Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible

Edited by
Earl D. Radmacher
and
Robert D. Preus

Designed by Mark Hunt

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Historical Grammatical Problems

Bruce K. Waltke
Professor of Old
Testament
Regent College

2. Historical Grammatical Problems

Bruce Waltke

The importance of more clearly identifying and analyzing problems in the historical grammatical method of exegesis ought to be obvious. By articulating the problems we will be in a better position to remedy them and thereby be able both to hear Gods Word more clearly and to remove some of the theological barriers separating those communities of faith based on the inerrancy of Gods Word.

The need for accurate rules in interpreting the Bible also ought to be obvious. If misinterpretations take place with frustrating regularity between people speaking the same language, living in the same community and even under the same roof, and who have the advantage of accompanying gestures, facial expressions, and tonal inflection, how much greater must the difficulty be when we are reaching across a gap of centuries to people speaking "dead" languages, living in a culture in which some of the common objects of daily life are unfamiliar to us, and whose minds have not been shaped by about two millennia of Western Civilization.' Just as Odysseus found on his visit to Hades that the dead seer Teiresias could not speak to him until his inarticulate ghost had been brought to life by the blood of a sacrifice ,[2] so also the ancient, inspired spokesman and scribes of Holy Scripture cannot become articulate to succeeding generations of the faithful without accurate and judicious rules of interpretation.[3]

The need for accurate interpretation of the Bible far exceeds the importance of a correct rendering of other ancient writers. The Bible is the Word of the sublime God; the others are merely the words of fallen man. In the spirit of St. Augustine, Evangelicals affirm: "What Scriptures says, God says." The canon of Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit yet without negating the distinctive personality of its human contributors, is the authoritative Word of God, making us wise unto salvation and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). But as James Packer frankly states, "Biblical authority is an empty notion unless we know how to determine what the Bible means."[4] The community faithful to the Bible universally concedes that the Bible, when rightly inter-

preted will not mislead us. But the catch here is the phrase, "when rightly interpreted."

Not only does the Bible's divine authority and sublime intention call for accredited rules of interpretation, but the Church's yearning for unity also demands our diligent establishment of them. Don Carson noted:

> Every debate in the history of the church is conditioned in part by hermeneutical considerations; and those happy souls who naively think they can without loss avoid such considerations and 'just believe the Bible' in fact adopt all sorts of hermeneutical stances unawares. Although hermeneutical positions *alone* do not *necessarily* determine one's theological conclusions in advance, the role they play is much larger than is often allowed.[5]

Four and a half centuries of Christendom divided into denominations and other ecclesiastical bodies, all of which appeal to the authority of Scripture in support of their divergent doctrines and practices, empirically validates the observation of the Westminster divines: "all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all" (Westminster Confession. 1. vii.).

Now to make the importance of our subject, "Historical Grammatical Problems," even more acute, we need to observe that many of these divided ecclesiastical bodies affirm the historico-grammatical method of exegesis as the most appropriate method of exegeting text. The signers of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy represent denominations divided in part by doctrinal differences, and yet affirm not only the inerrancy and authority of Scriptures but also "that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis,"[6] an affirmation assumed in this paper.

Concerning the history of the use of the nomenclature "grammatico-historical" Kaiser, basing himself on Milton S. Terry, wrote:

> Every since Karl A. G. Keil's Latin treatise on historical interpretation (1788) and German textbook on New Testament hermeneutics (1810), exegetes have generally adopted his term as being descriptive of their own approach to the exegetical task: the 'grammatico-historical' method of exegesis. The aim of the grammatico-historical method is to determine the sense required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history.
>
> The term *grammatico-,* however, is somewhat misleading since we usually mean by "grammatical" the arrangement of words

and construction of sentences. But Keil had in mind the Greek word *gramma,* and his use of the term *grammatico,* approximates what we would understand by the term *literal* (to use a synonym derived from the Latin). Thus the grammatical sense, in Keil's understanding, is the simple, direct, plain, ordinary and literal sense of the phrases, clauses and sentences.'

This method, as normally understood, attempts to recover the author's meaning and intention[8] by carefully establishing the context-the meaning of his words, the grammar of his language and the historical and cultural circumstances, etc.-in which he wrote. But this is easier said then done. Commenting on speakers sharing the same language, history and culture, Ogden and Richards said:

> Normally, when ever we hear anything said we spring spontaneously to an immediate conclusion, namely, that the speaker is referring to what we should be referring to were we speaking the words ourselves. In some cases this interpretation may be correct: this will prove to be what he has referred to. But in most discussions which attempt greater subtleties than could be handled in a gesture language this will not be so."[9]

From what has been said thus far it follows that for the Bible to speak more clearly, for its authority over our beliefs and practices to be realized more perfectly, and for our unity to be more complete we need to be more precise in the application of the grammatico-historical method. The divisions between those within the church employing this method of exegesis bears mute testimony to the fact that the method has problems, and we may be sure that these problems will not be solved until we can first uncover and analyze them. To that end we direct our paper. In my judgment the crucial and broad problem areas in the application of the historico-grammatical method are: (1) prejudgment; (2) biblical criticism; and (3) context.

I. PREJUDGMENT

Traditionally the historico-grammatical method has focused its attention on the context of the biblical writers in order to control their meaning and neglected the context of the interpreter. This one-sided approach to interpretation was further exacerbated by Descartes' theory of knowledge, in which man as active subject looks out on the world as passive object.[10] Olthuis wrote:

> The Cartesian subject-object split ('I am' and the sense-perceivable world) has denatured the interpretative process. One

does not begin from a desire to bring self in the proper mode of relation to a text with the purpose of dialogue, sharing and communion. Rather, we begin with the observing consciousness as the supreme arbiter of reality to which all things must give account, including Scripture; the text is simply a passive object to be mastered. Mastery, control, exploitation, is the basic form of human engagement with the world. The subject-subject dialogue between an interpreter and an author who has objectified his meaning in a text is denatured into an operation of a pre-supposition-less, body-less, a-historical mind who determines the meaning of a passive object through rigorous application of procedures in accordance with the rules of exegesis. The movement is one way: from subject to object."

But modern hermeneutics has turned attention from the text to the interpreter and underscored that it is impossible for him to be neutral or presuppositionless; rather his prejudgment *(Vorurteile)* decisively influences his understanding of the text before him. Schleier-macher, the father of modern hermeneutics, pointed out that our critical tools have led to misunderstandings and not to consensus; Gadamer exposed the naivete of the historian who assumes he can abandon his own concepts and think only in those of the epoch to be researched;[12] Dilthey shattered the illusion that understanding a text could be purely "scientific";[13] R. Bultmann argued "there cannot be any such thing as presuppositionless exegesis";[14] Heidegger theorized that the interpreter stands with a "world" decisively shaped by his own historicality.[15] Bernard Lonegran asserted:

> The principle of the empty head rests on a naive intuitionism. . . The principle . bids the interpreter forget his own views, look at what is out there, and let the author interpret himself. In fact, what is out there? There is just a series of signs. Anything over and above a reissue of the same signs in the same order will be mediated by the experience, intelligence and judgment of the interpreter. The less that experience, the less cultivated that intelligence, the less formed that judgment, the greater will be the likelihood that the interpreter will impute to the author an opinion that the author never entertained.[16]

The new hermeneutic has made it painfully apparent that it is much too simplistic to speak of interpreting the Bible by granting the texts its normal meaning. For many interpreters "normal" unwittingly means "according to my prejudgments, preconceptions and preunderstanding ."

Before considering the problem of how we shall overcome this problem of prejudgment, let me first say that I agree with I. Howard Marshall" that some new hermeneuts overemphasize the differences between the context of the original authors and their audiences, on the one hand, and the context of the modern reader, on the other hand. Their argument that our situation is so different from that of the biblical world that we can not do a straight reinterpretation of the meaning of the biblical text in order to gain teaching for ourselves overlooks the fact all men are made in the image of God so that God can speak to all men, however, accommodating that language must be, as Packer stressed.'* But in spite of this important caveat, it seems to me that Evangelicals need to look afresh at Bultmann's and his students' hermeneutic circle for its epistemological, philological and spiritual value. In this circle the interpreter must bring his preunderstandings, his prejudgment to conscious awareness. According to Bult-mann, preunderstanding "must be raised to consciousness to be critically examined in the course of understanding a text, to be gambled with; in short, this is required: to allow oneself to be questioned during one's inquiry of the text and to listen to its claims."[19] To use Wink's term, the interpreter must allow critical inquiry to *distance* him from the way in which the text has become embedded in the church's tradition and/or in his own culture. Nicholls complained:

> Throughout the history of Western Christian rheology the truth of the gospel has suffered from an unconscious assimilation of conflicting tenets and practices. Augustine was unable to completely free himself from neo-Platonism. Aquinas synthesized biblical faith and Aristotelian philosophy. Modern liberal theology in the West has been deeply influenced by the philosophies of the Enlightenment, evolutionary science and existentialism, and in the East by the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism. ... A contemporary example of cultural syncretism *is* the unconscious identification of biblical Christianity with 'the American way of life.'[20]

Olthuis cogently stated the need for consciously and critically distancing our culture and preconceptions from the authoritative text:

> The existential surrender to the God of the Scriptures is always embedded in the historical process: it happened here, at this time, in this community, through this particular vision of biblical authority. It is in terms of the language and symbolism of a certain tradition that the submission to God and the Word of God takes place.

At the same time, the fact that our confession of biblical authority takes place in terms of a particular tradition ought to remind us that the particular way we confess submission to the Scriptures is not simply the aggress of faith, but the articulation of faith in interaction with and filtered through the kind of persons we are, with the conceptual frameworks we work, in the kind of communities we live in, in the historical times that we live. That reality once accepted brings a necessary distinction to the fore and with the distinction a relativity. We need to distinguish our faith surrender to the Scriptures and their authority from the way we conceptualize and articulate it.

Recognizing this and acknowledging that both our conceptualizations and the tradition in terms of which we articulate are not without shortcomings, we are able to be open to other confessions of biblical authority. We will be able to relativize our own view of biblical authority without relativizing our surrender to the Scriptures. If we can resist the temptation to canonize our views about the canon, we will be able to honor the sincere conviction of others that they submit to the Scriptures even though we are convinced that their view of Scriptural authority is inadequate.**

That we cannot assume that the interpreter comes to the text *tabula rasa* is graphically illustrated by the paintings of the Madonna given as gifts by artists from many countries around the world and hanging in the sanctuary of the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Each artist of the same subject has either consciously or unconsciously portrayed Mary according to his own culture. For the Japanese artist she is an Oriental; for the Mexican a Latin; for the African a Negress, etc. None represents her as a Jewess. All represent her subjectively and inaccurately. So also each interpreter "colors" the Bible with his own world, and until he consciously separates his own culture from that of the Bible he will misinterpret it. The emphasis on distancing oneself from one's own prejudgment is not unique to the new hermeneutic; it is totally consistent with the historico-grammatical method.

In addition to distancing himself from the text by critical study and reflection the interpreter within the hermeneutical circle must also consciously allow the distinctive message of the text to reshape progressively his own questions and concepts. As developed by Bultmann's students, especially Fuchs and Ebeling, the interpreter finds that in dialogue with the text, the text progressively changes his historical, cultural, psychological and ideological world. In this cir-

cle, the hermeneut becomes involved in a two-way process of encounter between himself and the Word of God, on the one hand, and his own culture, on the other hand. In this dialogue, according to Gadamer, "the interpreter is free to move beyond his own original horizons, or better, to *enlarge* his own horizons until they come to merge or *fuse* with those of the text. His goal is to reach the place at which a merging of horizons *(Horizontverschmelzung),* or fusion of 'worlds,' occurs."[22] Thiselton noted: "in Gadamer's notion of the merging of horizons we find a parallel to Wink's ideas about 'fusion' and 'communion,' and Fuchs' central category of Einverstandnis" (= "common understanding ," "mutual agreement ," "empathy") .[23] Thiselton further added: "This is achieved . . . only when, firstly, the interpreter's subjectivity is fully engaged at a more than cognitive level; and when the text, and the truth of the text, *actively* grasps *him* as its object."[24]

To be sure evangelicals must avoid the pitfalls of the new hermeneutics-that the recognition of the author's meaning is an impossibility, that what the text once meant can no longer be authoritative theological statement in the modern era, that the text and one's experience of it enter into a relationship of mutuality, that the interpreter and text are necessarily swallowed up in a sea of historical relativity, that the objective meaning of the text is no longer the interpreter's goal, that meaning takes place in the existential encounter between text and interpreter.[25] Nevertheless, the practitioner of the historico-grammatical exegesis should pick up the strengths of the new hermeneutics; namely, of letting the text correct his own preunderstanding and of entering into the Bible's own culture-its facts, its "world" of ideas and values and above all its supra-historical and supra-cultural factor of conversion to the God of Israel and his Christ along with the acceptance of his Lordship over creation and history, in contrast, for example, to secularism, humanism and Marxist atheism.

By submitting in faith to these cultural dimensions of the text, conversion takes place and spiritual understanding ensues. The hermeneut is now spiritually prepared to translate the text in addition to being cognitively prepared for its historico-grammatical translation. This spiritual transformation, brought about by an encounter with the text and a decision on the part of the interpreter to surrender fully to its claims, also removes emotional blockages, political allegiances, socio-economic and other conscious or unconscious prejudices .[26]

To be sure the so-called new hermeneutic is not altogether new. Jesus accused his critics of erring in their interpretation of Scripture

for spiritual reasons (Matt. 22:29). Lady Wisdom rebuked the fools of her day: "If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you" (Prov. 1:23). Paul likewise emphasized spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 2:10-3:4). Although the principle of commitment to that which is being looked into has always been understood by both Evangelicals, especially by those within the pietistic tradition, and by philosophers who stressed associating knowing with experience, to my knowledge it has never been consciously linked as part of the historico-grammatical method of interpretation. This positive and abiding value of the new hermeneutic is in keeping with the method of the Reformers, who proposed a hermeneutical circle that sought to allow the Scriptures to correct the church's traditions. What is new is the stress upon correcting one's unconscious prejudices regarding the Scripture's meaning. Unfortunately, Bultmann himself never overcame his own prejudgment. Nicholls rightly observed: "Bultmann's acceptance of a mechanistic, scientific world view precludes any meaningful recognition of the supra-cultural elements in the biblical story.'"

II. BIBLICAL CRITICISM

A. Textual Criticism

The starting point in the historico-grammatical method is that of establishing the correct text of the "original autographa" from the witness of the Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions. Through the canons of textual criticism the exegete seeks to restore this text, and for both scientific and theological reasons we have good reason to think that the text is well-preserved and that no essential doctrine stands in doubt. But in spite of these convictions we must admit that the practice is fraught with problems. Here we address ourselves to four problems: (1) What do we mean by "original autograph?" (2) Is the Masoretic vocalization inspired and what weight do we grant it? (3) What weight should be accorded the varying witnesses to the text? (4) What is the boundary of the text?

First of all, then, what do we mean by original autograph? The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy states: "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture."[28] Our problem is occasioned by the phenomenon that books of the Bible seem to have gone through an editorial revision after coming from the mouth of an inspired spokesman. For example, an editor of the Second Book of the Psalter almost certainly revised the original psalm in his collection by systematically substituting Elohim for YHWH. The name YHWH occurs in the other four books of the Psalter 642 times in contrast to 29 occurrences of Elohim, but in Book II YHWH occurs 30 times and Elohim 164 times. Furthermore, Elohim sometimes occurs as the parallel for YHWH in the "b line" in the other four books, and vice-versa in Book II (cf. Ps. 70: 1). Then, too, in synoptic psalms Book I uses YHWH where Book II has Elohim (cf. Ps. 14:2 with 53:2; 40:13; with 70:1). To judge from the rules of the Qumran community, where a member was to be expelled for uttering the divine name (1Qs 6:27-7:2), Book II represents a very early piece of evidence for the reverential evasion of the divine name and ought to be regarded as the product of editorial activity. Differences in other synoptic passages of the Old Testament are also probably due to intentional editorial activity as well as to unintentional scribal error. Editorial activity almost certainly took place in other books of the Bible as well. If this be so, then the notion of an original autograph should also take account of later inspired editorial activity. From this perspective it is important to distinguish inspired scribal activity from noninspired scribal changes introduced into the text. But in practice such a distinction may prove difficult to establish. Brevard Childs relieves the difficulty by suggesting that even scribal "error" became part of the canon,[29] but I cannot accept his resolution because he does not reason from a well-defined doctrine of revelation and inspiration.

Then too, there ought to be a debate among Evangelicals concerning the inspiration of the text's vocalization. Matthias Flacius defended the vowel signs by the "domino theory" that if these are not dependent on God as the primary cause, but on human writers themselves, then the authority of all of Scripture must be called into question.[30] His conviction regarding the inspiration and authority of the vowel points found credal formulation in the Helvetic Confession. But today it is customary to scoff at this position because later research established beyond reasonable doubt that the vowel points were added to the consonantal text at a relatively late date and therefore, it is thought, they have less authoritative weight than the consonantal text. The difference in weight granted the consonantal text over the Masoretic vocalization is reflected in the practice of the NIV translators. When they departed from the consonantal text of the Masoretes they felt obliged to indicate that fact in the footnotes of their translation, but when they emended the vowels they felt no

constraint to inform their reader of their departure from the received text.

But the fact that the vowels indicators were added later does not preclude the possibility that the vowels are indeed inspired. J. I. Packer noted: "It makes no difference to inspiration (how could it?) whether its product is oral or written. When in the past evangelical theologians defined God's work of inspiration as the producing of God-breathed Scriptures, they were not denying that God inspired words uttered orally as well."[31] God said to Jeremiah: "I will put my words in your mouth." Now words consist of both consonants and vowels. It makes a great deal of difference, for example, what vowel is inserted between the consonants "f-r" ("for," "fir," "fear, "fire"). When God's words were placed on manuscripts the consonants alone were written, but surely they were "read" with the intended vowels. The consonants were passed down via writing, the vowels via voce, but together they constitute the inspired "word." It ought to be obvious that both are inspired even though they were represented and transmitted in different ways. Why should differences in their manner of transmission make any difference in our evaluation of their authority? Even the consonantal text underwent a serious revision when it was transposed from the paleo-Hebrew script to the Aramaic script. But who would wish to argue that because it has been represented differently in the course of its transmission that the consonants we have in hand were not inspired? It seems wrongheaded then to disparage the vowel points because they were put into writing at a late date.

Admittedly the vocalized portion of the inspired text is probably more vulnerable to corruption than the written text. But we have good reason to think, as I have argued elsewhere, that the text's vocalization was conservatively transmitted until the time of the Masoretes and accurately represented by them.[32]

Another textual problem relates to the weight to be given to varying text types. The debate in New Testament studies between those favoring the majority text type versus those favoring an editorially reconstructed text along the lines of arguments advanced by Westcott-Hort are well-known. In Old Testament studies inerrantists disagree regarding the degree to which priority should be given to the Masoretic text type over that represented in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint. A comparison of the NASB with NIV will show that the former stands much closer to the Jewish text than the latter (cf., for example, their rendering of Ps. 73:7).[33]

Finally, there is a problem regarding the establishment of the text's boundaries. Some inerrantists proceed on the assumption that the "original text" can be restored from the witness of the Hebrew manuscripts and ancient version and that the method of conjectural emendation should be set aside. Others accept the possibility that on occasion the *text* is so badly corrupted that the original reading must be conjectured. The argument now has been tilted in favor of allowing by conjecture a larger boundary than that attested in the traditional witnesses to the text with the discovery and establishment of an original *paragraph* in 4QSam[a], a reading heretofore attested only in Josephus.[34]

B. Historical Criticism

I. H. Marshall defined "historical criticism" as the study of any narrative which purports to convey historical information in order to determine what actually happened and is described or alluded to in the passage in question."[35] The term is sometimes employed more broadly for the aim to elucidate an obscure text by throwing light on it from its historical setting, but we shall limit ourselves here to its more narrow aim to test the historical accuracy of the text.

Before considering the positive contribution this criticism may have to the historico-grammatical method, we must admit that there are good historical, philosophical and theological reasons for excluding it. In the first place, most of its practitioners drink from the philosophical fountains that sprang up in English deism, French skepticism, and the German Enlightenment, which made human reason the touchstone and yardstick for whatever truth may be found in Scripture and finished off transcendence by confining the universe within a closed system of earthly cause-effect relationships. Furthermore, its practitioners often insist on handling the Bible as a book little different from any other book. Johann Salomo Semler (late eighteenth century) is usually designated as the father of this technique which revolted against miracles, the supernatural and heaven itself, and Ernst Troeltsch may be regarded as its great systematizer. Peter Stuhlmacher summarizes his unexcelled explanation of the structure of historical criticism:

> According to Troeltsch, historical criticism operates with three indissolubly connected principles. He calls them criticism, analogy, and correlation. Criticism denotes a systematic skepticism which the historian applies without partiality to all historical tradition. This criticism is made possible by analogy,

that is, the assumption of an intrinsic similarity in all historical occurrence. Troeltsch speaks emphatically of the 'omnipotence' and 'all leveling purport' of analogy, because it embraces all present and past historical occurrence in a single context of events, allows no arbitrary establishment of occurrences or revelatory texts without analogy, and enables the interpreter to make contemporary historical phenomena which are directly known and familiar to him the interpretative framework and criterion for comparable events in the past. The third principle, of correlation, that is, of the coherence and reciprocal action of historical events, is indeed already given with the concept of analogy, but now where (sic!) expressly named, it prevents arbitrary criticism or use of the scheme of analogy.[36]

Practiced with these three principles, the Old and New Testament were pitted against each other in a manner unlike that experienced in the church since Marcion, the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture to make one wise to salvation were destroyed, and the theologian was compelled to establish a canon within a canon, based on his subjective tastes and experiences. In sum, it eroded and destroyed the foundation of the Christian faith.

Gerhard Maier and Peter Stuhlmacher have for some time been involved in an important debate over the validity of the historical-critical method. Maier calls for the end of it. He argues that the method is invalid: "The statement that we must inquire into a theological subject with methods independent of theology, i.e., with 'atheological' methods, is a contradiction in itself and just the opposite of what is needed."[37] He also argues that the method is contrary to good historiography: "To be sure, as long as one makes analogous classification a precondition for acceptance, much in the Bible remains without foundation. But how can the *pure* historian without further ado reject something just because it happens only once? What can be experienced and what has analogies can certainly not be declared synonymous."[38] In addition, it rests on a prejudgment contrary to Scripture, and those prejudgments determine the result beforehand. Then too, it leads inevitably to the conclusion that we must find a canon with the canon: "The bold program of finding a 'canon in the canon' demands nothing else than this: to be more biblical than the Bible, more New Testamently than the New Testament, more evangelical than the Gospel, and even more Pauline than Paul. Radical earnestness is the intention, radical dissolution is the result."[39]

Peter Stuhlmacher also rejects historical criticism as practiced on Troeltsch's assumptions, but he comes at the problem differently. Rather than calling for the end of the historical-critical method he appeals instead for a "theology of consent," an approach that shows his indebtedness to the new hermeneutic. The historic critic, he argues, should give up his pretext of scientific detachment and recognize that his preunderstanding is decisively influencing his work: "The expectation … that the scholar was able in some way to hold himself aloof from the object of his research and thus allow them to speak for themselves has lain unfulfilled." He acknowledges the indispensability of historical criticism but adds the principle of "hearing," from which will result a dialogue between interpreter and text. In other words, he urges the historic critic to operate with a view of history and reality that is open to "transcendence." Against Baur he wrote:

> If the concept of history here is too narrow to allow a disclosure by way of revelation (of whatever kind) historical-critical results must of necessity oppose the gospel's revelatory claim. Conversely, if historical criticism operates with a view of history and reality which is open to transcendence, it can glean essential data for the orientation of church and preaching.[40]

Both men reject the practice of historical criticism based on presuppositions that preclude transcendence and divine intervention. But whereas Maier, building his case on cognitive arguments, represents traditional orthodoxy, Stuhlmacher, appealing to subjective experience, represents neo-orthodoxy. Both of their attacks against normative historical criticism are cogent. In addition to rejecting false premises of normative historical criticism, I also consider it illegitimate to call into question the Bible's accuracy either because the events it relates are not otherwise well attested or because they are contradicted in nonbiblical sources. We have sufficient historiographic and theological reasons to trust the Bible's accuracy. Caird helpfully commented: "It is well to recall that the ancient Israelite had in his legal system ample acquaintance with the notion of sufficient attestation."[41]

But is there a "legitimate" form of historical criticism, a legitimate way of calling into question whether the historical referents, persons and objects in Scripture actually existed and events really happened as presented in them, while at the same time accepting God's transcendence and activity in *Heilsgeschichte* and in the Scripture's inerrancy. In my judgment such historical criticism is possible in six connections.

In the first place, we must reckon with the possibility that the biblical writers may employ conventional language. The past is not accessible to us by direct scrutiny but only interrogation of biblical witnesses and the possibility of conversation with them depends on the interpreter's ability to speak their language. Goldingay put it this way:

> At this point we need to recall that God's written Word was given to us through human means, according to human conventions of particular historical situations. We may not write this way, but we must not treat our literary conventions as if they were absolutes. They are just a different set of conventions. These conventions must be understood and allowed for if we are to identify the assertions being made through them, which have their reliability that comes through inspiration.[42]

As an example of the way in which conventional biblical language may mislead us about what actually happened we may consider the biblical notices about the authorship of books. Jude, for example, says that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied certain things (vv. 14-15), but Goldingay commented that the book of Enoch which Jude is quoting "unquestionably belongs to the intertestamental period, and doubtless, in aspiring to antediluvian authorship, never aimed to mislead anyone."[43] Matthew cites Jeremiah for a quotation taken from Zechariah (Matt. 27:9); Mark cites Isaiah as the prophet of a passage taken from Malachi (Mark 1:2); the Book of Proverbs commences with the editorial heading, "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David," but includes material that is neither proverbial (contrast 10: 1 with the economiums to wisdom in 1:8-9: 18) or Solomonic (cf. 30: 1 and 3 1: 1). In the light of these facts, is it not possible to call into question the historical accuracy of references to Moses and Isaiah in the New Testament and to think of them instead as conventional ways of locating a passage? On the other hand, when Jesus builds his case for Messianic identity on the fact that Psalm 110 claims Davidic authorship, we should accept the Psalm's claim at face value.[44] In sum, we need to determine authorship of a book on other grounds than merely an appeal to the biblical notices regarding authorship. It seems to me that Article XVIII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy contains a built-in tension. On the one hand, it affirms that "the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its … devices ," and, on the other hand, it denies the legitimacy of "rejecting its claims to authorship." But

Scripture's "devices" may not necessarily lead to an historically accurate representation of its authorship.

Second, in deciding this matter of what actually happened, we need to reckon with the reality that biblical writers believed in dual causation of events; at one level events could be explained as the effects of earthly causes, while at another level they could be viewed as the work of heaven. But whereas, the modern historian is more likely to look to earthly causes in the chain of historical events, the biblical writers normally pointed to the Playwriter who wrote history's script. In the case of David's deliverance from Absalom, we have the advantage of both perspectives from two different authors. In Psalm 3 David praises the LORD for delivering him from his son, but the historian who wrote 2 Samuel attributes a large measure of the success to Hushai's wit. Both are historically accurate; both inform us about what actually happened, but without the historical record, we might have erred in our judgment about what actually happened by excluding the earthly factor in favor of restricting our explanation of the event exclusively in terms of the divine intervention. In Psalm 139: 13 David attributes his birth to God's creative activity, but we all know that it would be mischievous to pit this heavenly explanation of birth against the genetic processes involved in conception and birth. Similarly, Genesis 1 explains the creation of the cosmos exclusively as the work of God, but an interpreter might err in his historical judgment of what actually happened by excluding the possibility of "natural," earthly causes. What actually happened from the earthly perspective is not always given in the Bible, and we might err when we pit the heavenly view against earthly factors at work in the event, or when we exclude the possibility of such factors in our interpretation. In the matter of dual causation, historical criticism has a legitimate role to play in the historico-grammatical method of interpretation.

Third, it is legitimate to consider in this matter of deciding historical accuracy the literary genre in which events, persons or objects are reported to have occurred and existed. None would assume a historical referent for persons, objects or events in fables (Judg. 9), parables (Matt. 13) and allegories (Isa. 12). Since the Bible contains such fictitious pieces of literature we are left with the problem of determining the extent of such writing in the Bible. It is possible, for example, that the rich man and Lazarus in hell and Abraham's bosom (Luke 16) are not historical figures. On the other hand, we ought not to argue in a circle in deciding a text's historical

credibility by labelling it as a saga, legend or myth on the basis of a bias against transcendence, and then turn around and appeal to this classification as evidence that the referents in the literature are nonfactual.

Fourth, we need to take account of the fact that numbers in the Bible are notoriously difficult to accept on face value, especially as given in the received text of Chronicles, and are legitimately the subject of historical criticism. Some ascribe the large numbers m Chronicles to textual corruption, whereas others think they are used symbolically. Goldingay opts for accommodation as the explanation:

> When Chronicles says a million fought against Asa, what it means is that the odds against him were huge (and thus the victory given him by God was the more glorious), or more specifically that the army was of such a size that it would be the equivalent of a million in the military conditions of the writer's day (the Persian period, in which he wrote, was an age of great armies). To speak of thousands (the likely actual number) would make it seem a rather small-scale occasion. The Chronicler's infallibility consists in his giving the right impression of the magnitude of the occasion for the people of his age .[45]

Fifth, most will agree the speeches in Acts and elsewhere are abbreviated versions of what was actually said and to that extent do not precisely represent the historical situation.

Finally, we need to take account of the aim or intention of the writer. I have in mind here the point well-established in New Testament studies that the gospels do not give us a day-by-day chronological account of Jesus' ministry. The differences between the gospels demonstrate that they cannot all have followed a chronological order but must have rearranged events according to their purposes.

It has not been my aim in this discussion of historical criticism to solve the problems I have raised. I merely aimed to underscore that historical criticism may play an illegitimate or legitimate role in the historico-grammatical method of exegesis. It is illegitimate when it is undertaken in the prejudgment that rules out transcendence and divine intervention, or when it demands extra-biblical confirmation. On the other hand it may be both legitimately and profitably pursued as part of the historico-grammatical method when it is a matter of taking note of the biblical writers' conventions, heavenly perspective, use of nonhistorical literary forms, tendency to abbreviate and to present material according to his aim in writing about divine matters.

C. Source Criticism

Practitioners of the historico-grammatical method of exegesis rightly insist that an author's meaning must be determined in part by his historical situation. But who are the authors of the Bible and under what historical situations did they write? Kaiser wrote:

> Lest it be said that we are advocating the abandonment of all introductory studies, let it be announced in bold relief that it is exceedingly important that the interpreter complete a thorough investigation of the biblical book's author, date, cultural and historical background. It is virtually impossible to locate the book's message in space and time without this essential material.[46]

But this question of authorship raises several thorny problems. Many of the books of the Bible are anonymous, and we have already seen that references to authorship do not necessarily have to be taken at face value. In addition, if we accept the notion of editorial activity and redaction criticism we open the door to the problem of multiple authorial intentions in the literature. And finally, in narrative texts we need to recognize three levels of authorship; the characters in the narrative, the human author presenting their statements, and God.

With regard to this last concern let it be noted simply that we are concerned with the human author's intention in using the characters in his story. In addition it is wrongheaded to contrast the human author's intention with that of Gods. Caird rightly noted regarding the first two levels of authorship that we are "not to assume that the authors of the Old Testament approve all that is said or done by the characters in their story." But he erred when he attempted to drive a wedge between the Author's meaning and the human authors' intention. He suggested: "The Bible contains many instances in which the intention of God differs from that of his agent or messenger."[47] In support of this conviction he calls attention to Genesis 50:20; Isaiah 10:5-11; Isaiah 45: 1-4, but in all these instances he confounds agents within the books with the author of the book itself. In no case does he undermine Augustine's contention: "What Scripture says, God says ."

We shall address the second problem regarding discontinuity and continuity in authorial intentions as the texts were edited and became part of a larger canon of literature in another connection.[48] Here, then, we confine ourselves to the first problem: who authored the books of the Bible, especially the anonymous books.

Some younger scholars with a "high view" of inspiration and

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the Bible's infallibility are finding it more and more difficult to accept traditional "conservative" answers to this question. Goldingay, for example, wrote:

> I suggest that it is in fact possible to combine an acceptance of the Bible's authority, inspiration and infallibility; a conviction that the Bible is God's Book, that His Spirit inspired it, that it is exactly what He wanted it to be, that it is the only sure source of the Gospel; ... with a refusal to accept that a corrollary to this commitment is a commitment to traditional approaches to critical questions.[49]

In place of tradition these scholars employ critical source tools such as literary criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, canonical criticism, etc., and these tools not only serve them in deciding the matter of authorship, date and unity, but also as exegetical tools in their own right. Carson wrote:

> 'Source criticism,' 'form criticism,' 'tradition criticism,' 'redaction criticism,' 'audience criticism,' and the like .. when these literary tools were first introduced, they did not make their appearance as hermeneutical principles but as ways of getting behind the Gospels as we have them in order to illumine the 'tunnel' period and perhaps know something more about the historical Jesus. To use these tools at that stage usually meant buying into a larger conceptual framework concerning the descent of the tradition-a framework which evangelicals (and many others for the matter) were bound to differ.

> Yet in the case of the Synoptic Gospels, at least, we have enough comparative material to be certain that there are literary borrowings; identifiable forms whose history can be traced, however, tentatively; and demonstrable rearranging and shaping of the pericope to support certain theological ends. The literary criticisms were not necessarily evil after all; they became increasingly acceptable as exegetical tools, devices to enable us better to understand the. text .[50]

According to David Wenham the decisive evidence for the use of sources in the New Testament lies in the New Testament documents themselves:

> Not only are there dislocations and apparent duplications in the documents which suggest that the gospels, for example, have undergone a more complex editorial process than is often imagined; but much more important and much less ambiguous evidence is provided by the striking phenomenon of agreement between the synoptic gospels in certain passages. The agreement is too close to be explained as the accidental convergence of independent accounts, and the only adequate explanation is either in terms of a common source lying behind the different accounts or in terms of mutual dependence.[51]

With respect to source criticism I propose in this paper to consider more specifically the two-fold problem vis-à-vis the validity and value of employing various types of literary critical tools as part of the historico-grammatical method of exegesis. Because of my own competence and because of limited space I shall confine my attention to the Pentateuch.

D. Literary Source Criticism

"Orthodox" literary critics, to use Child's label, employ the four criteria of varying divine names, doublets, linguistic differences and diverse theologies to facilitate their efforts in isolating literary strands in the Pentateuch, and when these four criteria are brought to bear on Genesis 1: 1-2:25 they work together consistently in dividing this passage into two distinct creation stories. Putative "P" (1:1-2:3), among other features, uses the divine name Elohim, but "J" (2:4-25) has YHWH: "P" presents a distinct account of the creation climaxing with the creation of man; "J" begins with man; "P" uses *'adam* as a generic term for "mankind," "J" as a proper name, "Adam;" "P" presents God as transcendent, "J" as immanent.

Not only does the coincidence of these four criteria lend support to the contention of orthodox critics, who approach the text with a dissecting knife, that Genesis 1: 1-2:25 consists of two originally separate literary accounts of creation, but it finds further corroboration in the research of "classic" literary critics, who assume that a work is a unity and direct every effort to understand the whole of what they read. From their perspective one notes that the two accounts, isolated by orthodox literary critics, present the reader with two distinct plots, which Aristotle defined as a series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. Their analysis reveals two distinct introductions (l:l-2 and 2:4-6), which are syntactically similar containing a summary statement followed by a circumstantial clause describing the negative state at the time of creation using the construction *w* noun + *hyh,* (1:2 and 2:5-6), followed by the main creation account introduced by *waw consecutive* (1:3 and 2:7). Moreover, the middle sections of the two accounts differ in their unifying

principle-P develops the progress of creation according a very orderly plan marked off by a strict repetitive structure, whereas J develops it by means of dramatic plot. P's style is formal and straight forward, J's is that of a storyteller. P's theme presents God as the transcendent ruler over creation, J as the immanent God within it. Finally both accounts end with an epilogue-P explains the origin of the Sabbath, J explains the origin of marriage.

On the basis of the independent research of both types of literary criticism I think it is most reasonable to conclude that Genesis 1 and 2 consists of two accounts of creation which were probably originally isolated sources, and that these sources were later fused together to constitute complementary accounts about the creation. Moreover, I think it is fair to conclude that the analysis of literary critics contributes significantly to a more accurate exegesis of these chapters and also toward more profound reflection on divine matters. They have helped the exegete to see more clearly the structure of these two accounts, their styles and themes and to define words such as *'Adam* more precisely. In addition to these exegetical gains their analyses has heuristically placed us in the position to perceive more clearly theological truths that must be held in dialectical tension: in P God is transcendent, in J He is immanent; in P God is sovereign over the cosmos giving names to its life supportive systems- "Day," "Night ," "Sky," "Earth," "Sea'‘-in J man, as Gods responsible vice-regent over the earth, names all the animals. In P we feel comfortable, assured that God is in control, but uncomfortable because he seems remote. But in J we feel uncomfortable because we are uncertain about what man will do but reassured that God is with us. In P God calls upon man to subdue the earth, in J He places man in the Garden to tend it.

But there are features of orthodox literary criticism that are invalid. First, we should stoutly deny that the sources contradict one another. Second, we should jettison their posture of approaching the text primarily to isolate earlier sources. This approach should be rejected in the first place because it is often impossible. Although distinct literary units with the final text form can sometimes be clearly observed because all the knives of the literary critics cut the text at the same place, the fact of the matter is that often they do not. For example, Alan Jenks in his doctoral dissertation defended at Harvard contradicted the German scholars Fohrer and Eissfeldt by denying that the following portions of Genesis belong to putative "E": portions of Genesis 15, all of 21: 1-7; portions of 22, all of 24 and 25; portions

of 28, all of 29 and 30; portions of el, all of 32 and 34; portions of 35 and all of 36 and would radically alter their views regarding the Joseph story (Genesis 37:50.)[52] The reason for his difference with the German scholars is not hard to find: Jenks gave priority to the theological criteria; the Germans to the linguistic. In spite of Eissfeldt's claim to the contrary, the criteria often work against each other. The Canadian scholar, Van Seter, against the Germans and Jenks allows only Genesis 20:1-17 to E in the Abraham pericope. The Joseph story, formerly regarded as a sure mine for discovery E material, has now been set aside by Coats and Whybray as a possible text for source criticism.[53]

In contrast to this uncertainty about the isolation of sources in the Pentateuch is the certainty, newly won by rhetorical critics, that the Book of Genesis displays a unity and integrity that transcends its sources. Although one can sometimes with some confidence isolate distinct literary blocks in Genesis, he cannot separate these blocks from one another and still make sense of the story from any one of them by itself. For example, the so-called J account of the Flood commences: "The LORD said to Noah, 'Go into the ark,' " but without the preceding P material the audience is unprepared for the reference to the ark. Childs stated: "When this P material is joined to the earlier material the relationship is not redactional. The essential basis of this assertion is particularly clear in the fusion of strands within the flood story."[54]

In addition, we ought to reject the orthodox critical emphasis on dissecting the Bible into sources not only because it is often impossible and because the work in hand constitutes a unique and unified literary achievement, but also because this emphasis rests on a faulty theology. Most orthodox literary critics minimize the doctrines of revelation and inspiration, and with this prejudice they err against God and man. The canon of Scripture that resulted from the two-fold divine and human activity consists not of unattested and incomplete J and P documents and of a dubious E, but of the books of Genesis, Exodus, etc. These sacred books, and not the sources contained in them, constitute the Scriptures that bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ and are endorsed by Him and His apostles as the authority for our faith and practice.

Furthermore, in addition to discarding both the orthodox critical chaff that the sources contain contradictions in alleged doublets and their preoccupation with isolating sources and writing theologies based on them, we ought also to reject the notion that the date and fusion

of these sources are necessarily late. In contrast to the orthodox critical consensus of fifty years ago, today most orthodox critics recognize that the sources in the Pentateuch contain early and reliable historical remembrances. The Albright school during the course of the past half century through indefatigable labor in field archaeology and through brilliant and numerous publications turned the weight of scholarly opinion away from the entrenched Wellhausian idea that the ancient history portrayed in these sources was nothing more than a mirage projected into the distant past by the imagination of the sources' writers, to the conviction that these sources contain accurate memories of the Patriarchal and Mosaic age. On the other hand, these later orthodox critics also concur in the view that the sources also contain later materials. But when one tries to pin down this allegedly later material he quickly discovers that the critics do not agree about its content or date. Childs speaks boldly and authoritatively to the point. Regarding the dating of P, he concluded: "a tentative enterprise at best? Regarding the recent effort of Winett and his students, N. Wagner and J. Van Seters, to redate J and to separate into an earlier and post-exilic strand: "In my judgment, the major significance of these monographs has been to call into question many of the unexamined assumptions of the 'orthodox' literary critical method rather than to establish a convincing new hypothesis regarding sources."[56] After surveying the attempt to trace the traditio-historical development of D he concluded: "Needless to say, the very fluid state of research shows no signs of moving toward a consensus in respect to this set of issues."[57] In sum, scholars have identified, established and defended ancient, historical notices in the alleged Pentateuchal sources, but they have been unable to demonstrate either late materials in these sources of their date of composition beyond reasonable doubt.

Finally, we need to recognize that we cannot date scientifically the time when these sources were fused because we have evidence of redaction over at least two millennia, from 1800 B.C. to A.D. 200 Donald J. Wiseman wrote:

> Tigay has shown that redactors completed the remoulding of the earlier Sumerian poems into one 'Gilgamesh' tradition (ca. 1800 B.C.), about the same time as the Hittites made a summary of 5 tablets of Gilgamesh into one; and about the same time as the Kassite period of Babylonia (1540- 1250) when scribes began copying the Gilgamesh, and other epics, in a traditional

way which was to hand them on virtually unchanged for more than a thousand years.[58]

In 1975 Tigay reemphasized the point made by George Foot Moore in 1889 that Tatian in his Diatessaron, wove the four gospels into a single running narrative in Syriac or Greek around the year A.D. 170.[59] The same type of redaction took place in the Samaritan Pentateuch dated by James Purvis to about 110 B.C.. In a number of passages in Exodus the scribes within this tradition conflated the text by adding to it passages from Deuteronomy.[60] Furthermore, we know from the manuscripts at Qumran that these plusses were added to the text sometime between 400 B.C. and 100 B.C. in the earlier proto-Samaritan text on which the Samaritan sectarian recension was based.[61]

Now if we can establish ancient material in the sources and cannot establish later material in them, and if the fusion could have taken place at a very early period we have no reason to reject out of hand the notion that Moses authored the essential core of the Pentateuchal material.[62]

E. The Problem of Oral Tradition

Form criticism, tradition criticism and canonical criticism are all based on the conviction that the materials contained in the Pentateuch were reformulated, reworked, represented, and supplemented until they were finally written down and granted canonical status in the post-Exilic community. These modern source critics think that these stories were transmitted orally at local sanctuaries by tradents that is, by circles or centers of traditionalists who preserved, reinter: preted and added to Israel's diverse traditions and theological heritage. To the older "orthodox" critics' redactor and literary sources, the modern critics have added tradents and oral traditions. These critics uncritically accept the notion that oral communication was the chief mode of transmitting sacred materials through successive generations. Nyberg stated the conviction in this famous quote:

> Transmission in the East is seldom exclusively written, it is chiefly oral in character. The living speech plays in the East from ancient times to the present a greater role than the written presentations. Almost every written work in the Orient went through a longer or shorter oral transmission in its earliest history, and also even after it is written down the oral transmission remains the normal form for the preservation and use of the work .[63]

But what is the evidence for the conviction that oral tradition was the chief form of transmission of sacred materials in the East and for tradents that reshaped these traditions? The answer to this question is crucial for the historico-grammatical method of exegesis. The notion that Israel's sacred heritage was handed down in a fluid oral form raises a whole complex of problems about the Bible's historical accuracy and authorial intentions and meanings. On the other hand, if it can be established that they were written down at an early period and transmitted conservatively these problems are minimized. To answer that question I will direct my attention to the cultures and literatures surrounding ancient Israel. We will turn first to Ebla in Northern Syria (ca. 2350 B.C.), then to Mesopotamia whose coherent culture can be traced with confidence for over two millennia, until it was dealt what proved to be a fatal blow by Alexander the Great at about 330 B.C., then to the Hittites (1450 to 1250 B.C., then to the later Old Arameans of Northern Syria (900 to 800 B.C.), to ancient Ugarit (1400 B.C.), then to the united Egyptian culture and literatures from about 2500 to 500 B.C., then to the Northwest Semites, including the Hebrews, and finally to the earliest stages of Islam. In this wide-ranging survey I have but one question: "Did these peoples represent and preserve their cultural heritage through oral tradition easily subject to alteration or through written texts precisely with a view that their heritage not be corrupted?"

1. Ebla

According to Pettinato[64] the Ebla tablets contain economic-administrative texts, lexical (onomastica) lists, historical-juridical matters (royal ordinances and edicts, state letters, lists of cities subject to Ebla), true literature (myths, hymns, incantations, collections of proverbs), and syllabaries (for learning Sumerian, grammars of Eblaite, and bilingual grammars). This ancient city, which antedates Moses by a millennium was highly literate and preserved that part of its heritage and culture which it considered important in writing, and these tablets do not allude to tradents or oral tradition, at least to my knowledge and to the extent to which they have been published thus far.

2. Mesopotamia

In Mesopotamia we find collections of Sumerian proverbs copied as schoolboy texts that achieved canonical status as early as about 1500 B.C. Moreover, by comparing these collections of proverbs with later collections dated to the Neo-Babylonian period (ca. 600 B.C.) we discover that they were transmitted in writing with relatively little modification.[65] Their great creation epic, the *Enuma Elish,* was probably composed during the time of Hammurabi (ca. 1700 B.C.), and its earliest extant copy is dated only 100 years later, and this is clearly a copy. The law codes of Lipit Ishtar, Eshmunna, Hammurabi, etc. antedate Moses by centuries. Moreover, in the Akkadian culture, according to 0. Weber,[66] it was the rule that only an agreement that was fixed in writing was juridically valid. The Code of Hammurabi, with striking similarities to the Book of the Covenant concluded: "Observe all these laws with care." Here, too, we find hymns from the early Sumerian period (ca. 1900 B.C.), but what arrests our attention about these hymns is the fact that though they were intended to be sung at cultic centers they were written down. In fact these hymns contain technical terms probably related to their liturgical use that Sumeriologists cannot decipher, precisely as in the case of the biblical hymns which contain notices that Hebraists cannot interpret .[67] Letters, too, were read from written texts. One letter from Mari (1750 B.C.) reads: "Your tablet which you did send forth, I have heard ."[68] Representing the historical literary genre we have the famous Sumerian king lists and the later and equally famous Assyrian annals. Representatives of the religious genre include rituals, incantations, and descriptions of festivals. In all this literature there is no mention of tradents or oral tradition.

What then is the evidence for oral tradition in Mesopotamia? There is one text that shows it was copied from oral recitations. Its colophon reads: "written from the scholars' dictation, the old edition I have not seen." But this exception actually proves the rule. Commenting on this text Laessoe wrote: "It would seem to appear that oral tradition was only reluctantly relied upon, and in this particular case only because for some reason or other an original written document was not available ."[69] The situation represented by this colophon differs *toto caelo* from that supposed by form critics. The scribe is a faithful copyist and not a tradent who feels free to reformulate and supplement the tradition.

With regard to the Mesopotamian epics, one may theorize that oral traditions in smaller units existed behind the epic complexes, but this notion rests on pure speculation, not on evidence. We have already noted that these larger epics were on occasion redactions of earlier written sources and that they were composed at a very early period.

3. *Hittites*

From the Hittites we have not only their law codes that were granted canonical authority so that they could not be tampered with, but also their international treaties, and according to George Mendenhall[70] and Klaus Baltzer[71] they present us with striking similarities to the Book of Deuteronomy. These treaties could not be changed; e.g., to cite but one typical statement: "whoever changes but one word of this tablet, may the weather god ... root that man's descendants out of the land of Hatti."

4. *The Arameans*

For lack of space let me cite from the Arameans only the Sefire
... says,
'I will efface some of its words, 'may the gods overthrow that man.' '"
To my knowledge in all the literature of the Hittites and Arameans there is no mention of tradents such as are envisioned by modern source critics.

5. *Ugarit*

The peoples of ancient Ugarit wrote down their hymns and myths celebrating their nature deities and recited them at their sanctuaries, and there is no evidence to suggest that oral recitation ever existed without the written text we have in hand or that it had priority over the written witnesses to their beliefs.

6. *Egypt*

From Egypt we have numerous texts of many of the literary genres represented in the Bible, and once again the evidence shows that the scribes attempted to preserve their heritage in writing as accurately as possible. One colophon reads: "The book is completed from its beginning to its end, having been copied, revised, compared and verified sign by sign."

But is there any evidence for oral tradition among the Egyptians? Volten in his *Studien zum Weisheitsbuch des Anii* and van de Walle, in *La transmission des texts litteraires Egyptiens* compared identical texts from earlier and later periods in Egypt's history and showed three types of variants: (1) entirely graphic error; (2) auricular error; and (3) slips of memory. These scholars suggest that the slips of memory may have been due to the fact that the teacher was dictating from memory, or that the scribe copied from memory, or that the pupil copying from dictation forgot what the teacher had said. But scribal error due to faulty hearing or from copying from memory is certainly not sufficient evidence upon which to rest a case that the Egyptians transmitted their sacred heritage in a fluid oral form. Both Volten and van de Walle describe these changes as errors. But the hypothetical tradents imagined by modern source critics do not accidentally change the text through faulty hearing or memory, but intentionally alter it, sometimes drastically, to keep the traditions contemporary with changing historical conditions.

7. *Northwest Semitic*

When we turn to the evidence from Northwest Semitic civilizations and cultures we have less literary evidence, apart from the Old Testament itself, which may be due to both the perishable nature of the materials on which they wrote and to their climate which was so inimical to their preservation. But the evidence we do have suggests widespread literacy in this part of the ancient Near East, even at the time of Moses. If scholars accurately interpret the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, these inscriptions represent the *written* prayers of Semites enslaved by the Egyptians at about 1475 B.C., and this gives us strong reason to believe that the descendants of Abraham, though lowly slaves in Egypt, were also literate. The witness of the Old Testament comports favorably with that of its neighbors. It, too, appeals to literary sources, not oral ones. Its authors cite "The Book of Songs (LXX 3 Kings 8:53); 'The Book of the Upright" (8: 13), "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18), "The Diaries of the Kings" (Kings and Chronicles, passim). Not once do they cite an oral source on which they rest their work. A man must write a bill of divorce (Deut. 24:3), and kings had secretaries to assist them in their writing (2 Sam. 8:14). According to Judges 8:14 a young man wrote down for Gideon "the names of the seventy-seven officials of Succoth." This text assumes the literacy of Israel's youth. Its legal literature was written down (Deut. 3 1:9; Josh. 24:25-26; 1 Sam. 10:25), and it must not be altered (Deut. 4:2;12:32). The prophets refer to the Law as a written document. Hosea 8: 12 reads "I wrote for them the many things of my law" and speaks of "the lying pen of scribes has handled the law falsely." To judge from Isaiah 8: 16 and Jeremiah 36 the originally oral messages of the prophets were written down shortly after their delivery, exactly the same as happened in the case of Mohammed, as we shall shortly see. To be sure, the Law was to be memorized, as were the Proverbs, and to be

recited orally (Exod. 12:24-26; Deut. 6:6, 20-25; Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2), but we must not suppose that these exhortations to memorize the Law contradict the notices that it had to be written. Ringgren[72] demonstrated by comparing synoptic passages in the Bible that many variants are graphic errors and that others are due to mistakes of hearing or faulty memory, but like Volten and van de Walle, he describes the situation in terms of "mistakes," which assumes that the copyists intended not to be innovators but preservers of Israel's sacred heritage. I argued above that some of the changes were intentional, but the quality and quantity of these changes suggested by the texts themselves do not compare with the changes envisioned by source critics. The minor changes introduced into Israel's written traditions are qualitatively and quantitatively different from changes due to hypothetical tradents who deliberately reinterpreted and reformulated the nation's spiritual heritage being transmitted in a fluid oral form.

8. Arabic

South Arabic inscriptions, which are notoriously difficult to date, do show that even bedouins were literate. From a much later period, Widengren demonstrated that Mohammed not only contributed directly or indirectly to putting the Qurân into writing, but even made some interpolations into the text .[73] In one of his essays on oral tradition Widengren wrote: "Written tradition was written down early in order to fix the oral tradition and to preserve it ." And again: "We are confronted with the fact that in the earliest Islamic period the first generation were the collectors of traditions."[74] The situation in Islam seems very similar to that of Christianity-within a generation or two the witnesses to Christ were written down.

The only evidence for an oral tradition such as source critics envision to have happened in the transmission of the materials contained in the Old Testament comes from Indo-European peoples of a much later time, especially from Old Icelandic (ca. A.D. 1300). Here one finds a mighty priesthood trained in the oral transmission of their religious heritage. A somewhat similar situation can also be attested in the modern Serbo-Croatian heritage. But the objections to founding a theory for the development of the biblical sources on this sort of evidence is surely apparent. Widengren wrote:

> Is it not queer to observe that in order to prove the predominant
> role of oral tradition among such a Semitic people in antiquity
> as the Hebrews all real evidence from their closely related

neighbors, the Arabs, has been left out of consideration … whereas evidence from all kinds of Indo-European peoples was adduced, so that even the old Icelanders were called upon to render their service in which case neither the 'great interval of time' nor that of space seems to have exercised any discouraging effect?![75]

In all of the Eastern literatures we have considered there is not one reference to the hypothetical tradent, the key to tradition criticism. This central figure in the source critical theories that Israel transmitted their precious spiritual cargo in the leaky boat of oral tradition turns out to be a nonexistent ghost.

III. THE CONTEXT

The first and weightiest rule of speech is that context determines meaning. But what precisely do we mean by context? In the broadest analysis of the notion of context we need to distinguish the audience's context from that of the speaker's. The audience context may be further analyzed into that of the original hearers and that of successive generations up to the present. We have already considered problems connected with the later audience contexts in our discussion of "understanding our preunderstanding," or to put it another way, the need to take off our spectacles through which we view the text. In this section, however, I will restrict my attention to problems pertaining to the speaker's context. The words of the biblical writers occur in at least six contexts-linguistic, literary, cultural, situational, scriptural, and theological. Each of these has its own problems.

A. The Linguistic Context

Melanchthon truly said: "The Scripture cannot be understood theologically, until it is understood grammatically."[76] The first problem to be resolved in grammatical analysis is that of distinguishing linguistic structure from the speaker's referential or intended sense. F. de Saussure distinguished *la langue* (language) and *la parole* (speech), which marked the birth of the modern science of linguistics. Caird commented: "By language Saussure meant the whole stock of words, idioms and syntax available, the potential, the common property of all users. By speech he meant any particular and actual use of language by a speaker or writer."[77] "Language" offers what Otto Jespersen has called "a latitude of correctness."[78] Marshall noted: "We need to know about the world of language to which our text belongs, so that we may know what individual words can mean, and

how words can be connected together **syntactically**."[79] The possible and public meaning of words is the business of the lexicographer and the limits of their possible connections is the work of the grammarian. In this section we will first concern ourselves with the language of the community-their "rules" or conventions of **communication**—and then we shall address ourselves to the meaning of the individual.

It is not my intention here to consider problems that the standard lexicographers and grammarians address themselves to. Rather, I hope to raise linguistic issues that lie behind and beyond these tools.

I. *Problems in Lexicography*

Change in meaning, polysemy or multiple meanings, bivocals and the use of different words for the same referent belong to the conventions of a language and present problems for the exegete, along with the well-known problem of deciding the meaning of **hapax** legomena .

The first problem pertains to the recognition that a word which originally meant one thing by constant repetition may change its referent. Most words can be traced back to roots denoting originally something that can be grasped by the senses. Some words came to be used with a double referent, a material reality and a related mental idea, and at that stage were metaphors. Eventually, through constant use, the material reference was lost and only the intellectual idea remained. For this reason, for example, Hebrew expresses psychological states by words indicating the organs of the body, such as "kidney" and "heart." In a similar way, language appropriate for the tangible expressions of the Canaanite religion came to be filled with new meaning when referred to the LORD, who did not have physical form. Many scholars at the time when the theory of the progressive evolution of religion was chic made the mistake of thinking that expressions such as "food of God," or "to see the face of God" represented a more primitive stage of Israelite belief. But these "Canaanisms" meant in Hebrew religion "offering" and "to be received into Gods audience" respectively. Regarding the latter idiom Caird noted: "a regular Hebrew idiom for being received in audience by someone of consequence (Gen. 43:3, 5; 2 Sam. 14: 24)."[80] The texts of the latter convention, however, were changed consistently from the active stem to the passive stem, from "see the face of God' to "appear at the face of God" on account of pious pedantry on the part of later scribes.

Words may change meanings through constant repetition either gradually (e.g. the English word "exception") or suddenly (e.g. "gay"). First Samuel 9:9 offers a good example of the Hebrew writer's awareness that a word has changed its meaning.

Two practical conclusions ought to become apparent from this study. First, while it may be interesting to study a word's etymology, etymology cannot decide an author's meaning. The English word "bead," for example, originally meant "prayer," but by constant association with the object accompanying the prayer it came to denote the rosary and similar objects. Here, however, is an example of an intellectual notion being transferred to a physical object.

Secondly, when deciding an author's use of a word out of its many possible meanings offered in a lexicon, the exegete must decide the date of his material. NIV, for example, erred in rendering *ysd* in Psalm 8:2 by "ordain," a meaning attested only in postexilic Hebrew but never in preexilic Hebrew, where it always means "to lay a foundation" (cf. RSV).

It ought to be obvious that if a word's meaning is decided in part on the date of its usage then lexical studies are inextricably meshed together with introductory studies. Unfortunately, no consensus has been reached on the date of much of the biblical literature and some lexicographers have injudiciously spoken too prematurely and dogmatically on the subject. BDB, for example, presumed that **Aramaisms** were late, but later research into the **Aramaic** inscriptions proved them wrong.

In addition to changing meaning diachronically words came to pick up several references synchronically. Polysemy, "more than one meaning," offered the connection between David's intention to build God a "house" and God's intention to build David's "house." However, we must reject with Augustine the ancient "game" of assigning many meanings to the same word at the same time and in the same place. Augustine concluded: "a principle of this nature ... must introduce very great uncertainty in exegesis, than which nothing can be more pernicious ."[81]

But some words are truly bivocals, i.e., they connote what are at least two ideas in another language. The Hebrew term, for example, "fear of the **LORD**" in English always denotes "God's revealed will," its objective reality, and "man's unconditional surrender to it," its subjective reality. *Toda* denotes both the sacrificial animal and the spoken word accompanying it to express **the** worshiper's "confession" that God had intervened in his life. **Bivocals** bring translators

to grief because normally another language does not have a **bivocal** to express the same two references.

But when confronted with polysemy, how does the exegete decide which meaning the speaker had in mind? Several factors, none of which is free from its own problems, come to his aid: the literary form and the situation in which the word occurs, a speaker's idiosyncracies, and logic. In English "ball" means one thing on the social page and quite another in the sport's section of the newspaper. It makes a difference whether "table" is used in a furniture store, in a geology class dealing with underground water, or in a business meeting. So also it makes a difference whether *mašal* is used in wisdom literature, in which case it means "a proverb" or in prophetic literature, where it normally means "burden, oracle." We have already noted that *'adam* means "mankind" in P, but a proper name, "Adam," in J. Yet in Genesis 5:1, traditionally P, it also functions as a proper name showing once again that the alleged sources have not been redacted but fused. But above all the exegete employs logic in deciding meaning, more specifically the test of coherence. Just as music has a code and semiphore is a code and mathematics has a code, so also language is a code, a logically coherent entity, and when something does not fit, our computer-like minds "kick it out." When an unintelligible code becomes logically coherent, we say we have deciphered the code. So also in the case of words, the meaning must "fit" the logic of the text. If more than one meaning "fits" we can only speak in terms of plausibility or decide that the writer himself was ambiguous or punning for either intentional or unintentional reasons.

Words that occur only once, **hapax** legomena, or so rarely that we cannot induce its meaning with conviction, confront the exegete with their own set of problems. In these cases he must rely on cognate languages, ancient versions or rabbinic tradition. The problem occasioned by a word's propensity to change meaning diachronically or develop several meanings synchronically become exacerbated when we shift to its development and use in another language. Ancient translators confronted the same problems as moderns as Ben Sirach's Prologue makes us painfully aware. But in spite of his humble confession he was probably less aware of his own limitations and prejudgments than we are, less sophisticated in linguistics, and had poorer tools than we with which to work. Rabbinic traditions are at best uncertain. James Barr has brilliantly addressed himself to these problems and offered helpful rules for the use of the cognate languages and ancient versions; there is no need to rehearse them **here**.[82]

In some cases the exegete must reach certainty about his uncertainty and say so. For example, *selah,* at present cannot be known because the ancient versions disagree, Kimchi and **Rashi** disagree and modern scholars have proposed up to sixty different meanings for it largely on the basis of cognate studies. In a case like this the translator can put dots, which is intellectually the most honest, or guess at a translation and footnote his uncertainty, which is psychologically most satisfying, or transliterate the Hebrew, which mocks the uneducated.

In the case of Hebrew grammar the exegete confronts problems similar to those encountered in lexicography: change of form and meaning, polysemy, uncertainty and varying surface structures for the same idea.

A good historical grammar will trace the evolution of the phonemes, morphemes and syntax of a language. Our problem here is that we have no good historical grammars of the Hebrew language written in English.

First-year students in Hebrew and Greek become aware all too soon that the genitive case can convey many different ideas and that the **exegete's** decision in this matter can radically effect one's understanding of the author's intention. It takes several more years of study, however, to come to the realization with Caird that "the only grammatical form which appears to be wholly unequivocal is the vocative case." But Caird can not resist adding:

> We may of course be left in doubt about the referent of a word in a vocative (are the people addressed in Gal. 3:1 north Galatians living in Ancyra and Pessinus, or south Galatians living in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe?), or about the degree of emotional intensity involved (John 2:4).[83]

The grammarian assumes the task of establishing and setting forth the morphemic and syntactic boundaries of a language, and it is the **exegete's** task of deciding a writer's specific use by the same **critieria** employed in the case of lexical polysemy.

In addition to morphemic polysemy we also confront morphemic uncertainty. To date grammarians still have not reached agreement about the significance of the Hebrew "tenses," the so-called perfect and imperfect. Moscati, et al. said: "the 'tense' system presents one of the most complicated and disputed problems of the Semitic lan-

guages ."[84] He thereupon proceeded to dub the term "tense" as "improper" because he argued that they denoted not the time of the action but the kind of action. Joiion complained:

> Certain exegetes or translators, especially the more ancient ones, seem to have had only some vague idea concerning this matter. When translating, they were guided more by instinct than by a precise knowledge of the value of forms.[85]

But in contrast to Moscati, et al. he thereupon argued that time, not aspect, constituted the principal idea of the forms in question. A. Sperber disallowed any semantic difference between the so-called tenses but contended instead that the perfect and imperfect are used interchangeably and suggested for the word tenses "a neutral, time-less terminology, which is based on morphological characteristics . . .; suffix tense (instead of perfect) and prefix tense (for imperfect) ."[86]

But to put this discussion about uncertainty into perspective it is reassuring to note that most modern scholarship is leaning toward the idea that aspect is the essential notion of the Hebrew "tense," and that the problem is narrowing itself to defining aspect more precisely. O'Connor wrote:

> Aspect, as is clear from two recent studies of Semitic aspect, McCarus (1976) on Arabic and Kurylowicz (1973) on Semitic in general, is a problematic area even when the system is fairly obvious. Kurylowicz observes that in a system with two finite verb forms, the opposition must be between simultaneity and anteriority (Latin *imperfectum* and *perfectum).* This is the basic structure of the Arabic system, and it is distinct from the three-way opposition in Slavic and Classical Greek which opposes both imperfective and perfective, and linear and punctual categories. Kurylowicz reserves the term aspect for systems with both these oppositions; McCarus uses it in the distinct sense of the type of action predicated by the verb. In Arabic there is no aspectual (in Kurylowicz' sense) or temporal marking of verb forms; the relevant information is conveyed on the syntactic level.[87]

In contrast to polysemy we need to reckon with Chomsky's well-known hypothesis that the surface structure of language needs to be contrasted with the deeper structure in a speaker's mind. Because of this difference, a speaker may refer to the same reality by more than one expression. For example, a writer may have in mind a "god" qualified by the notion of being "foreign." In Hebrew this notion may be expressed in several ways: by an adjective, "foreign gods"; by a construct, "gods of foreignness"; by a clause, "gods which are foreign'; by a phrase, "gods belonging to foreigners"; by apposition, "gods, the foreigners"; by hendiadys, "gods and foreigners"; by an accusative, "gods in foreignness." The referent alluded to by these varying constructions is identical and the speaker chooses any of these options for either conscious stylistic reasons or unconscious linguistic factors at work in the language.

We now turn our attention from the rules governing communication within a community, and which the exegete must master to prevent him from false interpretations beyond the limits which the language will allow, to the speaker's intended meaning.

First, we need to ask ourselves whether or not it is possible to speak of the Word of God when it comes to us in translation. The answer here depends on the meaning we invest in the word "Word." If we mean the symbols on the page, then the answer is obviously "no," but if we mean the sense the author intended by them the answer is just as obviously "yes." Packer made the point well:

> (Verbal plenary inspiration) does not imply a Koranic view of inspiration, whereby translations of the original are precisely *not* the Holy Book. As Reformation theology used to say, it is the sense of Scripture that is Scripture, and all translations are in truth the Bible, at least to the extent that they are accurate.**

Olthuis similarly stated:

> For, although meaning is mediated by words, it is not contained in their form. Words are symbols through which we open up (or obscure, as the case may be) the universe and our place in it. In their lingual meaning they refer beyond themselves to (non-semantic) reality.[89]

Thiselton rightly declared that understanding the author's sense is an *art.*[90] We have already noted the problems occasioned by changed meanings, polysemy, uncertainty, etc., and we have suggested ways of approaching them, but we have not yet observed that the speaker's intention may also be opaque because he expressed himself elliptically. Caird noted:

> In one of his most tantalizing sentences Paul uses no fewer than five opaque terms-'the rebellion,' 'the man of lawlessness,' 'the mystery of lawlessness,' 'the restraining power,' 'the re-straining person'-and adds the comment that he explained all this to the readers last time he was with them (2 Thess. 2:3-7).

We shall return to this matter of elliptical opaqueness in connection with our discussion of the literary context.

The theologian should also be aware that words and morphemes do not necessarily coincide with the speaker's concepts. For example, almost all Hebrew nouns belong to one of two genders, masculine and feminine, but this does not mean that the Hebrews were unconscious of what we would call the neuter gender. We can infer from other languages also deficient in the grammatical distinction of genders that the grammatical expression does not precisely correlate with the speaker's thought. Turkish, for example, nowhere-not even in its pronouns-grammatically distinguishes gender, whereas French moulds all its nouns into either the masculine or feminine genders. But as James Barr pointed out, no one would suppose that the Turks were unaware of sexual differences, or that this proves the legendary erotic interests of the French.[91] To enter the speaker's world of thought we need to integrate linguistic studies with anthropology.

Another problem we need to address ourselves to is whether an utterance can have a meaning beyond what the original speaker intended. Kaiser answered this question with an emphatic "No,"[92] but I would prefer a qualified "Yes." To be sure there are numerous statements in which the speaker has a particular person, thing or event in view. When, for example, the psalmists referred to the Law (Pss. 1, 19, 119) they probably had the Deuteronomic Code in mind.[93] The gospel writers had in view a particular high priest that condemned Jesus to death. On the other hand, however, there are some statements that are deliberately open-ended without a particular referent in the speaker's mind. For example, the wit of the proverb is meant for the wisdom of all in many diverse situations. The "wise son" in Proverbs 10: 1 is not one particular wise son, and the foolish son refers to every foolish child. Each one in the audience will color the meaning of the proverb according to his own experience, an experience that lies beyond the experience of the author. A parable such as the prodigal son is also intended to have as many interpretations as there are hearers. Each listener, according to his own experience , will interpret somewhat differently the younger brother's folly and repentance and the older brother's self-righteousness. Obviously there is an ambiguity built into our original question. In some instances the speaker intended his statement to have a meaning beyond his own particular meaning.

Generic prophecies are also intended to have an open-ended meaning. I am indebted to Kaiser for alerting me to Beecher's identification of this important type of prophetic utterance. Beecher defined generic prophecy as:

> One which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts, separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole-in other words, a predication which, in applying to the whole of a complex event also applies to …its parts."

Caird compares this kind of utterance to a "Situation Vacant" advertisement. The famous prophecy regarding the woman's seed that would destroy the Serpent (Gen. 3:16) finds its fulfillment in all whom God elects to put enmity against Satan (cf. Rom. 16:20). It finds a unique fulfillment in Christ, but it also has reference to all who share faith with Him and in Him. Eve mistakenly applied it to Cain and likewise Abraham to Ishmael. In this kind of prophecy the speaker deliberately leaves his words open-ended to be filled in particularly according to the course of history.

The question of single meaning becomes more complex when a later biblical writer used an earlier canonical text in a way unintended by the original speaker. We shall discuss that problem in connection with the scriptural context.

In deciding this matter of what a speaker meant and of whether or not a speaker had more than one meaning in view, it will prove helpful to recognize that speakers use language in various ways. Linguists distinguish at least four functions of language: informative, which aims to clarify and convey an idea (e.g. the creation narratives); performative, which does not report an action but affects it (e.g. God's spoken Word that brought about the creation); expressive, which aims to capture and communicate an experience (e.g. "sabbath' in the epilogue to the creation account which evoked feelings of gratitude, joy and patriotism in Israel); and cohesive language, designed primarily to denote rapport (e.g. "greet one another with a holy kiss"). These categories often overlap and the same utterance may be designed to serve more than one purpose. In fact, all of Scripture according to Paul serves a dual purpose: it is profitable for doctrine-the informative use of language, and for reproof, correction and instruction-the performative use of language. With respect to the informative use of language one may profitably speak of single meaning but with respect to its performative function the term is less useful because the text's meaning is relative to the experience of each one in its audience.

Expressive and cohesive language raises the problem of its appropriate translation. Emotive terms such as "Sabbath," "circumcision," and "blood" do not create the same emotions in us as they did in ancient Israel. In fact, these emotive and cohesive expressions may have just the opposite effect in a later audience than that intended by the author. Shall we retranslate this kind of language into the dynamic equivalents of another culture? For example, shall we substitute "handshake" for "holy kiss" or "Sunday" for "Sabbath," or "baptism" for "circumcision?" The Wycliffe Bible translators[95] utilize language theory strikingly similar to Wittgenstein's concept of "language-game" vis-a-vis the speaking of language is a "form of life."[96] I think it best not to translate these emotive expressions by the dynamic equivalents in another language because they are not precise enough. Rather, I suggest, it is better to let the exegete explain this phenomena of language and meaning in a commentary.

B. The Literary Context

By literary context we mean the forms of literature at the speaker's command for presenting his thought (the form critic's object of study), the devices employed in these literary forms, his own unique structuring of the material (the rhetorical critic's object of study) and other literary devices writers employ, such as figurative language.

A major problem confronting the practitioner of the grammatico-historical method is that of deciding the literary genre of his text. As we shall see, his decision in this matter significantly modifies the way in which he interprets the text. For example, what shall we label the literary genres of Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25? In the case of the former, it will not do to label it as a scientific document because its subject is God (an "object" of study not possible for scientific inquiry) and not hydrogen gas, quarks, or molecules, the proper object of scientific inquiry. But many Evangelicals err egregiously against the text by reading it as a scientific treatise. Then, too, it is not history in the proper sense of that term because no man was present to record the events at the time of creation. We could label it as "myth' if we define that debated term to mean a lens through which we can better understand the world we live in, a story to explain the present and the future. But we must reject this term because for many it also denotes the notion that the story lacks historical credibility and the lens for interpreting life was ground in human imagination. Then, too, it is not theology because truths about divine matters are presented in narrative form and not in systematized abstractions. We

could define it as *Torah,* teaching about divine matters to make us wise unto salvation, but this nomenclature lacks precision, for Deuteronomy, which is very different from Genesis 1, is *Torah* par excellence. Perhaps the best we can do is to call it a Creation Story in Torah.

But even that label is not without its problems for it does not distinguish the literary genres of the two creation accounts in Gen. 1: 1-2:3 and 2:4-25. In contrast to the first account, the second story presents us with both historical and suprahistorical events. To be sure, the latter story as we have it in the Bible, is intended to be understood as an account of factual persons and events, at least to judge from the genealogies that take us back to Adam and from the way in which the Garden of Eden is so precisely located. But the story is also intended to be read as suprahistorical, that is, the persons and events in the story represent every man and woman and their experience in divine matters. None has ever suggested that God sentenced only the historical Eve to painful labor in childbearing or only the historical Adam to frustrating work and death. Every reader understands that Adam and Eve represent every man and every woman. Gerhardus Vos has shown convincingly that the Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Garden of Eden, etc., all serve as representations of eternal truths.[97] Shall we label the second account then as a Suprahistorical Creation Story in Torah? How ever we might label these accounts, it is essential that the exegete wrestle with the problem if he aspires to understand the meaning and intention of the author.

We have already raised the question regarding the appropriateness of labelling the biblical accounts according to their historical credibility. The writer of Genesis gives his reader no indications that he intended his narrative to be read as saga or legend. Those labels stem more from the prejudgment of the interpreter than from the text itself.

Having identified and labelled the writer's selection of literary genre, the exegete must then consider the literary devices of the genre. In *narrative literature* the writer allows the words and actions of the people in his story, rather than didactic statements on his part, to convey his teaching, though in the case of Genesis he peppered his stories with direct theological statements (cf. 2:2-3, 25; 15:6; 2526; etc.). In this sort of literature the exegete must consider such factors as the selection and arrangement of the material, statements in the story by God or His obvious spokesman, the climax of the story or how it turns out, and the larger context which may include

clear didactic teaching. Genesis, as part of the Pentateuch, ought to be interpreted in the light of the clear teaching of Deuteronomy. When we speak of the larger literary context, however, we have entered the arena of the scriptural context.

But is the storyteller's intention so unambiguous that we can speak authoritatively regarding the doctrine or moral values he aims to instill in his readers? For example, can we be certain about the propriety or impropriety of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt or Paul's visit to Jerusalem? Perhaps in cases like these the writer is deliberately ambiguous.

In the case of the interpretation of *prophetic literature* it is a well-recognized fact that the prophet often presents future events synchronically. Although Peter makes it clear that they knew that the glories of Christ would follow his sufferings, the prophets did not fully understand the sequence of all future events nor the extent of time separating them. They looked to the future with a bifocal vision. With their nearsightedness they foresaw immanent, historical events and with their farsightedness they foresaw the near event merging with the day of the Lord. Evidently their audience was able to discern the distinction between the two because while they recognized the prophet's gift in predicting the circumstances attending the immediate historical event, they did not stone him when all his predictions about the future did not come to pass. Presumably the immediate fulfillments of some prophecies proved he was not a false prophet, and therefore they were willing to accept the validity of unfulfilled predictions and assured they awaited fulfillment in succeeding generations. This dual prophetic vision confronts the interpreter with the problem of deciding the time when the prophecy was or will be fulfilled.

It is also clear that the prophets presented their utterance of judgment absolutely, though they knew that through these predictions God intended the recipient of the death sentence to repent. Jonah predicted: "Within forty days Nineveh will be destroyed," but he later admits that the reason why he fled to Tarshish was that he knew God would relent if the Ninevites repented (Jonah 3:4; 4: l-3). The episode recounted in Jeremiah 26: 18-19 makes it perfectly clear that the prophet's original audience understood that though the message of doom was stated absolutely, the unstated divine intention was that they relent. The prophetic literary device of presenting prophecy absolutely, however, makes the prophet appear false to the modern reader.

Another literary device employed by the prophet that the hermeneut must take into consideration is the principle that the prophets predicted the future in terms of their present. This principle is generally conceded by all exegetes, but they disagree on the extent of its application. Premillennialists, who employ the principle charingly, might allow that the prophets predicted the day of the Lord or of Israel's future kingdom in terms of his own culture. For example, few premillennialists would insist that Israel's still future attackers from Gog will come riding on horses and be armed with the small and large shield, the bow and arrow, and the war club and spear-the weapons of warfare in Ezekiel's time-or that at that time Israel will disarm itself by removing its walls along with its gates and bars (cf. Ezek. 38). But he will deny the amillennialist's extension of this principle to his claim that the prophets predicted the present, spiritual form of the kingdom in language appropriate to its geo-political form as the prophet experienced it. When the principle is stretched to this extent the premillennialist accuses the amillennialist of "spiritualizing" the text, which for him is an illegitimate principle. In favor of the premillennialist's caution against the "spiritualizing" of the text, one notes that prophecies pertaining to Christ's first advent were physically and not "spiritually" fulfilled. He was born in Bethlehem of a virgin, physical fulfillments of the prophetic predictions. The premillennialists argue on this basis that since these prophecies which we can test by historical experience were fulfilled exactly as predicted, we have no right to spiritualize other prophecies not historically fulfilled exactly as predicted. Rather, he argues these prophecies should be understood as referring to Israel's future kingdom. But the amillennialist might answer that during the course of His ministry Jesus sought to open Israel's eyes to the spiritual intention of these prophecies. In one incident after another Jesus moved His audience from an earthly interpretation of an Old Testament reference to a heavenly one. He transferred the "temple" from a physical building to His Body (John 2:19-21) and the water of Jacobs well to inner springs of spiritual water (John 4: 1-15). He brought these two images together in His invitation: "If a man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38). In this statement "water" means the Spirit of God, and the Scripture He had in mind was Ezekiel's vision of a temple with water coming out from under the threshold of the temple, water that grew ever more abundant as its course progressed (Ezek. 47:1-12).[98]

If it is legitimate to stretch the principle that the prophets predicted the future in terms of their own experience to that of spiritualizing the text, it might be helpful to supplement it with the principle of embellishment.[99] If Ezekiel's vision of a river emanating from the temple is to be interpreted spiritually as a reference to the Holy Spirit's welling up within the temple of the believer's body, then his vision of fruit trees that never failed growing along its banks and of swarms of living creatures and fish in the sea when the river reached its fullest dimensions might be best understood as embellishments to evoke the feeling of full satisfaction, delight, and life in this river.

When we turn from prophetic literature to *legal literature we* must reckon among its devices the use of synecdoche and the demand for spiritual interpretation. When the Law instructs one to put a parapet around the roof of a new house so as not to bring guilt of bloodshed on its builders (Deut. 22:8), it offers its subjects an explicit example of the meaning of the commandment "You shall not take innocent life either intentionally ('murder') or unintentionally ('manslaughter')" (Deut. 5: 17). The law in Deut. 22:8 serves merely as an illustration of the principle. It would be most unfortunate if one interpreted the legal literature in such a way as to argue that because something was not forbidden, therefore it was permitted. No, just the opposite. Its precise laws serve an exemplary function and are meant to be extended to include similar practical measures. The law to build a parapet around the roof of the house also means to put a fence around an open well. In sum, the laws are not exhaustive but synecdochic .

Jesus and Paul explicitly teach the law is to be interpreted according to its spirit and not according to its letter, and the Old Testament application of the law in narrative demonstrates the same truth. Though the law forbad the marriage of the Canaanite, we find in the narrative of the book of Joshua that God approved the marriage with the Canaanite prostitute Rahab, and though the law excluded a Moabite from the congregation of Israel for ten generations, God smiled with favor on the faithful Moabitess, Ruth. In sum, though the Lawgiver presented His commands absolutely and concretely, He intended them to be interpreted according to the Spirit of a personal relationship with God (Deut . 6:5) rather than as a binding, legal, impersonal contract.

The apocalyptic? literary device of presenting his thoughts through symbolism presents the interpreter with one of the greatest challenges in interpreting the Bible. This device is difficult both because we are not always sure when the apocalyptics' material is symbolical, but also because we are sometimes uncertain about the symbol's referent. For example, are we to take the one thousand years in Revelation 20 as actual years, or as a symbol of an indefinite and prolonged period of time? I am inclined to take it as the latter. But what about the division of the tribulation into three and a half years, or forty-two months, or 1260 days? Here I am inclined to take them as actual, but my procedure is more instinctive than founded on principle.

A literary device of both the prophets and apocalyptics is that of picturing judgment in terms of cosmic collapse. Jeremiah writhes in anguish at his vision of the cosmos returning to chaos (Jer. 4:23ff), but the immediate referent of his vision is the coming devastation of Israel. Isaiah's oracle against Babylon pictures God as putting out the lights of the sun, moon, and stars and pitching the whole cosmos into darkness (Isa. 13:9-13). Later he envisions the fall of Edom and the other nations in connection with the Lord's sword cutting the stars loose to fall on their heads (Isa. 34: l-5). These texts challenge the hermeneut to decide whether he will employ the principle of generic prophecy or hyperbolic embellishment.

The didactic saying is the most difficult literary device to interpret in the *wisdom literature. The* sage's intention is perfectly clear when he employs precepts, for he expresses his aim in the imperatival mood. But in the didactic saying he describes something as it is without disclosing his intended meaning, or to put the matter another way, its performative function. For example, in the didactic saying: "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor" (Prov. 10: 15), does he aim to instruct his audience to accumulate wealth in order to have security in times of crises? Or does he intend to say that both riches and poverty are undesirable financial postures because the rich has a false security in his money and the poor has no financial security. The didactic saying is obviously vulnerable to misinterpretation. These ambiguous sayings must be interpreted within the sage's broader literary context where, by precept and by other clear forms, he makes his intention known. In the light of his other sayings it becomes clear, for example, that in Proverbs 10: 15 he aims to warn us against accumulating wealth for it will prove a snare in leading us into a false sense of security. Elsewhere he admonishes his readers to "Trust in the LORD" (Prov. 3:5; passim) who gives those who trust in him a proper balance in the possession of property. Agur prayed: "Give me neither poverty

nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Prov. 30:8-9). The sage admonished: "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle" (Prov. 23:4-5). In sum, the didactic saying must be interpreted by other more clear sayings.

In his study of the literary context the hermeneut ought now to familiarize himself with the new discipline of rhetorical criticism. This discipline is traced back to Muilenberg's presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968.[100] Muilenberg argued that form criticism had reached the limits of usefulness. Because form criticism emphasized typical features of literary units, its unique features were being disregarded. He advocated, therefore, that form criticism be supplemented by rhetorical criticism "to supplement . . . form critical analysis with careful inspection of the literary unit in its precise and unique formulation." This concern accords well with the historico-grammatical method of exegesis. The main problem with it is that the exegete lacks adequate tools for employing the new discipline. Parunak,[101] who himself has made a notable contribution, stated the need: "a 'grammar' describing the functions of various structural features is still very much needed." He sought to remedy the need in part by positing that the "essential element in biblical structure is correspondence." Space fails me, however, to develop his rhetorical grammar further.

A most significant tool for analyzing Hebrew poetry is that of M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1980). His work makes R. Lowth's classic analysis of Hebrew parallelism seem like "child's play." The same can be said of works based on D. Müller with his attention to strophic and larger structures. From now on all studies of Hebrew poetry will have to build on and interact with O'Connor's emphasis on construction in contrast to meter and on syntactical parallelism and tropes based on linguistic awareness in place of roughly defined semantic parallelisms.

Literate men employ figures of speech as a stock-in-trade device for disclosing reality. Poets, especially the hymn writers, the sages and the prophets who authored the Scriptures, skillfully employ them in order to give their audiences another way of looking at and beyond the phenomenological world of sight. But how can the audience be sure that the author intended a certain locution to be understood as a figure? And how can he validate the author's intended meaning through this elliptical speech?

According to St. Augustine: "Whatever there is in the Word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred to either purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative."[102] "Purity of life," according to him, "has reference to love of God and one's neighbor, and soundness of doctrine to the knowledge of God and one's neighbor." With that imprecise and theologically-oriented criterion for identifying figurative language, Augustine opened the door to allegorizing the text. He undoubtedly would have defended himself against this charge by arguing that the authors of Scripture intended their stories as allegories. Most exegetes today, however, following the historico-grammatical method of exegesis, concur that instead of exposing the author's hidden meanings he, in fact, imposed on the text hidden meanings not derived from the text itself.

Figurative language can be identified by two criteria: juxtaposition and ellipsis. By juxtaposition I mean that the poet transferred a word or a larger piece of literature from its normal linguistic environment into a literary environment where it is not at home. For example, in the sentence "The LORD is my shepherd" (Ps. 23: 1) the word "shepherd," which is at home with words which have reference to animal husbandry, is here transferred and juxtaposed with the LORD, a word pertaining to a transcendent, spiritual being. Furthermore, the author has elided his full thought in the transference. When David prayed, "Cause me to hear joy and gladness," he juxtaposed objects that refer to an emotional state with a verb that refers to a physical activity. Elsewhere the poet says, "the trees clapped," whereby he transferred a verb that normally describes a human activity to that of an inanimate subject. A juxtaposition of semantic realms also takes place when Elijah taunts the prophets of Baal, "Cry louder, for he is a god," for the statement grants existence to Baal in the very context where he is proving he does not exist. In all these examples-metaphor, metonomy, personification, and irony respectively-the poets artfully and evocatively communicated their thought by transference and in none of them did they fully explicate their meaning.

Having identified a locution as figurative and having labelled it appropriately, the exegete now confronts the problem of deciphering the author's meaning in this elliptical speech. Here he must rely on clues within the literary discourse itself. For example, in the case of

metaphor, he looks for a descriptive term such as a defining word, a qualifying adjective, etc.

A problem that arises in the case of metaphor is that of deciding when one is dealing with a dead metaphor. A metaphor is the transference of a term from its normal referent to a second referent in order that the second referent might be illuminated by the first. The first serves as a lens through which the second can be seen and frequently evokes powerful emotions along with it. As long as the speaker and his audience are aware of the double reference it is a living metaphor, but when, through overuse, the first referent is lost sight of it fades and eventually dies. Dead metaphors in English include "eye of a needle" and "mouth of a river." "Heart ," "kidneys and "bowels ," are dead metaphors in the Bible and may be better rendered by their second referents. When the language itself is "dead," as is the case with the biblical languages, it is difficult to decide this matter.

Metaphor and metonymy can fail for one of two reasons. They may fail because the first referent is unknown to the audience. Caird cites Geothe's couplet: "Wer den Dichter will verstehen, Muss in Dichters Lande gehen"[103] ("Whoever wishes to understand the poet must go to the poet's land'). "Circumcision" of the heart is a case in point. Only an elite caste of priests and warriors dedicated to the service of the Egyptian deity were circumcised.[104] This primary referent was picked up and applied in Israel to all males to describe and evoke feelings of Israel's honor and unique privilege in becoming God's kingdom of priests. Without an understanding of the significance of the custom in ancient Israel, however, the significance of the figure is almost unintelligible. Biblical metaphors based on ancient Near Eastern pagan myths often not only do not communicate to the modern reader but may actually mislead him. Lucifer, referred to only in Isaiah 14, is a case in point here. Lucifer probably has as its primary referent the morning star Venus and the role it played in an ancient Near Eastern myth. The second referent is not Satan, as it so often is erroneously interpreted, but Sennacherib, king of Babylon.[105] Sometimes figurative comparisons (metaphor) and associations (metonymy) fail because the audience overextends the point of similarity between the two referents. Caird points out that the "neck' of a bottle has nothing to do with a head of beer.[106] The audience must discern through clues, such as those suggested above, the point of comparison. Sometimes the first referent shows many similarities with the second; e.g., the use of "body" to describe the church. Other times, however, the comparison is restricted to only one point as is

the case of likening the sun's rise to that of a bridegroom coming out of his nuptial chamber.

Just as we have polysemy in lexicography and grammar, so also an author or authors may use the first referent as a vehicle or lens of understanding with diverse second referents. For example, "water" may refer secondarily to "cleansing" or "life producing." Sometimes "firstfruits" has *as its* second referent giving God the best or the first to rise from the dead. But sometimes the second referent is so constant that the metaphor becomes a symbol, as is the case with "light" which consistently has "moral illumination" as its second referent, and with "break the jaw" which refers to abject humiliation. Sometimes it is debatable whether a vehicle has more than one second referent as is the case with "leaven."

Another feature of the Bible's literary style is that of absolute categorical statements. We already noted the absolute way in which the prophets delivered their message of impending judgment. The proverbs also present truth without qualification. The sages promise the righteous life, property, favor with God and man, a smooth path, mental and physical well-being, and material prosperity (Prov. 3: l-10) but our Lord on the cross experienced none of these. The sage in the Book of Proverbs is looking to a future that outlasts death and his focus in his sayings is on the righteous' final state of bliss. His focus becomes very apparent in his admonition: "Do not lie in wait like an outlaw *against* a righteous man's house … for though a righteous man falls seven times he rises again" (Prov. 24: 15-16). Job and Koheleth by contrast directed their attention at the righteous man when he appeared to be counted out. Confronted with this Semitic predilection for paratactic constructions, hyperbolic language and unqualified, categorical, absolute statements the exegete must set the paradoxical statements side by side and attempt to infer the logic of their relationship. This need to allow *categorical* statements to qualify each other and to suggest their own logical connection is absolutely essential in such theological antinomies as God's election and man's responsibility, God's repenting and the fact He does not repent, the fact the Son of Man will come without heraldry and yet only after a series of warning, the fact that the Kingdom of God has arrived and yet is to come; etc.

C. The Cultural Context

G. Linwood Barney has given a helpful model for analyzing the structure of a culture. He suggested that each culture is a series of layers, the deepest of which consists of ideology, cosmology and

world view. A second layer which probably derives from the first is that of values. Stemming from both of these layers is a third containing a culture's institutions such as marriage, law, and education. These institutions constitute a bridge to the fourth and surface layers of material artifacts and observable customs.[107] Barney's analysis is not only helpful in bringing more precision to a discussion about the cultural context of a writer, but it also assists us in deciding those features of the biblical cultures which are of abiding value and authority on succeeding generations of the faithful. The first two layers are eternally normative; the fourth is historically relative; the third is more debatable. We will say more about this.

We will discuss the first two layers of the biblical writers' culture in connection with their theological context. Their cosmology, however, might profitably be considered here. Israel's cosmology has two aspects: a heavenly, revelatory aspect and an earthly, phenomenological aspect. The revelatory dimension of their cosmology, namely that God created the world, belongs to their theology and presents us with eternal, unchanging truth. Their earthly observation of it, however, as a three-tiered universe consisting of heavens above, earth beneath and waters below the earth is phenomenologically conditioned and has no abiding theological significance. If the biblical writers aimed to teach a geocentric view of the universe in opposition to a heliocentric view of it, then that view of the cosmos would have eternal theological significance. But this is not the case. The exegete, however, must understand the earthly cosmology in order to interpret accurately their references to it.

With regard to the upper two levels of their culture we need to distinguish between precept and practice as well as the situations in which directions regarding their institutions, customs and artifacts are given. We shall discuss the latter concern in connection with the situational context. New Testament precepts such as the command to observe the Lords Supper and baptism ought to be observed in the Church, but the practices associated with them, such as the hour of their meeting, the exact shape of their services, which may be found in James, we need not keep.

The similarity of Israel's outward religious garb in its institutions, customs and artifacts to its pagan counterparts often present a problem to the beginning student of Israel's religion. But the problem largely disappears when one realizes that in Gods desire to disclose his nature, mind and will for his subjects he humbled himself and became incarnate, taking on human dress. That which distin-

guishes biblical religion from other religions is not so much on the upper two cultural levels but on the bottom two. While Jesus appeared like any other man, no other man spoke as he did, and while Israel's cultus and literary forms resemble those of its pagan neighbors, none of the latter knew Israel's ethical monotheism.

But this similarity between Israel's religion and their pagan neighbors raises another problem. To what extent did Israel adopt the forms of pagan religions? Armerding said: "Comparative religions research (religions-geschichtliche methode) begins with an assumption that the religion of the Old Testament is best understood by analogy to ancient religions in general.[108] More specifically, to what extent did Israel model its great Fall Festival after the pagan festivals such as the Mesopotamiam Akitu Festival or the Egyptian Sed Festival? And to what extent is such a festival assumed in Israel's hymnic literature? I suggest that future generations of evangelical scholars will have to address themselves to the problem of how to apply comparative religions research to biblical studies.

There is also a problem in deciding the extent to which Israel's literature and practices aimed to correct pagan practices. Israel's religion was both a sponge and a repellent. Leah Bronner[109] has argued persuasively that the miracles in the Elijah-Elisha pericopae had a polemical intention against the Canaanite worship of Baal, which nearly eradicated the worship of the LORD from Northern Israel. But does Genesis 1 also serve a polemic intention against worshiping the creation rather than its Creator?

D. The Situational Context

By the situational context we mean the occasion of the utterance and the factors that prompted it. Dispensationalists have made a contribution of inestimable value to hermeneutics by their insistence on considering the situation or occasion in which a performative or commissive utterance is given. The problem of many apparent contradictions in Scripture would readily disappear if this context were allowed to play its legitimate role in the historico-grammatical method. Failing to note the diverse situations in which discourse is carried on in the Bible, Kueng found the New Testament a *complexio oppositorum,* a collection of various testimonies which he regarded as contradictory and as having varying degrees of validity.[110] Ernest Käsemann spoke of "irreconcilable theological contradictions" and James Barr emphasized the multiplex nature of the Old Testament tradition. We do not argue that many of these alleged contradictions must be harmonized

because a high view of inspiration demands that we do so. Quite the contrary; we argue that careful attention to the situation in which words are spoken demands that we not pit many of these statements against one another.

Isaiah said the LORD has determined not to destroy Jerusalem; Jeremiah said that he is determined to destroy it. These statements, which on the surface seem so contradictory, are in fact uttered in diverse circumstances. Isaiah's is made at the time of Hezekiah's prayer and before the atrocious reign of Manasseh; Jeremiah's is given after Manasseh's wicked reign and a superficial revival. Moses allowed divorce, Jesus disallowed it; Moses established dietary laws, Jesus and the apostles abrogated them. In fact the early church essentially did away with the specific commands of the Mosaic law which were meant for people living in the land and were not intended for a universal, spiritual kingdom composed of Jews and Gentiles and in which the Aaronic priesthood was superseded by the heavenly high priesthood of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 15; Deut. 12:1; Hebrews).

But of what value then are the specific commands of the Mosaic Law which are either superseded by the heavenly reality in the high priesthood of Jesus Christ or abrogated? Their eternal and abiding value which will never pass away is found in the eternal, spiritual law stemming from the character of God that stands behind them. More specifically, each command in the Mosaic Code gives expression to the ideal of either loving God or loving man, and the modem reader needs to extrapolate from the specific commands of the ancient code its eternal truth and give it concrete expression in his own situation.

Taking note of the speaker's situation will also help to explain why the Psalmist found the Law an instrument to life while Paul found it an instrument of death (Ps. 1: 1-3; Romans 7: l-l 1). In fact, one finds in Paul himself opposing statements about the Law. In some passages he commends it as spiritual, holy, good and profitable (cf. Rom. 7:12, 16; 2 Tim. 3:16), but in others he says it provokes to sin; sometimes he speaks of the Church as free from the Law, yet in others he implies that we are to fulfill it (Rom. 7:5-1 1 and 13:28). Paul's disparaging statements about the Law must be read out of his own background in legalistic Judaism where he attempted to keep the Law while uncircumcised in his heart and dead in his sins (Col. 2:13ff) and his situation in which he is attempting to debunk incipient Gnosticism and full-blown legalism. Marshall aptly noted:

Reading a New Testament letter has often been likened to listening in to one end of a telephone conversation, and realizing that in order to understand what we can hear we also need to hear what is being said at the other end of the line.[111]

Then, too, it must he borne in mind that the Law was addressed to a situation where all things are equal. For example, the Law not to intermarry with the Canaanite had in view the normal situation in which the Canaanite would remain a loyal devotee of the pagan cult (cf. Deut. 7:3-4); it did not have in view the situation of a proselyte from Baal worship to the worship of the LORD, such as occurred in the case of Rahab. Then, too, it did not have in view those situations where the faithful were confronted with tragic moral choice. The Law categorically proscribed profaning the shewbread, but evidently it was always understood that when confronted with starvation or eating the shewbread the law was not applicable.

E. The Scriptural **Context**

By scriptural context I mean other portions of the Bible outside of the biblical book in which an utterance is found. Practitioners of the historico-grammatical approach concur that any statement must be interpreted in light of the entire book in which it occurs, its broader linguistc context. But should this literary context be expanded to include the total canon of Scripture? In raising this question, however, we have moved from a purely linguistic concern to the concern of the biblical theologian, who assumes as his work the task of observing, analyzing, and classifying progressive themes of Scripture. The biblical theologian locates a text not only in its immediate linguistic context but also in the progress of revelation.

Few exegetes would care to deny that a text ought to be interpreted in the light of antecedent revelation pertaining to that theme with which it is connected, assuming that the author was conscious of the earlier revelation. But the question arises whether or not a text should be interpreted in the light of later revelation related to it. Admittedly, the New Testament should be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament, but should the Old Testament be interpreted in the light of the New Testament?

Kaiser answered our question with an emphatic. "No!" He argued: "In no case must ... *later* teaching be used exegetically (or in any other way) to unpack the meaning or to enhance the usability of the individual text which is the object of study."[112] He proposed:

"comparisons with similar (sometimes rudimentary) affirmations found in passages that *have preceded* in time the passage under study" and thought "surely most interpreters will see the wisdom and good sense in limiting our theological observations to conclusions drawn from the text being exegeted and from the texts which Preceded it in time."[113] He allowed, however, that the exegete ought to make summaries in which the target passage is related to later texts: "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. ... But mind this point well: Canonical context must appear only as part of our summation and not as part of our exegesis."[114]

Now undoubtedly there is an important sense in which an earlier writer was unaware of what would happen to his text after it left his pen, but I would argue that in addition to exegeting a text's original sense, the exegetical process is incomplete until it is exegeted in the light of the entire canon. The Old Testament ought to be exegeted in the light of the New Testament. In support of this contention I advance the following arguments.

In the first place, the doctrine of inspiration demands that we consider a text within its canonical context. All who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture agree that the Scriptures have a dual authorship: God and man. In a very real sense there is one Author along with many human authors, and because there is one Author we ought to consider his entire unified corpus of inspired literature in the interpretation of any one piece of it. Students of Aristotle and other literate men exegete their individual compositions in the light of all their works. Why should we do less when considering the works of the Holy Spirit? Heidegger says: "Every poet composed from only a single poem. ... None of the individual poems, not even the total of them, says it all. Nevertheless, each poem speaks from the whole of the one poem and each time speaks it."[115]

Closely related to this recognition of a common divine authorship of all the Scriptures is the realization that 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 Scripture calls for an interpretation of its parts within the total canon containing both testaments. Thiselton rightly remarked: "The *total* of any theological utterance is hardly less than Scripture. ... In Heinrich Ott's words on the subject, 'Scripture as a whole constitutes the "linguistic room" the universe of discourse, the linguistic net of coordinates in which the Church has always resided. ...'"[116]

The doctrine of progressive revelation also calls for exegeting earlier texts in the light of later ones. It will help here to recognize that revelation takes place on several levels. On the primary level God reveals Himself to the characters in the literature. On the second level He further explicates that revelation through the inspired writers who recorded it and incorporated it in their written works. But after the text has left their hands God may continue to clarify the original revelation through other inspired writers. There are then at least three loci of any revelation: that of the original event, that of the inspired writer of the book reporting it, and that of the canon containing it. Each level must be kept distinct, but the exegete has not completed his work until he has exegeted the revelation in the light of all three levels. Let me illustrate the point. God originally gave a covenant through Nathan to David that he would give David an eternal dynasty and that though he would discipline the house of David for sin he would never negate his commitment to that house. On the second level of revelation the inspired writer juxtaposes this covenant with David's sin with Bathsheba, and by this juxtaposition he confirms and clarifies the covenant-even David's murder of the innocent Uriah and his defilement of the pure Bathsheba do not negate Gods promise never to dispose of the house of David. On the canonical level the same truth is reaffirmed, but on this level it becomes clear that God's covenant continues in effect over centuries filled with all sorts of scandals and finds its fulfillment in Jesus, the greater Son of David. Within the New Testament it becomes clear also that the eternal dynasty finds fulfillment in the eternal Son of God, that the eternal throne exists in heaven at God's right hand, while the earthly one on Mount Zion is only a replica Of the heavenly one, and that the eternal kingdom is spiritual composed of Israel's physical seed and Abraham's spiritual seed, and that while the present age fulfills the original charter, it will be consummated in the eternal state. How much richer is our understanding of the original revelation in the light of the total revelation.

Finally, Marshall pointed out the practical need of interpreting

the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament by noting that the Jews without the New Testament interpret the Old Testament very differently from Christians:

> It has sometimes been observed that the Old Testament leads up to both the Christian religion and also to the Jewish religion: both Christians and Jews would claim that they are holding fast to the essential message of the Old Testament, and it is at this point that one may see that two different total interpretations of the Old Testament are possible; how do we decide which is the correct one, and what effect does adoption of it have on our detailed understanding of the Old Testament?"'

In connection with the scriptural context we also need to consider the principle of the analogy of faith. This principle springs from the conviction that any given text of Scripture should be interpreted in the light of the canonical context. But this principle can easily slide into the rule of faith. The principle of the analogy of faith calls for the interpretation of unclear texts in the light of clear ones, but the rule of faith demands that Scripture be interpreted in such a way that it conforms with the church's traditions, creeds and confessions. In theory practitioners of the **historico-grammatic** method of exegesis decry the rule of faith, but all too often in practice they allow their creeds to usurp the place of the author's intended meaning. The problem then comes down to preventing the valid principle of the analogy of faith from degenerating into the mischievous rule of faith. I suggest that this can be prevented by limiting the role of the principle of the analogy of faith to the negative function of restricting the interpreter from interpreting an unclear passage in such a way that it contradicts a clear passage. We must not, however, domesticate difficult texts by facile harmonizations with familiar ones.

F. The Theological Context

By theological context I do not have in mind that progress of revelation as analyzed, classified, and systematized by the biblical theologian, but rather that model or paradigm of divine matters that the systematic theologians create through imagination and logic for understanding the Scriptures. Jack Rogers has helpfully defined paradigms and our need for them:

> Ian Barbour, a physicist and theologian, says that a model is 'a symbolic representation of selected aspects of the behavior of a complex system for particular purposes' *(Myths, Models*

and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 6). A model can be physical, like a model airplane. Or it can be mental, like the concept of an atom. A model is a tool for cutting complex things down to a manageable size and organizing them so that we can get a hold of them. It is not the same as the data we seek to describe. But it helps us enormously to understand data which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Once we have a model, then we can perhaps learn some new things about the data it represents. [118]

In sum, the model proposed by the systematic theologian provides the exegete with the final and decisive move in the interpretation of Scripture.

Now, while the paradigms proposed by the systematic theologian is essential for exegesis, we should be fully conscious of the problems associated with them. One problem with paradigms is that they restrict our view of divine matters to that data accounted for by the paradigm, but rarely do they represent the totality of Scripture. While they assist us in understanding certain aspects of Scripture we must be careful not to absolutize them in such a way that we rule out of our thinking data that does not fit them. A second problem is that we get attached to them. For psychological reasons once we commit ourselves to a paradigm we are reluctant to give it up. A third problem is that even when we have a paradigm that has problems in it we will not let go of it until we are sure we have a better one. Then too, we absolutize them so that they become authoritative as the text itself, though in theory we deny this. Finally, we find it difficult to believe that our paradigms are relative to our understanding and that with more maturity we should let them go for better ones. In short, the problem with paradigms is that we absolutize them. We fail to understand what they really are: human models to advance our understanding of the text.

NOTES

[1]G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 10.
[2]I am indebted to Caird, *Language of the Bible,* 202f. for this allusion.
[3]See Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 25-28 for a sample of some of Ernesti's key affirmations in his *Elements of Interpretation.*
[4]James Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *Themelios (1975): 3.*

[5]D. A. Carson, "Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends," *Themelios 5 (1980): 12.*

[6]Article XVIII.

'Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology,* 87f.

*Bruce J. Nicholls in *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1979), 49 strangely contrasts meaning and intention: "The purpose of this method is to discover what the biblical writer said, and it must be distinguished from the more speculative historical-critical method which aims to discover the author's intention."

[9]C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning, (New* York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 15, cited by Caird, *Language of the Bible,* p. 10.

[10]A. C. Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," in New *Testament Interpretation,* ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 317.

"James H. Olthuis, "On Interpreting an Authoritative Scripture: A Proposal for a Certitudinal Hermeneutic," in Conference Papers for *Interpreting an Authoritative Scripture,* held June 22-26, 1981, pp. 22f.

[12]Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* translation ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1975), 357f.

[13]Cited by Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 314.

[14]Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 313.

[15]Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic ," 318.

[16]B. J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology (New* York: Seabury,1972), 157, cited by Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," p. 313.

[17]I. Howard Marshall, "How Do We Interpret the Bible Today?' *Themelios,* 5 (1980): 9.

[18]J. I. Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *The Churchman,* 81 (1967): 7-21.

[19]R. Bultmann, "Das Problem der Hermeneutik," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Kirche, 47 (1950): 63,* cited by Olthuis, "Interpreting Scripture," 25f.

[20]Nicholls, *Contextualization, 30.*

[21]Olthuis, "Interpreting Scripture," 2f.

[22]Cited by Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 317.

[23]Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 317.

[24]Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 317f.

[25]For incisive criticisms of the new hermeneutics see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); Carson, "Hermeneutics," 15; Kaiser, *Exegetical* Theology, 30; J. W. Montgomery, "An Exhortation to Exhorters," in *Christianity Today,* 17 (1973): 606.

[26]Cf. Olthuis, "Interpreting Scripture," 32f.

[27]Nicholls, *Contextualization, 42.*

[28]Article X.

[29]Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 105.

[30]Cited by Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), 68.

[31]J. I. Packer, "The Adequacy of Human Language," in *Inerrancy,* ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 198.

[32]Bruce K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), I: 21 1-30.

[33]Waltke, "Textual Criticism," 211-30.

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A Response to
Historical Grammatical Problems

Kenneth L. Barker
**Executive Secretary of the
NIV Committee on Bible
Translation and Director
of the Bible Translation
Department for the New
York international Bible
Society.**

A Response to Historical Grammatical Problems

Kenneth L. Barker

First, by way of preliminary comment, I wish to state that I count it a great honor and privilege to respond to a paper by my dear friend and esteemed former colleague, Bruce Waltke. His work manifests the usual scholarship and erudition that we have come to expect of him. I find myself in agreement with probably at least 90 percent of his presentation. In fact, I will not comment on most of his paper precisely because I agree with it and can add nothing significant to it. If I differ in a minor way here and there, I do so to reflect my own viewpoint in the spirit of constructive criticism. My approach, then, is intended to be positive, not negative.

My remarks correspond to specific points in the outline to Waltke's paper.

I. PREJUDGMENT

In his discussion of the "new hermeneutic," Waltke notes, "What is new is the stress upon correcting one's unconscious prejudices regarding the Scripture's meaning" (p. 78). Goldingay underscores the importance of being open to such correction:

> It is actually impossible to study without having one's own beliefs and framework of thinking, and being influenced by them. Indeed, we need some such framework if we are to make coherent sense of the data we examine. What is important is to be open to recognizing our presuppositions, and then to be prepared for the material we are studying to challenge them and to modify the perspective with which we approached it.
>
> It is, of course, always easier to see someone else's perspective vitiate his interpretation than to see the same process at work in one's own efforts. [1]

II. BIBLICAL CRITICISM

A. Textual Criticism

Waltke believes that an editor of Book II of the Psalter "almost certainly revised the original psalms in his collection by systematically substituting Elohim for YHWH" (p. 78-79). He states: "To judge from the rules of the Qumran community, where a member was to be expelled for uttering the divine name (IQs 6:27-7:2), Book II represents a very early piece of evidence for the reverential evasion of the divine name and ought to be regarded as the product of editorial activity" (ibid.).

However, this is an oversimplification of complex literary traditions. Boling's analysis of and conclusions regarding the use of YHWH and Elohim in the Psalter have always seemed to me to be the preferred solution to this problem:

> It is highly improbable that the frequence of 'ɛlôhîm in E, where it is A-word in parallelism, could result from editorial adjustments of a pattern in which it was predominantly B-word, since this would presuppose a highly sophisticated approach to editorial problems. These distributions thus reflect preferences for sharply contrasted stylistic forms in which divine names are used in a fixed traditional order. ... Psalms which are preserved in a double recension and further indication that it was neither an aversion to one name nor a perference for the other *per se* which produced the contrasts in J and E,[2] but consistent preference for a given order in parallelism, which involves avoidance of the divine name in the first member of "Elohistic" bicola and pairs of bicola.[3]

He continues:

> ... the names for God are genuine variants and not the result of editorial adjustments in the text.
> There is not a single clear example in these doublets where *yahwêh* as B-word has been replaced by 'ɛlôhîm in the "Elohistic" passage. There are two clear examples in which *yahwêh* is the "Elohistic" B-word with variant parallels in the first position. In "Elohistic" psalms the Tetragrammaton is frequently avoided in the first colon, perfectly acceptable in the second.[4]

He concludes:

> The frequences of *yahwêh* and 'ɛlôhîm in J and E thus represent opposing stylistic preferences. The distributions of the

two in parallelism show that the basis of the opposition is a fixed traditional sequence in poetic construction. ... The common "Yahwistic" sequence, *yahwêh* (A) - 'ɛlôhîm (B), is merely reversed in E. These contrasts were also carefully preserved in Psalms with double J and E recensions.

> These conclusions pose an entirely new literary and historical problem. Both traditions must be extremely ancient in order to be so firmly established, so flatly opposed to one another, and so faithfully perpetuated in double recensions. A "late" redaction of Pss. 42-83, in which the Tetragrammaton was more or less systematically replaced by 'ɛlôhîm, becomes extremely improbable.[5]

This is a much more likely explanation of the phenomena. Or so it seems to me.

Later in this same section Waltke indicates that "the vocalized portion of the inspired text is probably more vulnerable to corruption that the written text" (p. 80). I fully concur with this judgment. However, he goes on to say, 'A comparison of the NASB with NIV will show that the former stands much closer to the Jewish text than the latter" (p. 80). Because of my position, I trust that I will be pardoned if I suggest that "much closer" be toned down to "a little closer."

B. Historical Criticism

Waltke asserts that "Matthew cites Jeremiah for a quotation taken from Zechariah (Matt. 27:9); Mark cites Isaiah as the prophet of a passage taken from Malachi (Mark 1:2)" (p. 84). But according to Hendriksen, this too is an oversimplification:

> What Matthew does ... is this: he combines two prophecies, one from Zechariah and one from Jeremiah [19]. Then he mentions not the minor prophet but the major prophet as the source of the reference. This mentioning of only one source when the allusion is to two is not peculiar to Matthew. Mark does this also. Mark 1:2, 3 refers first to Malachi, then to Isaiah. Nevertheless Mark ascribes both prophecies to "Isaiah," the major prophet .[6]

Waltke also mentions the problem of large numbers and asserts that they "are notoriously difficult to accept on face value, especially as given in the received text of Chronicles" (p. 86). This rather negative view of the Chronicler's accuracy in using numbers needs to be balanced by Payne's more positive evaluation.'

C. Literary Source Criticism

Although Waltke later appears to retract or at least qualify some of his earlier statements in this area, he nevertheless seems to make certain concessions that I personally am not willing to make (pp. 87-93). For example, it is just as reasonable to me that Genesis 1 and 2 (which I do not regard as two accounts of creation*) were composed originally by one and the same author (why not Moses?). After presenting in *summary* form a *general* account of creation (which included man and woman), the author next focuses on Adam and Eve in Eden in order to furnish more *specific* details about them in *particular.* According to Kitchen,[9] such an approach is quite common in the world of ancient Near Eastern literature. The whole narrative makes more sense to me when conceived of as a single literary unit. So-called "P" and "J" are simply structural parts of a unified whole. Waltke himself acknowledges the overall unity of the final form of Genesis. I prefer to attribute this unity to a single author (Moses, in my view) who organized his work around the literary device of the *tōledōt* formula.

But perhaps I have partially misunderstood my friend, since he himself concludes, "Now if we can establish ancient material in the sources and cannot establish later material in them, and if the fusion could have taken place at a very early period, we have no reason to reject out of hand the notion that Moses authored the essential core of the Pentateuchal material" (p. 93).

D. The Problem of Oral Tradition

Here his treatment and conclusion are excellent. I heartily agree with his final statement: "that Israel transmitted their precious spiritual cargo in the leaky boat of oral tradition turns out to be a nonexistent ghost" (pp. 99).

III. THE CONTEXT

A. The Linguistic Context

1. Problems in Lexicography

Waltke makes the rather bold pronouncement that the NIV "erred in rendering *ysd* in Ps. 8:2 by 'ordain', a meaning attested only in postexilic Hebrew but never in preexilic Hebrew, where it always means 'to lay a foundation' " (p. 101). This may be another oversimplification, since one must always be open to the possibility that later research will prove the conclusion about *ysd* wrong-particularly in the light of the Septuagint and New Testament rendering (Matt. *21:* 16).

Shortly after this, one encounters a very helpful definition of "the fear of the LORD": it is " 'Gods revealed will,' its objective reality, and 'man's unconditional surrender to it,' its subjective reality" (p. 101).

I have hermeneutical problems with the statement, "A parable such as the prodigal son is also intended to have as many interpretations as there are hearers" (p. 106). Probably most of us would agree with Ramm that we should "look for the one central thesis of the parable ."[10]

B. The Literary Context

It is my judgment that in his advocacy of a "spiritualizing" approach to much of the prophetic literature (pp. 1 10- 12) Waltke goes too far, the discussion is too subjective, and there are not enough hermeneutical controls over the exegetical or interpretative process.

Waltke's claim that O'Connor's method of analyzing Hebrew poetry replaces "roughly defined semantic parallelism" (p. 114) is an overstatement of the case. O'Connor's principles *supplement* thought parallelism, but they do not 'supplant it. Thought parallelism-particularly synonymous parallelism-is simply too transparent in Hebrew (and Ugaritic) poetry to be discounted.

C. The Cultural Context

Some Old Testament scholars challenge the view that Israel's cosmology conceived of a "a three-tiered universe consisting of heavens above, earth beneath and waters below the earth" (p. 118). [11]

Later the question is raised: "Does Genesis 1 also serve a polemic intention against worshiping the creation rather than its Creator?" (p. 117). My answer is "Yes." Indeed, I would add that Genesis 1 is a polemic against competing views of creation, as I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere. [12]

D. The Situational Context

To the discussion of what I would call the false dichotomy between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law (pp. 119-21) I would add the Pharisaic view of the Sabbath in the New Testament. Jesus made it clear that it is *always* lawful and right to do good and to save life (Matt. 12:12; Luke 6:9; 13:15-16; 14:5). In my opinion, such an understanding had always been God's intention for the *spirit*

of the law of the Sabbath.[13] He had never intended that the Sabbath law prohibit doing good and saving life.

E. The Scriptural Context

I agree wholeheartedly with Waltke's contention (against Kaiser) that "in addition to exegeting a text's original sense, the exegetical process is incomplete until it is exegeted in the light of the entire canon. The Old Testament ought to be exegeted in the light of the New Testament." (p. 122).[14] Similarly, Johnson argues, "Thus the work of the biblical interpreter is not necessarily finished when he has come to the meaning intended by the original human author."[15] He continues, "The total context of a passage is necessary for its correct understanding and, therefore, the intention of the secondary author must be subordinated to the intention of the primary author, God Himself."[16] Saphir illustrates the point:

> Supposing that there is a little plant before me. I can examine it. But supposing that I have a powerful microscope. I look at it, and now I can see a number of things which before were entirely non-existent to me. Have I put anything into that plant that was not there before? Have I changed the plant? Have I introduced my pet ideas into that plant? So, when we read Leviticus with the light of the epistle to the Hebrews; when we read the whole Old Testament with the light of the evangelists and the epistles, that is exposition, not imposition. We do not put anything into it. The Holy Spirit enlarges our vision to see what is there. [17]

Goldingay likewise addresses this issue:

> Finally, are OT and NT theology to be studied in isolation from each other? ... theologically it seems questionable. The Bible as a whole is the nonnative context for interpreting any one of its parts; therefore to fence off one area (Old or New) and generalize about it in isolation seems likely to lead (and has led) to imbalance. Christian theology needs a biblical theology, rather than an OT theology which has difficulty in referring to Christ, or a NT theology which omits the NT's nonnative but unspoken theological background and context. [18]

As Waltke astutely observes, "Students of Aristotle and other literate men exegete their individual compositions in the light of all their works. Why should we do less when considering the works of the Holy Spirit?' (p. 122).

Unfortunately, there are occasional differences of opinion among us as to how the New Testament is interpreting the Old Testament in specific instances. For example, Waltke claims that "the present age fulfills" the Davidic Covenant and that "it will be consummated in the eternal state" (p. 123). This depends on what one means by "present age." In my view, the New Covenant em includes the present church period and a future literal form of the Messianic kingdom on this earth in time-space history, as I have argued elsewhere.[19]

To Waltke's discussion of the analogy of faith and the rule of faith (p. 124) I would add a reference to the treatment by Ramm.[20] Waltke declares that all too often practitioners of the historico-grammatical method of exegesis "allow their creeds to usurp the place of the author's intended meaning" (p. 124). I concur. Indeed, in my opinion, the rule-of-faith procedure should not be part of our exegetical method. Even the church must be prepared, if necessary, to modify its traditions, creeds and confessions if biblical exegesis and biblical theology clearly dictate that it should. I personally do not believe that this will ever need to happen in the case of commonly accepted cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, but it could easily happen in the case of the church's understanding of other doctrines and specific passages of Holy Scripture.

F. The Theological Context

Similarly, we must be willing to revise and refine our systematic theology if biblical exegesis and biblical theology indicate that we should do so. If this means that systematic theology (other than in the areas of universally acknowledged cardinal doctrines of historic Christianity) must, at least to some extent, be always in a state of flux, so be it. As Waltke points out, probably the chief problem with systematic theology paradigms "is that we absolutize them. We fail to understand what they really are: human models to advance our understanding of the text" (p. 125). But if "our understanding of the text" requires us, in turn, to revise our systematic theology paradigms, we must be prepared to do precisely that. Otherwise, inerrancy no longer attaches to the text of Scripture but to our understanding of it. After all, this is the International Council on *Biblical* Inerrancy, not the International Council on *Ecclesiastical* Inerrancy. Therefore, in the final analysis, Scripture itself, when interpreted properly through the process of biblical exegesis and when synthesized legitimately

through the process of biblical theology, must stand in judgment on all our humanly devised systems of dogmatic theology. For Goldingay's assertion is valid: "Dogmatic theology has often imposed its own concerns on biblical study and hindered the Bible's own concerns and categories from emerging."[21]

[17]Adolph Saphir, *The Divine Unity of Scripture (New* York: Hodder, 1895), 64; cited by Johnson, *Old Testament in the New,* 108.
[18]Goldingay, *Approaches,* p. 36.
[19]Barker, "False Dichotomies."
[20]Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 125-28.*
[21]Goldingay, *Approaches, 21.*

NOTES

'John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grover: Intervarsity, 1981), 18.

[2]Boling uses J and E merely as a means of convenient classification of the psalms in which Yahweh (or Jahweh) and Elohim predominate, respectively, not in reference to Pentateuchal documents or sources.

[3]Robert G. Boling, " 'Synonymous' Parallelism in the Psalms," *Journal of Semitic Studies 5* (July 1960): 248.

[4]Boling, " 'Synonymous' Parallelism," 250.

[5]Boling, " 'Synonymous' Parallelism," 254-55.

[6]William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, New* Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker 1973), 948.

[7]J. Barton Payne, "Part 1: The Validity of the Numbers in Chronicles," *Bibliotheca Sacra 136* (April-June 1979): 109-28; idem, "The Validity of the Numbers in Chronicles: Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra 136* (July-September 1979): 206-20.

[8]Nor does Aalders so regard them. He writes: "The revelation about the creation of the world is followed by a description of the history of that created world. The first scene portrayed in that history is Paradise and the events associated with it, primarily the Fall into Sin." G. Ch. Aalders, Genesis: Bible *Student's Commentary, 2* vols. trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1981), 1:78. He further states that "it is certainly incorrect to call Genesis 2:4b-3:24 a second creation narrative. The contents of this section clearly belie such a designation." Ibid., 79.

[9]K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity 1966), 116-19.

[10]Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956), 261.

[11]See, for example, Walter C. Kaiser's discussion in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,* ed. R. Laird Harris et al. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:501.

[12]Kenneth L. Barker, "The Value of Ugaritic for Old Testament Studies," *Bibliotheca Sacra 133* (April-June 1976): 120-21.

[13]Cf. Kenneth L. Barker, "False Dichotomies between the Testaments," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 25* (March 1982).

[14]Barker, "False Dichotomies."

[15]S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 51.

[16]Ibid. Johnson, *Old Testament in the New,* 51.

Historical Grammatical Problems

Allan A. MacRae
President of Biblical
   Theological Seminary and
   Professor of Old
   Testament

A Response to Historical Grammatical Problems

Allan A. MacRae

After being asked to respond to a paper on "Historical Grammatical Problems" I was surprised to find that very few of its twenty sections deal with either grammar or history. Perhaps the content of the paper could be better represented by such a title as "Problems confronting those who attempt grammatico-historical interpretation of the Bible."

Much of the paper deals with matters of great importance, many of them subjects to which I have devoted years of research and thought. My views regarding some of them differ substantially from those in the paper to which I am responding. I trust that this will not be considered as in any way a reflection against the author personally.

I read the paper by Dr. Waltke with great interest. There are many statements in it with which I wholeheartedly agree. There are others with which I feel a strong disagreement. One matter is so basic that I would like to respond to it at length before dealing with the sections of the paper in order. I refer to material on pages 22-25 and elsewhere that speaks approvingly of the division of Genesis l-2 into documents that it designates as P and J, and thus endorses the foundation stone of what has been called the Higher Criticism, the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen theory, and, more recently, "Orthodox Literary Criticism of the Pentateuch." (It should be noted that in this Connection "orthodox" does not mean "in line with generally accepted Christian ideas" but "in line with the views that were held by most biblical critics between 1880 and 1920.")

There are several reasons why I am disturbed by the use of the terms P and J and by statements in support of the ideas that they represent:

1. There has been no movement more effective in destroying Christian faith than the "Higher Criticism." A century ago most of the so-called evangelical denominations in Europe and America accepted the Bible as inerrant and proclaimed its great central doctrines.

Today there are leaders in most of those denominations who strongly oppose belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and many of them deny the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. No force has been more effective in producing this change than the spread of the Wellhausen theories, which introduced the terms P and J.

2. The terms P and J originated from the Wellhausen theory and represent a denial of the Pentateuch as containing historical truth. The symbol P stands for "Priestly Document" and implies Wellhausen's claim that many parts of the Pentateuch are taken from a long document composed by the Jerusalem priests centuries after the time of Moses in order to enhance their own authority and income. The symbol J is derived from the German representation of YHWH, the personal name of God that is used preeminently in connection with God's dealings with mankind, and particularly in connection with those who would be the special objects of His love and care. This name, represented in the KJV by LORD, occurs frequently in the book of Genesis and almost universally in the other four books of the Pentateuch, which particularly involve Gods dealings with His covenant people. The symbol J represents an alleged document, written before P, but still long after the events that it claimed to describe. The name represented by YHWH actually occurs far more often in the so-called P document than in the J document.

To many readers, use of Wellhausen's symbols would seem to imply that his antichristian reconstruction of Bible history is true. Wellhausen declared that we can learn nothing from the Pentateuch about the time with which it deals, but only about the evolutionary development of the religion of Israel, many centuries after the supposed time of Moses.

3. These terms reflect the continuing use of concepts and attitudes that most secular literary scholars abandoned nearly half a century ago. In fact, many of them have forgotten that their discipline ever wandered in these erroneous bypaths.

The history of science is filled with movements that have flourished for a time and then have been abandoned. For centuries it was held that one of the best ways of treating most diseases was to remove blood from one's body. This was done by either making a cut or attaching leeches that would suck out some of the blood. Some historians believe that George Washington's death was due to well-intentioned efforts to relieve him of a minor malady by bleeding him. As recently as fifty years ago advertisements in Philadelphia offered leeches for sale for medical purposes. Today the exact opposite is universally held and blood banks and transfusions are commonplace.

Use of the terms J and P, as well as a number of related statements in the paper, reflect a blind alley in which general literary study wandered for over a century. Although most students of general literature abandoned such efforts nearly fifty years ago, these attempts to divide biblical documents into alleged but otherwise undocumented sources are still taught as valid procedure in many university departments of religion and in nearly every theological seminary that is over sixty years old, even though no ancient copy of a J document or a P document has come to light, and there is no reference to any such document in any ancient writing.

Early in the present century it was often said by those who espoused the theories of source criticism that we must treat the Bible the same way we would treat any other book. Unfortunately most Bible students, whether conservative, liberal, or radical, are quite unaware of an important fact: the idea that great literary works have been composed by the interweaving of various sources and can be reasonably separated into original component parts was strongly attacked by prominent literary critics during the first third of the present century, and was so completely demolished that it has not only been abandoned by most students of literature but has almost been forgotten.

When source criticism was introduced into the Pentateuch its proponents declared that anyone familiar with literary study would know exactly what was meant by the term "Higher Criticism" because of its use in connection with general literature. About twenty years ago I looked at all the standard works on literary criticism in the University of Pennsylvania library and found that few even listed the term "Higher Criticism" in the index. In the rare cases where it appeared it proved to be only a reference to biblical criticism, and not related to general literary criticism at all.

This trend in literary studies began in Germany during the eighteenth century and was first applied to such great classics as the writings of Homer, which F. A. Wolf declared to have been formed by the combining of several previous writings. Goethe was so impressed by Wolf's genius that he asked Wolf's daughter to hide him in the closet in Wolf's classroom so that he could hear the professor lecture without embarrassing him by his presence. Yet later, as Goethe continued to study the *Iliad* he publicly repudiated his former stand, declaring that the essential unity of the work proved that it could only have been produced by one man, though of course the author might

have drawn many of his ideas from stories that were already in circulation.

The famous literary scholar, Karl Lachmann, devoted much time to detecting sources in Homer, and declared that the newly-discovered *Nibelungenlied* had been composed by the fusion of twenty different lays.

Scherer claimed that diversities of style and inner contradictions in the Prologue of *Faust* showed that certain lines had been written in the enthusiasm of Goethe's youth and others inserted in the disillusionment of his old age, Long after Goethe's death a manuscript copy of *Faust* was found, that had been copied while he was comparatively young, and it proved to include the lines that had been labeled as later insertions.

Many followed J. M. Manly in declaring that *Piers Plowman,* the great English poem from the fourteenth century, was really the work of five men. Others thought it was formed by the joining of three sources. The process of dividing ancient and medieval writings into alleged original sources was carried to great extremes.

Yet as scholars continued their search for sources it came to be recognized that most good writers use several different styles and that even in the writings that are known to be composite it is extremely difficult to identify the parts written by various individuals. Richard Altick says: "Though we know that half a dozen men (Swift, Arbuthnot , Pope, Gay, Parnell, and the Earl of Oxford) composed the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus,* we cannot positively isolate the contributions of any one of them."[1] Professor René Wellek of Yale University wrote: "Even in the case of Beaumont and Fletcher, in which we have the advantage of having work definitely only by Fletcher written after the death of Beaumont, the division between their shares is not established beyond controversy; and the case is completely lost with *The Revenger's Tragedy* which has been assigned to Webster, Tourneur, Middleton, and Marston alternatively or in various combinations ."[2]

Early in the present century a reaction against the whole divisive criticism appeared among literary scholars, who began to insist that a great work of art must have a single author, though, of course, this author may draw ideas from many sources. Professor R. W. Chambers of the University of London scoffed at the idea that "those lost lays" were of such a character that an epic could be made by fitting them together. He said: "Half a dozen motor-bikes cannot be combined to make a Rolls-Royce car."[3]

Most literary scholars now are willing to accept the claim of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch of Cambridge University that *Piers Plowman* is a single work, written by William Langland.[4]

In his *Preface to World Literature (1940)* Professor Albert Guerard of Standord University gave his evaluation of the Homeric controversy, saying: "Internal evidence, of a convincing nature, reveals a commanding artistic personality. To dissolve Homer into a myth or a committee, much stronger acid would be needed than the Wolfian school has been able to supply."[5]

In 1962 George Steiner described the changed attitude toward the divisive theories. He wrote:

In the late 19th century dismemberment was all the rage. ... The plays attributed to that illiterate actor Shakespeare appeared to have been compiled by a committee which included Bacon, the Earl of Oxford, Marlowe, recusant Catholics, and printers' devils of extraordinary ingenuity. This fine fury of decomposition lasted well into the 1930's. As late as 1934 Gilbert Murray could discover no reputable scholar ready to defend the view that a single poet had written either or both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* Today the wheel has come full turn. ... To Professor Whitman of Harvard, the central personal vision and "ineradicable unity" of the *Iliad are* beyond doubt.[6]

In 1963 Robert Gordis wrote:

We may note the growing disfavor in which the atomization of ancient literary documents is viewed by contemporary scholarship. Increasingly, the study of ancient literature, like that of the Homeric epics, has been focusing attention on the unity and meaning of the whole work rather than upon the disparity of the constituent elements. That the indiscriminate (and even accidental) lumping together of scattered literary fragments by an obtuse redactor, who often did not understand the material he was working with, could produce a masterpiece-that naive faith of 19th century literary critics is no longer widely held today.'

Professor H. Gardner of Oxford has said:

The modern scholar or critic concentrates in the first place on making what he can of his text as it has come down to him. There has been a strong reaction against the study of even extant and known sources, much more against the discussion of hypothetical ones. .. The importance of the single author and

the single work dominates literary studies, as can be seen if the plan and treatment of the new *Oxford History of English Literature,* now in progress, is compared with that of the old Cambridge History.[8]

My fourth reason for wishing that no trace of the method so generally abandoned in literary studies were retained among believers in biblical authority is the fact that source-hunting, as now practiced in Bible departments, no longer can be said to possess what was formerly its most effective argument, the claim that it was a system agreed upon in its major positions by all critical scholars. It is true that during the first fifth of this century most of the various scholarly presentations of the higher criticism agreed very closely. But this unanimity has been completely shattered. To understand this we should briefly examine the history of the criticism of the Pentateuch.

Starting at about A. D. 1800 various theories of the division of the Pentateuch into alleged sources were presented by a number of scholars in Germany and other countries. For some time one theory after another of the alleged origin of various parts of the Pentateuch came into favor. By 1878 the so-called supplement hypothesis was held by most of the believers in source criticism. Then Julius Wellhausen, a brilliant German scholar who possessed unusual ability to write in a very clear style, wrote his "Prolegomena to the History of Israel" in which he presented a theory that completely reversed the previous ideas of the nature and sources of the Pentateuch. The theory that he advanced was so startlingly different from previous views that it was called a Copernican revolution. It claimed to show the evolution of the Israelite religion from very primitive ideas to a very complicated system of ritual.

At that time evolution was sweeping much of the scholarly world and Wellhausen's theory appealed greatly to the younger scholars though most of the older scholars continued to hold the supplement theory to the end of their lives. Wellhausen's ideas were introduced into England by W. Robertson Smith, S. R. Driver, and T. K. Cheyne, and in the course of a few years they came to be accepted as certain in the religion departments of most British and American universities as well as in many theological seminaries.

The process of disintegration was soon extended to other parts of the Old and New Testaments and there is hardly an Old Testament book that critics have not claimed to analyze into a series of separate sources, most of which could not be proven to have ever had a separate existence.

For nearly fifty years Wellhausen's complete system was taught as established fact in most university departments of religion and in an increasing number of theological seminaries. Wellhausen himself was so sure that his ideas were correct that he paid no attention to the developing science of archaeology. However, others did, and they found that at point after point the findings of archaeology were proving statements in the Pentateuch to fit the background of the time at which they claimed to be written and not to fit the background of the time of writing required by the Wellhausen theory. As a result, scholars began revising the theory at one point after another, and soon a great diversity of opinion developed. In 1929 Dr. William F. Albright said to me: "In Germany there are now only two orthodox Wellhausenists left, and even they are not orthodox." In succeeding years more and more variety was introduced into the theory with hardly any two scholars agreeing.

About twenty years ago I examined a number of standard detailed books about the Pentateuch, written by leading supporters of the Wellhausen theory. When a chart was made with various colors to indicate their views of the alleged J, E, and P documents it showed more differences than agreements among them. In his commentary on the book of Genesis in the *Anchor Bible,* E. A. Speiser pointed out that all previous critics had agreed in assigning Gen. 29:24 and 29 to P, as they were "the type of statistical detail that is customary with P," but declared on the basis of the Nuzi tablets that "it is precisely these two verses that are most likely to constitute direct transcripts from some old and authentic document."[9]

Today the alleged consensus can no longer be claimed. Every critic has his own theory of sources, though most try to preserve the Wellhausenist terminology.

We shall look at other aspects of this matter later on, when we look at Literary Source Criticism as we go through the paper in order. Now we shall begin to respond to its successive parts, as far as time and space permit.

The introduction makes the following statement about "grammatico-historical exegesis": "The divisions between those within the church employing this method of exegesis bears mute testimony to the fact that the method has problems" (p. 73).

Personally I incline strongly to the opinion that most of the divisions among Christians are not the result of problems in using the grammatico-historical method, but rather of failure to use it. All too often we go to the Bible to find proof texts to support views that we

already hold instead of carefully examining the Bible to see what each sentence actually says. I believe that the principal need in **her-meneutics** is unbiased lexical and grammatical study of the Bible, comparing passage with passage to see what God has said, rather than spending much time in consideration of the ideas of those who reject our basic view that the Bible is God's **inerrant** word through which He desires to tell His people what He wants them to know.

I. PREJUDGMENT

An especially common form of this danger is present when one approaches a verse with an idea of a definite truth taught elsewhere in the Scripture and assumes that this is the subject of the particular verse. When I was still a seminary student I was sometimes shocked at hearing a verse that seemed at first sight to contradict a particular theological truth so treated by the professor as to rob the verse of all meaning whatever. I felt that the Lord must have had a reason for placing the verse in the Scripture and that we should seek to discover that reason rather than to try to explain it away.

One of the greatest needs for interpreting Scripture is to make every possible effort to avoid allowing prejudgments or presuppositions to influence one's interpretation. It might be helpful to begin by trying to interpret each verse in as many ways as possible, even including those that might seem to contradict what had already been learned from other passages, and then carefully to weigh each suggested interpretation. What God expresses in one place will not contradict what he has stated elsewhere, but the words would not be there unless God intended to convey a definite idea and it would be worth a substantial effort to discover the meaning of the particular verse. It might alter some detail of our understanding of something taught elsewhere, or perhaps add a new fact or angle.

At the moment I am busily preparing a study of the prophecies of Daniel. Apart from a few main facts clearly taught in the New Testament I am trying very hard to avoid bringing in anything that is not specifically contained in the statements in the book of Daniel, and when studying its earlier prophecies I am carefully refraining from reading into them anything gained from later prophecies, although I feel it altogether right in interpreting his later prophecies to take into account material gleaned from his earlier ones. I am looking at every reasonable interpretation, but excluding from my conclusions everything that would be at all questionable, not because I do not believe that great progress can be made by study of the Scripture as a whole, but because I feel that one of the great needs, particularly in the area of prophecy, is to study each section very carefully, avoiding prejudgment as much as possible, in order: (1) to see exactly what the section definitely teaches; (2) to see what it may possibly teach; and (3) to determine what ideas should be definitely excluded from the particular passage.

Dr. **Waltke** deserves credit for beginning the paper with this emphasis on the danger of prejudgment. Yet I see no reason why it should be necessary to give credit to any so-called new hermeneutics for something that should have been recognized throughout the history of interpretation, nor do I feel that the importance of the matter is strengthened by quotations from men whose vision is clouded by their failure to accept the Bible's claim to inerrancy. His remarks about "the pitfalls of the new hermeneutics" in the first half of the middle paragraph on page 8 would seem to give sufficient reason for Bible believers to avoid this particular movement.

II. BIBLICAL CRITICISM

A. Textual Criticism

God has enabled us to possess far more manuscript copies of the Old Testament and of the New Testament than of any other ancient writing. Many a text of an ancient Greek or Roman classic has been preserved to us in only one copy-sometimes in one written as late as the twelfth century A.D.; yet material from such a copy may be used to n-y to contradict a statement in all the manuscript copies of the Bible. The amount of material available to us for textual criticism of the Bible is so great that there are very few questions of real significance about the actual wording of either Testament.

God has stated and emphasized in Scripture the important truths He wishes His people to have. I know of no variation attested by any substantial number of manuscripts that affects any important teaching. I know of no place where the deletion of a word, phrase, or verse that is said not to be in the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament would remove any thought from the Scripture.

The question whether the last sixteen verses of the Gospel of Mark were original or not is of no real importance, though I am very sure that Mark did not end with the statement "and they were afraid." There must have been an original ending, whether by these words or by others. These verses contain hardly anything that is not already present in the parallel passage in Luke. About the only thing in them

that is unique is the statement that "they will take up serpents and not be hurt," and properly interpreted this gives no basis for making public displays or taking foolish risks. It was spoken to the disciples and was literally fulfilled at Malta when Paul accidentally took up the viper and suffered no injury from it, though the bystanders expected him to die.

In both Testaments textual criticism is a very interesting study, but for interpretation its importance is minimal, though the exegete should be aware of textual problems in order that he may avoid building any conclusion on a verse in which there is a serious textual problem. Every important idea in Scripture is clearly presented in verses on which there is no such problem.

When a textual difference causes real uncertainty the exegete should see what the two renderings have in common and stop there. The purpose of Scripture is to give us the thoughts God wishes us to have, and I believe we have ample material for discovering them.

B. Historical Criticism

Under this head Dr. Waltke has made some excellent statements about the dangers of illegitimate historical criticism and then has mentioned six connections in which historical criticism is said to be legitimate. Under the first of these he points out that the biblical writers, like ourselves, sometimes use conventional language. Thus when we say "the sun set," the Hebrew would say, "the sun went in."

It seems strange to place under "conventional language" a discussion of the authorship of biblical books. The paper says that we should accept the claim of Psalm 110 to Davidic authorship at face value, but seems to question the validity of all other biblical statements about authorship when it says that "we need to determine authorship of a book on other grounds than merely an appeal to the biblical notices regarding authorship."

I agree that we need to interpret carefully on this point, and to determine in each case whether a statement refers specifically to a writer or speaker, or whether it is merely a conventional way to indicate a book or perhaps to refer to a group of books that might begin with the one mentioned. All these methods are in common use today in referring to sources.

When the New Testament says that Moses made a certain statement, belief in inerrancy would require that we accept it as a fact that Moses actually did make such a statement. In Romans 9:27,29;

10:16,20; and 15:12, Paul specifically quotes from Isaiah the man and thus the Holy Spirit placed His seal upon the authenticity of the first, second, and third sections of Isaiah, and denied in advance the modern critical theory of three Isaiahs.

I do not agree with the inference on page 84 that Jude quoted from the rambling apocryphal book of Enoch. When Jude says that Enoch made a certain statement, we who believe in inerrancy have no doubt that Enoch did so, though we do not know whether God revealed this fact to Jude or whether his statement was based on an ancient tradition that the Holy Spirit authenticated. In either case the statement gives us no warrant for saying that Jude considered the apocryphal book of Enoch to be inspired.

The second suggestion is that we should reckon with the reality that "the biblical writers believed in dual causation of events." This merely points to the fact that while God controls all things and is the prime mover behind everything that happens, the liberty of lesser beings is also a fact and we are responsible for what we do. Thus it is true to say that God tempted David and equally true to say that Satan tempted David.

The third point discussed here is that of deciding what literary genre is involved. Here I would say that parables and allegories are usually designated as such in Scripture. When there is no clear designation we should go slow about being dogmatic.

In the fourth area mentioned I find myself in strong disagreement. I do not believe "that numbers in the Bible are notoriously difficult to accept on face value." The first response includes a good treatment of this point, but I would like to add two remarks: (1) except for foreign proper names, numbers are the most difficult materials to transmit accurately; (2) in dealing with numbers there is always the possibility that some factor with which we are not familiar is involved. Thus until recently the numbers given for the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah were considered quite impossible to harmonize. We are grateful to E. R. Thiele for having brought to the interpretation of these numbers some previously unrecognized principles of chronology. In his introduction to Thiele's book, Professor William A. Irwin of the University of Chicago, who is certainly no conservative on biblical matters, said, "It is a matter of first-rate importance to learn now that the books of Kings are reliable in precisely that feature which formerly excited only derision." While the possibility of an occasional textual error must be admitted, particularly in the case of numbers, Professor Irwin mentions the fact

that even in pre-Christian times these numbers were thought to be quite corrupt, but says, "The vast bulk of them are precise to the point of **astonishment**."[10]

The fifth point mentioned is that "the speeches in Acts and elsewhere are abbreviated versions of what was actually said and to that extent do not precisely represent the situation." It should be pointed out that it is never possible to "precisely" represent a historical situation since there are always innumerable facts involved. One has to make a selection and can be precise only to a certain point. We can trust what the Bible says, but should not read into it a degree of precision beyond what is intended. If it says an event follows another event, that makes the order clear. If it simply mentions two events without indicating which came first, we have no right to be sure, without further evidence, as to the order in which they occurred, or whether one followed the other immediately or with an interval between. Thus 2 Kings 19:36-37 mentions Sennacherib's return to Nineveh and immediately tells of his assassination, with no mention of the twenty years between these two events. Scriptural accounts may be arranged in chronological or logical order and we have no right to assume a particular order unless it is so stated in the narrative.

C. The Problem of Oral Tradition

Since these three subjects are closely related I shall discuss them together. Dr. Waltke has done a very excellent job of demolishing the idea, so strongly presented by the Scandinavian school of critics, that much of the content of the Pentateuch was passed on by oral tradition for centuries with many changes, and that in the course of this oral tradition various segments were brought together and interwoven until finally the present form was reached. I believe he summarizes it very well when he says, "In all of the Eastern literatures we have considered there is not one reference to the hypothetical tradent , the key to traditional criticism. This central figure in the source critical theories that Israel transmitted their precious cargo in the leaky boat of oral tradition turns out to be a non-existent ghost." (p. 99). I thoroughly concur with this conclusion regarding the views of the **Upsala** school of critics, but feel that the same words ought to be applied to "source criticism" and "literary source criticism." While these sections contain some very excellent statements they also include some that impress me as being based on unwarranted assumptions.

The first sentence in the section on "Literary Source Criticism"

includes the words, "when these four criteria are brought to bear on Gen. 1:1-2:25, they work together consistently in dividing this passage into two distinct creation stories."

I find it necessary to differ sharply with this statement which supports the foundation stone of the Wellhausen theory, and I am grieved by the presence of similar statements in the following pages. I do not believe that the four criteria mentioned prove that these are "two distinct creation stories ."

The criteria named are, "varying divine names, doublets, linguistic differences, and diverse theologies." We shall briefly look at each of them.

The alternation of various names may seem strange to the American or English reader, because it is different from our usual custom. Yet many writers in other languages frequently use various names for an individual and even oscillate back and forth between them. The name of the patriarch Jacob was changed to Israel, but both names continued to be used in combination with the two names for God as a means of producing two consistent documents.

All of us at times use different names for an individual in different connections, depending on the particular relationship. Thus a woman may speak of her husband to her close friends as "Henry," to her **chilren** as "Dad," and to strangers as "Dr. Smith." Having begun with one usage it is natural to continue it until there is reason to switch to another.

In Gen. 1: 1-2:4, which tells of the creation of the universe, the general name which stresses God's power is most appropriate. In the next few chapters, which give details of the creation of human beings and describe God's dealings with them, the most appropriate name is the one represented in the KJV by "the LORD," which shows God in an intimate relation with His people.

The second criterion is called "doublets." This can hardly mean that the stories are doublets in their entirety. Genesis 1 tells of the creation of the heavens and the earth; of light; of the sun, moon, and stars; of plants; and of animals. None of these acts of creation are described in Genesis 2. The only real point of overlapping is the creation of mankind, which is briefly portrayed in its proper place in the course of chapter 1, and described in more detail in chapter 2. (Some critics say that God's planting a garden is a doublet to God's creation of vegetation and that God's bringing the animals to Adam to see what he would name them is a doublet to God's creating the

animals, but these alleged doublets are obviously far-fetched.) There is really only a slight amount of overlapping."

As an analogy to the relation of these two chapters we might suggest an account of a trip around the world before air travel became common. The first chapter might contain a short survey of the voyage across the Atlantic from New York, the cities visited in Europe and Asia and the boat nip across the Pacific to San Francisco, and a brief statement of having driven across the United States and been joyfully welcomed home. The second chapter might begin at San Francisco and tell of the problems involved in selecting and buying a car, the difficulties and disappointments experienced while roads were still unpaved and cross-country travel still uncommon, the visit with relatives along the way, and the changes that had occurred at home while the writer was making his journey.

There would be doublets: both chapters would describe trips and both would tell that America was crossed by automobile. Further doublets could be found by noting the similarity of one or two incidents in Europe with some of the same experiences in America. Doublets would not prove different sources unless there were unexplainable contradictions.

The third criterion is "linguistic differences." It is hard to see how this term would apply unless the material were in a different dialect. Probably what is meant is differences in style. The next page says the "P's style is formal and straightforward, J's is that of a storyteller." I am sure that many writers use both of these styles, depending on the subject matter. In the analogy of the trip around the world, the first chapter could easily be "formal and straightforward," briefly listing places visited and expenses at each; the second could be developed "by means of a dramatic plot" as it described interesting experiences while motoring across America. It would be at least as easy to find linguistic differences as in Genesis 1 and 2, perhaps easier since an occasional word in a foreign tongue might occur in the first part.

The fourth criterion is called "diverse theologies." This can hardly mean that the theological view of the two chapters contradict each other, for it is said on page 90, "We should stoutly deny that the sources contradict one another." If it means only that one chapter stresses the transcendence of God and the other His immanence, it is my feeling that either of these thoughts about God is incomplete without the other, though I do not feel distressed when emphasis is put on one of them without the other being immediately mentioned.

We can hardly expect every chapter of the Bible to cover every aspect of theology. I see no reason on this account to say that these two chapters must originally have been separate accounts of creation.

On pages 90-92 enough errors and weaknesses of literary source criticism are mentioned to seem in my opinion to prove the whole procedure unworthy of confidence. Since the method has been abandoned in general literary studies and does not work out consistently in biblical studies, and since no copies of manuscripts P and J have ever been found it is my opinion it is better to jettison the method altogether.

Personally I would feel much happier if the section ended on a more positive note than the one that is sounded in its concluding sentence: "we have no reason to reject out of hand the notion that Moses authored the essential core of the Pentateuchal material."

III. THE CONTEXT

A. The Linguistic Context

Of the six contexts listed, this is by far the most important. Dr. Waltke's discussion includes many important suggestions for which we should be grateful.

I do not think he is right in saying that before deciding on the author's use of a word it is necessary to decide the date of his material. On page 103 he laments the lack of a good historical grammar of the Hebrew language in English, but I am quite sure that there is not enough material available for anyone to make a trustworthy historical grammar of Hebrew. If this knowledge were necessary to understand the Bible, God would have provided us with such material.

On page 104 he points out the difficulty of exact understanding of the meaning of Hebrew tenses. English has a very extensive set of tenses while Hebrew has very few. I do not feel that H. Sperber is right in suggesting that we do away with the terms "perfect" and "imperfect." In spite of occasional difficulties we can say that as a general rule the perfect tense refers to an event in past time, while the imperfect generally points to future time or to something that is future to the event or situation that immediately precedes its use. It is all too easy for a careless exegete to ignore the differences in the tenses. Thus Isaiah 53 ends with four verbs, three of which are in the perfect and the last in the imperfect, but most translations completely ignore this difference. They translate the last phrase as if it were merely a repetition of the general thought included in the first

three. Yet if the verbs are translated literally, the meaning becomes immediately apparent. While the first three very aptly describe the atoning work of Christ at Calvary, God enabled Isaiah, by the fourth verb, to look forward to the later activity of Christ, as He sits at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

The listing of functions of language as informative, **performative**, etc. seems to me to raise more questions than it solves. Dr. Waltke has well said that it is "best not to translate these emotive expressions by the dynamic equivalent and in another language because they are not precise enough."

B. The Literary Context

This section begins with a somewhat confusing attempt to label the genres of various parts of the Bible. To say that Genesis 1 is not history because no man was present to record the events may be only a quibble about words. After all, God is a person, and He was there. Since the events really happened, I prefer to call it history.

To say that a chapter is both an account of an important event in the life of the first human beings and also a picture of every man and woman opens the door to all sorts of allegorizing. It would be better to restrict exegesis to determination of the actual event and its effects and to consider lessons drawn from it as application rather than exegesis. Use of the term "suprahistorical" adds nothing to understanding.

C. The Cultural Context

As the first response has suggested, the statement that writers of the Bible believed in a three-tiered universe rests on an arbitrary translation of certain biblical statements that was colored by the misunderstanding of the translators.

There is an interesting question on page 119: "To what extent does Israel adopt the forms of pagan religions?' The history in the Bible shows them doing this repeatedly, and the prophets constantly rebuked them for it. The conflict between what God had ordered and what neighboring peoples did was unending. People then, as today, were always faced with the decision between God and Baal.

It seems strange to give Bronner credit for trying to prove the obvious-that the immediate purpose of the work of Elijah and Elisha was to lead the Israelites to follow God rather than Baal. But to go on from this obvious fact to the question about the intention of **Gen-**

esis 1 is rather fanciful. Any writing may accomplish many results. But the purpose of Genesis 1 is clear: to tell how it all began.

D. The Situational Context

This chapter presents the question of which laws are intended to be temporary and which permanent. It is not always easy to distinguish the moral law, which is of permanent duration and validity, from civil law, which is an application of the moral law to specific situations. Careful study of the relevant passages is needed.

E. The Scriptural Context

Next to A. The Linguistic Context, this is the most important part of this section of the paper. Study of the interrelation of the parts of the Bible is vital, but this study should be preceded by careful examination of each part.

All the teaching of Scripture is interrelated. The more we learn about any part of Scripture the easier it becomes to understand every other part. Yet there is great danger here. It is easy, by reading into a sentence something derived from another part of Scripture, to miss Gods purpose in giving us the particular sentence. I strongly advocate that each chapter, each section, each book be first studied by itself, seeking to list all possible meanings and interpretations and then comparing them and determining which best fits the context in each case.

F. The Theological Context

As Dr. Waltke points out, theology should be the result of Bible exegesis, not its basis. If proper exegesis and synthesis are first performed, correct theology will result. We should not approach the Bible merely as a set of proof texts and a collection of illustrations, but rather as an inexhaustible source of truth. The faith of John Robinson that God would yet cause more truth to be found in his Word is still valid.

Important as it is that we do not allow our theology to have too great an effect on our interpretation of individual verses, still greater caution needs to be exercised in deriving ideas of Bible interpretation from writers who hold views opposed to Bible truth. We would laugh at the idea of a gardener making suggestions for improved production of airplane motors. One who does not take the Bible as God's Word may gather material on history or archaeology that can be helpful in understanding something of the background of the Bible, but when

suggestions about Bible interpretation are made by unbelievers they should be examined with great skepticism. Aside from the apologetic purpose of preparing to answer attacks upon Christianity the study of books on hermeneutics written by men who deny biblical inerrancy is more apt to be misleading than helpful. At times it seemed that the paper was too ready to take as fact ideas or suggestions presented by writers whose presuppositions are quite different from ours, and to show far less skepticism toward their statements than toward the ideas of men who believe the Bible. Unless the Holy Spirit is helping a student, how can he be expected to interpret God's Word correctly?

It has been a stimulating experience to go through the paper and I hope that my suggestions will prove to be of some value. Since I am grateful for the many statements of confidence in God's Word that it contains, I was sorry indeed that it was necessary to devote so much of my response to pointing out statements with which I have to disagree.

NOTES

[1] Richard D. Altick, *The Art of Literary Research (New* York 1963), 71.

[2] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature (New* York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949, 1956), 60.

[3] R. W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London: Cape, 1939), 63-64.

[4] Ibid., Chambers, *Man's Mind, 85.*

[5] Albert Guerard, *Preface to World Literature (New* York: Holt,1940), 72.

[6] George Steiner, "Introduction: Homer and the Scholars," in *Homer, A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. George Steiner and Robert Fagles (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 2.

[7] Robert Gordis, "Elihu the Intruder: A Study of the Authenticity of Job," in *Biblical and Other Studies,* ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 66.

[8] Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 97.

[9] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: The Anchor Bible, 2* vol. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 1:226.

[10] Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. xvii.

[11] For a fuller discussion of this question see A. A. MacRae, "The Principles of Interpreting Genesis 1 and 2, *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society,* 2, 4 (1959): 1-9.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26-28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the years that have passed since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying flow of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to **hermeneutical** principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated.

In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Articles of Affirmation and Denial*

Article I. WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

Article II. WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in one Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Article III. WE AFFIRM that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

Article IV. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to any one anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Article V. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

Article VI. WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We

further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Article VII. WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

Article VIII. WE AFFIRM that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

WE DENY that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

Article IX. WE AFFIRM that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

Article X. WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates Gods truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey Gods message.

Article XI.
WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Article XII.
WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.

WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process.

Article XIII.
WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

WE DENY that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article XIV.
WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

WE DENY that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article XV.
WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that

is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article XVI.
WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Article XVII.
WE AFFIRM the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

WE DENY that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Article XVIII.
WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article XIX.
WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

WE DENY that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

Article XX. WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

WE DENY that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Article XXI. WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Article XXII. WE AFFIRM that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Article XXIII. WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Article XXIV. WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.

WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

Article XXV. WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

Explaining Hermeneutics:
A Commentary on
The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics
Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Norman L. Geisler

Article I. *WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.*

WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

This first article affirms that the authority of Scripture cannot be separated from the authority of God. Whatever the Bible affirms, God affirms. And what the Bible affirms (or denies), it affirms (or denies) with the very authority of God. Such authority is normative for all believers; it is the canon or rule of God.

This divine authority of Old Testament Scripture was confirmed by Christ Himself on numerous occasions (cf. Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; John 10:34-35). And what our Lord confirmed as to the divine authority of the Old Testament, He promised also for the New Testament (John 14:16; 16:13).

The Denial points out that one cannot reject the divine authority of Scripture without thereby impugning the authority of Christ, who attested Scripture's divine authority. Thus it is wrong to claim one can accept the full authority of Christ without acknowledging the complete authority of Scripture.

Article II. *WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in*

one Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scrip-ture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Here an analogy is drawn between Christ and Scripture. Both Christ and Scripture have dual aspects of divinity and humanity, indivisibly united in one expression. Both Christ and Scripture were conceived by an act of the Holy Spirit. Both involve the use of fallible human agents. But both produced a theanthropic result; one a sinless person and the **other** an errorless book. However, like all analogies, there is a difference. Christ is one person uniting two natures whereas Scripture is one written expression uniting two au-thors (God and man). This difference notwithstanding, the strength of the likeness in the analogy points to the inseparable unity between divine and human dimensions of Scripture so that one aspect cannot be in error while the other is not.

The Denial is directed at a contemporary tendency to separate the human aspects of Scripture from the divine and allow for error in the former. By contrast the framers of this article believe that the human form of Scripture can no more be found in error than Christ could be found in sin. That is to say, the Word of God (i.e., the Bible) is as necessarily perfect in its human manifestation as was the Son of God in His human form.

Article III.   *WE AFFIRM that the person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.*

WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

This Affirmation follows the teaching of Christ that He is the central theme of Scripture (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). This is to say that focus on the person and work of Christ runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. To be sure there are other and tangential topics, but the person and work of Jesus Christ are central.

In view of the focus of Scripture on Christ, the Denial stresses a hermeneutical obligation to make this Christo-centric message clear in the expounding of Scripture. As other articles (cf. Article XV) emphasize the "literal" interpretation of Scripture, this article is no

license for allegorization and unwarranted typology which see Christ portrayed in every detail of Old Testament proclamation. The article simply points to the centrality of Christ's mission in the unfolding of God's revelation to man.

Neither is there any thought in this article of making the role of Christ more ultimate than that of the Father. What is in view here is the *focus* of Scripture and not the ultimate *source* or *object* of the whole plan of redemption.

Article IV   *WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.*

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to any one anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Here stress is laid on the fact that the Holy Spirit not only is the source of Scripture, but also works to produce faith in Scripture He has inspired. Without this ministry of the Holy Spirit, belief in the truth of Scripture would not occur.

The Denial is directed at those alleged "revelations" which some claim to have but which are contrary to Scripture. No matter how sincere or genuinely felt, no dream, vision, or supposed revelation which contradicts Scripture ever comes from the Holy Spirit. For the utterances of the Holy Spirt are all harmonious and noncontradictory (see Article XX).

Article V.   *WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.*

WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

The design of this article is to indicate that the ministry of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the inspiration of Scripture to its very application to the lives of the believer. Just as no one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3), so no one can appropriate the message of Scripture to his life apart from the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

The Denial stresses the truth that the natural man does not re-ceive the spiritual message of Scripture. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit there is no welcome for its truth in an unregenerate heart.

This does not imply that a non-Christian is unable to understand the meaning of any Scripture. It means that whatever he may perceive of the message of Scripture, that without the Holy Spirit's work he will not welcome the message in his heart.

Article VI. *WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further **affirm** that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error **if it** misrepresents the facts.*

*WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be **defined** in terms of this function. We **further** deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.*

Since hermeneutics is concerned with understanding the truth of Scripture, attention is directed here to the nature of truth. Several significant **affirmations** are made about the nature of truth.

First, in contrast to contemporary relativism it is declared that truth is absolute. Second, as opposed to subjectivism it is acknowledged that truth is objective. Finally, in opposition to existential and pragmatic views of truth, this article affirms that truth is what corresponds to reality. This same point was made in the "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" (1978) in Article XIII and the commentary on it.

The Denial makes it evident that views which redefine an error to mean what "misleads," rather than what is a mistake, must be rejected. This redefinition of the word "error" is-both contrary to Scripture and to common sense. In Scripture the word *error* is used of unintentional acts (Lev. 4:2) as well as intentional ones. Also, in common **parlence** a statement is in error if it is a factual mistake, even if there was no intention to mislead anyone by it. So to suggest that the Bible contains mistakes, but that these are not errors so long as they do not mislead, is contrary to both Scripture and ordinary usage.

By this subtle redefinition of error to mean only what misleads but not what misrepresents, some have tried to maintain that the Bible is wholly true (in that it never misleads) and yet that it may have some mistakes in it. This position is emphatically rejected by the confessors of this document.

Article VII. *WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, **definite, and fixed**.*

WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

The Affirmation here is directed at those who claim a "double" or "deeper" meaning to Scripture than that expressed by the authors. It stresses the unity and fixity of meaning as opposed to those who find multiple and pliable meanings. What a passage means is fixed by the author and is not subject to change by readers. This does not imply that further revelation on the subject cannot help one come to a fuller understanding, but simply that the meaning given in a text is not changed because additional truth is revealed subsequently.

Meaning is also definite in that there are defined limits by virtue of the author's expressed meaning in the given linguistic form and cultural context. Meaning is *determined* by an author; it is *discovered* by the readers.

The Denial adds the clarification that simply because Scripture has one meaning does not imply that its messages cannot be applied to a variety of individuals or situations. While the interpretation is one, the applications can be many.

Article VIII. *WE AFFIRM that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.*

*WE DENY that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We **further** deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.*

In view of the tendency of many to relativize the message of the Bible by accommodating it to changing cultural situations, this Affirmation proclaims the universality of biblical teachings. There are commands which transcend all cultural barriers and are binding on all men everywhere. To be sure, some biblical injunctions are directed to specific situations, but even these are normative to the particular situation(s) to which they speak. However, there are commands in Scripture which speak universally to the human situation and are not bound to particular cultures or situations.

The Denial addresses the basis of the distinction between uni-

versa1 and particular situations. It denies that the grounds of this distinction are relative or purely cultural. It further denies the legitimacy of relativizing biblical absolutes by reducing them to purely cultural mandates.

The meaning of this article is that whatever the biblical text means is binding. And what is meant to be universally binding should not be relegated to particular situations any more than what is meant to apply only to particular circumstances should be promulgated as universally applicable.

There is an attempt here to strike a balance between command and culture by recognizing that a command transcends culture, even though it speaks to and is expressed in a particular culture. Thus while the situation (or circumstances) may help us to discover the right course of action, the situation never determines what is right. God's laws are not situationally determined.

Article IX.   *WE AFFIRM that the term hermeneutics, which historically **signified** the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.*

*WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives **from**, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.*

The primary thrust of this Affirmation is definitional. It desires to clarify the meaning of the term *hermeneutics* by indicating that it includes not only perception of the declared meaning of a text but also an understanding of the implications that text has for one's life. Thus, hermeneutics is more than biblical exegesis. It is not only the science that leads form the meaning of a passage but also that which enables one (by the Holy Spirit) to understand the spiritual implications the truth(s) of this passage has for Christian living.

The Denial notes that the meaning of a passage is not derived from or dictated by the interpreter. Rather, meaning comes from the author who wrote it. Thus the reader's understanding has no **her**meneutically definitive role. Readers must listen to the meaning of a text and not attempt to legislate it. Of course, the meaning listened

to should be applied to the reader's life. But the need or desire for specific application should not color the interpretation of a passage.

Article X.   *WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.*

WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

This Affirmation is a logical literary extension of Article II which acknowledges the humanity of Scripture. The Bible is God's Word, but it is written in human words; thus, revelation is "verbal." Revelation is "propositional" (Article II) because it expresses certain propositional truth. Some prefer to call it "sentential" because the truth is expressed in sentences. Whatever the term-verbal, propositional, or sentential-the Bible is a human book which uses normal literary forms. These include parables, satire, irony, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, poetry, and even allegory (e.g., Ezek. 16-17).

As an expression in finite, human language, the Bible has certain limitations in a similar way that Christ as a man had certain limitations. This means that God adapted Himself through human language so that His eternal truth could be understood by man in a temporal world.

Despite the obvious fact of the limitations of any finite linguistic expression, the Denial is quick to point out that these limits do not render Scripture an inadequate means of communicating God's truth. For while there is a divine adaptation (via language) to human **finitude** there is no accommodation to human error. Error is not essential to human nature. Christ was human and yet He did not err. Adam was human before he erred. So simply because the Bible is written in human language does not mean it must err. In fact, when God uses human language there is a supernatural guarantee that it will not be in error.

Article XI.   *WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.*

WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Simply because the truth of Scripture was conveyed by God in the original writings does not mean that it cannot be translated into another language. This article affirms the translatability of God's truth into other cultures. It affirms that since truth is transcendent (see Article XX) it is not culture-bound. Hence the truth of God expressed in a first-century culture is not limited to that culture. For the *nature* of truth is not limited to any particular *medium* through which it is expressed.

The Denial notes that since meaning is not inextricably tied to a given culture it can be adequately expressed in another culture. Thus the message of Scripture need not be relativized by translation. *What* is expressed can be the same even though *how* it is expressed differs.

Article XII.   *WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those* functional *equivalents that are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.*

         WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process.

Whereas the previous article treated the matter of the translatability of divine truth, this article speaks to the *adequacy* of translations. Obviously not every expression in another language will appropriately convey the meaning of Scripture. In view of this, caution is urged that the translators remain faithful to the truth of the Scripture being translated by the proper choice of the words used to translate it.

This article treats the matter of "functional" equivalence. Often there is no actual or literal equivalence between expressions in one language and a word-for-word translation into another language. *What* is expressed (meaning) is the same but *how* it is expressed (the words) is different. Hence a different construction can be used to convey the same meaning.

The Denial urges sensitivity to cultural matters so that the same truth may be conveyed, even though different terms are being used. Without this awareness missionary activity can be severely hampered.

Article XIII.   *WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary* cate-

gories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

         WE DENY that generic categories which negate historic@ may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

The awareness of what kind of literature one is interpreting is essential to a correct understanding of the text. A correct genre judgment should be made to ensure correct understanding. A parable, for example, should not be treated like a chronicle, nor should poetry be interpreted as though it were a straightforward narrative. Each passage has its own genre, and the interpreter should be cognizant of the specific kind of literature it is as he attempts to interpret it. Without genre recognition an interpreter can be misled in his understanding of the passage. For example, when the prophet speaks of "trees clapping their hands" (Isa. 55:12) one could assume a kind of animism unless he recognized that this is poetry and not prose.

The Denial is directed at an illegitimate use of genre criticism by some who deny the truth of passages which are presented as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is presented as a historical person and so referred to by Christ (Matt. 12:40-42). This Denial is an appropriate and timely warning not to use genre criticism as a cloak for rejecting the truth of Scripture.

Article XIV   *WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.*

         WE DENY that any such event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was *invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.*

This article combines the emphases of Articles VI and XIII. While acknowledging the legitimacy of literary forms, this article insists that any record of events presented in Scripture must correspond to historical fact. That is, no reported event, discourse, or saying should be considered imaginary.

The Denial is even more clear than the Affirmation. It stresses

that any discourse, saying, or event reported in Scripture must actually have occurred. This means that any hermeneutic or form of biblical criticism which claims that something was invented by the author must be rejected. This does not mean that a parable must be understood to represent historical facts, since a parable does not (by its very genre) purport to report an event or saying but simply to illustrate a point.

Article XV   WE AFFIRM *the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of* **all** *figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.*

WE DENY *the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.*

The literal sense of Scripture is strongly affirmed here. To be sure the English word literal carries some problematic connotations with it. Hence the words *normal* and *grammatical-historical are* used to explain what is meant. The literal sense is also designated by the more descriptive title grammatical-historical sense. This means the correct interpretation is the one which discovers the meaning of the text in its grammatical forms and in the historical, cultural context in which the text is expressed.

The Denial warns against attributing to **Scripture** any meaning not based in a literal understanding, such as mythological or allegorical interpretations. This should not be understood as eliminating **typology** or designated allegory or other literary forms which include figures of speech (see Articles X, XIII, and XIV).

Article XVI.   WE AFFIRM *that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.*

WE DENY *the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.*

Implied here is an approval of legitimate techniques of "lower

criticism" or "textual criticism." It is proper to use critical techniques in order to discover the true text of Scripture, that is, the one which represents the original one given by the biblical authors.

Whereas critical methodology can be used to establish *which* of the texts are copies of the inspired original, it is illegitimate to use critical methods to call into question *whether* something in the original text is true. In other words, proper "lower criticism" is valid but negative "higher criticism" which rejects **truths** of Scripture is invalid.

Article XVII.   WE AFFIRM *the unity, harmony, and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.*

WE DENY *that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.*

Two points are made in the Affirmation, the unity of Scripture and its self-interpreting ability. Since the former is treated elsewhere (Article XXI), we will comment on the latter here. Not only is the Bible always correct in interpreting itself (see Article XVIII), but it is the "best interpreter" of itself.

Another point made here is that comparing Scripture with Scripture is an excellent help to an interpreter. For one passage sheds light on another. Hence the first commentary the interpreter should consult on a passage is what the rest of Scripture may say on that text.

The Denial warns against the assumption that an understanding of one passage can lead the interpreter to reject the teaching of another passage. One passage may help him better comprehend another but it will never contradict another.

This last part of the Denial is particularly directed to those who believe the New Testament writers misinterpret the Old Testament, or that they attribute meaning to an Old Testament text not expressed by the author of that text. While it is acknowledged that there is sometimes a wide range of *application* for a text, this article affirms that the *interpretation* of a biblical text by another biblical writer is always within the confines of the meaning of the first text.

Article XVIII.   WE AFFIRM *that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating* **from**,

but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

*WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood **the full** implications of their own words.*

This Affirmation was perhaps the most difficult to word. The first part of the Affirmation builds on Article VII which declared that Scripture has only one meaning, and simply adds that whenever the Bible comments on another passage of Scripture it does so correctly. That is, the Bible never misinterprets itself. It always correctly understands the meaning of the passage it comments on (see Article XVII). For example, that Paul misinterprets Moses is to say that Paul erred. This view is emphatically rejected in favor of the inerrancy of all Scripture.

The problem in the second statement of the Affirmation revolves around whether God intended more by a passage of Scripture than the human author did. Put in this way, evangelical scholars are divided on the issue, even though there is unity on the question of "single meaning." Some believe that this single meaning may be fuller than the purview of the human author, since God had far more in view than did the prophet when he wrote it. The wording here is an attempt to include reference to the fulfillment of a prophecy (of which God was obviously aware when He inspired it) as part of the single meaning which God and the prophet shared. However, the prophet may not have been conscious of the full implications of this meaning when he wrote it.

The way around the difficulty was to note that there is only one meaning to a passage which both God and the prophet affirmed, but that this meaning may not always be fully "evidenced" until the prophecy is fulfilled. Furthermore, God, and not necessarily the prophets, was fully aware of the fuller implications that would be manifested in the fulfillment of this single meaning.

It is important to preserve single meaning without denying that God had more in mind than the prophet did. A distinction needs to be made, then, between what God was *conscious* of concerning an affnmation (which, in view of His foreknowledge and omniscience, was far more) and what He and the prophet actually expressed in the

passage. The Denial makes this point clear by noting that biblical authors were not always fully aware of the implications of their own affirmations.

Article XIX.   *WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.*

*WE DENY that Scripture should be required **to fit** alien **preunderstandings**, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, **scientism,** secular humanism, and relativism.*

The question of preunderstanding is a crucial one in contemporary hermeneutics. The careful wording of the Affirmation does not discuss the issue of *whether* one should approach Scripture with a particular preunderstanding, but simply *which* kinds of **preunder**standing one has are legitimate. This question is answered by affirming that only those preunderstandings which are compatible with the teaching of Scripture are legitimate. In fact, the statement goes further and demands that all preunderstanding be subject to "correction" by the teaching of Scripture.

The point of this article is to avoid interpreting Scripture through an alien grid or filter which obscures or negates its true message. For it acknowledges that one's preunderstanding will affect his understanding of a text. Hence to avoid misinterpreting Scripture one must be careful to examine his own presuppositions in the light of Scripture.

Article XX.   *WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further **affirm** that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.*

WE DENY that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

What is in view here is not so much the nature of truth (which is treated in Article VI), but the consistency and coherence of truth. This is directed at those views which consider truth paradoxical or

contradictory. This article declares that a proper hermeneutics avoids contradictions, since God never affirms as true two propositions, one of which is logically the opposite of the other.

Further, this Affirmation recognizes that not all truth is in the Bible (though all that is affirmed in the Bible is true). God has revealed Himself in nature and history as well as in Scripture. However, since God is the ultimate Author of all truth, there can be no contradiction between truths of Scripture and the true teachings of science and history.

Although only the Bible is the normative and infallible rule for doctrine and practice, nevertheless what one learns from sources outside Scripture can occasion a reexamination and reinterpretation of Scripture. For example, some have taught the world to be square because the Bible refers to "the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11: 12). But scientific knowledge of the spherical nature of the globe leads to a correction of this faulty interpretation. Other clarifications of our understanding of the biblical text are possible through the study of the social sciences.

However, whatever prompting and clarifying of Scripture that extrabiblical studies may provide, the final authority for what the Bible teaches rests in the text of Scripture itself and not in anything outside it (except in God Himself). The Denial makes clear this priority of the teaching of God's scriptural revelation over anything outside it.

Article XXI.   *WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.*

WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

This article continues the discussion of the previous article by noting the harmony of God's general revelation (outside Scripture) and His special revelation in Scripture. It is acknowledged by all that certain *interpretations* of Scripture and some *opinions* of scientists will contradict each other. However, it is insisted here that the *truth* of Scripture and the *facts* of science never contradict each other.

"Genuine" science will always be in accord with Scripture. Science, however, based on naturalistic presuppositions will inevitably come in conflict with the supernatural truths of Scripture.

Far from denying a healthy interchange between scientific theory and biblical interpretation, the framers of this statement welcome such. Indeed, it is acknowledged (in article XX) that the exegete can learn from the scientist. What is denied is that we should accept scientific views that contradict Scripture or that they should be given an authority above Scripture.

Article XXII.   *WE AFFIRM that Genesis I -1 I is factual, as is the rest of the book.*

WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis I-l I are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Since the historicity and the scientific accuracy of the early chapters of the Bible have come under severe attack it is important to apply the "literal" hermeneutic espoused (Article XV) to this question. The result was a recognition of the factual nature of the account of the creation of the universe, all living things, the special creation of man, the Fall, and the Flood. These accounts are all factual, that is, they are about space-time events which actually happened as reported in the book of Genesis (see Article XIV).

The article left open the question of the age of the earth on which there is no unanimity among evangelicals and which was beyond the purview of this conference. There was, however, complete agreement on denying that Genesis is mythological or unhistorical. Likewise, the use of the term "creation" was meant to exclude the belief in macro-evolution, whether of the atheistic or theistic varieties.

Article XXIII.   *WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.*

WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Traditionally this teaching is called the "perspicuity" of Scripture. By this is meant that the central message of Scripture is clear, especially what the Bible says about salvation from sin.

The Denial disassociates this claim from the belief that everything in Scripture is clear or that all teachings are equally clear or equally relevant to the Bible's central saving message. It is obvious to any honest interpreter that the meaning of some passages of Scripture is obscure. It is equally evident that the truth of some passages is not directly relevant to the overall plan of salvation.

Article XXIV   *WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.*

WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

This article attempts to avoid two extremes. First, it affirms that one is not dependent on biblical "experts" for his understanding of the basic truths of Scripture. Were this not true, then a significant aspect of the priesthood of all believers would be destroyed. For if the understanding of the laity is contingent on the teaching of experts, then Protestant interpretive experts will have replaced the teaching magisterium of Catholic priests with a kind of teaching magisterium of Protestant scholars.

On the other hand, biblical scholars do play a significant role in the lay understanding of Scripture. Even the very tools (Bible, dictionaries, concordances, etc .) used by laypersons to interpret Scripture were produced by scholars. And when it comes to more technical and precise understanding of specific Scripture the work of experts is more than helpful. Hence the implied exhortation in the denial to avail oneself of the fruit of scholarship is well taken.

Article XXV   *WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which* ***sufficiently*** *conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.*

*WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God **apart** from the text of Scripture.*

This final article declares that good preaching should be based in good hermeneutics. The exposition of Scripture is not to be treated in isolation from the proclamation of Scripture. In preaching the preacher should faithfully expound the Word of God. Anything short of a correct exposition of God's written Word is pronounced insufficient.

Indeed, the Denial declares that there is no message from God apart from Scripture. This was understood not to contradict the fact that there is a general revelation (affirmed in Article XXI) but simply to note that the only inspired and infallible writing from which the preacher can and must preach is the Bible.

Exposition on Biblical Hermeneutics

J. I. Packer

The following paragraphs outline the general theological understanding which the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics reflects. They were first drafted as a stimulus toward that statement. They have now been revised in the light of it and of many specific suggestions received during the scholars' conference at which it was drawn up. Though the revision could not be completed in time to present to the conference, there is every reason to regard its substance as expressing with broad accuracy the common mind of the signatories of the statement.

STANDPOINT OF THE EXPOSITION

The living God, Creator and Redeemer, is a communicator, and the inspired and inerrant Scriptures which set before us his saving revelation in history are his means of communicating with us today. He who once spoke to the world through Jesus Christ his Son speaks to us still in and through his written Word. Publicly and privately, therefore, through preaching, personal study and meditation, with prayer and in the fellowship of the body of Christ, Christian people must continually labor to interpret the Scriptures so that their normative divine message to us may be properly understood. To have formulated the biblical concept of Scripture as authoritative revelation in writing, the God-given rule of faith and life, will be of no profit where the message of Scripture is not rightly grasped and applied. So it is of vital importance to detect and dismiss defective ways of interpreting what is written and to replace them with faithful interpretation of God's infallible Word.

That is the purpose this exposition seeks to serve. What it offers is basic perspectives on the hermeneutical task in the light of three convictions. First, Scripture, being God's own instruction to us, is abidingly true and utterly trustworthy. Second, hermeneutics is cru-