Moving from Scripture to Doctrine

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The topic invites inquiry. How do we of the church, once the Bible has been exegeted, proceed to formulate doctrine? To answer that question I propose first to do a brief historical sweep, from which I will draw several pertinent observations. A theoretical discussion will follow that explores the thesis of the paper, namely, that we move from Scripture to doctrine via biblical theology. Lest we get lost in the cyberspace of the theoretical, I include two case studies, one dealing with atonement and a second with divorce. Finally, the preacher within me says we must end with a challenge, specifically some exhortations.

Key Words: biblical theology, hermeneutics, exegesis

HISTORICAL ORIENTATION

Doctrinal statements can be creedal, succinct, and relatively brief. Selected ecclesial benchmarks in the formulation of doctrine would include the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49) where the issue was the incorporation of the Gentiles into the church, and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), which pontificated on Christ’s divinity over against the Arian claim that the Son was the highest creation. Chalcedon (A.D. 451) tackled the issue of Christ’s divine and human nature. The Westminster Confession (A.D. 1647) and the Chicago Declaration of Inerrancy (1978) are further examples of doctrinal statements by churchly bodies, to which might be added any number of denominational statements of faith.

Doctrinal statements can also be elaborate expositions, as in Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologica (A.D. 1265), John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion (A.D. 1536), Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics (1932–39), or Millard Erickson’s Christian Theology (1998). In both creeds and expositions we see the end product of a process in which the church
corporately or representatively has moved from Scripture to doctrine.1 A survey of process and product prompts several observations.

1. **Various Factors.** Scripture, though undoubtedly the most important factor in establishing Christian doctrine, is not the only factor. *Tradition* plays a strong role. Karl Barth’s church dogmatics builds on the Reformation, which in turn makes very self-conscious links with Augustine and others.2 The move from Scripture to doctrine is not made de novo but is often recognizably nuanced by the larger frameworks such as Reformed, Dispensational, Charismatic, or Anabaptist. Not only church tradition but philosophy and culture enter the mix. The place of philosophy may be most apparent in Process theology, but the importance of philosophy (e.g., a foundational or nonfoundational approach) is best not dismissed, since no theological statement is immune from philosophical presuppositions. With the current emphasis on anthropology and sociology, the cultural milieu into which a theological word is spoken is also widely recognized. In sum, there is no straight line that takes us from Scripture to doctrine. The trajectory moves through tradition, philosophy, and culture.

2. **Change in Theological Agenda.** The theological agenda changes. The Nicene Creed addressed issues relating to Jesus Christ. Later councils focused on the Holy Spirit. The twentieth century was particularly exercised about the doctrine of revelation. Currently, a critical theological doctrine in need of address is anthropology, specifically sexuality, as indicated by debates about gender, genetic engineering, abortion, and homosexuality. Moreover, a backward glance over the journey makes clear that doctrinal formulations are hardly once-for-all statements. Clark Pinnock puts it this way: “Somewhat like scientific theories, dogmas are conceptual gestalts built up retroductively through imaginative attempts to render the biblical phenomena intelligible.”3 What this means is that theological statements are not absolute. They are models subject to refinement and revision. Already the


3. Function of Community. From the first, it was the community of believers through its representatives that engaged in formulating doctrine (Acts 15). These representatives of the church, “the apostles and elders,” were assembled to forge a position on the nature of the gospel (Acts 15:6). They moved from Scripture to doctrine in debating whether Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism to become “real” Christians. Around that table were missionaries and church leaders, biblical scholars such as James, theologians such as Paul. The community of faith was the locus for decision-making about theology and ethics. In our time of theological individualism, this observation that the locus for theologizing is the assembled body of believers is most germane. Quite appropriate then are the voices that call for the faith community’s involvement in the process.5

The faith community has another role, namely, the role of an assayer of doctrines. Biblical examples of this function are clear. At Mt. Carmel in the time of Elijah, the test was conducted before the assembly, and the assessment came from the assembly: “The Lord indeed is God” (1 Kgs 18:39 NRSV). The audiences in Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian threat heard the proclamation of both Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jeremiah 28). Each is described in Scripture as a prophet; each speaks employing the divine messenger formula, “Thus says the Lord.” But their messages are contradictory. Which is the right word for the hour? That decision devolved on the listeners, for they would order their lives by one message or by the other. In NT times the Galatians are confronted with Paul’s gospel and also with “another gospel” preached by an itinerant party. Which is the real gospel? The Galatian readers would decide (Gal 1:6–7; cf. Rev 3:18).

To this day the church is faced with constructive but not identical theological expositions, such as those by Paul Tillich, Wolfhart Pannenberg, James McClendon, and Wayne Grudem. Believers have the task of adjudicating between adequate or more adequate formulations, and more seriously still between biblically faithful and specious doctrines, even as believers did historically when they rejected Marcionism and

4. The temple theology espoused by Isaiah and validated by experience in King Hezekiah’s time, had become a shibboleth, a cliché, and no longer appropriate for a situation 80 years later (Jer 7:1–15).

Arianism. In summary, the faith community is present as the doctrine is formulated; its related task is to adjudicate the resulting doctrine for its “orthodoxy.” This understanding of the community’s role as assayer is beset with problems when implemented practically, as Willard Swartley’s survey makes clear. But the difficulties, rather than obviating the theory, only emphasize the importance of the role of assembled believers.

4. Function of Theology. Broadly speaking, theology functions to collate, comment, and clarify matters about God and God’s relationship to human beings and the world. Theology gives an orderly account of what is to be believed. The concise definition of “faith seeking understanding” has been reformulated by Trevor Hart as “Faith thinking.” Theologians assist the church in formulating a belief structure. The theologians’ work is both corrective and constructive. It is corrective in that theologians speak to trends that would take the church away from its theological moorings or that would harm society. Their task is constructive in that they present models by which the interrelatedness of Christian belief is demonstrated. Essentially, the role of the theologian is to mediate communication from the Bible, on the one hand, to the church and/or society, on the other.

5. Function of Scripture. Scripture’s role, always a factor in formulating Christian doctrine, has been uneven both in creedal confessions and in larger expositions. The early church answered the question about the inclusion of Gentiles by appealing to Scripture, specifically Amos 9. Judging by Scripture references in the 1978 Chi-


8. For example, B. B. Warfield thought of theology as that “science which is concerned with setting forth systematically, that is to say, as a concatenated whole, what is known concerning God,” quoted by R. Lints, The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 183–84. Commenting on the work of a systematic theologian, Lints says: “A theological vision seeks to capture the entire counsel of God as revealed in the Scriptures and to communicate it in a conceptuality that is native to the theologian’s own age.”

9. Some hold that systematic theology primarily serves the church. I am sympathetic, however, to C. Norman Kraus’s definition: “Theology is a dialogue carried on in the church between the church and the world cultures” (God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode [Scottdale: Herald, 1991] 13). Compare with the summary of T. Hart’s understanding: “The task of theology is to set out the Christian gospel showing its ‘internal coherence’, and to relate that gospel to the wider world of public knowledge, pointing up its ‘external coherence’” (from a book review of Hart’s Faith Thinking, in ExpTim 107 [March, 1996] 161); D. H. Kelsey comments about Paul Tillich, who held that “the theologian is to show that Christian symbols contain the ‘answers’ to existential ‘questions’ men are asking today” (Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology [Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity, 1999] 71).
cago Declaration of Inerrancy, the role of Scripture is minor, for in 13 assertions, only once is Scripture cited. Some larger expositions of theology are extensively saturated with Scripture references and extended explanations,\(^\text{10}\) by comparison, others, such as W. Pannenberg, are relatively lean in their direct use of Scripture.\(^\text{11}\) Whether the use of direct Scripture has been extensive or limited, the assumption has been that Scripture gives rise to doctrine.

Is the purpose of Scripture to be a source book of doctrine? Yes, partly. “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16 NRSV). Scripture does function for teaching and for doctrine. But the same text qualifies the conclusion that this function is its only, or even its main function. We may assert with boldness: the function of Scripture is to shape a community of faith. To say this is not to deny that Scripture is a quarry for doctrine, but it is to say that it is not only there for that purpose.\(^\text{12}\) Consider the following as evidence that the Bible is to shape a community. Out of the exodus, Israel’s founding event, has come a people. The Torah given to that people includes a basic doctrinal creed on monotheism (Deut 6:4). But the legislation and the narratives (both extensive) address the way Israel is to exist in the world. In a later dispensation, out of the Christ event, is born a people, the church. The role of Scripture is to shape the way this people lives. Many of the Pauline epistles, though they initially treat of doctrinal matters, balloon into lengthy directives about the way this new community is to behave. Paul’s interest is that “Christ be formed in you (plural)” (Gal 4:19).\(^\text{13}\) To be sure, both are important: belief and behavior; faith and life; orthodoxy and orthopraxy, to which, as one writer has rightly said, we may add “orthokardia,” a right heart’s attitude. If our concern in this paper is doctrine, it must be remembered that Scripture points the way both to right

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thinking and righteous living. Doctrine, then, should not be narrowly conceived as a list of cognitive abstractions only.

6. Options for Moving from Scripture to Doctrine. The historical review of doctrinal positions shows that, in the move from Scripture to doctrine, two dominant options have existed. Broadly speaking, we may describe these as the deductive mode and the inductive mode. In the deductive mode the Scripture functions somewhat indirectly in formulating doctrine, as may be noted especially from an examination of creeds and briefer confessions. For these, Scripture has functioned at an earlier stage in setting out Christian belief. In creeds, this long tradition of Christian faith statements is invoked. Under specified topics, derived from this legacy of Christian theologizing, doctrinal propositions are crafted, often with the aim of conciseness, but still reasonably self-explanatory. In some denominational confessions of faith, the condensed statement of belief is printed, below which, as in a scholar’s essay, the relevant Scriptures are cited. The warrant for the confessional statement is Scripture, to be sure. But despite the appearance, Scripture functions indirectly and deductively rather than directly and inductively. An example on the Doctrine of God from the Southern Baptist document, The Baptist Faith and Message, can illustrate (see appendix).

This Baptist statement is definitely informed by Scripture, as is visually documented. Scripture is invoked as the authority. However, as in students’ footnoting, it is not always clear how a given item of documentation bears on what is claimed. Partly because of the format and the brevity, the interconnectedness of the articles of belief and the Scripture references remains unclear. Moreover, the selected Scripture texts, so biblical exegetes fear, may be texts the context for which is ignored.

Such a use of Scripture, however, is valid, though pitfalls must be recognized and avoided. Used carelessly the documentation easily takes on the nature of proof-texting, not unlike Hugo of St. Victor in the Middle Ages, who counseled: “Learn first what you should believe, and then go the Bible to find it there.”14 The filters of tradition, philosophy, and culture must not only be acknowledged, but care must be taken to minimize the biases that these impose. Whatever the denominational tradition in which the confession stands—reformed, dispensational, or otherwise—it is important to be self-critical. The Chinese proverb is often far too apt: “Ninety percent of what you see is behind your eyes.” Does an underlying philosophy intrude itself in the arrangement of the formulations? Some would point out from the

14. C. Scalise notes the irony of proof-texting—that is, that Arius had more Scriptures on his side than did Athanasius when it came to whether Christ was created by God or not (From Scripture to Theology, 86).
example just given that the Aristotelian penchant for definitions in terms of qualities and attributes is altogether too evident. Does such a doctrinal formulation privilege certain texts over other texts? If so, by what criteria? That question paves the way for a second model, the inductive mode.

The inductive method, so dominant in the sciences, calls for moving from the particulars to hypothetical summaries. In terms of our topic, the biblical data on certain subjects is collected, collated, and then recast as a theological statement. But how are the data within these Scriptures interconnected? How are the components to be prioritized? Answers to these questions, I propose, are given by the theologian. It is the theologian’s task to negotiate the move from Scripture to doctrine. But then the question is, “Which theologian, the Biblical theologian or the systematic theologian?” My answer to that question is at the same time the thesis for this paper. The move from Scripture to doctrine is made through the doorway of Biblical theology.\textsuperscript{15} This discipline, which is designed to synthesize biblical materials, pays attention to the literary genres of the Bible, especially to narratives, pronouncements, and metaphor. So, it would seem reasonable, a priori, that whatever move be made toward doctrine would be made with major input from the biblical theologian.\textsuperscript{16} With that comment the historical section of this paper recedes, and the theoretical aspect of the paper takes center stage.

\textbf{THEORETICAL ANALYSIS}

Some theoretical analysis is necessary in order to sort out (1) the role of the biblical theologian, and (2) the role of the systematic theologian. Each, it will be shown, relates to the formulation of Christian doctrine but not altogether in the same way.

\textit{The Roles of Biblical and Systematic Theologians}

It can readily be agreed that both kinds of theologians are indeed theologians; that is, each is engaged in describing God and his ways

\textsuperscript{15} Joel Green in a recent article adjudicates such a move as part of a failed experiment: “Scripture and Theology: Failed Experiments, Fresh Perspectives,” \textit{Int} 6 (2002) 5–20. My proposal departs from “the typical way” (p. 12).

\textsuperscript{16} In championing this particular form of the inductive approach, I am setting aside without commentary some other inductive approaches, two of which C. J. Scalise calls the “facts-of-revelation” approach, which assumes, in the words of Charles Hodges, that “the Bible is a storehouse of facts,” and the “events-of-revelation” method, which seizes, not on propositions, but as popularized by G. E. Wright, on God’s acts in a particular history (\textit{Heilsgeschichte}) from which assertions about doctrine are then made (\textit{From Scripture to Theology}, 28). Both approaches are overly bogged down with the enlightenment-driven category of revelation, says Scalise.
with humans and nature. It is also without argument that each brand of theologian is engaged in constructing theological models. Biblical theologians such as W. Eichrodt, B. W. Anderson, and Paul House present different models of the way in which one might synthesize the OT theologically. So also the theological models of systemat-icians such as Thomas Finger, James McClendon, and Millard Erick-son, not to mention Wolfhart Pannenberg, differ from each other. Each model, because it is a model, is open to challenge. Each is more or less adequate, its adequacy tested by the basic criterion of its faithfulness to the Scriptures. Models, by their nature, can be corrective as well as constructive. Theologians, because they are sensitive to dangerous emphases or omissions within the church will offer correctives. A biblical theologian working with Luke–Acts material, for example, will highlight Luke’s attention to the theme of poverty riches and urge that, in a full-orbed doctrinal statement, this subject not be neglected. In a more constructive mode, theologians by their models aid believers in their understanding and in their spiritual nurture. So biblical theologians and systematic theologians have in common a constructive and corrective task.

But there are also differences in method, scope, and function between the two disciplines. Geerhardus Vos proposed long ago that the fundamental difference between the two disciplines was the way each organized its material. Essentially biblical theology was organized in a historical framework; systematic theologians worked with themes or topics. However accurate that may be, much more needs to be said about the two specializations. Biblical theology collates and


18. Thomas Finger, Christian Theology; James McClendon, Systematic Theology; Millard Erickson, Christian Theology; Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology.


comments on those subjects—God, humans, the world, and their interrelationship—using biblical categories such as justice, righteousness, sacrifice, temple, land, prophecy. Its study engages primarily the material between the covers of the Bible. Its purpose is to synthesize biblical faith, to engage in macro-exegesis, primarily for the benefit of the church. The work of biblical theology is descriptive, but not only so, for it is also normative. By normative I mean that its conclusions are regulative for the faith communities’ faith and conduct.22 Biblical theology is to the church what the public health department is to the public. It monitors the health and warns of virus-like intrusions. Also, recognizing diversity within the Bible (a diversity within unity), biblical theology seeks to be at home with an open-endedness.

Systematic theology differs from biblical theology, for systematic theology does not confine its language to biblical categories but uses extrabiblical terms from culture and philosophy (e.g., homoiousious; trinity, foundationalism). Moreover, its target community, while it is the church, is even more strategically the larger society.23 Systematic theology, especially of the evangelical variety, has sought to bring closure to issues by attempting to resolve paradoxes and in general to make the pieces fit. That each discipline has had a distinct function and method in theory has not been particularly in dispute. More controversial is the issue of their interrelationship.

_The Interrelationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology: A Traditional Answer_

Given these differences of approach to theologizing, our question about the interface of Scripture and doctrine now takes the form: “How are the relationships of the two disciplines to be construed in making the move from Scripture to doctrine?”

A traditional answer to this question holds essentially that biblical theology gathers and processes the biblical data and then hands over the results to the systematician, who recasts it for another set of consumers. The model assumes, quite correctly, that biblical theology is the capstone discipline for biblical studies. Following the study of backgrounds, languages, and exegesis, the discipline of biblical theology orders the material according to biblical categories. Its task is to interrelate the biblical data, essentially synthesizing it and indicating


23. See Richard Lints: “The primary cultural task of the theologian is to clothe the entire counsel of God in a conceptuality that is intelligible to the modern community” (_The Fabric of Theology_, 112).
priorities. These results, so it was long maintained, are then handed over to the persons responsible for formulating doctrine (see fig. 1). What’s wrong with this traditional approach? Several things. First, it assumes that doctrine, that which is to be believed and is normative, is the sole responsibility of the systematic theologian. On this view, biblical theology is descriptive and not normative. In the words of Gerhard Ebeling, “It [biblical theology] leaves entirely to dogmatics the doubtful advantage of providing normative theological statements for the present situation.” This tidy division of labor rests on a time-honored but flawed distinction articulated by Krister Stendahl between what a text meant and what it means, a distinction that has been roundly criticized and found to be unhelpful. The standard model also assumes that the systematic theologian is not particularly at home with the biblical material, a situation happily not true for most evangelical theologians.

27. The book by two Catholics, G. O’Collins, and Daniel Kendall, The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture (New York: Paulist, 1997) is written to help systematicians in their use of the Bible.
The standard model has a major disadvantage, for it distances the two kinds of theologians and so becomes fertile ground for suspicion. At times biblical theologians have even disparaged systematic theologians, maintaining that the latter treated the Bible as flat. Systematic theologians, too, have chided the biblical theologians for their indeterminate results. Moreover, in actual practice systematic theologians have not shown themselves eager to receive doctrinal syntheses from the biblical theologian, an observation verified by a check of book indices by systematicians. For that matter, how palatable has been the “hand-off” by biblical theologians? Large and ever larger tomes have been produced that, but for a few exceptions, have hardly left a definitive summary for the systematic theologian to appropriate. The standard way of describing the relationship between the two—biblical and systematic theologians—may be time-honored, but it is badly flawed.28

The Interrelationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology: A Proposed Model

A quite different view of the function of each discipline holds that both biblical theologians and systematic theologians engage the biblical text. For the biblical theologian this close attention to the biblical material is paramount, virtually all-consuming. The systematic theologian, though not nearly as closely involved with the Scripture, is nevertheless at home with the issues and assists in biblical interpretation. Each addresses the community of faith. The systematic theologian, moreover, has the special skills to represent the Christian doctrine in the public square. The biblical theologian, not trained for that role, ought not, however, abdicate responsibility for the way the Christian message is presented in the public square. He or she needs at least to be conversant with the prevailing philosophy and the cultural language. Thirty years ago, G. Fohrer, modeled such a function. After having delineated the contours of an OT theology, he concluded with an extended chapter on how such an understanding would impinge on a Christian community and on a society (see fig. 2).29

Critical to the model here advocated is the proposal that these two brands of theologians enter a close partnership. Both sort out the question of biblical norm in conversation with each other, even though in this investigation the biblical theologian will take the lead. Also, both point their work, while in dialogue with each other, to the modern (or

28. To a large degree, then, I agree with Green, “Scripture and Theology,” who claims that “linear hermeneutics” is a failed experiment.
postmodern) society and culture. For this second target audience, the cues will be given by the systematic theologian, but the biblical theologian will be an active partner. Both breeds of theologians work at formulating doctrine. The emphases of each will differ, but neither can abdicate the responsibility of presenting an ordered account about God, humanity, and the world, together with their interrelationships. So for example, the emphasis in Luke–Acts on poverty and riches is held up for examination by the biblical theologian as a teaching against which the church can take its measure. The systematician, now a partner, expositions further the meaning of this understanding for a doctrine of Christian economics. While the different specializations cannot and should not be eliminated, the isolation that has characterized each must cease.

Voices favoring such a cooperative stance between the two disciplines have recently become louder. We cite Brevard Childs, who urges “biblical scholars to be more systematic, and systematic theologians to be more biblical, and to get on with the task.” 30 Another voice is that of Richard Lints, who proposes that the two specializations be brought into dialogue with each other. In this marriage of disciplines, Lints advises, biblical theology can clarify the Bible’s metanarrative, which for him is the story line of redemption. 31 Also worried about the gulf between the two disciplines is Werner G. Jeanrond. He calls

for a reform of the theological curriculum in order to achieve greater integration.32

Another voice that calls for a change in the status-quo relationship is Francis Watson, who takes issue with two kinds of demarcation that have characterized biblical studies. One is the demarcation between biblical theology and systematic theology (the other is the separation of OT and NT studies), the result of which is that theological concerns, which should rightly be a part of biblical scholarship, have been relegated elsewhere. Watson says in his opening statement, “As redefined and practised in this book, ‘biblical theology’ is an interdisciplinary approach to biblical interpretation which seeks to dismantle the barriers that at present separate biblical scholarship from Christian theology.”33 It turns out that what he conceives of as an expanded biblical theology, others, and even he, term “theological hermeneutics.”34 He says explicitly that he is not outlining a program for this newly defined “biblical theology.” “The only programme I have to offer is the proposal that theologically-oriented biblical interpretation should be an interdisciplinary activity.”35 In so saying, he shares our concern about a problematic status quo, though his solution differs from ours. He supports an approach that has affinities with the biblical theological movement (1930–60), especially in that it grasped the dialectical unity of the Christian Bible. He advocates, as far as I can see, a different role for biblical theology than I envision. I affirm the current specialization but plead for teamwork.

The implications of the proposed partnership model are several. First, the traditional boundaries for each field are spoiled. Each, biblical theologian and systematic theologian, needs to think outside the time-honored boundaries. Second, there needs to be an intentional fostering of the interdependence of the two disciplines. Conversations need to be arranged. At the seminary level, the Bible departments and theology departments must meet, not only for the business of curriculum tweaking, but for the purpose of substantive dialogue. Conversation and vigorous interaction at the speaking level is important in order to minimize misconceptions and also in order to provide the synergism that might make for fresh theological configurations. At


34. Ibid., 9; cf. the heading of part 1: “Studies in Theological Hermeneutics.”

35. Ibid., 17.
base level, biblical theologians and systematic theologians have reason to read each other’s books.

Third, beyond conversation across the halls within our institutions and reading each other’s books, some joint publishing enterprises might be envisioned. One such example of partnership is the announced commentary series Two Horizons Commentary. As explained by the editors, Joel Green and Max Turner, this work will be uniquely formatted. The first third will consist of a theological exegesis; the middle third will elucidate key theological themes of the biblical book, and the final section will articulate the significance of the biblical book and its themes for theology and praxis and will do this “in conscious dialogue with serious contributions to modern systematic, constructive, and practical theology.”36 A major reason for such a venture is that most current commentary series stay within the horizon of the past and offer little of theological significance for the present. With both biblical and systematic scholars around the table, this projected commentary might illustrate how a partnership of the kind here proposed could look.

If there are voices favoring this two-way partnership in moving from Scripture to doctrine, there are also certain to be protesting voices. So steeped are we scholars in our specializations that we despair of keeping abreast of our own subspeciality, let alone becoming literate in related disciplines. Even so, my conviction is that the time has come to work less at the deepening of our individual wells and to put our energies into connecting our separate wells with other wells for the common good of both church and society. Otherwise, for all our digging, the sustaining water of the gospel will not ever reach the thirsty. But there is a more serious objection to the notion of teamwork. It is that biblical theology is not up to the task. Stephen Fowl on the very first page of Engaging Scripture states: “I will also argue that, given my account of theological interpretation, the discipline of biblical theology, in its most common form, is systematically unable to generate serious theological interpretation of scripture.”37 This evaluation is due, he says, to biblical theology’s persistent concern with “its own disciplinary integrity.” He does not cite, but could, James Barr’s recent 700-page book The Concept of Biblical Theology which, while sorting out the problems, has little to say about solutions. A biblical theologian might respond to Stephen Fowl as follows: “You are right in that this discipline has not a clear methodology and produces less-than-helpful summaries. But given the virility of this dis-

36. Green and Turner, Between Two Horizons, 3 (italics theirs).
cipline and the range of models it has produced, it is hardly wise to ignore its actual and potential contribution. Your goading may well hasten a better product in the future. May we not live in hope? I, for one, live in the hope that the confusion he notes does not spell hopelessness for the discipline. As I shall show in my case study, there is much that biblical theology has to offer.

It is not clear to me, however, that the route taken by Stephen Fowl, a contributor to the Two Horizons Commentary, and by its editors is the “better way” of interfacing Scripture and theology. Their proposed way is not to begin with Scripture and work toward doctrine, but to put current theological questions to Scripture. By this process of “theological hermeneutics,” they hope to ensure that the Bible is relevant. A feature of this approach is to look for patterning in Scripture. In the programmatic volume, Steve Motyer’s contribution, “Two Testaments, One Biblical Theology,” lists five assertions about “doing” biblical theology. Surely the ground has shifted from the commonly accepted understanding when he declares in #5: “So the proper center or focus of biblical theology is not found behind the text in its history, nor is it any abstracted experience or theme . . . but it is the contemporary theological agenda.”

Though I cited with some approval the teamwork of biblical scholars and systematicians, who together hope to produce the Two Horizons Commentary (THC), my proposal differs from theirs. My proposal is to move deliberately from the texts of Scripture through the avenue of biblical theology to doctrine; the THC team very self-consciously distances itself from this approach. Their method calls for reading the biblical texts with a theological agenda more on the order of reading “in front of the text,” not as reader response, but in a manner that reverses the directional flow of the theological enterprise. Evangelicals have touted the proposition that theology must emerge from the biblical text. The arrow, so it has been claimed, points from biblical text toward doctrine. But the directional flow in the proposed commentary will be from doctrinal concerns toward Scripture. The aim, the editors say, is for THC to “elucidate in a coherent fashion the internal relations of one aspect of belief to other potentially related beliefs.” Will not the bypassing of a biblical theology short-circuit the endeavor and result in less-than-wholistic, even skewed results? Until the product is accessible for inspection, the answer is unclear. Assuming the rightness of the proposed model—from text to biblical theology to systematic theology with a partnering of the specialists—I offer two cases for testing.

38. Green and Turner, Between Two Horizons, 160 (italics his).
39. Ibid., 10.
CASE STUDIES

Two issues can serve as case studies for what I propose. The first, atonement, deals with doctrine in the usual sense of that term. Another, divorce, is a theological issue, even if some would consign it to the discipline of ethics. Given the size of both topics, comments here are clearly skeletal.

Atonement

How is a statement on atonement, whether intended for a creedal statement or for a longer exposition, to be derived? Were someone to seize on a single text, red flags of caution would appear on all sides at once. Still, a deductive model in which Christian tradition already provides a conceptual framework, is an option for the theologian to pursue. Appropriate Scripture texts, in smaller font and printed en masse below, would document the claims.

But in the inductive method, which is more appropriate for the full-scale exposition, the starting point would be Scripture. Hence the work of the exegete and the biblical theologian comes into play. The biblical theologian, engaging in macro-exegesis of the Scripture on this topic, pays attention to genre of at least four varieties.

The first genre to notice is the large framework or metanarrative. Three other main genres that the biblical theologian studies with great seriousness are: stories, pronouncements (e.g., didactic materials that include wisdom) and metaphor (poetry). That larger framework of the Bible has often been represented as the story of redemption. Or one might find convincing the claim that reconciliation is the rubric that best serves the two testaments as a unifying umbrella (à la Peter Stuhlmacher) or that the theme Kingdom of God best synthesizes the material, as G. E. Ladd and Bruce Waltke propose, or that the framework of God's design has merit. The point to emphasize is that infor-

40. The literary forms in which biblical content is given are also stressed by Vanhoozer, who comments, “In suggesting that biblical theology and systematic theology should attend more than they have to the Bible’s literary genres, I am not advocating a merely literary approach to Scripture.” Again, “The task of systematic theology is to ‘knit together’ the various genres of the Bible into a tensile unity that would hold the genres together in a dynamic equilibrium” (“From Canon to Concept,” 113, 117).


mation about atonement will be situated in a larger matrix, which will include understandings about God, cult, accountability, and sin. Relative to atonement, within the genre of stories I would include such stories as the golden calf incident, where the mediation consisted in Moses’ prayer, not sacrifice (Exodus 32); the story of Phinehas dealing decisively (if strangely) with the potentially virus-like evil at Baal-peor (Numbers 25); and the NT passion narrative (Matthew 26–28).43 Extensive pronouncements are found in the book of Leviticus and turn around the term כפר. In obedient response to sacrifice, the worshiper hears the priest announce that his/her sins have been atoned for (e.g., Lev 4:31, 5:6). Pronouncements on the subject of atonement are found also in Isaiah 53, in the response of Jesus to penitents and in the writings of Paul.44

The metaphors are drawn from various spheres of life, as for example, the cult. Those who are defiled and hence separated from the assembly can be cleansed and returned to the assembly by submitting to a purification ritual (Num 13:38–4:32). A common metaphor is drawn from market-place economics, as in Isaiah’s statement that “God gives as ransom (כפר) for the life of Israel the pagan nations that come to Yahweh” (Isa 43:3–4).45 From the judiciary dimension of society comes the metaphor (at the same time more than a metaphor) about substitution (Leviticus 16). With the material from these respective genres—story, pronouncements and metaphor—the biblical theologian can offer a summary of the biblical teaching on atonement.

A book that stresses the biblical images and is in the biblical theology mode, is John Driver’s Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church.46 Chapters are devoted to the following biblical images for understanding the atonement: the conflict-victory-liberation motif, vicarious suffering, archetypal images, the sacrifice motif, the redemption-purchase motif, reconciliation, justification, and the adoption-family image. Driver acknowledges that his exposition of the

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43. For additional narratives, for example, 2 Sam 21:1–14, see H. Gese, “The Atonement,” in Essays in Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981) 93–116. He stresses that atonement is the “total substitutionary commitment to life,” a point confirmed in the blood ritual in which blood is brought in contact with holy objects such as the altar, and blood is brought into the sanctuary.

44. See Rom 4:25: “Who was put to death for our sins.” See also Rom 5:9, and esp. v. 11.


subject does not reach for the philosophical and what he calls the "speculative." 47

Precisely because of this gap or lacuna in his work, the services of the systematician are enlisted. In a third-world culture, the contextualization of the biblical teaching would entail familiarity with societal ethos and conventions and so would require the services of a specialist. In Western society, whose heir for good or ill is the enlightenment, contextualization is part of the theologian’s job description.

The systematic theologian has been looking over the shoulder of the biblical theologian all the while, has (ideally) been in dialogue with him or her, has ingested the material, and is now faced with recasting this material into another language. The theologian’s task is not so much a translation as it is a transumption, that is lifting the material out of its setting and reordering it in a manner that will resonate with the times. In so doing the theologian will take into account the configuration of the biblical material as primary, but there will be sensitivity also to the inevitable and necessary filters, namely, Christian tradition, reason/philosophy, and idiomatic cultural language. How might the systematic theologian’s effort now be shaped in concert with the biblical theologian’s work? In what follows I lean hard on Robert K. Johnston, who especially urges that the current American cultural ethos be taken seriously as the context in which the doctrine of atonement might be formulated. 48 Both kinds of theologians are in touch, we shall assume, with the range of biblical expression about atonement. In the church’s history, certain of these biblical representations have served, as do valences in atoms, as hooks for contextualization. It is now up to the systematic theologian, who has the skills necessary to “read” the culture in which the doctrine of atonement needs to be explained, to take the lead.

Two examples from church history can show how, because of the prevailing ethos of the time, certain dimensions of atonement became strategic. Between the second and fifth centuries, given the political glorification of empires and conquest, the model of Christus Victor was highly pertinent to a theory of atonement. The conflict motif to render atonement intelligible has biblical support, since the imagery of Yahweh-war was taken up by Jesus. Centuries later, in the 1960s, the model was revived by Gustaf Aulén in Sweden. Christ’s work of atonement, it was explained, spells a victory over evil and negative forces and so offers release from the power that Satan and

47. Ibid., 243.
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sin have over groups and individuals. Central to this model is the issue of power. At another point in church history, the feudal period, Anselm could capitalize on the judicial language of substitution as a way of answering his own question, “Why the God-man?” Central to this model is the issue of guilt.

But, explains Johnston, North American church and society at the turn of the third millennium will not resonate well with either the notion of penal substitution (Anselm) or the Christus Victor formulation (Gustaf Aulén). As Johnston sees it, drawing on cultural analyses and studies, North Americans are preoccupied with fulfillment. Happiness is a high value; so is individualism. Still, fragmentation and rootlessness are being felt keenly. As it stands now, “contemporary Americans have heard the cross discussed in the language of accountability through ears attuned to images of fulfillment.” The mismatch is obvious. In response, the theologian will not jettison the components of cross and suffering so constitutive to atonement but will ask whether, in faithfulness to the Scripture, there might be another leitmotif within the constellation of images that will more intelligibly address contemporaries.

What if more were made of adoption and family language, asks Johnston. Sin can be understood, indeed must be understood as alienation, estrangement, and disconnectedness (פשע) as well as transgression (חטא). In the OT the consequence of sin was to be cut off from the congregation (already Cain, Genesis 4). But atonement in the form of reconciliation was possible, so that “not-my-people” might become “my people.” In the NT Jesus’ parable of the prodigal puts emphasis on homecoming. Christ’s death, Paul explains, speaks the language of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). His work makes possible for a person to be welcomed into God’s family. It is an image pressed into service by Paul (Gal 4:4–7). Reconciliation and belonging, more than penal substitution, become key terms in this proposed explanation of atonement. The other images are thereby not discarded, for so marvelous is the reality of atonement that no single metaphor or definition can do it justice.

Objections to depicting atonement primarily as reconciliation will most certainly be raised. What about the seriousness of sin? Answer: The sting of sin is not dulled or neutralized. Indeed the sting of alienation is understood in all its cultural reality and more importantly is glimpsed in its theological dimensions as distance from God and humans. What of the orthodox teaching about the vicarious,

substitutionary death, a teaching that has been the touchstone of the evangelical theological structure? Answer: It has not been removed; rather, the explication of the cross-event now travels on a family track instead of on a legal/judicial track. Does such an attempt not dilute the gospel message? Answer: It enhances it because it is in sync with biblical imagery, cultural reality, and cultural expression. But is this not changing the legacy of a crucial doctrine? Answer: That legacy was conditioned by its times; so is this model or something like it. But is this talk of atonement as issuing in reconciliation and adoption into God’s family not to make doctrines relative? Answer: Hardly. The net result as with other models is to come to terms with the seriousness of being distanced from God, to recognize that Christ is the answer to the problem, and to come by way of his work on the cross to be at-one with God. What then is the meaning of the cross? Answer: Here is shown the violent collision of the human over-againstness in the presence of God, as well as the ultimate price of God’s reach to reconcile. It scarcely needs saying that no one model can capture all that is entailed in God’s salvific work in our behalf. It may be in the nature of our finitude that theologians have to be selective. In the past the model of Christus Victor leaned heavily on narrative. In medieval times the penal substitution theory drew mostly from propositions, from didactic materials. Metaphors may be God’s gift to a postmodern age, which looks with suspicion on a cerebral interpretation of reality and resists closure but embraces symbolism.  

51. Broadening this taxonomy, one might propose that entire theological constructs have gravitated toward certain genres as their lynchpin. Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and Augustus Strong centered on didactic pronouncements; Karl Barth and W. Pannenberg could be numbered among those who capitalized on narrative. Paul Tillich reached for symbols. On the latter, compare David Kelsey’s comment: “Paul Tillich agrees that the authoritative elements in scripture are the biblical images, only he calls them ‘symbols’” (Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology, 64).
Divorce

Current experiences in the church and the society toss the hot potato of divorce into the lap of the theologians, where it lands with a loud thump and an anguished cry. Church leaders, Christian counselors, and the believer at least pay lip service to wanting a Christian answer to the question: How do we think Christianly about divorce? This answer, I suggest, is the joint responsibility of biblical and systematic theologians. We step aside to watch the partnering process.

First, the biblical theologian takes the lead in this investigation by examining the biblical pronouncements on marriage and divorce. These include in the OT the Genesis statement about husband and wife becoming one flesh (Gen 2:18–25) and Malachi’s unequivocal declaration: “I hate divorce” (Mal 2:16 NRSV). From the NT come the words of Jesus, which, to quote Matthew, are, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery” (Matt 19:9 NRSV). Paul’s instruction makes room for divorce and remarriage when an unbeliever leaves the spouse (1 Cor 7:12–16). But as straightforward as this summary might sound, the didactic texts are not univocal. Mark makes no mention of the so-called “exception clause” (Mark 10:2–12).

Reaching for metaphor only makes for greater complexity. Deuteronomy’s didactic statement about divorce is taken up metaphorically by Jeremiah to speak of Israel’s relationship to Yahweh. So Jeremiah, after describing a honeymoon period between God and Israel (e.g., Jer 2:1–3), depicts confrontation between the two and reports Israel’s willfulness in seeking another lover, with the result that God is abandoned. At this point God presses into service the legislation of Deut 24:1–4, but in a subverting way. He asks Israel, divorced de facto if not de jure, would she who is now in the category of the divorced and remarried wife return to him (Jer 3:1–5)?

The Mosaic legislation stated that, when a woman is divorced and then remarries, and for whatever reason is without a husband, she cannot go back to the first husband (Deut 24:1–4). The divine accusations against Israel have made clear that Israel has left God for another partner. Then the question becomes: can Israel return now that she has spiritually become the wife of another? Strangely, the answer is yes.52 God overturns his own legislation. One may respond by saying that this is God’s prerogative. As a person, the will of the lawgiver at any given point is decisive, more so than any earlier expressed pronouncement. However one adjudicates the material, the

metaphoric use of marriage/divorce refuses a determinate conclusion, such as, "There is no room for divorce; no room for remarriage." Despite all the pronouncements elsewhere in the Bible, the metaphoric use of marriage/divorce functions to allow an alternative.

That absence of closure on the prescriptive legislation is further illustrated in the narrative of Hosea. This prophet is asked to marry Gomer. Whether prior to the marriage or after or both, Gomer is found to be promiscuous. She has attached herself to others. There is adultery, and reasoning backward from the spiritualized application “Lo-ammi,” and especially from the formula of divorce, “she is not my wife, and I am not her husband” (2:2), one must posit a divorce. Yet Hosea, contrary to the Mosaic divorce law (unless it be thought that Deuteronomy is subsequent to Hosea, as in the JEDP hypothesis), is instructed to return to her and to take her once again as his wife (3:1–3).

So there are multiple, even conflicting, prescriptive pronouncements and precedents. In identifying the diversity, I am only saying what all biblical scholars know. How is one now to formulate a teaching on the subject of divorce? One way is to privilege a particular text, usually a pronouncement text (Matthew 19 or Mark 10), and offer a ruling.53

Another is to take the biblical theology approach and face up to the biblical material, namely, that there is a spectrum of positions, ranging from (1) no divorce under any circumstances to (2) divorce permitted and remarriage permitted. Does the Scripture then leave us without guidance? Not at all. Several factors play into the final formulation on the biblical teaching on divorce. First, one has good reason to privilege the pronouncements, for these set out the ideal—namely, God’s intent is for divorce-free marriages. Second, from the narrative and the metaphor it is clear that this ideal is not always enforced. There are instances in which allowance is made for divorce, possibly also remarriage. Third, the community in any particular case is empowered to render a decision. Is this not what binding and loosing mean (Matt 18:15–20)?54 True, the community may in some cases tend toward the more restrictive view on divorce; in others toward the more open position. Realistically, the Bible could not possibly address the right procedure to take in every ethically-charged domestic situation.

But the question is legitimate: Which community is authorized to make the determination? I take it from Matthew 18 that it is the local

53. Several articles in TJ n.s. 11/1 (Fall 1990) provide a good entry point into the subject.

54. Compare the responsibility given the faith community to decide between true and false prophets, Jeremiah 28–29, or the obligation placed on the Corinthian community to deal with the immoral person (1 Corinthians 5).
congregation. But in answer to this question the historical and systematic theologian enter significantly. They point to tradition, the way the larger church community through the centuries has employed the Scripture on this question. While here too there is not a single position, no doubt for good reason, the evidence is that the church, certainly in the first centuries, privileged the words of Jesus and took a position against divorce and for the most part against remarriage. The Roman Catholic church sees marriage as a sacrament (so Augustine and Aquinas) so that essentially nothing, not even adultery, can dissolve the union of two communicants. The Westminster Confession of 1647 stated categorically that nothing but adultery and willful desertion were sufficient reason for dissolving the marriage bond. However, this multi-century history means at the least that the formulations and practice must gravitate toward the right end, the conservative side, of the spectrum.

Fourth, there is the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to which biblical theologians, systematic theologians, and the body of Christ are subject. God’s Spirit in the superintending of Scripture did not see fit to deposit one unequivocal message on divorce. This means that not one universal ruling covers all instances in the lived life of the church. God’s Spirit, however, can be trusted to direct the body of Christ generally and certainly also in specific immediate situations. Universal truth can, indeed must be affirmed, but the application of biblical doctrine allows for accommodation. Indeed, we do well to invoke here the metanarrative, whether that be labeled redemption, kingdom of God, reconciliation, or God’s design, for it is coherent with that larger frame that the Spirit will offer necessary guidance.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In moving from Scripture to doctrine, scholars would do well to consider counsel along the following lines.

1. *Keep in Focus the Function of Both Scripture and Theology.* True, that function exists, in part, to enable believers to formulate doctrinal propositions. But as important, if not more so, is the function to empower the Christian community in the shape its life takes. More specifically, both the Bible and theology speak to the faith community’s values, its life-style, and its way of being in the world. Were the Bible intended to serve only to instruct and clarify abstract concepts and to appeal to the cerebral part of our being, it would have been better given solely as propositions. But the Bible is not a catalog

55. See David L Smith, “Divorce and Remarriage from the Early Church to John Wesley,” *TJ* n.s. 11 (1990) 131–42.
of pronouncements; it is story, it is proverbs, it is metaphor. It addresses how people of Christian faith “walk the talk.”

2. Guard Scholarly Integrity. To guard integrity implies that scholars do careful exegesis, not only exegesis of individual texts, but the macro-exegesis of the Scripture and so encompass all of Scripture. Scholars should account for all of Scripture in such a synthesis and avoid ignoring or disparaging portions that challenge preconceived conclusions. Honesty is not an easy virtue for exegettes and theologians. It will not do to select only the Scriptures that conveniently support certain biases. Scholars must acknowledge the abomination of selective listening to the Scripture. They must let the antinomies stand, as does Don Carson in treating divine sovereignty and human responsibility.56 An element of mystery is present; to admit it will help us in our humility.

To be scholars of integrity includes an acknowledgment that we work with certain filters. They provide a compass, they keep us from extremes, but they have not the binding authority that Scripture has. So, while scholars are beneficiaries of the reflections of saints in the past, scholars resist being victims of their formulations. Further, scholars take care not to be sideswiped by culture. Also, while we as scholars sharpen our tools of logic and reason, we are not bedazzled with philosophy. Reason is not the ultimate arbiter; that role belongs to Scripture.

3. Strive toward Partnership between the Biblical Theologians and Systematic Theologians. This appeal represents the chief burden of this paper. To do so will mean dealing with several hurdles: making an idolatry of our specializations,57 overcoming an isolationist mind-set, dealing with tensions that inevitably come in partnerships, and thinking short-range instead of long-range. It will mean commitment to communication with fellow faculty members, not necessarily those of our immediate guild. It may mean arranging for cross-discipline forums in an institution or something similar in an ecclesial setting. For academics it will mean an openness, a willingness to be vulnerable, a readiness to put conclusions on the line for testing by a broader group of experts.

4. Practice the Hermeneutic of Community. In theory perhaps most evangelicals subscribe to the notion that not only biblical interpretat-


57. The “editorial” commenting on sustaining a lively conversation between biblical and theological scholarship states, “The increasing specialization within biblical and theological scholarship and the shift in the location of much biblical scholarship from theological schools to secular academic institutions have driven a wedge between biblical and theological scholarship” ([Int 6] [2002] 3).
tion and application but also doctrine ought to be practiced within the community of faith. However, to take seriously the community of faith does not mean that only the so-called experts dialogue with another. It means that rank-and-file Christians be brought into the discussion for their questions, responses, and insights. As John Christopher Thomas notes, his scholarly work as a theologian is bathed in the prayers that his fellow church members make for him. He, in turn dialogues with members about the process and the results. Few scholars would gainsay the theory, but implementation of that theory will require creativity and hard work.

5. Rely to a Greater Extent on God’s Spirit. We may think of the Spirit’s ministry in regard to our topic along three lines. First, God’s Spirit aids us scholars so that we might properly recognize and utilize filters such as tradition, culture, and philosophy. Second, the Spirit who has inspired Scripture will assist in transposing that Scripture into teaching, into doctrine, as he did with the church at the Jerusalem Council. As John Christopher Thomas notes, OT Scriptures could have been cited to support the claims of the “legalists”; even more telling, more explicit texts about including the Gentiles than Amos 9 could have been quoted (i.e., Isa 42:6; Zeph 2:11). But the report of the resolutions committee reads: “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . .” (Acts 15:28). Third, for our cooperative work the Spirit of God will empower us with humility, patience, long-suffering, and the necessary mellowness that makes listening a reality.

6. Beware of Rigidity. A dose of flexibility, at least on methodology, is a necessary ingredient in our work. Admittedly, there is no flexibility with regard to the foundation that must remain without question, the Holy Scripture. But there is no single, right way to move from Scripture to doctrine, although there are less-adequate and more-adequate ways. Some will point to Scriptures that have informed the tradition and feel that Scripture is best heard through the lens of past interpreters. Others will lean hard on patterns of canonical text (theological hermeneutics). My urgings are to give greater weight to biblical theology, and especially to urge, even insist that the isolationism that has characterized Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology cease. Both streams of theology are needed to nurture the faith of the community. The separate functions need not be removed from each, for both have a responsibility to address the society as well as the church.

To repeat: in our enterprise Scripture remains primary. But the task of theologizing is a constructive one, and this requires imagina-

58. Thomas, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions,” 121–22.
59. Ibid., 114–15.
tive initiatives. These, though constrained by Scripture, should not be stifled. In new situations the church will formulate doctrine in ways not mechanically duplicating the past. But Christian theologians, regardless of the different uniforms they wear, should speak for the edification of the body of Christ, for the enlightenment of current society, and ultimately, always in submission before God, and always to the glory of God.60

60. This essay is a revision of an earlier paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, West Coast. The author thanks the respondents, Tremper Longman, Michael Grisanti, and James Sawyer. The author benefited from earlier exchanges with Professors Marvin Tate, Dan Block, Thomas Schreiner, Craig Blaising, and Stephen Wellum of Southern Baptist Seminary, where a draft version was presented to the graduate club. I thank Jeff Mooney, my teaching assistant there, and am grateful for comments from Professor Paul Raabe (Concordia Seminary) and my colleagues Allen Guenther, Pierre Gilbert, and Jon Isaak.

APPENDIX

The Baptist Faith and Message (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1963), 7–8.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

After a semester of teaching an undergrad course on Scripture and Tradition, a number of things emerged in our discussions that might be worth reflecting on regarding the Bible and its interpretation. I’ll simply list them without much elaboration (i.e. as mini rants) and in no specific order.

- Principilizing approaches (i.e. drawing out abstract propositions from biblical texts) to moving from Scripture to practice (e.g. Walter Kaiser) appear unavoidable, even if one reads in light of redemptive history or with the express purpose of enacting the Scriptures as players in a divine drama. I remain convinced that Warfield and Packer offer the most helpful accounts of the doctrine of Scripture, standing above even some very formidable modern restatements (e.g. John Webster’s Holy Scripture).