significant in understanding the role of Psalm

⁴¹Waldemar Janzen, "Ašrê in the Old Testament," *HTR* 58 (1965): 215-26. I disagree, however, with his conclusion that the word "is never applied to oneself, for there is no ground for envying oneself" (p. 224). In Psalm 41, the speaker does use it to describe himself, not to express enviousness of himself, but rather to express how enviable is his position.

41 in its Old Testament canonical context. I will first, then, examine this significance.

bēliyya al

The etymology of the word is uncertain. After surveying various scholarly opinions, which range from equating the term with some kind of prince of the underworld, to the possibility that it is simply the Hebrew negative, *bēlî*, in combination with some form of *yā al*, "profit" or "benefit," Otzen says,

There is hardly a convincing solution to the etymological problem posed by *beliyya al*. This much can be said, however: it is based on some mythological term whose meaning we are no longer able to recover or on some name, which has been "interpreted" by popular etymology as a negative with the prefix *beli*.⁴²

At times the word seems to have more of its supposedly mythological and supernaturally sinister connotations. At other times, it seems to be little more than just a characterization of certain persons as being wicked, emptied of whatever underworld associations it may have had. It does seem, however, that there are special connections between these usages.

(1) In some passages, the persons described with the word *bēliyya al* seem to be accused by the text with slander or speaking evil of someone (1 Kgs 21:10-13; Prov 6:12-14; 16:27; 19:28).

⁴²Benedikt Otzen, "*bēliyya al*," in TDOT, vol. 2, rev. ed., ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 133.

(2) In other passages there appears to be a connection with idolatry or disregard for the holy things of the Lord (Deut 13:12-13; 2 Chr 13:7; Nah 1:11-2:1; 1 Sam 1:15; 2:12; Ps 101:3; 2 Sam 23:6). These last two passages, in particular, need to be taken together. In Ps 101:3, a Davidic psalm, and most certainly a royal psalm, David declares that he will set before his eyes "no vile thing," and then states later in the psalm that "whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence" (v. 5); further he states that "every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land" (v. 8). In 2 Sam 23:6, he declares that "evil men are to be cast aside like thorns."

(3) Two of the occurrences are parallel to each other (2 Sam 22:5; Ps 18:5). In these two passages, which refer to the "torrents of destruction" (*bēliyya al*) there seems to be the strongest connection to some kind of mythological underworld motif.

(4) In other passages there seems to be a reference to ill treatment of, or disregard for the poor or those in need (Deut 15:7-11; 1 Sam 25:17, 25; 30:22).

(5) In two passages it is the wicked Benjamites, who were guilty of particularly vile practices, including homosexuality and idolatry, to whom the term refers (Judg 19:22; 20:13). Notice further Benjamite connections in 1 Sam 10:27 and 2 Sam 20:1.

(6) Finally, in one place, and the only one in which the term occurs with the definite article, and also the only place where the term is used without justification, Shimei curses David and calls him an *îš habbēliyyā al* (2 Sam 16:7). This last passage has a Benjamite connection as well.

From this brief survey, there are some patterns which I believe begin to emerge. (1) Being characterized by *bēliyya al* means being a slanderer, one who shows little concern for those who are in need, one who disregards and even desecrates holy things. (2) There is a strong Benjamite-*bēliyya al* connection. (3) David, in particular, saw it as his royal duty to rid the land of *bēliyya al*. (4) Of the twenty-seven occurrences of the term in the Old Testament, five occur in writings attributed to David (including all three occurrences in the Psalms), four occur in narratives as characterizations of David's enemies, and one occurs in a narrative where a Benjamite calls David an *îš habbēliyyā al*.

There is a strong tradition in rabbinic Judaism that connects Psalm 41 with the coup attempt of Absalom and the treachery of David's counselor Ahithophel in going over to Absalom's side.⁴³ This tradition connects the traitor in v. 9 with Ahithophel. The study here suggests that the tradition

⁴³See the references to these in M. J. J. Menken, "The Translation of Psalm 41.10 in John 13.18," *JSNT* 40 (1990): 69; and in Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture Within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John*, SBLDS 133 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 113-14.

may be more than just "idle" midrash. Taking David, for the sake of argument, to be the author of the psalm, the connections that can be made seem to be more than just coincidental. (1) In the psalm, David's enemies say of him that a "thing of belial," *dēbar-bēliyyā al*, has come upon him (v. 9). And indeed, during the revolt of Absalom, Shimei, a Benjamite cursed David, calling him a man of belial, *îš habbēliyyā al* (2 Sam 16:7). (2) One particular charge which David brings against his enemies in v. 7 is that

Whenever one comes to see me,
 he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander;
 then he goes out and spreads it abroad.

And, as we have seen, there is a strong connection between *bēliyyā al* and the accusation of slander. (3) One thing in particular that the person characterized with the term *bēliyyā al* does not do is to have regard for those who are in need. Interestingly, David characterizes himself as a person who does pay attention to the weak and the poor. Thus we see that a major argument in the psalm is that though David's enemies accuse him of being a man of *bēliyyā al*, David argues that such is not the case, for he is one who has regard for the weak, the exact opposite of what a man of *bēliyyā al* would do. Rather, it is his enemies, the ones whose mouths are full of slander, who should be characterized with such a term. It is interesting to note as well that there is a confession of sin in the psalm (v. 5). If this psalm were, indeed, to be connected with the Absalom revolt, then this confession would

correspond with David's recognition that even though it is evil men who are revolting against him and being traitorous, that the whole series of events was, in fact, set in motion by his own sins and by his failure to deal as he should have with the situation involving Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom. Could it be that the question of the enemies in v. 6, "When will he die and his name perish?" could be the expression of a desire to see the Davidic kingship come to an end with no successor? Could it be also that the prayer in v. 11, "Raise me up that I may repay them," catches something of the flavor of David's last words to Solomon to make sure that Shimei was repaid for what he had done (1 Kgs 2:8-9):

And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord: "I will not put you to death by the sword." But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood.

Based on this data, I will make two suggestions here that I cannot develop at length in this dissertation. The first is that there may indeed be a recoverable historical setting for this psalm, and the situation may well be the revolt of Absalom and the treachery of Ahithophel. I am not advocating here a return to the days when it was thought that the best avenue to understanding a psalm's meaning was to recover the historical situation behind the psalm. Nor, however, do I believe that possible clues to the interpretation of a psalm which are provided by the canon

itself should be ignored. Second, if an interpretation which takes account of the correspondences just noted should prove to be warranted, I believe it could well provide reason to re-examine the psalms of sickness in the Psalter. In the account of the Absalom revolt, there is no indication of David experiencing such a sickness that he was bed-ridden for any period of time. Is it possible that the references to sickness in this psalm are to be taken metaphorically and not literally? Could this be true for other psalms of sickness as well? Or, are we to see a connection in the fact that David is on his sickbed or deathbed when he gives Solomon the charge to carry out a death sentence against Shimei? I simply raise these two questions, suggesting that the current consensus on these points should be re-examined.

Intra-Psalter Connections

First, I wish to explore the connections between Psalm 41 and the two other psalms that contain this word *bēliyya al*, Psalms 18 and 101. To be noticed in this connection is that the word is used differently in the three psalms. In Psalm 18, a thanksgiving psalm (par. 2 Samuel 22), the psalmist himself describes his past distress in underworld/water ordeal terminology (vv. 5-6):

The cords of death entangled me;
 the torrents of destruction (*bēliyya al*) overwhelmed me.
 The cords of the grave coiled around me;
 the snares of death confronted me.

In Psalm 41, as we have already seen, the psalmist puts the term in the mouth of his enemies as they suggest that "a thing of *běliyya al*" has come upon him. In Psalm 101, the word is used to refer to some "vile" thing that the king pledges not to set before his eyes. And yet, in spite of the difference in the ways they use the word, they are still connected.

Psalm 101 is very similar in content to 2 Sam 23:1-7, in terms of its expression of the essential righteousness of the king's household and his hatred for the things of *běliyya al*. And, of course, this passage in 2 Samuel 23 follows right on the heels of 2 Samuel 22, the parallel version of Psalm 18. The connection with Psalm 41 is established in that the prayer and oracle in 2 Samuel 22-23 follows upon the rebellion of Absalom in 2 Samuel 15-19, in which Shimei was the one who accused David of being an *îš habběliyyā al*, and the rebellion in 2 Samuel 20, in which Sheba, a Benjamite, is referred to as an *îš běliyya al*.

Also to be noted in regard to these three psalms are the other motifs that occur in them. In each one there is the proclamation of integrity and righteousness before God and the confidence that the Lord is very much pleased with and delights in the psalmist (Ps 18:20-25; 41:12-13; 101:2-8). All three psalms make reference to the enemies (18:38-49; 41:6-12; 101:3-5, 7-8), and in Psalms 41 and 101, those enemies are particularly characterized as slanderous.

These observations lead me to the conclusion that Psalm 41 should, indeed, be regarded as a royal psalm, and that there is no need for hesitation in regarding the psalm as confirming Wilson's thesis regarding the placement of royal psalms at the seams of the Psalter.⁴⁴ This leads to the next set of connections to be examined.

As a royal psalm at the seam between Books One and Two, Psalm 41 should be explored for the connections it has with Psalms 2, 72, and 89. With Psalm 2, Psalm 41 has in common the theme of the conspiracy of the wicked and the delight which the Lord takes in the psalmist. There are also very interesting linguistic parallels; key words in Psalm 2 which are also found in some form in Psalm 41 are *yāsab*, *śākal*, *ābad*, and *ašrê*. With Psalm 72, Psalm 41 has in common the themes of taking care of the poor and needy, the perpetuity of the king's name, and the continuance of the king's life. With Psalm 89, Psalm 41 pays attention to the king's enemies and, again, the desire that the king's name may continue. Along with Wilson and Walton, then, I believe it is right to see that, on a large scale, these royal psalms do, indeed, trace the fortunes of the Davidic dynasty.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Wilson himself seems to waver a bit on the issue; see his Editing, 208 and n. 15; and "The Use of the Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," JOT 35 (1986): 87-88, 94 n. 13.

⁴⁵Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms," 85-94; John H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," JETS 34 (1991): 21-31. It should be noted, however, that I am in basic agreement with Wilson in his criticism of the tenuousness of many of Walton's suggestions. See the discussion on this in chapter

Also, it is to be noticed that the psalm seems to have interesting connections with the psalms that surround it. Zimmerli has called attention to the fact that four consecutive psalms at the end of Book One, Psalms 38-41, all have the word *āmartî* in them at some point.⁴⁶ Psalms 38 and 41 may, in fact, be purposefully placed at the outside of this four-psalm collection as psalms that have the motifs of sickness and slander, while all four psalms have the motifs of enemies and confession of sin. Christoph Barth has called attention to the linguistic connections between Psalms 40 and 41.⁴⁷ Most interesting among these connections are that both psalms contain the *ašrê* formula, and that Psalm 41 seems to pick up where the last verse in Psalm 40 ends: Ps 40:18 begins with the petition, "Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me"; and, of course, Ps 41:2 begins by pronouncing a blessing on those who consider the poor (this is actually a conceptual rather than linguistic connection, since the verbs and nouns are not the same). It is also interesting to note that Psalm 41 and Psalms 42-43 are not totally unrelated.

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⁴⁶Walther Zimmerli, "Zwillingspsalmen," in Wort, Lied, und Gottespruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten: Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler, ed. Josef Schreiner, FB 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 1972), 106.

⁴⁷Christoph Barth, "Concatenatio im ersten Buch des Psalters," in Wort und Wirklichkeit: Studien zur Afrikanistik und Orientalisk: Eugen Ludwig Rapp zum 70 Geburtstag, ed. Brigitta Benzing, Otto Böcher, and Günther Mayer (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1976), 35.

There are still enemies; there is still the need for vindication; and there may be a reference to some physical infirmity (42:11). Also, even though the last four psalms of Book One are connected by the use of the first-person perfect, *āmartî*, the disjunction between Books One and Two is nevertheless softened somewhat with the occurrence in Psalm 42 of the first-person imperfect (cohortative), *ômĕrâ*.

Finally, it is certainly interesting to compare Psalm 41, the last psalm in Book One, with the book's first psalm. The use of the *ašrê* formula at the beginning of the two psalms invites the comparison. Aside from this interesting connection, it is important to note that in each case the psalmist can be called *ašrê* because he has done that which is right in the sight of the Lord and has the assurance that the Lord will sustain him. Psalm 1, by telling us that the wicked will perish (*ābad*), prepares us for Psalm 41, for when we read there that the psalmist's enemies wish for his name to perish (*ābad*), we know that their desires will not be fulfilled, but that instead they will be the ones who will perish. When we read in Psalm 1 that the blessed man is one whose delight (*hepes*) is in the Lord, we are not too surprised to find out in Psalm 41 that the Lord is pleased (*hāpas*) with the psalmist there who has been careful to be mindful of the poor, as the law says to do. Psalm 1 tells us that the man will be blessed who delights in the things in which Yahweh himself delights, and Psalm 41, which, at the end of Book One

forms an inclusio with Psalm 1, simply confirms what we have already been told.

Perhaps it seems that I am paying too much attention to the structure of the Psalter, after disclaiming in chapter 7 that the shape or structure of the book holds any authoritative canonical claim on us. At the same time, however, it is interesting that those who edited the Psalter into its final shape, did so in such a way that our attention is called to the many correspondences and parallels that exist between certain psalms. I do not believe the shape of the book is ultimately authoritative for us. But there is nothing wrong in listening to the voices of some ancient Israelites who, perhaps, read these Psalms more carefully than we, and arranged them accordingly.

The Use of Psalm 41 in John 13

In John's account of the evening in the Upper Room the night before our Lord's crucifixion, Jesus, after having washed the disciples feet and encouraging them to show the same kindness and humility to each other, then enigmatically says, "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me'" (John 13:18). The Scripture being quoted, of course, is Psalm 41:10.

Of great interest in the past two decades are several studies that have shown that John, by putting this quotation on Jesus's lips, has actually called up more than just Psalm

41, but, as well, the entire narrative of betrayal of David by Ahithophel.⁴⁸ In the discussion that follows, I will attempt to synthesize the results of these studies, adding some new observations as well (indicated by an asterisk), by going chronologically through the story of Absalom's revolt against David and the betrayal of Ahithophel, noting the correspondences with the passion accounts in the Gospels.

* (1) As David flees the city of Jerusalem on account of Absalom's advance, his officials say to him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever the king chooses" (2 Sam 15:15). This is strikingly reminiscent of the disciples who pledge their loyalty to Jesus on several different occasions, but in particular, on the very night of his betrayal (Matt 26:35).

(2) On the way out of the city, David tries to persuade Ittai the Gittite, and all the men of Gath who are with him, to go back to their own people, since there is no reason for them to lose their lives in David's cause. Ittai, however, replies, "As surely as the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be" (2 Sam 15:21). Earlier in the Passion Week, Jesus had declared, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be"

⁴⁸T. Francis Glasson, "Davidic Links with the Betrayal of Jesus," ExpTim 85 (1974): 118-19; L. Paul Trudinger, "Davidic Links with the Betrayal of Jesus: Some Further Observations," ExpTim 86 (1975): 278-79; Menken, "The Translation of Psalm 41.10 in John 13.18," 68-73; Schuchard, Scripture Within Scripture, 113-15.

(John 12:40). Glasson, who calls attention to so many of these parallels, says that he does not put very much weight on this particular one. But I believe we will see as we go along that it bears more weight than Glasson suggests.

*(3) The story records that as the king and all his men passed by the crowds on the way out of Jerusalem, the "whole countryside wept aloud." This is very much reminiscent of the large crowd and the "daughters of Jerusalem" who mourned for Jesus as he carried his cross to Golgotha (Luke 23:26-31).

(4) The king and his men cross the Kidron Valley (2 Sam 15:23). Jesus, also, crossed this valley on the way to the garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1).

*(5) At one point during the flight, David expresses his hope that he may return, but at the same time declares that his fate is in the Lord's hands, and then adds, "Let him do to me whatever seems good to him" (2 Sam 15:26). This, of course resonates with Jesus' desire that the cup might be taken from him, yet resigning himself to whatever the Father wills (Matt 26:36-44 and par.).

(6) David's flight progresses till he begins to ascend the Mount of Olives, weeping as he goes (2 Sam 15:30). And, of course, Jesus, too, ascends this same mount and weeps in great agony (Matt 26:30-45). Not only does Jesus weep, but he specifically calls the disciples' attention to his great sorrow (Matt 26:37-38).

(7) Immediately after the mention of David's ascent up the Mount of Olives, the text for the first time mentions that David had been told that his trusted advisor Ahithophel had gone over to Absalom (2 Sam 15:31; Ahithophel's treachery had already been related by the narrator in v. 12). David prays, "O Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness." So also, Jesus prayed for deliverance from the cup (Matt 26:36-44).

*(8) The text mentions that David arrived at the summit of the Mount of Olives "where people used to worship God" (2 Sam 15:22). Luke emphasizes in his version of the account that Jesus went out "as usual" to the Mount (22:39).

(9) David puts in motion a plan that will "frustrate" Ahithophel's advice (2 Sam 15:34). Jesus, though betrayed by Judas, was still in charge of the whole situation. If this was a Passion Play, then Jesus was not only lead actor, but also director, producer, and in charge of casting ("What you are about to do, do quickly" [John 13:27]).

*(10) Later in the king's flight, he encounters Shimei, as we saw in a passage earlier. Shimei curses David, calling him an *îš habbēliyyā al* (2 Sam 16:7). Can we see here, perhaps, an analogy to Jesus' being called Beelzebub, "the Prince of Demons" (Matt 10:25; 12:24)?

*(11) Abishai son of Zeruah, one of the men accompanying David, says to his king in regard to the curses of Shimei, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?"

Let me go over and cut off his head" (2 Sam 16:9). This seems to line up well with two situations in the Gospels. The first, of course, is in the passion account when Peter cuts off the high priest's servant's ear (John 18:10). It is also very similar to an earlier narrative where some of Jesus' disciples ask if they should "call fire down from heaven" to destroy the Samaritans who would not receive Jesus (Luke 9:51-54).

*(12) David emphatically refuses the request: "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruah?" He goes on further to say that the Lord has told Shimei to curse him (2 Sam 16:10-12). Jesus, on both of the occasions mentioned above, emphatically rebuked the requesters, and in Peter's case makes a remark to the effect that what is happening is God's will. To Peter he said, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11). In some manuscripts of Luke 9:56, Jesus replies to the disciples, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of."

(13) Ahithophel's advice to Absalom was to strike that very night, while David would still be weary, and kill him (2 Sam 17:1-2). Judas led the soldiers to the Garden that very night while Jesus was weary from his Gethsemane experience (Matt 27:47).

(14) Ahithophel says that only the king would be killed. He remarks, "The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed." This seems

somewhat reminiscent of Judas identifying the one person to be arrested with a kiss (Matt 26:48-49), and also of Jesus' words to the soldiers, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go" (John 18:8). Ahithophel also said that if the king was struck, all the people would flee. And of course, as we know from Mark 14:50, when Jesus was arrested, all his disciples fled.

(15) The Lord frustrated the plans of Ahithophel by causing Absalom's men to disparage Ahithophel's advice. When Ahithophel realized that his advice was not going to be considered anymore, he went to his hometown, put his affairs in order, and hanged himself (2 Sam 17:23). Judas also hanged himself (Matt 27:5). Other than Saul, who fell on his sword in battle to avoid having the Philistines take his life, Ahithophel and Judas are the only persons in the Bible who committed suicide. Moreover, the language that describes the suicides of each in the Septuagint and in Matthew are strikingly similar.

Was Jesus, when he quoted the words of Ps 41:10 in the Upper Room, thinking of these correspondences when he did so? Or was John, in his report of the passion of our Lord, thinking of them? The sheer weight of these parallels makes it practically certain. But there are other indicators as well. For example, it is interesting to note one major difference between John's version of Psalm 41:10 and the Septuagint's version. The Septuagint has translated fairly

literally the Hebrew *higdîl ālay āqēb*, by using the verb *emegalynen*. John, however, has the verb *epēren*. Menken has advanced the thesis that John has been influenced here by 2 Sam 18:28 where Absalom and Ahithophel are referred to as those who "lifted their hands against" the king. Menken then argues that in place of the woodenly literal Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew verb, John has made his own translation of the Hebrew, using the verb "lifted" (*nāsē ū*) as a more appropriate idiom in Greek.⁴⁹ Though this suggestion is credible, I find it perhaps too speculative.

What I wish to focus on, however, is the possibility that our Lord may have had more in mind that night than just a single verse of the psalm. There are several indications that such is the case.

First, I believe it is important to go back to the second verse of the psalm, where the psalmist says, "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak" (or "poor"). Interesting in this regard is the fact that just a few days earlier in Bethany, when Jesus was anointed with costly perfume by Mary, Judas voiced his opposition to the extravagant action (John 12:4-6):

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's

⁴⁹Menken, "The Translation of Psalm 41.10," 70-73. For the view that John was trying to be more idiomatic than the Septuagint, see Roger J. Humann, "The Function and Form of the Explicit Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John," Lutheran Theological Review 1 (1988/1989): 39-40.

wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put in it.

It is interesting that in the Matthean and Markan versions of this account (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9), it is not just Judas, but all the disciples who make this objection. But what is interesting to note as well is that it is immediately after this incident that Judas decides to betray Jesus. I freely admit that this is speculative, but at the same time, very likely, that this incident could have prompted the recall of Psalm 41:2 in the mind of our Lord.⁵⁰ He who was a thief accused him who was sinless of disregarding the needs of the poor--just as in Psalm 41, they who were men of *běliyya al* accused the psalmist of being such a person, even though he had shown that he was not, as evidenced by his regard for the poor. Perhaps the words and actions of Judas prompted the Savior to be especially meditative in this Psalm during the week of his passion.

Lending credence to this suggestion is the fact that not only does Jesus quote from Psalm 41 on the night of his betrayal, but also from Psalm 42. I mentioned in the previous

⁵⁰On the one hand, I want to affirm fully John's many assertions that Jesus knew everything that would happen to him (e.g., 13:1; 18:4; 19:28). But on the other hand, I also want to confess fully the incarnation and the fact that the eternal Son of God subjected himself to all that it means to be human, including human thought processes, and having a "succession of moments." In accordance with this, I find it both logical and orthodox to predicate of Jesus that he "recalled," "remembered," "understood," "reasoned." Even so, in this case, I suggest the words and the actions of Judas brought Psalm 41 to mind.

chapter the opinions of several scholars who believe that in Matt 26:38 there is a conscious allusion to Ps 42:6. Douglas Moo regards this as an example of what he calls "use of Scriptural language as a vehicle of expression."⁵¹ He writes,

We may take Jesus' words of lament in Gethsemane as an example: *perilypos estin hē psychē mou heōs thanatou* ("My soul is sorrowful, even unto death," (Mk 14:34/Mt 26:38). The rarity of *perilypos* (only eight times in the LXX, never in Philo or Josephus, only twice in the NT), especially in combination with *psychē*, renders an allusion to the "refrain" of Psalms 42 and 43 (perhaps originally a single psalm) virtually certain.⁵²

So on the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus quotes from two consecutive psalms.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Psalms 41 and 42 are connected to each other by more than just juxtaposition. They are also connected via a third psalm. Psalm 55, though it is never quoted in the New Testament, has a passage very similar to the one in Psalm 41:10. Verses 13-15 read,

If an enemy were insulting me,
I could endure it;
if a foe were raising himself against me,
I could hide from him.
But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,
with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship
as we walked with the throng at the house of God.

⁵¹Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 188.

⁵²Ibid., 188-89. See also Edgar Monroe McKown, "The Influence of the Psalms upon the New Testament" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1932), 46.

At the same time, however, notice the connection this passage has with Ps 42:5:

These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go with the multitude,
leading the procession to the house of God,
with shouts of joy and thanksgiving
among the festive throng.

It is entirely possible that it was the connections between these various psalms that prompted in the mind of Christ, the appropriation of, not only Psalms 41 and 42-43, but also other psalms that he appropriated in connection with his passion (Psalms 22, 31, 34, 69, 118).

By using the word, "appropriation," I take the risk of being misunderstood, so I will anticipate one of my conclusions from the last chapter. I mentioned above that Douglas Moo categorizes Jesus' use of Ps 42:6 as "use of Scriptural language as a vehicle of expression." I quote here the rest of the paragraph cited above so we can see what Moo means by that:

But there is little evidence that we should find in Jesus' allusion an attempt to cite the psalms(s) as authoritative prefigurement of His sufferings in the Garden. Jesus appears simply to be using familiar biblical language to express His emotions. To be sure, Jesus' use of this language may suggest a general identification of His plight with the psalmist's--oppressed by enemies, seeking God's vindication and rescue--but we would be wrong to accuse him of misusing the text or reading into it new meaning if we were to find no evidence that Psalms 42-43 were predictive of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane.⁵³

⁵³Ibid.

I appreciate Moo's concern here. At the same time, I believe there is more that is going on than just a "general identification." To be sure, Jesus "appropriates" the psalmist's language. But what is important to see here is that this is not just an "after thought" appropriation. Rather it is both an "intentional" and an "intended" appropriation. That is, when God inspired David and the other psalmists to compose their laments, their thanksgiving songs, and their hymns, these compositions were not only, or even primarily intended by God for use in their original contexts. Instead, God intended them for use by his Son. And, if we are to determine what a text means by authorial intention, then it seems that we have to say that these psalms receive their fullest and intended meaning in Christ's appropriation of them. I will have more to say on this in the last chapter.

One intriguing issue, and one which I will only raise here, and address further in the last chapter, is the confession of sin in v. 5. Glasson, comparing Psalm 41 with several other psalms, such as Psalm 69, which were used messianically in the New Testament, yet contain confessions of sins, states that, of course, these psalms cannot in their "entirety be applied to Jesus."⁵⁴ Grudinger differs, however; he remarks:

Yet I suggest that it is at this very point that the early Church interpreters may have understood Jesus as

⁵⁴Glasson, "Davidic Links," 118-19.

fulfilling the psalmist's role as testified to in this psalm.⁵⁵

He then reasons that either the early Church would have understood Jesus as confessing sins in this verse vicariously, or that the sins in the original psalm were not actually the psalmist's sins, but one with which his enemies has wrongly charged him. Again, I will come back to this in the last chapter.

Psalm 129

I consider Psalm 129 to be in the general category of thanksgiving psalm. It has been typed otherwise, however, particularly because of the last half of the psalm. Therefore some have categorized it as a lament,⁵⁶ while most others have analyzed it as a psalm of trust.⁵⁷ Though there is a future orientation to the psalm in the last four verses, the only statement about Yahweh himself comes in the backward-looking portion of the psalm. The liturgical nature of the psalm, as evidenced by the first two verses, plus the declaration of *YHWH sādđiq*, "Yahweh is righteous," leads me to think that the dominant motif here is not so much trust as it is praise. In

⁵⁵Trudinger, "Davidic Links: Further Observations," 279.

⁵⁶Bernhard Anderson, Out of the Depths, 70, 242; Mitchell J. Dahood, Psalms III, 101-150, AB 17a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 230.

⁵⁷VanGemeren, "Psalms," 707; Leslie C. Allen, Psalms 101-150, WBC 21 (Waco: Word, 1983), 188-89; A. A. Anderson, Psalms, 2.871-72; Sabourin, The Psalms, 2; Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalm 60-150: A Commentary, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg), 460-61.

any case, genres should not be seen as existing only in "rigid" and "pure" forms.⁵⁸

Many have suggested that the psalm has undergone an extensive reworking so that what was originally an individual psalm has become a communal one. Seybold, in particular, has proposed that the psalm originally consisted of vv. 2-4 and 6-7, which was simply the prayer of a rural, agrarian Israelite, who offered it at the sanctuary.⁵⁹ The psalm then was taken up into the collections of prayers and songs. It was communalized with the addition of v. 1, "Let Israel say"; Zionized with the addition of v. 5, "May all who hate Zion . . ."⁶⁰; and then given a liturgical finish with the addition of a priestly blessing formula in v. 8b, "We bless you in the name

⁵⁸On this, see Tremper Longman III, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academie, 1987), 16 and n. 7.

⁵⁹The following account of Seybold's reconstruction is taken from Introducing the Psalms, 104-5; "Die Redaktion der Wallfahrtspsalmen," ZAW 91 (1979): 25; Die Wallfahrtspsalmen: Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Psalm 120-134, BibS(N) 3 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 27-28, 47-49, 57-58.

⁶⁰Which also, according to Seybold, betrays its secondary character by lack of conformity to the metrical pattern of the rest of the psalm, and for lack of consistency with the internal parallelism with the other verses. There is, however, no need to delete or make textual emendations, either for metrical reasons, or to make the parallelism more consistent. As Tremper Longman III has shown, whether there is such a thing as meter in Hebrew poetry is very tenuous ("A Critique of Two Recent Metrical Systems," Bib 63 [1982]: 230-54). I believe this lack of consistency in meter should probably be seen as extending to parallelism as well.

of the Lord."⁶¹ A later redactor who did not recognize the last line of the psalm as a priestly blessing formula, thinking instead that it was a harvester blessing similar to that found in Ruth 2:4, tried to make the connection more obvious by inserting the first half of v. 8.

While Seybold's proposal is very imaginative and at times insightful, and I would have no trouble accepting much of what he says (except for the part about the clumsy, ignorant redactor), this whole matter of reconstructing a text's history is the very thing I have been quarrelling with throughout this thesis. There is simply no way to construct a bridge from historical reconstruction to theological statement. Even if the psalm was originally an individual composition with only the individual's own experience in mind, though I do not believe it is⁶²; and even if v. 5 is an

⁶¹Many have suggested that v. 8b (or 8c if the last verse is reckoned to be a tri-colon) is a priestly blessing. See, Allen, Psalm 101-150, 187-88, 190; Kraus, Psalm 60-150, 463; Weiser, Psalms, 771; Mays, Psalms, 405; Oswald Loretz, Die Psalmen, II: Beitrag der Ugarit-Texte zum Verständnis von Kolometrie und Textologie der Psalm 90-150, AOAT 207/2 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 275; Richard Press, "Die zeitgeschichtliche Hintergrund der Wallfahrtspsalmen," TZ 14 (1958): 413.

⁶²It seems more credible, and more simple, to understand that a creative psalmist has written a composition for all Israel to sing, but in first-person style. See James Luther Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 18; Psalms, 404.

addition, though as Allen argues, it is not⁶³--even if these things are true, I cannot extract from these possibilities any theological relevancy. In other words, the present text of Psalm 129 is canonical and reconstructions of putative earlier forms of the psalm are not.

There are only two other matters that are of concern before looking at the psalm in its context in the book of Psalms and in the Old Testament. The first is the interpretation of the verbs in vv. 5-8. Are they imperfects or are they jussives? Most translations opt for the jussive. Allen has argued that it makes more sense to see them as simple imperfects, which is also what tips the scales for him in typing the psalm as a song of confidence rather than either a lament or thanksgiving song.⁶⁴ I am not fully persuaded one way or the other, nor convinced that, whichever way they are taken, that either confidence or hope would be excluded in either construal.

Second, though it has become popular of late to regard the second of the two blessing formulas in v. 8 as a priestly blessing upon the worshipping community, and therefore not to be seen as a part of the quotation put in the mouths of those who pass by the enemies of Zion, I am not convinced that this has been satisfactorily demonstrated. Against it, in my

⁶³Allen, Psalms 101-150, 189: "It is significant that v 5 nestles firmly into the psalm stylistically as well as exegetically . . ."

⁶⁴Allen, Psalms 101-150, 187-88; also, Westermann, 460-62.

opinion, is the possibility that the last two lines are somewhat chiastically structured, with YHWH preceding *ālêkem* in the first line, but following *etkem* in the second line. The matter, however, cannot be firmly decided either way.

In any case, the psalm is one in which Israel as a collective body praises the Lord for his righteousness to them during the course of their entire history and for freeing them from the wicked. They are both hopeful and confident that he will continue to do so.

Psalm 129 in its Old Testament Context

First, it is important to note that the psalm is one of the Songs of Ascents and bears close similarities to other psalms of the same group. I cannot go into a discussion here of the purpose of this collection, except to say the consensus seems to be that the psalms are pilgrimage songs, having some connection with the journeys Israelites would make to Jerusalem to attend the great festivals there.⁶⁵

Evidencing itself as being a part of this collection are the affinities it has with the other psalms: references to Zion and Israel; liturgical formulas such as "Let Israel say," and "We bless you"; references to the name of the Lord; and

⁶⁵For surveys, see Allen, Psalms 101-150, 219-21; Seybold, "Die Redaktion der Wallfahrtspsalmen," 247-68; Die Wallfahrtspsalmen; Press, "Die zeitgeschichtliche Hintergrund der Wallfahrtspsalmen," 401-15; Cuthbert C. Keet, A Study of the Psalms of Ascents: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary upon Psalms CXX to CXXXIV (London: Mitre, 1969); Daniel Grossberg, Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry, SBLMS 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

the fact that the enemies are national enemies. Liebreich has called attention to the close linguistic connection that exists between the Songs of Ascents and the priestly blessing in Num 6:24-26.⁶⁶ He calls attention to the fact that four key words in the priestly benediction ("bless," "keep," "be gracious," and "peace") occur in all but three of the fifteen psalms. Grossberg has taken Liebreich's work and suggested that there may, therefore, be some substance to the older view that these songs have a connection with the steps of the temple. Indeed, he notes the correlation between four significant pieces of data: (1) the fact that rabbinic literature has it that the priests cited this benediction on the steps of the temple, (2) the fact that the same rabbinic tradition has it that there were fifteen of these steps, (3) the fact that there are fifteen Songs of Ascents, and (4) the fact that there are fifteen words in the priestly benediction in Num 6:24-26. I believe these correlations are probably more than just coincidental; at the same time, I am not quite sure what to make of them, except to note, as Grossberg does, that there does seem to have been a concern on the part of the editors to allow concerns of transtextuality to play a part in the collection.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Leon J. Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," JBL 74 (1955): 33-36.

⁶⁷Grossberg, Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry, 50-51.

The opening words of the psalm, of course, bear considerable similarity to the opening words of Psalms 118 and 124. Not only is there this formal similarity, but there is a contentual similarity as well. In all three psalms, there is the reflection on the psalmist's past history of deliverance from enemies by the help of the Lord. In all three psalms the imagery that is used to portray these enemies is especially graphic. In Psalm 129 the enemies are pictured as plowmen who dig deep furrows into the psalmist's back. In Psalm 124, the enemies attack, their anger flares, they are out to swallow their prey, they are a flood about to engulf their victims, they are raging waters, and powerful torrents. In Psalm 118 the enemies are pictured as surrounding their would-be victim; they swarm around him like bees. But in all three, the Lord provides a great deliverance, and it was, in all three, a deliverance that only the Lord could have accomplished. It is also interesting that Psalm 118, like Psalm 129, contains a blessing formula, only the one there occurs in the midst of blessing the Messiah, whereas the one in Psalm 129 is a blessing that blesses no one.⁶⁸

In its connections with the rest of the Old Testament, there are two motifs in Psalm 129 that call up similar passages. First the psalmist describes Israel from the days of her "youth." This evokes passages like Exod 4:22; Hos

⁶⁸Since Psalms 118 and 124 are usually categorized as thanksgiving psalms, perhaps that should have a bearing on the genre analysis of Psalm 129.

2:15; 11:1; Jer 2:2; 22:21; and Ezek 23:3. All these passages describe Israel as a child; sometimes the image is flattering, sometimes it is not, but it is always associated with suffering. As Kraus remarks, "The history of Israel is one single passion narrative."⁶⁹

Second, the psalmist describes Israel's suffering as having furrows cut in one's back with the plowman's plow. This calls up passages like Isa 1:6; 51:23; and Mic 3:12.

Israel was greatly oppressed during her history. Most of it she probably earned. But, the point to keep in mind here is that in this psalm post-exilic Israel points to such sufferings as had happened all through that history--the bondage in Egypt, the oppression during the time of the Judges, the exile to Babylon--and still declares, "But they have not gained the victory over me." Could it be that we should see in the sufferings of Israel and the victory that Yahweh gave her, the greater sufferings and the greater victory of a greater Son yet to come?

Psalm 129 in its New Testament Context

There is a very interesting in passage in John 19:1. It reads as follows:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. This happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long."

⁶⁹Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 462

No, it doesn't read like that. But part of the thesis of this dissertation is that it could have.⁷⁰ It could have, just as easily as John 19:34-36 says that Jesus' death was timed so that the soldiers did not have to break his bones, and that

These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones shall be broken,"

thus fulfilling Ps 34:21. Or as Paul, in Eph 4:8 used Ps 68:19 to describe the ascension of Christ. For the book of Psalms was a messianic reservoir from which a host of phrases and symbols and images could be drawn to describe what God did in Christ Jesus. By this I do not mean that it was simply a resource book of favorite quotations, much like a pastor might use on a Saturday night to pepper up the next morning's sermon. These were not just literary allusions. They were that--but they were more than that. For the New Testament writers recognized that there was an intrinsic connection between Jesus Christ and this book. Indeed, it was his book. Israel's psalms were his psalms. And Israel's history was his history.

⁷⁰Therefore I disagree with Gerard Van Groningen's ultimate conclusion (Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 403) when he says, "There is no reference to Psalm 129 in the New Testament. Further, the psalmist refers to all the sufferings the children of Israel suffered throughout their history. Yahweh, however, had delivered them by cutting the cord of the wicked (v. 4). Israel is called upon to curse those in the future who will not call Yahweh's blessings upon Israel (vv. 5-8). There is, in this last part, a reference to a messianic passage (Gen. 12:1-3). Neither this passage, nor any other part of this psalm, should be considered messianic."

In Matt 2:15, the author of that Gospel, after recounting the story of the flight of Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus into Egypt, and how they stayed there until the death of Herod, then goes on to say:

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Matthew has been accused by a number of scholars as being a twister of the Scriptures.⁷¹ After all, the passage in Hos 11:1, from which Matthew quotes, isn't even a prophecy; it's a historical reference to the history of Israel, in particular, their time in the land of Egypt. But as many have noticed, that is exactly the point that Matthew seems to be trying to make. It is only by looking at what Matthew is doing in his Gospel, but particularly in the first two chapters, that we see that he was very much concerned with history. Not only in order to see what Matthew is doing in his quotation of Hos 11:1, but also to better understand Psalm 129, I want to briefly look at a number of analogies between the first few chapters of Exodus and the first few chapters of Matthew (though I may occasionally look a little farther), analogies which Matthew invites us to draw by quoting Hos 11:1.⁷²

⁷¹For example, S. Vernon McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scripture," JBL 80 (1961): 143-48.

⁷²For much of what follows I am indebted to M. D. Goulder, Type and History in Acts (London: SPCK, 1964). See also his Midrash and Lection in Matthew (London: SPCK, 1974); and Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). See also, R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," NTS 27 (1981): 233-51.

(1) The most obvious correspondence is that both narratives are concerned with the birth of a baby. And both babies are destined to become the deliverers of their people.

(2) In each case there is an account of the slaughter of innocent boy babies.

(3) In the Exodus account, Pharaoh is outwitted by the Hebrew midwives (Exod 1:15-21). In Matthew, Herod is outwitted by the Magi (Matt 2:16).

(4) Moses has to flee Egypt because Pharaoh tries to kill him. Jesus has to flee Israel because Herod tries to kill him. There is, however, with this parallel, a rather significant contrast as well; for in Jesus' case, it is the land of promise and a Jewish king from which he is forced to flee.

(5) The Israelites were in Egypt because of a Joseph who was a dreamer. Jesus is taken down to Egypt because of a Joseph who dreamed (Matt 2:13). In Matthew 1-2 Joseph has three revelatory dreams.

(6) Both Josephs are sons of a father named Jacob (Gen 30:22-24; Matt 1:16).

(7) Moses is able to return to Egypt "for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead" (Exod 4:19). Jesus can return to Israel "for those who were to trying to take the child's life are dead" (Matt 2:19).

(8) Moses still has to come face-to-face with another Pharaoh before whom he performs miracles. Jesus must yet come

face-to-face with another Herod who wants to see him perform some miracle (Luke 23:6-9).

(9) Moses is provided with a spokesperson who will appear before Pharaoh. The spokesperson is related to him, older than him, and also dies before Moses does. Moses is like God and Aaron is his prophet. At one point Aaron has doubts about Moses (Exod 4:14-16; 7:1; Num 12:1-8). Jesus is provided with a spokesperson who will appear before Herod. The spokesperson is related to him, older than him, and also dies before Jesus does. Jesus is God and John the Baptist is his prophet. At one point John has doubts about Jesus.

These are the correspondences which relate most closely to the earliest chapters of both Exodus and Matthew. A few others, however, may be instructive as well.

(10) After the Red Sea crossing (cf. 1 Cor 10:2) the Israelites are tempted forty years in the wilderness). After Jesus' baptism he immediately goes to be tempted forty days in the wilderness.

(11) The Israelites' temptations are, for the most part, ones that involve complaining about food, and the first thing God gives them in response to their complaints is bread (Exod 16). Jesus' first temptation has to do with bread (Matt 4:1-4).

(12) Moses is several times rejected by his own people (Exod 2:14; 5:19-21; 16:1-3; 17:1-3; Num 12:1-9; 14; 16; 21:4-

5). Concerning Jesus, John says "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1:12).

(13) Moses was almost stoned by his own people (Num 14:10). Jesus was almost stoned by his own people (John 8:59; 10:31).

(14) The Lord three times tells Moses exactly what will happen with regard to Pharaoh (Exod 3:18-20; 4:21-23; 7:1-5). Jesus three times tells the disciples about his coming betrayal and crucifixion (Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19).

(15) Moses gives instructions for the institution of the passover (Exod 12:21-27). Jesus gives instructions to his disciples regarding the preparation of the passover (Luke 22:7-19).

(16) Moses has seventy elders (seventy-two with Eldad and Medad) (Exod 24:9). Jesus sends out the seventy-two (Luke 10).

(17) The Lord gives Moses a sign that will only be fulfilled if Moses trusts (Exod 3:12). Jesus gives the Jews a sign that will only be fulfilled if the Jews trust (John 2:18-22).

(18) Moses feeds the multitude in the wilderness (Exod 16). Jesus feeds the five thousand (Mark 6:30-42).

(19) The Exodus was a remembering of God's covenant with his people (Exod 2:24). The work of Christ was a remembering of God's covenant with his people (Luke 2:72-73).

(20) Moses gives the law from Mt. Sinai (Exod 20). Jesus reinforces the law in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7).

(21) And here is the one that perhaps sums it all up. Israel is God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22). Jesus is God's firstborn son (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:6).

And with this last one in particular, we are more than justified in bringing Psalm 129 into the picture. Even as Israel could say that she had been oppressed from youth, so Jesus could say that even from his youth he had been oppressed.⁷³ Even as Israel could complain of the furrows dug into their backs by the plowmen, so Jesus could complain of the punishment he had received, even the flogging at the hands of the Gentiles (certainly, the metaphorical plowmen in Psalm 129, are, at the same time, very literally non-Israelite). Even as the Israelites could declare that Yahweh had given them the victory, so Jesus, as we have seen in other psalms, is the ultimate worship leader and giver of praise as the risen and exalted Son of God.

Thus we see that, because of the intra-canonical connections Psalm 129 has with Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; Matt 2:15, and a host other passages, Psalm 129 should be considered to be a messianic psalm. This is not due to the psalm being in some way a specific prediction of Christ's sufferings, but

⁷³Andrew Bonar, Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms (New York: R. Carter, 1861; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 397.

rather because it belongs to the Christian canon of Scripture. And yet, it was predictive, for if we believe that the canon is the creation of one Author who has written the former words with a view to the later ones, and has in the later ones clarified his intentions in the earlier words, then we should also believe that when the New Testament authors interpreted the Psalms with reference to Christ, and as we do so today in following the pattern of interpretation they left for us, we are reading the canon as it was intended to be read; we discern the canonical intentionality that is there. And because we do so through the lens of the New Testament, then this reading must be more than just canonical, it must be Christo-canonical.

Conclusion

I believe I have been able to demonstrate, following the pattern of the New Testament authors, that the psalms considered in this chapter are rightly and appropriately interpreted with reference to Christ. These last two chapters together, I believe, have shown that the more correct approach, rather than working with the assumption that there are messianic and non-messianic psalms, is to work with the assumption that the Psalter as a whole is messianic. This, however, raises a number of questions and implications. I will address these in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 10

Implications of the Christo-Canonical Approach For Interpreting the Book of Psalms

In this final chapter I wish to lay out some of the implications of the Christo-canonical approach for both the scholarly and ecclesiastical communities. Since, as I have indicated in a previous chapter, biblical scholars should not see their work as divorced from their Christianity and Church community, I will not attempt to distinguish between the applicability of these implications.

The Psalms Are to Be Interpreted According to the New Testament Paradigm

This is the heart of the Christo-canonical approach. The Bible is not only contentually authoritative, but it is also paradigmatically authoritative. And I believe that scholars who want their interpretations to come under the rubric "canonical" must do so by consciously trying to follow the paradigm for interpretation that is set forth by the New Testament authors, who, in turn, received their pattern from Christ.

Joachim Becker, in a book that is, from a strictly descriptive, historical-critical perspective, reticent to recognize an intentional messianic element in the Old

Testament, near the end of the book, however, asks himself and his readers a question:

The christological actualization of the Old Testament in the New is so commanding that it confronts exegesis with the question of conscience whether the historical-critical method, which we too have employed, is in fact a way at all of carrying out exegesis of the Old Testament as such.
 . . .

Above all, we must remember that the messianic interpretation of the Old Testament, arbitrary as it may appear, is nevertheless based on the highest authority. The scriptural interpretation of the early church is not simply a question of late Jewish mentality; it is carried out with the aid of the Spirit (see especially 2 Cor. 3:12-18). It is one of the processes that make up revelation and are constitutive for the church. The Spirit dictates an inalienable form of scriptural interpretation. Jesus himself, according to Luke 24:32, 45, opened the Scriptures. Christ himself casts light on the Old Testament. . . .

If at the outset we found it easy to caricature the traditional picture of messianic expectations, we must now retract. To find Christ at every stop on our way through the history of Israel and the Old Testament is not only no deception but also a duty imposed on us by the inspired testimony of the New Testament, the meaning of which we must strive to understand.¹

I appreciate Becker's words here in relation to his need to subject his historical-critical interpretation of the Old Testament to the authoritative witness of the New Testament. Indeed, this is the very thing that this dissertation calls for. We need such scholars who will, as Becker so correctly recognizes, strive to be Christians not only in Church but also at their desks and in their research. And we need professors of hermeneutics who will train their students to

¹Joachim Becker, Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament, trans. David Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 94-96.

interpret the Bible, not according to an arbitrarily imposed paradigm, but according to the one that is taken from the material to be interpreted itself, the paradigm that is laid down for us in the New Testament by Jesus and his apostles.

The Psalms Are a Messianic Reservoir

I have argued in this paper that the Psalter should be seen as a messianic reservoir. By this I mean that the New Testament authors considered there to be an intrinsic connection between Christ and the book of Psalms and that anything in the Psalter was "fair game" to use in reference to the person of Christ. Thus, we should not think in terms of messianic versus non-messianic psalms, but instead use as a working assumption the existence of a messianic Psalter. The only troublesome part for me in stating this hypothesis is that it seems to preclude the purely predictive element that many would still wish to see in at least certain psalms.² The New Testament provides warrant for there being a predictive element in the Psalter (e.g., Acts 2:30). And as Tournay has demonstrated, the psalmists who followed David seem to have

²Cf. the discussion on this in William J. Hassold, "Rectilinear or Typological Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy?" CTM 38 (1967): 155-67. See also, Ronald E. Clements, "Messianic Prophecy or Messianic History?" HBT 1 (1979): 87-104; Harvey D. Lange, "The Relationship Between Psalm 22 and the Passion Narrative," CTM 43 (1972): 610-11; Edward R. Dalglish, "The Use of the Book of Psalms in the New Testament," Southwestern Journal of Theology 27 (1985): 28-30.

perceived their role as, indeed, being a prophetic one.³ At the same time, however, even as there are prophecies in the books more traditionally regarded as being prophetic in nature, that have both immediate and distant fulfillments, so I believe that there are probably no psalms that are purely predictive. And yet, they are all predictive. So I agree with Tremper Longman when he says, "Messianic psalms, in an exclusively narrow sense, do not exist."⁴ But I also agree with him when he says, "All the psalms look forward to Jesus Christ."⁵

I want to emphasize, however, that I do not see this forward look as merely a broad kind of generalized messianic expectation, though it certainly may have been that on the part of many, perhaps most, of the psalmists. But rather, it is important to keep in mind here that if we truly believe that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit of Christ, then we should expect to see Christ in the Psalms. In other words, there is an incarnational element to the book of Psalms: Christ has incarnated himself in biblical canon. I

³Raymond Jacques Tournay, Seeing and Hearing God in the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, trans. J. Edward Cowley, JSOTSup 118 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

⁴Tremper Longman III, How to Read the Psalms (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 73.

⁵Ibid., 68.

believe that this is what Bonhoeffer meant when he said that "Christ was in David."⁶ Bonhoeffer remarks,

David was a witness to Christ in his office, in his life, and in his words. The New Testament says even more. In the Psalms of David the promised Christ himself already speaks (Hebrews 2:12; 10:5) or, as may also be indicated, the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 3:7). These same words which David spoke, therefore, the future Messiah spoke through him. The prayers of David were prayed also by Christ. Or better, Christ himself prayed them through his forerunner David.⁷

I do not believe this is very far from the perspective of the New Testament writers. And even though he does not agree with them, Hanson is certainly correct in understanding the New Testament authors as understanding that there was, in fact, a "real presence" of Christ in the Old Testament.⁸

It is this which I believe provides the answer to the question as to how the words of the very human psalmist, can also be the words of God. Bonhoeffer reflected on this question:

⁶See the discussion on this in Martin Kuske, The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer's Interpretation, trans. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 67-81.

⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, trans. James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 18-19. Cf. Jouette M. Bassler ("A Man For All Seasons: David in Rabbinic and New Testament Literature," Int 40 [1986]: 168) on the perspective of the New Testament authors: "Not only, however, did David speak of Jesus in the psalms, he also spoke, the New Testament writers were convinced, as Jesus."

⁸Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1965); see also his The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983).

It is at first very surprising that there is a prayerbook in the Bible. The Holy Scripture is the Word of God to us. But prayers are the words of men. How do prayers then get into the Bible?⁹

And the answer is that Christ by his Spirit has incarnated himself in biblical canon. Thus, at one and the same time, they are the words of man and God. So when the New Testament authors interpreted the Psalms with reference to Christ, they were not imposing on the Psalms an arbitrary hermeneutical grid, but they were interpreting the Psalms as they were meant to be interpreted. They were not reading Christ into the Psalter, but correctly recognizing the Christ who was already there. In other words, the appropriations that Christ and the New Testament authors made of the Psalms, were intended appropriations.

After making a similar statement in the last chapter, I went on to remark,

When God inspired David and the other psalmists to compose their laments, their thanksgiving songs, and their hymns, these compositions were not only, or even primarily intended by God for use in their original contexts. Instead, God intended them for use by his Son. And, if we are to determine what a text means by authorial intention, then it seems that we have to say that these psalms receive their fullest and intended meaning in Christ's appropriation of them.

I need now to clarify what I mean by this. If we are to conceive of the Holy Scriptures as the word of God, and if we grant that God, unlike any human author, understands all the

⁹Bonhoeffer, Psalms, 13-14; see also his Life Together, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 44-46.

implications and ramifications of what he says in his word, then it seems to me that we must understand that later appropriations of Old Testament passages by New Testament authors are, in fact, intended appropriations.¹⁰ And if the locus of meaning is to be found in authorial intention,¹¹ then it follows that New Testament appropriations of Old Testament passages are, in fact, explications of the meanings of those passages. This is not "reading God's mind"; rather, it is reading God's word with the presupposition that it is God's word. It is simply recognizing that the writings of "these inspired poets were so shaped and moulded by the Holy Spirit that they might grow and expand with the growth of revelation, and 'gather wealth in the course of the ages.'"¹²

¹⁰Cf. William Alexander, The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity, The Bampton Lectures, 1876 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1877), 30: "The applicability of so many passages is a proof that the application was intended to be made."

¹¹The debate over whether meaning is to be found in author, text, or reader was briefly touched on in chapters 5 and 6. My argumentation here is based on the fact that this debate must necessarily work with different assumptions when the author in view is God. With the human author, there is certainly the possibility that a text can engender new meanings or that readers can read meanings into the text, of which the author would not have been aware. With the divine author, however, there are no valid or invalid text-oriented or reader-oriented meanings that are outside his purview.

¹²A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms with Introduction and Notes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), xii-xiii.

The Psalms are the Skandalon of the Old Testament

The Psalms, precisely because they are human prayers, and yet prayers in which Christ has incarnated himself, are the *skandalon* of the Old Testament. Even as Christ in his humanity, in his having come to earth in the "likeness of sinful flesh," is the stumbling block of the New Testament, so the Psalms constitute the stumbling block of the Old Testament.¹³ We love Jesus holding children in his arms and blessing them. We are less enamored with the Jesus who drives out the money changers and who pronounces doom and destruction on the city of Jerusalem. In like manner, we love Psalm 23, but we hate Psalm 109. There are four problematic areas in the Psalms that I believe are put in right perspective if we understand that Christ is the Psalmist, and that these very human prayers are his prayers.

First, it has been noticed that some of the prayers appear to be very prideful prayers, such as Psalm 26 where the psalmist asks for vindication from the Lord because he has lived a blameless life.¹⁴ Now this psalm is perfectly understandable as the prayer of a man who is simply painting a

¹³Cf. Thomas Merton (Bread in the Wilderness [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1953], 95): "The Christ who is born to us of Scripture is just as hard to recognize as the Christ Who is born of Mary."

¹⁴For one scholar's problem with this psalm, see Friedrich Baumgärtel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," trans. Murray Newman, in Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, ET ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 138.

portrait of himself as the opposite of the evildoer, and as von Rad, remarks, "There is no room for any intermediate state, or for any of the finer shades so familiar in human evaluations."¹⁵ At the same time, however, these psalms do seem to both our Reformation heritage and to our modern ideas of pride and humility, to be psalms that we cannot so easily take on our lips. But I believe we can do so as we pray these psalms in Christ, who was, indeed, blameless.¹⁶

Second, the Psalms appear to be very "whiny" prayers. It surprises many people to discover that well over half of the Psalms contain either laments or remembered laments. It is good to keep in mind, however, the tremendous gulf that exists between the complaints in the Psalms and the complaints of the Israelites in the wilderness. The psalmists complained in second person. God makes tremendous allowances for the honest complaints of his people. So even in Old Testament times, the complaints were not something to be seen as whiny.¹⁷ But was there anyone more qualified to pray these lament psalms than Christ, who took upon himself all the laments and

¹⁵Gerhard von Rad, "'Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," chap. in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 243-66 (citation from p. 250).

¹⁶So C. S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958), 135.

¹⁷It is good that scholars have called the Church back to the lament psalms. See Claus Westermann, "The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," trans. Richard N. Soulen, Int 28 (1974) 20-38; Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," JSOT 36 (1986) 57-71.

the complaints and the cries of his people? I suggest that in Christ, we may learn what it is to lament again.

Third, and much more of a problem apparently than the previous two, are the imprecatory psalms.¹⁸ Can these be Christian prayers? Can we see Christ as the psalmist even here? I do not think that we can take Craigie's way of dealing with these psalms:

But these psalms are not the oracles of God; they are Israel's response to God's revelation emerging from the painful realities of human life, and thus they open a window into the soul of the psalmist. The psalmists in ancient times were bound to the same commitment of love for enemies as is the modern Christian or Jew (cf. Lev 19:17-18; Exod 23:4-5), and their expression of vindictiveness and hatred are not "purified" or "holy" simply by virtue of being present in Scripture. They are the real and natural reactions to the experience of evil and pain, and though the sentiments are in themselves evil, they are a part of the life of the soul which is bared before God in worship and prayer. The psalmist may hate his oppressor; God hates the oppression. Thus the words of the psalmist are often natural and spontaneous, not always pure and good, and yet they reflect the intimacy of the relationship between psalmist and God. The expression of hatred is in a way a confession of sin, though it is not phrased as such; it is a part of the

¹⁸There is a vast body of literature devoted to the imprecatory prayers. For differing perspectives on the imprecations see, Chalmers Martin, "Imprecations in the Psalms," in Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation, ed. Walter Kaiser (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 113-32 (first published in Princeton Theological Review 1 [1903]: 537-53); Johannes G. Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," WTJ 4 (1942): 123-38; C. S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms 22-26, 136; Raymond F. Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," Springfielder 39 (1975): 88-102; J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," BibSac 138 (1981): 35-45. For a very balanced discussion, see Patrick D. Miller, Jr. Interpreting the Psalms (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 150-53.

inner life of a person which may be cleansed and transformed through the relationship with God.¹⁹

I cannot deal with this problem in any extensive way here, except to note that the imprecatory element is not absent from the New Testament. Not long after Christ's resurrection and ascension the apostles used imprecatory elements in Psalms 69 and 109 in regards to Judas (Acts 1:20). And the book of Revelation is filled with joyful imprecations over the fall of Babylon. Elizabeth Achtemeier has put this well:

The church can learn from the psalmists that it is proper to pray for the destruction of the enemies of God. We finally desire that the kingdom of God will come on earth, do we not? But that means that God will put down every opposition to his rule, and the church should pray earnestly for the elimination of such opposition.²⁰

Therefore, I suggest that Christians, with Jesus Christ, should pray for the destruction of the enemies of God.²¹

The last problem has to do with the confessions of sin. I cannot be dogmatic here, but I think it is possible that, in light of what I believe was their tendency to view the Psalms as a messianic reservoir, and in light of their reasoning that if Christ is the speaker in one part of the psalm that he is the speaker in the entire psalm, they may have regarded the

¹⁹Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC 19 (Waco: Word, 1983), 41.

²⁰Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching from the Old Testament (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 143.

²¹Cf. Bonhoeffer, Psalms, 56-61; Life Together, 47. For a more recent suggestion in this regard, see William L. Holladay, The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 348.

confessions of sins in these psalms as vicarious prayers on the part of Christ for his Church. It has been so understood by many.²² A. T. Hanson, in regard to Paul's use of Psalm 69:10 in Rom 15:3, reasons,

There is indeed a confession of sin in verse 5 of the Psalm, but we may suggest that Paul would interpret this as a vicarious confession; like the suffering, it was part of Christ's voluntary self-identification with men.²³

And Bonhoeffer, commenting on the same psalm says,

In Psalm 69, verse 5 tends to cause difficulty because here Christ complains to God about his foolishness and guilt. Certainly David spoke here of his personal guilt. But Christ speaks of the guilt of all men, also about the guilt of David and my own guilt which he has taken upon himself, and borne, and for which he now suffers the wrath of the Father. The true man Jesus Christ prays in this Psalm and includes us in his prayer.²⁴

We make our confessions of sins and then ask God to forgive them in Jesus' name. So we may still pray these prayers and believe that in solidarity, Christ prays them with us. In this way, then, even the "penitential psalms" can be seen as psalms that Jesus prays with us.²⁵ And that bring me to a last point.

The Psalms Are to Be Prayed

²²William Alexander, The Witness of the Psalms, 41-43; John Brown, The Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah: An Exposition of Psalm 18 and Isaiah 52:13--53:12 (1852; repr., Byron Center, MI: Sovereign Grace, 1970), 33.

²³Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, 154-55.

²⁴Bonhoeffer, Psalms, 37.

²⁵Ibid., 51-52.

Not all psalms are to be prayed, for there are didactic and wisdom compositions among the collection, but what prayers are there, I believe, are meant to be prayed by Christ's people. Therefore I welcome a number of books and articles that have stressed the need to pray the Psalms.²⁶ But one of the implications of this study is that they should not be prayed too quickly. A prerequisite for praying the psalms is coming to them through Christ. Besides the places we looked at in chapter 8 where Christ is portrayed as first-person speaker in the Psalms, there are also places where the psalms become the prayers of the Church (e.g., Rom 8:36). But behind this usage is an understanding, I would suggest, that they are the Church's prayers because they are Christ's prayers. I believe it is imperative then, again in the words of Bonhoeffer, that,

If we want to read and to pray the prayers of the Bible and especially the Psalms, therefore, we must not ask first what they have to do with us, but what they have to do with Jesus Christ.²⁷

²⁶Noel Quesson, The Spirit of the Psalms: A Handbook for Reading and Praying the Psalms with Israel, with Jesus, and with the Present Moment, trans. and ed. Marie-France Curtin (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990); Walter Brueggemann, Praying the Psalms (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's, 1982); Lawrence B. Cunningham, "Praying the Psalms," Today 46 (1989): 39-44; Yves Congar, Called to Life, trans. William Burridge (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Balthasar Fischer, "How to Pray the Psalms," Orate Fratres 25 (1950): 10-20; Paschal Botz, "Praying the Psalms," Worship (1972): 204-13.

²⁷Bonhoeffer, Psalms, 14. Cf. A. G. Hebert (The Throne of David: A Study of the Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ and his Church (London: Faber & Faber, 1941), 253.

It is not legitimate for a Christian to make an end run, so to speak, around Christ to get to the Psalms; rather he or she must read them, study them, and pray them, through Christ.

In chapter 1, it was noted that a change took place in Luther's interpretation of the Psalms. Though his first lectures on the very Psalms were very Christological via the allegorical route, his later lectures were less allegorical and consequently less explicitly Christological. Preus argued that this was because Luther had begun to appreciate the "faithful synagogue" of the Old Testament and had found a connection between his own humanity and faith and the humanity and faith of the psalmists, thereby not having to understand the Psalms through Christ.²⁸

Roland Murphy also argues that this connection between our humanity and the humanity of the psalmist is necessary for a correct understanding of the Psalms:

When one hears the cry of pain of the psalmist it is not difficult to associate this with Christ, as the New Testament itself does (Mt. 27:46). But one should first hear the psalmist's human suffering and only then go on to the personal dimension of one's own Christian self-understanding. . . .

This spirit catches the mood of the Psalms much more than a privatized application to Christ himself.²⁹

²⁸Patrick D. Miller, Jr. notes a similar phenomenon which seems to have taken place in Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Psalms ("Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Psalms," Princeton Seminary Bulletin n.s. 15 (1994): 279-80.

²⁹Roland E. Murphy, "The Faith of the Psalmist," Int 34 (1980): 238. See also his "Old Testament/Tanakh--Canon and Interpretation," in Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Roger Brooks and John J.

While I certainly appreciate these words of warning, I believe, nevertheless, that it is the incarnation of Christ and the fact that it was a fully human Christ who prayed the Psalms, which allows us to fully enter into "the mood of the Psalms." It is not so much the humanity of the psalmist as it is the humanity of the Christ that accesses the Psalter as our prayerbook.³⁰ I do not know that she would agree with me on this point, but Elizabeth Achtemeier has certainly articulated well the reasoning behind my argument here:

It is specifically God's chosen, elect, covenant people who speak in the Psalms, and unless somehow we are related to that particular people the Psalter is not our book. If we are not now the new Israel in Christ, then we cannot stand in the relation to God in which the psalmist stood, and we cannot make the Israelites' prayers and praises, their laments and liturgies, the reflection and responses to God's action our own.³¹

Thus, I propose that it is not so much the humanity of the original psalmist as it is the humanity of our Lord which grants the Church access to the Psalter, and allows Christians to pray these ancient Israelite prayers. It is this, I believe, which Bonhoeffer understood so well:

How is it possible for a man and Jesus Christ to pray the Psalter together? It is the incarnate Son of God, who has borne every human weakness in his own flesh, who here

Collins, *Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity* 5 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 21, 28-29.

³⁰Cf. Gerald T. Sheppard ("Theology and the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 [1992]: 154-55): "Indeed, Christ's life and death 'fulfills' the psalms of lament by casting light upon both his, and our own, humanity."

³¹Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Preaching from the Psalms," *RevExp* 81 (1984): 441.

pours out the heart of all humanity before God and who stands in our place and prays for us. He has known torment and pain, guilt and death more deeply than we. Therefore it is the prayer of the human nature assumed by him which comes here before God. It is really our prayer, but since he knows us better than we know ourselves and since he himself was true man for our sakes, it is also really his prayer, and it can become our prayer only because it was his prayer.³²

Thus, we may pray the Psalms because they are Christ's psalms. And even as the Psalms find their truest and fullest meaning in Christ, we never pray them so fully or so meaningfully as when we pray them in solidarity with him.

Conclusion

I have, I suppose, said very little in this chapter that has not already been said by many others. And I appreciate those who have in the last few years emphasized the need for a Christian reading and praying of the Psalms.³³ But I do believe the work in the previous chapters has made the theological and exegetical rationales for such reading and praying more secure.

When I was listing the more "scandalous" elements in the Psalter, there was one element which I did not list, and that

³²Bonhoeffer, Psalms, 21-22; cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus (Theology of the Psalms, trans. Keith Crim [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986], 189): "From now on anyone who prays the Psalms is not only entering into the prayer language of Israel but also is taking up the prayer that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ . . ."

³³See Ronald B. Allen, Rediscovering Prophecy: A New Song for a New Kingdom (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1983); Lord of Song: The Messiah Revealed in the Psalms (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1985); Holladay, The Psalms through Three Thousand Years, 345-58.

was the praises. For that is an element that we do not consider to be very troublesome. But I would suggest that the praises in the psalms are just as much a scandalous element in the Psalter as any other. For we are unworthy to vocalize these praises. But this problem is resolved in Christ as well. For not only is he the one who is most qualified to take the praises of God upon his lips. But the amazing thing is that he asks us to join him in praise to his Father and our Father, his God and our God. For he is not ashamed to call us his brothers (and sisters). He says,

I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the presence of the congregation (the *ekklēsia*)
I will sing your praises.

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THE BOOK OF PSALMS AS THE BOOK OF CHRIST:
A CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH TO
THE BOOK OF PSALMS

by

Jerry Eugene Shepherd

ABSTRACT

Interpretation and identification of the messianic psalms has taken many different paths in the history of interpretation: allegorical, typological, literal-prophetic, and idealistic, among others. Bruce Waltke, capitalizing on the emphasis that began to be accorded to canonical analysis in the 1970s, proposed a "canonical process" approach to the Psalms, whereby the Christological meaning of the Psalms was made clearer and deeper with the growth of the canon. But "canon" has different meanings for different scholars, as evidenced by the two names most closely associated with canonical approaches, Brevard Childs and James Sanders. So it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "canon" or "canonical interpretation" when attempting to use the concept of canon as a hermeneutical tool.

It should be recognized that the primary characteristic of canon is not that of "list," but "norm." It is important, therefore, that a canonical approach to hermeneutics have a theological basis for recognizing the canon as normative.

That theological basis is the "Canon" above the "canon," that is, Jesus Christ. Therefore, a canonical hermeneutic which claims to make authoritative theological statements must be explicitly "Christo-canonical." Christ is Lord of the canon and he is Lord of the would-be interpreter of the canon. Thus it is necessary for a canonical hermeneutic to submit itself to the authority of Christ. This is not done by setting up putative historical or sociological reconstructions of the "reality" behind the text; rather, it is done by following the hermeneutical paradigm laid down by Christ and the New Testament authors. That paradigm calls for us today to do canonical interpretation, recognizing that the most important context for the interpretation of Scripture is the canonical context.

An investigation of the use of the Psalms in the New Testament, particularly those Psalms in which Christ is regarded as first-person speaker, shows the hermeneutical presuppositions and methodologies with which the New Testament authors worked. Those same hermeneutical presuppositions and exegetical methods should be used by modern-day interpreters. When so used, it will be seen that, indeed, the Book of Psalms is the Book of Christ.