Projection Interpretation: Toward a Hermeneutic for Homiletics

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by

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Abstract

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This thesis offers a new hermeneutic specific to biblical interpretation for preaching. "Hermeneutics" is, roughly speaking, the art and science of understanding. With reference to preaching, hermeneuts examine how preachers interpret the Bible in preparation for preaching from it.

This thesis surveys hermeneutics in contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics texts and concludes that the field is fractured. Homileticians commend incomplete and unclear hermeneutical methodologies which are unable to assess the value and accuracy of particular interpretations.

What is required instead is an approach to interpretation that is specific to the nature of homiletics. Using theological goals for preaching as a hermeneutical guide, this thesis adapts and appropriates the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff for homiletics. It constructs a new hermeneutic for biblical interpretation, "Projection Interpretation," which comprises a solution to the homiletical problem of fragmentation and which represents an original contribution to the field.

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And, of course: Ava, Eva, and Mandy. All the days.

Abbreviations

CU	Wayne Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism.*
DD	Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks.*
HHS	Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.*
IT	Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning.*
OU	Nicholas Wolterstorff, *On Universals: An Essay in Ontology.*
TM	Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*
TTP	Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue.*
WWA	Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*.

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Part I:
The Problem of Fractured Homiletics

The first part of this thesis centers on a problem facing contemporary mainline and evangelical homiletics: the lack of a comprehensive, clear hermeneutic that is able to assess the value and accuracy of biblical interpretations for preaching. After an overview in chapter 1, chapter 2 reveals a fracture in general hermeneutics since the publication of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. General hermeneutics since that work have looked for meaning to authors, texts, readers or critical hermeneutics.

Chapter 3 then argues that there is a corresponding fracture in contemporary homiletics texts. Chapter 4 evaluates this homiletical fracture and draws three conclusions: that the fracture in homiletics requires repair; that theological goals for preaching give hope for such a repair; and that a hermeneutic that is adequate to homiletics should embrace any methodology that meets those theological goals. These conclusions set the stage for the development of a new hermeneutic for homiletics in Part II.

Chapter 1:
Seeking a New Hermeneutic for Homiletics

Whenever we analyze a text, we never deal with a text pure and simple, but inevitably apply a frame of reference specifically chosen for our analysis.

—Wolfgang Iser[1]

Preaching faces a problem: its hermeneutical foundation is fractured. This thesis will expose that problem by examining major hermeneutical systems in homiletics texts. It will then develop a new hermeneutic for homiletics that comprises a solution to the problem. The present chapter argues that such a new hermeneutic is needed, describes it briefly, and previews the argument.

1 Fractured Hermeneutics and Homiletics: A Problem

Biblical interpretation in homiletics is built on the foundation of general hermeneutics. But that foundation is fractured. To elaborate: Christian preaching is a hermeneutical endeavor. Week after week, preachers read the Scriptures, and in so doing engage in the complex act of text interpretation. They do this in preparation to preach. Preachers are not just readers, but readers on the way to being proclaimers of the word of God. Therefore, it is essential

[1] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 53.

for homileticians to offer preachers clear hermeneutical methods that will lead to effective pulpit proclamation.[2]

Therein lies the problem. This thesis will argue that the models for biblical interpretation in contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics are fractured: that is, they are incomplete, insufficiently clear, and are unable to assess actual biblical interpretations. When preachers peruse homiletics texts to learn how to interpret the Bible for preaching, they find a variety of models. Some models focus on authors as creators of meaning; some focus on the Bible as the repository of meaning; some focus on readers as generators of meaning; some recommend critical reading of the Bible according to predefined theological, sociological, or philosophical values.

I will show that such models are, first of all, incomplete: they lack the breadth required to embrace the multifaceted nature of preachers' interpretive practices. In other words, they do not describe and incorporate the many things preachers actually do with texts. They concentrate only on a portion of preachers' interpretive actions, ignoring or discounting others. Second, the models lack the clarity necessary to explain how the four entities above (author, text, reader and critical hermeneutics) cooperate or interfere with one another. During interpretation, all four entities interact, and at times they collide. Current homiletical systems, even when they include more than one of the four, fail to account for and evaluate such interactions. They are unclear. Finally, the models offer no helpful way to assess interpretations. Because they disagree on how texts hold or communicate meaning and on the role authors and readers play in interpretation, assessment of widely different methods and interpretations is impossible.

The result is an array of methodological options for biblical interpretation, none of which are adequate to the task. When preachers choose among such models, they will be compelled to select interpretive methodologies that are neither comprehensive enough to describe the many things that preachers do with the Bible nor clear enough to explain how they as readers engage with authors, texts, and critical hermeneutical practices.

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[2] §4.2 will explain what is meant by "effective" preaching.

Furthermore, preachers will receive inadequate guidance from homiletics texts for the assessment of interpretations. The interpretive foundation of homiletics is fractured.

This thesis will argue that the problem of fractured homiletics may be traced to contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. Hermeneutical models also focus on either authors, texts, readers, or critical hermeneutics.[3] By its adoption of this or that hermeneutical approach, North American homiletics has become similarly fractured.[4] And what may be fine for hermeneutics is fatal for homiletics. Preachers do not read the Bible as a literary or critical exercise. They interpret with the understanding that, as Thomas Long puts it, "In the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ speaks God's word in the human and frail words of the sermon."[5] The theological nature of preaching requires that biblical interpretation for preaching be done in a manner that can lead to theologically successful sermons. Fractured hermeneutics for homiletics will not do.

To sum up: preaching faces a problem. Preachers encounter myriad methodologies for interpreting the Bible. Those methodologies are incomplete, unclear, and cannot assess interpretations effectively. This problem in homiletics requires the development of a new hermeneutic sufficient to the task of preaching. Preachers need a way to combine methodologies into a clear and unified whole, and to assess which methodologies are most valuable for preaching.

2 A New Hermeneutic for Homiletics

This thesis employs the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff to construct a new hermeneutic for biblical interpretation that offers a solution to the problem of homiletical fragmentation. Using key insights from his work, it will develop a successful hermeneutic for preaching,

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[3] Because interpretation in general is a varied enterprise, this fragmentation may not be a problem for the field of hermeneutics. Multiple theories of interpretation may simply reflect readers' multiple interpretive interests. This is not an uncontested claim. See §4.1 for a defense.

[4] Such fragmentation may be due in part to homileticians' cultural situations. Nonetheless, §4.2.1 will contend that cultural factors cannot adequately account for the situation.

[5] Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 16.

which I call "Projection Interpretation." This new hermeneutic is able to embrace multiple interpretive methodologies by describing the many things that preachers actually do when they read the Bible. It is thus a more comprehensive model for homiletics than others.

It also displays the clarity necessary to describe the intricacies of biblical interpretation for preaching. It does this by means of a well-defined framework that elucidates how authors, texts, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact when preachers read the Bible. Projection Interpretation can thus unite disparate hermeneutical fragments into a coherent and theologically informed whole.

Finally, Projection Interpretation allows preachers to assess the methodologies of biblical interpretation for their value and accuracy. It gives preachers theological standards by which to evaluate interpretations.

Therefore preachers, rather than having to choose from a long list of incompatible approaches, can use Projection Interpretation as an overarching hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible. That hermeneutic will enable them to understand the various methods of biblical interpretation and the homiletical value of each. Preachers will then be able to select, based on their theological commitments and the contours of their pastoral context, an appropriate method for biblical interpretation.

I do not claim that Projection Interpretation is the only hermeneutical solution for preaching. However, I do argue that any solution addressing the hermeneutical fragmentation in homiletics must have certain attributes, and that Projection Interpretation has them. It provides a successful (though not necessarily unique) solution to the problem.

3 The Scope of Central Terms

This thesis focuses on the intersection of hermeneutics and homiletics. "Hermeneutics" is, roughly speaking, the art and science of understanding.[6] Restricted to the realm of

[6] For an extensive definition see §2.1.

preaching, the term "hermeneutics" describes how preachers interpret the biblical text in preparation for preaching a sermon from that text.

The term "homiletics" refers to the study of preaching. "Preaching" in this thesis is defined as the practice of delivering Christian sermons. Furthermore, "preaching" in this thesis is limited to the activity of delivering a sermon based on a passage from the Bible. Some valuable forms of preaching obviously fall outside of this limitation, but this thesis focuses on interpreting a biblical text in preparation for delivering a Christian sermon from that text, and so passes over other varieties.

Also, unless otherwise noted, in this thesis the word "preaching" refers to contemporary North American mainline and evangelical practice.[7] Some limitation of scope is necessary within a field as broad—theologically, socially, and historically—as homiletics. A restriction to contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics is appropriate, because within this sub-field the problem of hermeneutical fragmentation is particularly clear, as I will show. Additionally, there has been extensive and fruitful engagement with hermeneutics by contemporary mainline and evangelical homileticians in North America.

4 The Argument

The following discussion will range widely. Here I offer a roadmap for the journey ahead.

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[7] For contemporary Roman Catholic homiletical approaches, see, for example, Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 2000); 297-346. For homiletics outside North America, see, for example, Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 173-236 (African preaching) and 237-96 (Latin American preaching); Maurice Elliott and Patrick McGlinchey, eds., *Perspectives on Preaching: A Witness of the Irish Church* (Dublin: Church of Ireland Publishing, 2017); Roger Standing, "Mediated Preaching: Homiletics in Contemporary British Culture," in *The Future of Preaching* (London: SCM, 2010), 9-26; Sangyil Park, *Korean Preaching, Han, and Narrative* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

4.1 Part One: The Problem of Fractured Homiletics

The remainder of Part I (chapters 2 to 4) describes the problem that contemporary hermeneutics poses for North American homiletics. It also outlines the requirements for a successful solution.

Chapter 2 begins the journey by demonstrating that contemporary hermeneutics is fractured: current theories of text interpretation are split into mutually incompatible approaches that locate meaning in the author, text, reader, or in critical hermeneutics. Similarly, chapter 3 canvasses the field of mainline and evangelical homiletics and finds that the field is fractured along the same fault lines: contemporary homiletical theories of Biblical interpretation locate meaning in either the author, text, reader, or critical hermeneutical practices. I will show that such theories are incomplete, insufficiently clear, and do not permit assessment. In other words, the hermeneutical fracture has created a homiletical echo.

Chapter 4 evaluates the fractured state of both fields in order to see whether and how this problem can be solved. Regarding hermeneutics, it concludes that, given the diverse possible goals for reading, one should expect diverse approaches. It does not take a stance on whether this state of affairs is helpful or harmful for general hermeneutics. However, it contends that the homiletical fracture is harmful. Preaching requires a coherent approach to biblical interpretation. That approach can be developed by looking to theology: theological goals for preaching can regulate biblical interpretation for preaching. The chapter outlines four such theological goals for preaching and concludes that any hermeneutical method adequate to homiletics will meet these goals. Consequently, the theological goals allow for multiple methodologies while providing a means for assessing them.

Part one concludes that hermeneutics has imprinted its own fractured condition upon contemporary homiletical theory. This state of affairs hampers preaching, because it results in inadequate approaches to biblical interpretation. Such circumstances call for a hermeneutic that is adequate to the theological shape of homiletics.

4.2 Part Two: A Solution to the Homiletical Fracture

The second half of this thesis (chapters 5–7) uses the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff to construct such a hermeneutic. Chapter 5 introduces two concepts from the hermeneutics of Wolterstorff necessary for its development: "world projection" and "appropriated discourse." The chapter explains each notion and then expands and modifies them for homiletics. Together, world projection and appropriated discourse provide a way to fuse fragmented hermeneutical theories into a homiletical whole.

In chapter 6 I employ Wolterstorff's theories to construct a new hermeneutic for homiletics: Projection Interpretation. Projection Interpretation meets the demands outlined in part one: It is a comprehensive hermeneutic for biblical interpretation, able to describe the many things that preachers actually do with the biblical text. It also displays the clarity necessary to show how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact during interpretation. Finally, Chapter 7 puts the theory through its paces in order to show that Projection Interpretation can assess the value and accuracy of biblical interpretations for preaching. The chapter concludes that although there are multiple valid methods for interpreting the Bible for preaching, some are more valuable than others. The final chapter will review the journey and demonstrate that Projection Interpretation is indeed a successful solution to the problem. It will also note limitations of the study and indicate directions for further research.

Thus, this thesis will have developed a new hermeneutic adequate to homiletics. This hermeneutic comprises a solution to the problem of fractured biblical interpretation for preaching: it embraces many methodologies under a single hermeneutic, it clarifies how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics cooperate in interpretation, and it is able to assess examples of biblical interpretation for preaching.

Chapter 2:
Hermeneutical Fracture

The hermeneutic field . . . is internally at variance with itself.

—Paul Ricoeur[1]

In this chapter I consider the state of contemporary hermeneutics. This discussion is in preparation for showing (in chapter 3) that a parallel state obtains in contemporary homiletics. Here I argue that since the publication of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method,* contemporary hermeneutics is fractured into four major approaches.[2] Furthermore, the disparate goals and methodologies of each branch of hermeneutics hinder dialogue between those branches.

In order to explain the hermeneutical fracture, I first delineate the areas of hermeneutics relevant to this thesis, and then review two key developments that culminated in Gadamer's work. From that vantage point I then trace the fourfold fracture in contemporary hermeneutics and analyze the resulting state.[3]

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[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 26-27. Quoted in Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6.

[2] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1996).

[3] In the process of so doing I review the hermeneutical literature central to the conversation.

1 The Scope of Hermeneutics for Preaching

Restricting the scope of the term "hermeneutics" is both necessary and helpful. Roughly speaking, hermeneutics is the art and science of understanding. One must speak roughly at the outset, because the field resists definition. Its concerns, concepts and methods draw from varied disciplines, intrude on other fields of study, and have changed substantially over time. This "loose, baggy monster" has proven difficult to corral.[4]

Hermeneutics, first of all, has a sprawling scope. Initially developed as a tool for biblical interpretation, it was later used to tackle general textual interpretation, and then to analyze the phenomenon of human understanding. As such, it touches on (among other topics) theology, aesthetics, law, and historiography. It addresses concerns in sociology, linguistics, and philosophy—especially epistemology and ontology.

In discussions about hermeneutics it is often difficult simply to know what people are talking about. The term can denote methodology for understanding texts, theory about human comprehension, or the ground of our very being. Wherever the act of understanding is interesting or problematic, hermeneutics stalks into the room.[5]

Second, hermeneutics (understood as text interpretation) can pursue myriad goals. Just what is the reader of a text trying to understand?[6] Is it what the author intended? What the original addressee would have understood? What the signs on the page mean? What those signs referred to then, or what they refer to now? What the text can tell us about the world from which it came? What a text might mean for the reader specifically or for the reader's community? Is the reader trying to understand the text on its own terms or on the terms of some other ideology? These are all potential hermeneutical goals.

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[4] Gerald L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 17.

[5] In an ironic twist, biblical interpreters have now marked off their own original interpretive concerns as *special hermeneutics*, labeling all else *general hermeneutics*. Some have subsequently argued that the general discipline is a subset of the special! See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 414.

[6] It should be noted that although the present project will focus on textual interpretation, hermeneutics also covers other communicative situations like face-to-face conversation or expression in works of fine art.

This leads to a third issue: what is "meaning"? Even individual words have ranges of meaning that vary according to use and context.[7] The phrase "meaning of a sentence" may refer to its propositional content, but also to its emotive force or rhetorical effect.[8] Sentences also "mean" by referring to entities in the world. And beyond literal meaning, texts communicate by figures of speech or by implication. Meaning is not monolithic.

Finally, hermeneuts of different stripes employ different methodologies. Analytic philosophy relies on tools of logic and close analysis of ordinary language; continental philosophy uses existential and ontological methods; critical hermeneutics employs sociological analysis.[9]

When dealing with such a monster, is classification even possible? Some have wondered if general hermeneutical studies are worth the attempt.[10] In any case, any hermeneutical study will have to sharpen its focus.

The subject of this thesis provides such a sharpened focus. Its concern is the relationship between hermeneutics and Christian preaching, and that relationship will set the parameters for the following discussion. In particular I explore hermeneutics as biblical interpretation in preparation for preaching. I examine what happens when Christian preachers, in the act of sermon preparation, interpret a passage of Scripture. In this thesis, the readers are preachers; the text is the Bible; the goal is preaching a sermon using that text.

This interest in homiletics focuses the discussion of hermeneutical goals and methods. Preachers interpret with the goal of preaching and they use methods appropriate

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[7] *HHS*, 44.

[8] The term "propositional content" comes from Nicholas Wolterstorff. I explain his terms (and the terminological inconsistency among hermeneuts) in §5.2.2. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 138-39.

[9] Roy J. Howard adopts these categories in *Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[10] See Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*, 8-9; Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 16.

to that activity. Therefore, I interact with general hermeneuts as they bear on biblical interpretation and homiletics. I will also engage with biblical scholars, theologians and, of course, homileticians. In general, I will interact with contemporary (mid-twentieth century to present) works.

Thus, homiletics will narrow the following hermeneutical study. But it will also deepen such a study: the biblical text presents unsurpassed challenges for interpretation, and the goal of preaching from the Bible adds layers of complexity to an already complicated endeavor.[11]

Even with this homiletical restriction in place, the hermeneutical fracture exposed below is incomprehensible apart from its historical development. Therefore, I first note two important predecessors to Hans-Georg Gadamer, and then discuss his *Truth and Method*.

2 Two Forerunners to Gadamer

In this section I set Gadamer's theory and the subsequent hermeneutical fracture in its historical context by discussing relevant contributions of two hermeneuts: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Martin Heidegger.[12] The former laid the foundation for general hermeneutics; the latter was particularly influential to Gadamer.

[11] See §3.1 for discussion of the complexity of the biblical text.

[12] Space limitations preclude a general review of hermeneuts prior to Gadamer. For biblical hermeneutics prior to Schleiermacher, see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). For hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Gadamer, see Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

Hermeneutics began as a methodology for interpreting difficult biblical texts.[13] Theorists understood "interpretation" to be only occasionally necessary, because most texts could be comprehended without special interpretive effort.[14]

Friedrich Schleiermacher's seminal work in the early nineteenth century transformed hermeneutics from a methodology for thorny exegesis into a general discipline addressing the understanding of any text.[15] However, in doing so he created a dilemma in the field. Schleiermacher's goal was to use a text to understand the mental state of an author at the time of composition.[16] In order to do so, he commended both objective and subjective processes, developing a bifurcated approach that blended scientific methodology and moments of spiritual sympathy between author and reader.[17] The result was that although Schleiermacher attempted to vindicate hermeneutics as a human science, he did so in part by utilizing the tools and standards of the natural sciences.[18] The use of objective scientific systems for the goal of entering the mental world of an author created an uneasy marriage. As Ricoeur states, "Schleiermacher's hermeneutical program thus carried a double mark: Romantic by its appeal to a living relation with the process of creation, critical by its wish to elaborate the universally valid rules of understanding."[19]

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[13] See, among others, Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 34-38; Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 3.

[14] Gadamer discusses Chladenius in this vein. *TM*, 182-83.

[15] Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 204-36. There are complications surrounding Schleiermacher's work, because many of his thoughts were given in lecture form and only put into writing posthumously. However, see his early hermeneutical thought in the recent publication of his notes: Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, "The Aphorisms on Hermeneutics from 1805 and 1809/10," in Gayle L. Ormiston, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 57-83.

[16] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 86.

[17] Schleiermacher's terms are the "grammatical" and "psychological" moments of interpretation, respectively. He also subdivides psychological interpretation into "comparative" (contrasting a work to similar works) and "divinatory" (inhabiting the mind of another). See Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 88-90.

[18] In this thesis, the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, and so on) are in contrast to the human sciences (art, literature, history, sociology, and so on).

[19] *HHS*, 46.

Palmer agrees, noting, "Schleiermacher's was a dialogical hermeneutic that . . . was blinded by its own desire for laws and systematic coherence."[20] This conflict of objective and subjective methodologies drove hermeneutical study forward after Schleiermacher: hermeneuts followed in his steps by seeking objective methods for an activity that seemed to operate by human intuition.[21] One can see in this tension a precursor to a fracture in hermeneutical method.

I mention just one other hermeneut prior to Gadamer because his theory paved the way for Gadamer's insights. Martin Heidegger's philosophical work provided tools for Gadamer to address Schleiermacher's hermeneutical tension.[22] He did so by expanding the scope of hermeneutics from a theory of interpretation (an epistemological project) to an inquiry into human existence (an ontological project).[23]

In the course of that expansion, Heidegger developed a new concept of understanding (*Verstehen*) that could replace earlier notions based on detached scientific objectivity. For Heidegger, to understand something is not to grasp it objectively, but to be

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[20] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 94.

[21] Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, expended enormous effort arguing for a legitimation of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) alongside the natural sciences based on the concept of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) expressed objectively in works of art. See Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 247-251, and Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 98-123.

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). This brief discussion of Heidegger focuses only on preparing for Gadamer's contributions. For a detailed review of Heidegger's contributions to hermeneutics, see Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980), 143-68. Gadamer explains in detail his own development of Heidegger's ideas (*TM*, 254-307).

[23] Heidegger approached the question of being (*Sein*) by an analysis of being consciously present, the idea of "being-there" (*Dasein*) (*Being and Time,* 21-28). *Ontology* is that branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of being: "What there is, what exists . . . [and] what the most general features and relations of these things are." Thomas Hofweber, "Logic and Ontology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018), ed. Edward N. Zalta [online]; available from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/logic-ontology/; accessed 1/31/19. See Nicholas Wolterstorff's helpful comments in *On Universals: An Essay in Ontology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), xii-xiii.

familiar with it. A person "understands" a hammer not just by looking at it or measuring it, but by knowing how to use it: knowing what it is for and how it fits into human life.[24] Understanding is rich, historically located, and self-involved: it means knowing one's way around (*Sichverstehen*), and even understanding one's self (*sich verstehen*).[25] The detached objectivity commended in earlier hermeneutics was no longer necessary for understanding. A hermeneutic based on self-involved understanding was possible.[26]

This alteration in the notion of understanding would lead to a sea change in hermeneutics. As Gadamer states referring to Heidegger, "Against the background of this existential analysis of *Dasein* . . . the problems of a hermeneutic of the human sciences suddenly look very different."[27] Heidegger developed tools that would support a conception of hermeneutics prior to and independent of the standards of the natural sciences. Those tools would be instrumental for Gadamer's project.

3 Gadamer's *Truth and Method*

Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* marked a major turning point in hermeneutics.[28] The outcome of his work and the details of his arguments gave impetus to crucial developments in the field.[29] In particular, several steps in Gadamer's argument allow for

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[24] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 98-99.

[25] This insight is Gadamer's (see *TM*, 260-261).

[26] Heidegger's project was even more ambitious than this. He ultimately wanted to show that understanding, instead of being an activity grounded in something more fundamental like being or reason, is itself the ground of being. The human capacity to understand is foundational to *Dasein.*

[27] *TM*, 259.

[28] On the significance of *Truth and Method* to hermeneutics, see Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 74 ("Gadamer . . . championed its twentieth century development"); Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 162-63 ("A decisive event . . . an important new phase"); Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 313 ("a paradigm-shift in the very nature of hermeneutics").

[29] Space limitations oblige me to leave to the side a discussion of theorists roughly contemporary with Gadamer, like Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs, who formulated the "New Hermeneutic." Although important for hermeneutics in general and New Testament interpretation in particular, I have chosen to focus on Gadamer because his work is more generally applicable to hermeneutics than theirs, and because the specific

the worsening of an incipient fracture in hermeneutics.[30] Rather than canvassing the entirety of *Truth and Method*, I highlight those portions that shed light on the subsequent fracture within hermeneutics: his ideas about understanding, about authors, about texts, and about readers.

First, in *Truth and Method* Gadamer, following Heidegger, develops a conception of understanding in the human sciences that is not based on scientific objectivity yet is nevertheless valid.[31] He thus finds a way to relativize the hegemonic claims of scientific objectivity vis-à-vis the human sciences.[32] Gadamer claims that one can understand an object without objectifying it in the way that the scientific method does.[33] In other words, the scientific method is not the only or best route to knowledge. Understanding texts involves more than detached analysis, and knowledge gained by subjective means is true knowledge.[34] In this way he tries to overcome the dilemma that Schleiermacher introduced by insisting on both critical and intuitive methodologies. Gadamer argues that self-involved understanding (*Verstehen*) is superior to critical distance.

Second, Gadamer diminishes the role of the author in shaping a text's meaning. For instance, he argues:

> The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not

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connections to later hermeneuts is more obvious in his case. For more on the New Hermeneutic, see Gerhard Ebeling, *God and Word* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

[30] I do not argue that Gadamer initiated such a fracture—it was incipient already in Schleiermacher. But his work catalyzed it. See the next section for discussion.

[31] *TM*, xxiv-xxv.

[32] This argument is woven throughout the book. See, however, *TM*, 281-85.

[33] Hermeneuts speak in this vein of the "subject/object split." This means that in viewing or analyzing an object as an object, observers must also understand themselves as subjects who are independent of the object. It was Kant who began to challenge this idea by examining how our own structures of consciousness limit and determine one's experience of an object. Subsequent ontology, like that of Heidegger, sought to undermine the subject/object split more radically by showing how deeply self-involved all understanding is.

[34] Schneiders provides an account of how Gadamer's work convinced her of this as a New Testament scholar. See Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 1-4.

> identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter. . . . Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author.[35]

The combination of the two ideas above means that the author is no longer the creator of an independent meaning that the interpreter, by objective means, may isolate and analyze. Meaning is at least partially generated by readers as they come to understand a text.

Third, Gadamer offers a new conception of what a text is: he discusses the ontology or mode of being of a work of art, and whether and how art conveys truth.[36] He contends that its mode of being is not simply that of an "object" but of a "work." An object is observed; a work is experienced. It absorbs the viewer into its world, much as a game absorbs players into an imaginative world. Therefore, understanding art requires personal engagement with (or surrender to) the work. In addition, experiencing a work is an event, because the work comes into being by being performed, viewed, or read.

Gadamer's discussion of texts is relevant here. Texts are works that generate meaning during the event of their being read. As Gadamer says, "Reading with understanding is always a kind of reproduction, performance, and interpretation."[37] Each reading is a unique coming-into-being of the work.

Fourth, Gadamer makes important claims about readers and the role they play in interpretation. He argues that the event of a work of art (such as reading a text) always happens via a reader's tradition that makes possible the understanding of that work. Traditions—pre-understandings involving the reader's presuppositions, the history of the work and its prior interpretation—guide reading. Reading a classic text of poetry, a work of history, or a biblical narrative all require some pre-understanding of the kind of text one is

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[35] *TM*, 296. This is not to say that authorial intention has no value for interpretation, but that it has no authoritative value. It supplies a part but not the whole of the meaning of the text.

[36] *TM*, 101-169. When Gadamer speaks of the "mode of being" of a work of art, he is asking about its ontology: in what manner it exists. A text, for example, is more than a physical object. A copy of *The Great Gatsby* is not the same thing as the work itself. It is an instance of the work. In what way, then, does a piece of art exist? This problem occupies a large part of *Truth and Method*.

[37] *TM*, 160.

reading, which stem from a culture's tradition of reading that kind of work. Gadamer states that experiencing a work of art "brings its hidden history into every age."[38] That is, works are always seen through a lens of the history of a literary tradition and of the prior interpretation of a work. Although such pre-understanding (or prejudice), as conceived in the natural sciences, is a hindrance to understanding, Gadamer argues that it is prejudice that enables understanding.

Furthermore, he states that unlike in the natural sciences, understanding in the human sciences happens in a version of the hermeneutical circle:[39] readers bring to the text a pre-understanding (*Vorverstehen*) from their tradition, and as they interpret they are "brought up short" by aspects of the text that challenge their pre-understanding, forcing them to revise earlier views.[40] This in turn changes readers' perspectives, modifying their interpretive stance as they go back again to interpret. Understanding and interpretation operate in a circular relation. Another way of saying this is that the "horizon of the text" fuses with a "reader's horizon," and both are thereby expanded.[41] Because interpretation changes readers' horizons, all genuine understanding involves application or personal involvement.[42] This emphasis on self-involvement makes biblical interpretation a parade example of understanding: Gadamer says, "We have the task of *redefining the hermeneutics of the human sciences in terms of . . . theological hermeneutics.*"[43] Understanding the Bible is a model for understanding any text at all.

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[38] *TM*, 161.

[39] This term appears often and with varied meaning in hermeneutics, with the result that several back-and-forth interpretive processes go by this name. Freidrich Ast originally used it to refer to how understanding a part of a text and understanding the whole of a text proceed back and forth and inform one another. See Palmer, *Hermeneutics,* 77.

[40] *TM*, 267.

[41] *TM*, 306-7. A "horizon*,"* as Gadamer defined it, is the entire scope of experience and knowledge that a text or person possesses. As such, it is impossible to objectify. A horizon cannot be seen; it is the composite of all that one is able to see.

[42] He concedes that there is such a thing an uninvolved, objective understanding, but he argues that it is anemic compared with self-involved understanding (*TM*, 259, 300-307, 341-46).

[43] *TM*, 310-11. Emphasis original.

Thus, according to Gadamer, readers read from within a tradition that enables their interpretation, and they proceed via a self-involved hermeneutical circle toward a fusion of the reader's horizon with a text's. Gadamer's theories would exacerbate the tensions present within hermeneutics since Schleiermacher and allow for the worsening of an incipient fracture in the field.

4 Gadamer's Hermeneutical Legacy

Truth and Method left an indelible mark on hermeneutics, introducing concepts that would support fractured approaches to interpretation. Here I discuss how Gadamer's views have done just that: encouraging subsequent interpreters to focus on one entity (author, text, reader, or critical concerns) to the minimization of others.

First of all, Gadamer divides interpretation into author-focused approaches that strive for objectivity and text-focused approaches that emphasize reading as an event. On the one hand, his theories associate author-focused hermeneuts with supporters of objective interpretation.[44] On the other hand, Gadamer favors the text (along with the reader) as the locus of meaning, experienced in the self-involved event of reading.[45] Those who follow Gadamer's arguments tend to focus on the text and reader as well.[46] Thus, Gadamer distinguishes interpretation focusing on authors from that focusing on texts and readers.

However, it was only a matter of time before text *and* reader became text *or* reader. In fact, Gadamer's ambiguity about readers enabled such a text-reader split. On the one hand, he minimizes readers' impact on interpretation, writing that in legitimate

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[44] TM 369-75. Here Gadamer describes knowing an author's mind as "a scientific virtue" similar to "the knowledge of nature" (373). Grant R. Osborne, an author-focused hermeneut, responds to "the attack on objective interpretation." He is "not so skeptical" as others about the possibility. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 489, 498, respectively.

[45] *TM*, 193. See also xxxi, 167, 296, 372-73.

[46] See, for instance, Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text,* 23-24.

interpretation readers identify their prejudices, foreground them, and suspend them. They "let local and limited prejudices die away," and substitute true ones.[47] On the other hand, he elevates readers' contributions, insisting that tradition does not hinder interpretation but enables it.[48] Historical beings understand by means of their own historicity, which means that interpreters should not discount their own perspectives. Such ambiguity supports both text-focused ideas of interpretation (in which meaning resides independently in texts and can be accessed by setting aside prejudices), as well as reader-focused methods (in which readers create meaning from their own viewpoint).[49]

Finally, *Truth and Method* has opened up a space for critical hermeneutics. Gadamer raises issues of truth and falsehood, freedom and manipulation in interpretation—in fact, he does so by omission. Reviewers of *Truth and Method* point out that Gadamer's hermeneutics lacks a critical element: he does not anticipate ineffective or dishonest communication.[50] Gadamer's reply is, in effect, to acknowledge the omission but to clarify that his hermeneutic is descriptive and not prescriptive.[51] It is not his purpose to correct faulty communication. Such a reply invites exploration of those neglected prescriptive elements. How should readers read? How can incorrect interpretations be identified and rejected?[52] Hermeneuts insist that there must be a place for critical questions that probe ineffective or dishonest communication.

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[47] *TM*, 298.

[48] *TM*, 303.

[49] For instance, Grant R. Osborne thinks that readers can and should (imperfectly but sufficiently) suspend prejudices. Stanley Fish values community tradition and states that presuppositionless interpretation is impossible. And Paul Ricoeur and Karl-Otto Apel envision a back-and forth movement in which one suspends and then engages them. See below for discussion of these authors.

[50] For an example of such criticism, see Emilio Betti, "Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the *Geisteswissenschaften*," in Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 79-81.

[51] *TM,* xxxvii-xxxviii.

[52] See, for example, the extensive exchanges between Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas, summarized in Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 385-93, and discussed in n.136 below.

Thus, Gadamer's work has allowed for fragmented approaches to interpretation. He raises concerns for the features of the text, the reader's involvement, and issues of manipulation. He also liberates those entities from the hegemony of the author's intent. Consequently, his work has permitted subsequent interpreters to focus on one entity—author, text, reader, critical concerns—to the minimization of others.

I do not claim that Gadamer initiated this fracture. Others had previously posited multiple contributors to a text's meaning,[53] and scholars had disagreed about them prior to *Truth and Method*.[54] But Gadamer's work catalyzed the fragmentation: his conception of understanding that rivals the scientific method, his focus on the text over the author, his equivocal stance on readers' prejudices, and his opening of a space for concerns of freedom and manipulation set the stage for hermeneutical models that looked either to authors and objectivity, or to textual meaning as Gadamer advocated, or beyond his theories to a dominant role for readers in interpretation, or to critical concerns. It is to these fragmented lines of development that I now turn.

5 A Fourfold Schema for Hermeneutics

The remainder of this chapter will show that, broadly speaking, hermeneutical approaches may be categorized based on where they locate meaning: in the author, in the text, in the reader, or in critical hermeneutical practices. I first defend the validity of this fourfold schema. The schema is neither original nor the only way to categorize hermeneutical

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[53] For instance, I discuss New Criticism (a text-focused hermeneutic) below, which predates *Truth and Method.* See also the literary analysis of Roman Jakobson and his six elements in communication ("Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), 350-77), which came before *Truth and Method*.

[54] In particular, Ludwig Wittgenstein's influential work raised the idea of self-involved understanding in language. His notion of "language games" analyzes communicative situations in ways that require self-involvement. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations,"* 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 81.

approaches.[55] But for two reasons, both stemming from homiletics, the fourfold system will serve the purposes of this thesis admirably.

First, many homileticians describe their own interpretive systems in identical terms. Chapter 3 will demonstrate that when contemporary mainline and evangelical homileticians in North America discuss their approach to biblical interpretation, those approaches fall into these categories.

Second, each entity in the schema—the author, the text, the reader, and critical hermeneutics—assume special forms when the focus is biblical interpretation for preaching, as chapter 3 will show. Therefore, those four terms will prove helpful in understanding homiletical hermeneutics.

Consequently, though the schema is not the only one available to describe hermeneutics, the homiletical focus of this thesis justifies the selection of this particular framework. I now describe the four approaches, giving examples of theorists and noting essential sub-divisions. In order to illustrate an otherwise abstract discussion, I discuss how each approach might interpret a biblical passage: Mark's narrative of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany (Mark 14:3–9).[56]

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[55] For alternatives, many of which overlap with mine, see Emilio Betti's "triadic process" of author, text and reader ("Hermeneutics," 56); Wayne C. Booth's five options for what a text is (*Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 57); Roy J. Howard's three "faces" (analytical, psychosocial, and ontological) (*Three Faces*, 1-34); John Barton's event/text/author/reader approach (John Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 (1984): 19-35); David E. Klemm's four-part theory of the artist, the world, the work and the audience (*Hermeneutical Inquiry*, *Volume 1: The Interpretation of Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 34); and Ben F. Meyer's reader/text/referent ("A Tricky Business: Ascribing New Meaning to Old Texts," *Gregorianum* 71 (1990): 743).

[56] I offer these interpretations as illustrations, not as definitive representatives of each approach.

6 Author-Focused Hermeneutics

This first approach understands the meaning of a text to be more or less equivalent to the intention of its author. The discussion of contemporary author-focused hermeneutics will proceed in four stages: an outline of how contemporary models have responded to Gadamer, a discussion of a theoretical tool (Speech-Act Theory) that has enabled that response, a review of two prominent author-focused hermeneuts, and author-focused interpretations of Mark 14.

6.1 Author-Focused Hermeneutics since Gadamer

Interpreting authorial intent has been a common practice for thousands of years. Augustine declared, "The aim of [the Bible's] readers is simply to find out the thoughts and wishes of those by whom it was written down and, through them, the will of God, which we believe these men followed as they spoke."[57] The author's thoughts and wishes are determinative for the text's meaning.

Gadamer's work did not dislodge that tradition. However, it did mount an incisive attack on author-focused interpretation, with the result that in the post-Gadamerian era, meaning derived from the intention of an author must be argued for, not simply assumed.[58] Such arguments address the definition of "intention," the possibility of overcoming historical distance between author and reader, and the role of readers in interpretation.

First, author-focused hermeneuts avoid defining "intention" as the mental or psychological state of a person.[59] "Intention" now commonly refers to a textually enacted

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[57] Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 32.

[58] Challenges to authorial intent have come from more theorists than Gadamer. One important article (predating *Truth and Method*) the title of which has become an accusation, is W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Suwanee Review* 54 (1946): 468-88.

[59] This is how Schleiermacher defined intention. He intimates as much when he states, "An important prerequisite for interpretation is that one must be willing to leave one's own consciousness and to enter the author's." Schleiermacher, "The Aphorisms on Hermeneutics," 58. Thiselton argues that although Schleiermacher included the mental intention of an author, he was actually after the "goal and purpose" of a text that reflected that intention (Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids:

intention. Author-focused interpreters do not try to go behind the text to a mental event but instead see at the text as an enacted meaning.[60] As Nicholas Wolterstorff says, interpreters seek "not the . . . acts that the author *intended* to perform; [but] the ones he *did* perform."[61] Although the goal remains the discovery of what the author did by writing a text, interpretation proceeds by studying the text itself, without attempting to reconstruct an author's mental state.[62]

In addition, most author-focused hermeneuts admit that the quest for authorial intent does not always succeed. Multiple problems can arise: authors may have failed to be clear in their intentions (or may have intended to be unclear);[63] some meaning may have come from an author's subconscious or been otherwise unintentional;[64] or the historical and cultural distance between an author and a reader may make recovery of authorial intent partial at best.[65]

Finally, author-focused hermeneuts acknowledge that readers do play a substantial role in interpretation. Osborne admits, "Every reader brings to the task a set of 'preunderstandings.' "[66] In fact, in some texts (like parables) the author's intent seems to be

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Eerdmans, 2009). Nonetheless, Schleiermacher's hermeneutic did involve the mental intention of an author, even if it moved beyond it.

[60] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 75-76; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 59.

[61] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 27 (2003): 22. Emphasis original.

[62] This point is sometimes lost on opponents. Monroe Beardsley's "The Authority of the Text" provides a perfect example of hermeneuts speaking at cross-purposes. Throughout, Beardsley is determined to show that "meaning" is logically different than an author's mental intention. He succeeds admirably, but because he fails to recognize that author-focused hermeneutics searches not for intended meaning but for enacted meaning, his shots are wide of the mark. Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Authority of the Text," in *Intention and Interpretation*, ed. Gary Iseminger (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 24-40.

[63] See Thiselton on symbolic biblical literature and the variable "reader-effects" of some text (*New Horizons,* 575-92).

[64] Wolterstorff says, "We regularly say more than we know we are saying, and we say things other than we think we are saying" ("Resurrecting the Author," 24).

[65] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 24-25.

[66] Osborne, 29.

that readers would contribute a significant portion of the meaning themselves.[67] Thus, contemporary author-focused hermeneuts tend to modify their approaches to defend against Gadamer's attacks. In many cases, such modifications are enabled by the use of Speech-Act Theory.

6.2 Speech-Act Theory and Author-Focused Hermeneutics

Speech-Act Theory, a branch of philosophy formulated by J. L. Austin and enriched by John Searle, undergirds much author-focused hermeneutics.[68] Speech-act theorists construe spoken and written words as both objects and instruments—speakers speak words and also perform actions *by* speaking. By their words they promise, threaten, predicate, and proclaim. Every speech act has a "locution" (the actual words said or written), an "illocution" (the action performed by speaking, such as promising), and a "perlocution" (the effect of a speech act, such as reassuring someone).[69]

Speech-Act Theory has been important for author-focused hermeneutics in three respects.[70] First, as a philosophical tool that ties words to speakers, it forges a strong

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[67] See Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 115-20.

[68] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); John R. Searle, *Speech-Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977). The development of Speech-Act Theory is reviewed in Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 31-72. Speech-Act Theory is an example of ordinary language philosophy, a development of analytic philosophy that pays close attention to how language is commonly used in order to re-cast and perhaps solve fundamental philosophical problems. It is part of the more general "linguistic turn" in philosophy.

[69] This is a simplification of a complex terminological situation. See §5.2.2 for a discussion of Speech-Act terminology.

[70] Among hermeneuts who utilize Speech-Act Theory are Vanhoozer, Thiselton, Osborne, and Timothy Ward (see his *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)). The use of Speech-Act Theory has not gone unchallenged. Stanley Porter questions its validity in hermeneutics. See Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 267; Stanley Porter, "Hermeneutics, Biblical Interpretation and Theology: Hunch, Holy Spirit, or Hard Work?" in *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology,* ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 97-127. Richard Briggs has responded extensively in his *Words in Action*.

connection between an author and a text. It contends that texts are the result of self-involved actions of authors, and therefore that adequate analysis of a text must refer to the author that generated it. Second, because texts are generated by people who have the right to be heard and understood, Speech-Act Theory implies an ethical obligation to listen to the author.[71] Third, Speech-Act Theory supplies a theoretical frame in which one may account for the reader's participation in reading: reader's responses and involvements are a part of the perlocution of a speech act; readers may react how they will and still leave the meaning (the author's locution and illocution) untouched.

Speech-Act Theory, in spite of these contributions, is not an interpretive panacea. For although it can tie texts to authors, it cannot do so in every reading situation. Sometimes what readers do with texts has nothing to do with authors. Because texts are not just the products of an author's action but are also the instruments of action, readers can use texts in ways that disregard the author.[72] Speech-Act Theory has no framework to describe such a commonly occurring situation.

In addition, written communication differs from oral speech acts, and such differences are significant for interpretation.[73] Speech-Act Theory does not itself address those changes. Finally, perlocution is an insufficient explanation of all of the ways that readers impact meaning. Readers' pre-understandings affect meaning prior to perlocutionary response.[74] In spite of these weaknesses, I will argue in coming chapters

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[71] By contrast, other approaches are explicit in a rejection of such rights. "Texts, like dead men and women, have no rights, no aims, no interests." R. Morgan and J. Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), quoted in John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 7.

[72] See Clarence Walhout, "Texts and Actions," in Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton, and Clarence Walhout, *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 43-45.

[73] Paul Ricoeur's discussion of how writing changes discourse forms a valuable correction to Speech-Act Theory. See below under Text-Focused Hermeneutics.

[74] The variety of how readers treat texts and impact meaning will be covered in detail in chapters 5 and 6.

that Speech-Act Theory, significantly modified, can occupy an important place in biblical interpretation for preaching.[75]

Two author-focused hermeneuts merit discussion: E. D. Hirsch and Anthony Thiselton.[76] They comprise apt representatives both because of their influence and because they respond directly to Gadamer's work.

6.3 E. D. Hirsch

Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* has been a mainstay of author-focused hermeneutics for decades.[77] According to Hirsch, authors create meaning, and readers discern it. Hirsch defines "meaning" as a mental object.[78] That is, a meaning is an entity that endures and can be referred to by an agent. Because meaning exists independently, there are objective processes for verifying meaning in a text.[79]

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[75] Kevin Vanhoozer's work is an example of Speech-Act Theory hermeneutics. I mention him here only briefly, because he uses the theory as more of a theological than a hermeneutical frame, in order to undermine not only text-focused and reader-focused hermeneutics but the philosophical foundations upon which they are built. See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 414. I should also note Timothy Ward's use of Speech-Act Theory. Ward's interest is the renewal of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. I mention him only briefly here, because the systematic theological focus of his work is tangential to my own (Ward, *Word and Supplement)*.

[76] Other contemporary hermeneuts that work from an author-focused perspective include Grant R. Osborne (*The Hermeneutical Spiral*), Kevin J. Vanhoozer (*Is There A Meaning* and *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005)), and Richard S. Briggs (*Words in Action*).

[77] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1967). Though recent treatments strive to move beyond his theories, they usually begin there. For two examples see Vanhoozer *Is There a Meaning,* 74-82; Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 23.

[78] He uses Husserl's phenomenological categories for this understanding. See *Validity in Interpretation,* 217-18.

[79] Though those processes can give only probable and not certain results. Hirsch, *Validity,* 197-99.

Hirsch rejects hermeneutics that locates meaning in a text.[80] In responding to Gadamer's theories, Hirsch is able to avoid much of the force of Gadamer's arguments because he (Hirsch) restricts his definition of "meaning" to

> that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation or indeed anything imaginable.[81]

Hirsch's "meaning" does not involve reference—a connection to extratextual realities—at all.[82] For Hirsch, the study of meaning is "interpretation," while the study of significance is "criticism."

Yet the cost of Hirsch's bifurcation is an anemic notion of meaning and interpretation.[83] Respondents may grant his points about meaning but, because Hirsch excludes so much from "meaning," see his arguments as largely irrelevant.[84]

6.4 Anthony Thiselton

Anthony Thiselton, another author-focused hermeneut, handles competing approaches to interpretation with more sympathy than does Hirsch.[85] Thiselton acknowledges the involvement of the reader in interpretation as well as multiple valid hermeneutical

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[80] He contends that arguments for these positions logically fail. When reviewing Gadamer's work, for example, Hirsch claims that textual meaning always reduces to indeterminate reader-centered meaning (Hirsch, 245-64).

[81] Hirsch, 8. Emphasis original.

[82] In subsequent years Hirsch has modified his terms somewhat. See, for example, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 202-25. Here I use his system as it appears in *Validity in Interpretation*.

[83] I would argue that even this truncation of meaning's domain does not make Hirsch immune to Gadamer's arguments. Gadamer contends that any notion of understanding must involve reference to larger social realities. Even the language in which a text was written forges a strong connection between the text and the world.

[84] See Palmer, *Hermeneutics,* 60-65.

[85] Thiselton's major hermeneutical works include *Two Horizons* and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. He has also authored numerous articles and an introductory work on the subject (*Hermeneutics: An Introduction*).

approaches.[86] He interacts considerately with Gadamer, without abandoning his own commitment to authorial meaning.[87] In the end, though, Thiselton finds problematic any notion that texts be altogether divorced from authors. In concert with Roger Lundin and Clarence Walhout, Thiselton contends that viewing texts as authorless speech represents an impoverished understanding of what a text actually is.[88]

This is because, according to Thiselton and his colleagues, the concept of action is philosophically prior to the concept of speech; speech is one type of action. Texts, being recorded speech, are the results of an author's action of inscription. Yet texts are also instruments of an author's action, which that author uses for specific ends (persuading an audience, endorsing certain views, entertaining readers, and so on). If this is the case, then authors matter as actors, because the text is a result of their actions and the instrument of their actions. Thus, knowledge about an author's writing of a text and use of a text is helpful for interpreting the meaning of those actions.[89]

Thiselton ultimately develops an author-focused hermeneutic that makes significant room for readers. His approach, using Speech-Act Theory, grants to readers more or less influence, depending on the genre of the text in question.[90]

In order to see author-focused hermeneutics in action, I present two author-focused interpretations of a narrative in Mark 14:3–9. In this passage, at Simon the Leper's house in Bethany, a woman anoints Jesus with costly ointment. In spite of the objections of the

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[86] See Thiselton's chapter on the "Hermeneutics of Self-Involvement," and his "Ten Ways of Reading Texts" in *New Horizons,* 272-312, 558-96, respectively.

[87] Thiselton, 313-30. He also applies Gadamer's views to narrative interpretation (566-75).

[88] Lundin, Thiselton, and Walhout, *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*. A re-working of the book from a faith-informed perspective is Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton, and Clarence Walhout, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[89] Walhout, "Texts and Actions," 43-49.

[90] Anthony C. Thiselton, "Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics," in Lundin, Thiselton and Walhout, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 201-4. See also his tempered appreciation for Speech-Act Theory in *New Horizons,* 597-602.

disciples that the perfume could have fed the poor, Jesus commends her action, calling it a preparation for his upcoming burial.

6.5 Two Author-Focused Interpretations of Mark 14

Any author-focused interpretation of this passage would emphasize what Mark (or whoever originally composed the story) communicated by writing it.[91] An analysis based on Hirsch's work might limit the interpretation of this passage to the "meaning" of the narrative, not the relation of that meaning to anything else—to historical issues, to Christian theology, or to contemporary readers. Therefore, if it were determined that the meaning of the story intended by Mark was, "In light of Jesus' coming death, he approved of a woman's extravagant gesture," then understanding would be complete. That would be the end of the interpretive trail.[92] Other questions about how this story relates to ancient or contemporary society would fall under what Hirsch calls "criticism."

An interpretation following Thiselton's theories might agree substantially with the first analysis of Mark 14 but be willing to go further by including questions of reference. Those questions focus on what Mark intended to convey about his own social-historical context when he wrote the narrative. For instance, Mark may have intended this story as a historical occurrence in the life of Jesus; or he may have intended it as a contrast between the respective values of the once-for-all sacrificial death of Christ (expressed by the woman) and the church's ongoing care for the poor (expressed by the disciples); or he might have intended to highlight the contrast between the unenlightened disciples whom Jesus rebuked and the perceptive woman whom he praised; or he may have intended some kind of warning or encouragement for the early church. In fact, he may have intended more than one of these. The business of interpretation, for author-focused hermeneutics, is to discern those intentions.

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[91] There is an issue here involving just who the author(s) and editor(s) of Mark's Gospel are. Like most biblical texts, Mark has historical layers that could involve multiple authorial agents. See §5.5.1 for discussion.

[92] This means that the relation of the narrative to the historical Jesus would also be irrelevant to interpretation.

Additionally, a Thiseltonian interpretation could ask how the passage functions as narrative to affect the reader, because such effects form part of a skilled author's intention.[93] In other words, author-focused hermeneutics can analyze perlocutionary response. Furthermore, by taking into account the divine intent of Scripture, the interpretation would not be complete without asking how present-day followers of Christ might actualize Mark's intent in their lives. Thiselton takes an author-focused perspective that is open to contributions from other methodologies.

Author-focused hermeneutics comprises the first branch of contemporary interpretation theory. It has been modified in response to the insights of Gadamer and others, often relies on Speech-Act Theory, and can affirm readers' participation in interpretation.

7 Text-Focused Hermeneutics

The second fragment of contemporary hermeneutics focuses on the text itself. As early as 1946, critics advocated that authorial intent was either inaccessible or irrelevant.[94] Instead, they viewed the freestanding text as the sole repository of meaning.

If, then, the text carries the meaning, it does so *as text*: that is, as a set of written symbols, now separated in time and space from its original setting. The written document is not the same as an oral speech act that is tied to the author. Text-focused hermeneuts pay close attention to the changes attendant upon the transformation from oral to written discourse. They affirm not only that texts still have meaning, but also that a text's meaning is constituted, in part, by virtue of its written form.

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[93] Thiselton lists four ways this can happen, each of which is compatible with author-generated meaning: reversing readers' expectations, helping readers understand identities (their own and God's), stimulating readers' imagination, and using an author's self-involving illocutions to affect readers. Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 567.

[94] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 468.

Discourse changes when agents write down their words.[95] Sometimes this results in communicative losses. The physical presence of speakers—their tone of voice, their gestures, their ability to respond to questions—are gone. This can increase ambiguity in communication. Furthermore, committing speech to writing cuts off the text from its original addressee.[96]

But in exchange for these losses, writing brings gains. Writing preserves a discourse in perpetuity, so that it can reach an unlimited audience. Additionally, the ambiguity that writing brings may be an advantage: interpretations multiply, meaning grows, and one text can function in a multitude of ways.[97] Gadamer describes the special way that texts function:

> The mode of being of a text has something unique and incomparable about it. . . . In deciphering and interpreting [literature], a miracle takes place: the transformation of something alien and dead into total contemporaneity and familiarity. This is like nothing else that comes down to us from the past.[98]

Because of these significant changes, text-focused hermeneuts see the text as the locus of meaning. The meaning is in the words on the page, not in the mind of an author or reader. I review three variants of text-focused interpretation and then offer a text-focused interpretation of Mark 14:3–9.

7.1 New Criticism

New Criticism arose as a form of literary criticism in mid-twentieth century North America. Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* is a classic representative.[99] The authors advance

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[95] Ong's classic work explores the changes from orality to textuality on a societal level. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

[96] *HHS*, 147.

[97] See Jonathan Culler, "In Defense of Overinterpretation," in Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 109-23.

[98] *TM*, 163.

[99] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956). Note that this book preceded *Truth and Method*. New Criticism is evidence that Gadamer's work did not directly initiate a hermeneutical fracture. Instead, I argue that Gadamer's influential work facilitated fragmented approaches.

a view of a literary work as a "structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers."[100] Because a work can cause different experiences in different readers, interpretations are only partial expressions of a text's total potential meaning.[101]

Consequently, the intention of the author matters little. Wellek and Warren state the case bluntly: "The whole idea that the 'intention' of the author is the proper subject of literary history seems, however, quite mistaken. The meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention."[102] The text alone houses the meaning.[103]

7.2 Structuralism

Structuralism comprises a second text-centered approach.[104] Unlike New Criticism, structuralism extends well beyond the bounds of literary criticism. Beginning as a theory of linguistics, it owes much of its growth to the anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and was later developed into a literary theory.[105]

A structuralist practitioner views texts as independent entities, and identifies elements in and beneath the text, their relationship to one another, and the structure that defines those relationships.[106] Jean Poullion states, "A structure is essentially a syntax of

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[100] Wellek and Warren, 138-39.

[101] Wellek and Warren, 16, 140-41.

[102] Wellek and Warren, 31. T. S. Eliot, in an essay foundational for New Criticism, likened the mind of the poet to a catalyst that accelerates a reaction of emotions and ideas, while remaining uninvolved in the reaction: "The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings . . . which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together." T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Egoist* 6 (1919): 54-55; reprint, *Perspecta* 19 (1982): 40.

[103] New Criticism arose in the mid-twentieth century, and by the 1970's was fading in importance, but its explicit text-focus would reappear in other forms. See Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 400.

[104] That is to say, second in our listing. Structuralist ideas actually preceded New Criticism. I present them anachronistically because New Criticism is a simpler example of text-focused hermeneutics.

[105] For an accessible review of structuralism and its development, see Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral,* 471-74.

[106] This use of "structure" is different than New Criticism's "structure of norms." Schneiders explains, "It is helpful to distinguish [structure], which is concerned with surface structures such as repetition, chiasm,

the transformations which pass from one variant to another, and it is this syntax which accounts for their limited number and the restricted exploitation of their theoretical possibilities."[107] This does not mean identifying the elements of a work and how they interact. Structuralist critics seek an underlying structure of relationships that explains the surface interactions of elements. It identifies the unseen laws that drive interactions within a text and thus derives meaning of a text by demonstrating how that text obeys an underlying structure.

Structuralism views the text and its underlying structure as a system of depersonalized forces. Authorial intent, far from creating that structure, stands upon and is shaped by that structure. Authors operate within its systems unconsciously. It is the text alone, as evidence of larger cultural structures, which determines meaning.[108]

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inclusio, etc., from [structuralism], which is the application of semiotic theory in the attempt to analyze deep structure" (*Revelatory Text*, 131 n. 39).

[107] Jean Poullion, "Structuralism: A Definitional Essay," in *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of Essays,* ed. and trans. Alfred M. Johnson, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series no. 22 (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1979), 36.

[108] Daniel Patte provides a structuralist interpretation of Luke 24. He contends that the text reveals what Luke and his contemporaries unconsciously believed about the process of moving from unbelief to faith. Those unconsciously held views regulated how entities in the text could or could not interact. Daniel Patte, "Structural Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, rev. and exp. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 187-95.

7.3 Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Paul Ricoeur offers yet another text-focused outlook.[109] His work has been enormously influential in hermeneutics as well as homiletics.[110] Writing in response to Gadamer,[111] Ricoeur employs a dialectical approach to interpretation.[112] An exploration of three of his dialectical pairs will shed light on his hermeneutic.

Ricoeur's first dialectic is between an author's intention and a text's meaning. When a spoken discourse becomes fixed in writing, significant changes take place.[113] Ricoeur claims, "With written discourse, however, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. . . . Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text."[114] Authorial and textual meaning exist in dialectical tension.

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[109] Ricoeur has written extensively on hermeneutics. I rely here on his *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* and on *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

[110] Ronald J. Allen, for instance, writes, "The hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur is becoming as canonical to the present generation of biblical scholars as was the demythologization program of Rudolph Bultmann a generation ago" (*Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1981), 131).

[111] See, for example, Ricoeur's extended discussion of Gadamer and Habermas in *Hermeneutics,* 43-100.

[112] *Dialectic*, according to Maybee, refers to "a method of philosophical argument that involves some sort of contradictory process between opposing sides." Plato's dialectic method involved dialogue between opponents in a discourse. Maybee notes that Hegel's version of dialectic was more advanced: "A contradictory process between 'opposing sides' in Hegel's dialectics leads to a linear evolution or development from less sophisticated definitions or views to more sophisticated ones later." Pellauer and Dauenhauer note that in Ricoeur's work, dialectic "is an approach through which he seeks to find the middle term that can mediate between two polar terms and allow us to move back and forth between them. Locating such a mediating term leads to enhanced understanding." On Plato and Hegel, see Julie E. Maybee, "Hegel's Dialectics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016), ed. Edward N. Zalta [online]; available from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/hegel-dialectics/; accessed 2/10/19. For Ricoeur's dialectic, see David Pellauer and Bernard Dauenhauer, "Paul Ricoeur," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016), ed. Edward N. Zalta [online] available from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ricoeur/, accessed 2/10/19.

[113] *IT*, 26-37.

[114] *IT*, 29.

A second dialectic describes the two referents of a text. The primary referent is the world referred to when the text was written: in Mark 14, the primary referent is a house in Bethany and the event that transpired there. But the process of writing has created a second, non-literal referent. The text now "projects a world." It is an imaginative, literary world in which the values of the text operate, and which the reader is invited to inhabit. Ricoeur's concept of the "world in front of the text" emerges here: "For what must be interpreted in a text is a *proposed world* which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost [*sic*] possibilities."[115] Ricoeur, then, aims his interpretive effort at the ideal world (the secondary referent) projected by the text.

A final dialectic, understanding and explanation, occurs as readers interpret. This is a methodological description of the back-and-forth of interpretation, which proceeds as follows. On a first reading, a reader makes a guess (or first understanding) about what the text means.[116] Understanding proceeds to explanation, a critical phase in which the text is objectively taken apart and analyzed. Guesses must be validated or discarded.[117] Finally, readers move to a second understanding as they personally appropriate the world in front of the text, imaginatively enter it, and consider living out its values. Consequently, the interpretive process in reading moves from initial understanding, through critical explanation, back to a mature understanding of the world in front of the text.[118]

A key to the operation of Ricoeur's hermeneutic is dialectic. By it he preserves places for author *as well as* text, primary *as well as* secondary referents, explanation *as well as* understanding. In particular, because "the authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart of the verbal [textual] meaning, and they have to be construed in terms of each

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[115] *HHS,* 122. Emphasis original.

[116] Such a "guess" involves complex versions of the hermeneutical circle. *HHS*, 76-78.

[117] Here the text is viewed more as *langue* than *parole*, as a free-floating system of signs. Ricoeur endorsed structuralist methodology in this phase. See *HHS,* 152-57.

[118] This is one of Ricoeur's versions of the hermeneutical circle, which he calls the "hermeneutical arc." See *HHS*, 164.

other," his dialectic approach produces a text-focused hermeneutic that allows for creative tension between text and author.[119]

In spite of his dialectic between author and text, the balance of Ricoeur's system falls squarely on the text. He states, "The dominant problematic is that of the text. . . . It is the paradigm of distanciation in communication."[120] Because Ricoeur has been so influential in hermeneutics and homiletics, I interact closely with his work in the following pages.[121]

7.4 Text-Focused Interpretation of Mark 14

How might Ricoeur's model operate in Mark 14:3–9?[122] (I do not offer New Critical or Structuralist accounts of this passage, because Ricoeur's methodology embraces significant portions of both theories.) Readers would begin with a guess: a first understanding of the story as a narrative that refers to an episode at Bethany. They might view it as a simple historical remembrance or a bizarre morality tale.

But advancing to the explanatory phase, readers, using structuralist methodology, would search for the underlying structures that generate the narrative. They would look for opposing pairs of objects and people in the pericope, whose interaction reveals a deep structure. Readers might, for example, notice how the text pits the woman against the disciples, or love for Jesus against concern for the poor, or an unclean leper against valuable nard. In fact, "value" is a theme that sheds light on other oppositions in the text. The valuable nard should not be used on the (value-less?) poor, but anointing Jesus is a "beautiful thing" (v 6 ESV). And a place that seemed value-less (a leper's house) turns out to

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[119] *IT*, 30.

[120] *HHS*, 131.

[121] One other theorist deserves brief mention, because he demonstrates the variety of text-focused approaches. Umberto Eco advocates a theory similar to Ricoeur's, in that it focuses on the text. But his methodology is explicitly semiotic, not structuralist. His view is noteworthy because although he accepts the polysemy of words and texts, he believes that textual meaning cannot be infinitely plastic. "I accept the statement that a text can have many senses. I refuse the statement that a text can have every sense" (*Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 141). Interpretations must be tested by the data within the whole text (not by the author's intent) and are more or less likely to be true based on that evidence.

[122] The interpretation here offered is a simplified version, due to space limits.

be a valuable house of worship. In fact, the value of the people in the pericope follows the same pattern: the valuable disciples turn out to offer nothing of value—they are rebuked—while a value-less, nameless woman is forever commemorated. These oppositions (whether intended by Mark or not) are present in the text.

Moving to a second understanding, readers no longer focus on the historical world but on the projected, literary world of the text. This world is one where people recognize the true value of things: of other people and of Christ. Readers who enter that world then may return to their own, more attuned to the true value of people and actions.

In text-focused hermeneutics, the text has escaped the orbit of the author but does not come under the gravitational pull of the reader. It bears meaning by virtue of its form and structure.

8 Reader-Focused Hermeneutics

According to the third hermeneutical fragment under examination, readers do not detect meaning; they help to create it. This approach dovetails with Gadamer's claim that all interpretation involves a fusion of the work's horizon and the reader's. If interpretation is an event to which readers bring their own traditions, then they influence meaning. The next logical step, from readers' influence to readers' dominance, would prove to be a short one.[123] In what follows I survey two variants of reader-focused hermeneutics, offering for each an interpretation of Mark 14:3–9.

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[123] The push to take such a step was coming from scholars besides hermeneuts. I mention two. In 1984 Alasdair MacIntyre published *After Virtue*. His exploration grounds moral philosophy in a community's traditions. In tying moral reasoning to local values, MacIntyre grants a formative role to each community in determining meaning. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

The theologian George Lindbeck sounds a similar note in his *The Nature of Doctrine.* He proposes a "cultural-linguistic" view of Christian doctrine. Doctrines are, in this view, like languages or cultures in that they function within a specific community as guidelines. Doctrines "mean" only when readers use them. Lindbeck called them "communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action." George A. Lindbeck, *The*

8.1 Reader-Response Theory

Reader-response theory describes the processes by which readers create meaning. In 1977 Susan Wittig published a seminal article on reader-response theory.[124] She proposes for New Testament parables a "double-reference" model of communication: for each linguistic sign the reader supplies one of its two referents. Thus, in Luke 15, the linguistic sign "a man had two sons" has a double referent: it denotes the concept of a man having two sons, but also connotes something in the reader's experience (perhaps a reader's own two children, or two roommates, or two outlooks on life). The ascription of that secondary referent is dependent upon a reader's presuppositions and experiences; different readers produce different referents. Wittig thus shows that readers "provide meaning *to* the text rather than discovering meaning *in* the text."[125] She concludes that polyvalence in interpretation is unavoidable—it is the way that language sometimes functions.

Reader-response theorists like Wittig grant an influential role to readers in interpretation. Yet their positions on just how much readers influence meaning lie along a spectrum from significant (but bounded) to nearly absolute.

At the modest end of the spectrum, reader-response theorists posit that while readers influence meaning, nevertheless the text provides boundaries on acceptable interpretations. Wolfgang Iser, for instance, understands a reader's role in creating meaning to be circumscribed by factors in and around the text. Like Wittig, Iser states that the "meaning of the text—which is not *formulated* by the text—is the reader's projection rather than the hidden context."[126] Readers create meaning.

Yet readers do so in partnership with the text. Iser writes, "The text itself simply offers 'schematized aspects' through which the subject matter of the work can be produced,

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Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 18.

[124] Susan Wittig, "A Theory of Multiple Meanings," *Semeia* 9 (1977): 75-103.

[125] Wittig, 90. Emphasis original.

[126] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 17. Emphasis original.

while the actual production takes place through [a reader's] act of concretization."[127] In Iser's theory, this happens because a literary text contains "blanks"—gaps in the form and content of the text—in which "the imagination is automatically mobilized" when readers try to fill in those blanks.[128] According to Iser, "The structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text."[129] In other words, the text's blanks invite readers to fill them in, and readers will do so according to their own dispositions. Therefore, every literary text, according to Iser, "allows a spectrum of actualizations."[130] Nevertheless, readers must fill in those blanks in ways that the text's structure permits. Iser believes that readers do create meaning, but that they do so within textual constraints.

At the radical end of the spectrum, reader-response criticism gives absolute interpretive power to the reader, unbounded by authorial or textual constraints. The text is a screen for the meanings that readers project upon it. Reader-focused hermeneutics of this sort must wrestle with what constraints, if any, exist to distinguish responsible interpretation from pure invention.[131]

Stanley Fish understands such constraints to be generated by the corporate nature of interpretation. According to Fish, texts do not at all restrict meaning (a perspective he labels "formalism"); the only meaning in a text is the meaning a reader inserts. Fish comes to the "unqualified conclusion that formal units [features of a text like plot or poetic meter] are always a function of the interpretive model one brings to bear (they are not 'in the

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[127] Iser, 21.

[128] Iser, 186. Space limitations require this simplified version of Iser's theory. For more details on what blanks are and how they operate in relation to the form and content of a text, see Iser, 163-231.

[129] Iser, 169.

[130] Iser, 24.

[131] The question of limits or guards on interpretation will appear often in this work. One of the factors that guide theories is simply that of interest: total indeterminacy as a hermeneutic theory is rarely interesting. Thus, even when theorists do not propose limits to interpretation, they may still find some readings better than others. Richard Rorty's pragmatism evaluates readings based on the interest that a particular reading holds for someone. See Richard Rorty, "The Pragmatist's Process," in Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 89-108.

text')."[132] Texts do not have features as such; any features readers discern are products of their own interpretation rather than independent objects awaiting discovery.

On the other hand, Fish does posit constraints on interpretation, albeit ones that do not come from the text or the author:

> This sounds like the rankest subjectivism, but it is qualified almost immediately when the reader is identified not as a free agent, making literature in any old way, but as a member of a community whose assumptions about literature determine the kind of attention he pays and this the kind of literature "he" "makes."[133]

The controlling structure in interpretation is not literary or philosophical, but sociological. Fish believes in the authority of interpretive communities.

8.2 Reader-Response Interpretation of Mark 14

Reader-response hermeneutics is not monolithic, and neither are its interpretations. On the one hand, a hermeneut following Iser would allow a range of interpretations for Mark 14:3–9, arising from the blanks in the text. For instance, the text leaves unanswered questions about Simon the Leper's place in the story. Dining at an unclean leper's home passes without comment. This blank in the text invites readers' attempts to fill it.

Some readers may note that although Simon has a physical disease, the disciples seem afflicted with a spiritual deadness or uncleanness. The narrative, by condemning the disciples, is compatible with the idea that spiritual deadness is worse than physical illness. Readers might resolve to overlook the physical shortcomings of others, and instead ascribe more value to a heart that is open to the presence of God.

Other readers might identify with Simon's leprosy, and instead conclude that the things that make them seem unclean (past mistakes, for example) do not prevent the presence of Christ in their lives. Each interpretation appropriates Simon's "leprosy" differently. However, the term itself has a definitive range of connotations and acts as an interpretive fixed point. Readers operate in the blanks of the text around that term.

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[132] Fish, *Is There a Text*, 13.

[133] Fish, 11.

On the other hand, Fish would honor an unlimited range of interpretations for Mark 14:3–9, as long as each cohered with the value system of a reader's community. He would approve of a community's reading of the story as a divine command to spend significantly more money on sanctuary construction and worship services than on helping the poor. He would also welcome "against-the-grain" interpretations. Readers, for example, might argue that Christianity's priorities (as Mark has them) are disastrously wrong. The church should not obey this story but instead should prioritize service to the marginalized. The story would function in their community as a negative example of short-sighted expenditure over compassionate service. Thus, reader-response theories ascribe significant meaning-creation to readers but do so in ways that provide stronger or weaker checks on interpretation.

8.3 Ideological Interpretation and Mark 14

A second form of reader-focused hermeneutics, "ideological interpretation," engages the text from the point of view of a specific ideology (such as feminism, womanism, liberation theology, or post-colonialism).[134] Ideological critics ask what a text can reveal in relation to a reader's ideology. They do this by asking questions that the text was not intended to answer.

A liberationist interpreter, for example, might ask questions about the social structures (such as rich vs. poor, or men vs. women) that underlie the narrative in Mark 14. Issues of gender, health and economics pervade this story. Jesus, for example, in a startling move, seems to pit the honor of a woman against alms for the poor. What does such an opposition reveal? Perhaps this story reflects one first-century society's unconscious bias operating in the powerful group (middle class men) to which Mark belongs: groups in power tend to stay in power by setting marginalized groups (women and the poor) against one another. Whatever Mark intended, his story betrays a sociological dynamic relevant to liberationist theology. Readers could use this story as a window into the social values of the

[134] For discussions and examples of ideological criticism, see Fernando F. Segovia, "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Socioeconomic Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning,* 283-306. See also Sandra Schneiders's feminist interpretation of John 4 in *The Revelatory Text,* 180-99.

first-century church in order to critique those values and, in turn, critique the contemporary church.

I have reviewed two examples of reader-focused approaches (reader-response theories and ideological interpretation). Each gives significant weight to the commitments, experiences, and activities of the reader in interpretation.

9 Critical Hermeneutics

Schneiders writes that hermeneutics needs a way "to protect the reader from the text and the text from the reader."[135] Enter critical hermeneutics.[136]

Critical hermeneutics is the fourth and final piece of the fractured hermeneutical vessel. Instead of searching for meaning in an author, text, or reader, it addresses a tacit assumption in other interpretive theories: that texts, however they communicate, do so honestly. But of course, some texts (and some authors) manipulate readers, lie about facts, or abuse power. They bear close watching. What is more, readers are not always honest, nor are their presuppositions always harmless.[137] In both cases, hermeneutics requires some sort of methodology to separate readings—good from bad, true from false, helpful from harmful.

Strictly speaking, critical hermeneutics is not a method for finding meaning in a text. It is an attitude that provides a check on interpretation—a filter that eliminates false readings. Joseph Bleicher defined critical hermeneutics as "an approach in which the meaning embedded in objectivations of human activity is understood objectively and then

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[135] Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 169.

[136] The development of critical hermeneutics, especially through the work of Jürgen Habermas, was in direct reply to Gadamer's approach. Habermas's initial response can be found in *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967); there is also a collection of essays on the exchange by Habermas and others in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, ed. Karl-Otto Apel (Frankfurt: Surhkamp, 1971). An overview and analysis can be found in Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," in *HHS*, 63-100.

[137] Readers' traditions, as Gadamer notes, can be false. *TM,* 298-99.

confronted with the 'author's' self-understanding of the intentions underlying them."[138] Authors must be held to account by interpreters.

Karl-Otto Apel's work exemplifies this approach.[139] Apel argues that moments of self-involved understanding (as Gadamer describes them) must be interspersed with moments of objective self-distancing that operate according to different principles. Both are necessary for interpretation.[140]

Apel states that any human engagement with the world has what he calls a "cognitive interest." That is, when people attempt to understand something, they seek particular types of knowledge: either an objective, technological knowledge aimed at mastery of objects and situations (dominant in the natural sciences) or a subjective, hermeneutical knowledge aimed at personal involvement (dominant in the human sciences and in accordance with Gadamer). Alone, each cognitive interest is insufficient for hermeneutics: interpretation requires "a *complementarity* of the scientific and the hermeneutic sciences."[141] Understanding requires moments of humanistic self-involvement as well as critical objectivity.

Only some aspects of a text can be understood via a hermeneutical cognitive interest—a sympathetic, self-involved surrender to the text. Other aspects, because of their

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[138] Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, 144.

[139] Apel's is not the only critical theory on offer. Jürgen Habermas offers a methodology for interpretation that, he argues, overcomes manipulative factors and produces objectivity in communication. The result is a theory that establishes conditions for ideal, non-coercive communication (see note 136 above). Habermas is a well-known critical hermeneut, and his works, as well as his extensive engagement with Gadamer, have been important. However, because he operates from a Marxist sociological position that conditions his theories, Apel forms a more suitable dialogue partner for a homiletically focused hermeneutic: "[Apel's] transcendental critique is less specifically bound up with certain social theories" (Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 405).

[140] The following discussion is based on Apel's essay, "Scientistics, Hermeneutics, Critique of Ideology: An Outline of a Theory of Science from an Epistemological-Anthropological Point of View," in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1992), 320-45. This is but one part of his larger project of developing a general theory of science. For that work, see his *Explanation and Understanding: A Transcendental-Pragmatic Perspective*, trans. Georgia Warnke (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

[141] Apel, "Scientistics," 332. Emphasis original.

irrationality or duplicity, "evade understanding."[142] Apel contends that in such cases there must also be a methodological abstraction "by which a scientific thematization of intended or expressed meaning becomes possible."[143] Interpreters must utilize objective tools (a process he calls "scientistics") to guard against deception brought about by the text and by oneself. This is the scientistic cognitive interest, in which subjective understandings come under the scrutiny of objective analysis.

The two cognitive interests work in tandem. Apel uses the illustration of personal conversation to explain: when listening to someone, listeners ordinarily follow the speaker passively, participating and being absorbed in what the speaker says. This is the self-involved, Gadamerian, hermeneutical cognitive interest. Yet there will also be moments in which listeners sense discord, irrationality, or dishonesty in the speaker. They then pull themselves away, disengage, and reflect instead on the truth or propriety of what the speaker is telling them. This distancing move, said Apel, is the technological moment of scientistic cognitive interest. The listener reflects on the content and evaluates it with a view to critical analysis. Subsequently the listener may resume the initial mode of participatory listening.

The interchange between hermeneutic and scientistic moments comprises what Apel names a third cognitive interest: "The technical term for this dialectical mediation of 'understanding' and 'explaining' is 'critique of ideology.'"[144] This "critique of ideology" is the critical hermeneutical back-and-forth undertaken to analyze and neutralize dishonest or irrational communication.

Apel summarizes:

> By means of a detour into an initially causal-analytic analysis . . . of our action intentions, this critical self-reflection [the critique of ideology] is able to supersede the boundaries between reasons for acting that can be understood

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[142] Apel, *Explanation and Understanding*, 213.

[143] Apel, "Scientistics," 332-33.

[144] Apel, 341. In *Explanation and Understanding* (218) he refers to it as the "emancipatory cognitive interest."

> in rational terms and causes of action that cannot be understood, but rather, are determined by human nature or quasi-nature.[145]

Apel's work shows how critical hermeneutics functions: it keeps readers alert to dishonest texts and self-deceptive prejudices. It guards the reader from the text, and the text from the reader.[146]

9.1 Critical Interpretation of Mark 14

A reading according to Apel's critical hermeneutics would oscillate between moments of trust and moments of suspicion. The moments of trust—Apel's hermeneutical cognitive interest—might operate according to one of the prior models (author-focused, text-focused, or reader-focused).[147] However, the interpretive process would be perforated by detached moments of suspicion.

Such moments of suspicion could focus on the text, asking how this pericope has been or can be used to reinforce ungodly power structures in the church. In the narrative, the impulse of the disciples is sharply curtailed by a word from Christ. Does the teaching role of the church operate in the same way today? Does preaching, Scripture, or doctrine stifle spiritual impulses in the laity? If so, is that proper? Is that part of Mark's intent, or has this passage been improperly appropriated in order to reinforce the power of the pulpit? Apel's critical hermeneutic allows readers to pull away from a passive listening to the text, and to engage in detached—even suspicious—examination of how the narrative functions, and whether that function is ethical.

Conversely, critical hermeneuts could suspect themselves as readers. If, for instance, they come to the text with a preexisting guilt about their giving to the poor, they may

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[145] Apel, *Explanation and Understanding*, 214.

[146] Paul Ricoeur, a discussion of whose interpretive approach appears above, also includes critical concerns in his hermeneutic. His dialectical arc of explanation and understanding, like Apel's model of conversation, displays critical features during the "explanation" phase. I categorize him as a *text-focused* hermeneut because both phases of his hermeneutic look to the text for meaning. See §4.3.5 for a critique of his model.

[147] This may not be possible for all prior models. It is questionable, for example, whether one could practice ideological interpretation in a humanistic mode, because one is already disengaged from the text by virtue of one's ideological focus.

accept readings that relativize that concern, because it would ease their guilt. Moments of suspicion may reveal those tendencies and invite readers to guard against them.

To summarize Apel's critical hermeneutics: it operates in a back-and-forth manner to generate and then critique proposed interpretations. Critical hermeneutics is thus on the alert for manipulative texts and dishonest readings.

10 Hermeneutical Hybrids and Their Obligations

Some hermeneuts combine one or more of the four methodologies above. Of course, many of the theorists canvassed in this chapter allow some room for multiple perspectives within their model. But several theorists do so to the extent that they offer truly hybrid systems.

Werner Jeanrond's *Theological Hermeneutics* represents one such formulation.[148] Jeanrond writes about the "possible plurality of adequate approaches to a foundational text."[149] His proposal acknowledges that readers bring with them expectations, but also that texts permit some interpretations, resist others, and cannot be exhausted by a single reader.[150]

N.T. Wright, as a part of his larger project of New Testament theology, provides another hybrid hermeneutic.[151] He approaches interpretation through the lens of critical realism,[152] rejecting both "naïve realism" (author-focused) and "phenomenology" (reader-focused) systems as incomplete hermeneutical systems. For Wright, reading the New Testament requires a more complex approach.[153] Interpreters should search for authorial

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[148] Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

[149] Jeanrond, 162.

[150] Jeanrond, 116-18.

[151] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). See especially 26-28.

[152] Critical realism comes into biblical studies from philosopher Bernard Lonergan, through the work of Ben Meyer. See Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 17 (San Jose: Pickwick Publications, 1989).

[153] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 32-37.

intent by reading historically, textual meaning by reading literarily, and include readers' participation by reading theologically.[154]

However, the hybrid models above and others like them face the challenge of clarifying how author, text and reader interact in the reading process. If conflict between these entities arises, which one will determine a text's meaning? Or will theorists accept the polyvalence of texts? This type of analysis is necessary in any blended model: It is not enough simply to affirm that multiple factors contribute to meaning or that multiple approaches can be legitimate. One must explain how they interact, in both complement and conflict.[155] In later chapters I provide such an explanation for my own approach.

11 Hermeneutical Fracture

This chapter places most hermeneutical theorists since Gadamer into four broad categories.[156] To describe the result as a "fracture" may seem extreme. Some might speak

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[154] Wright, 26-27.

[155] Anthony Thiselton, for instance, though an author-focused hermeneut, allows for readers to contribute to meaning. His model proposes that an author's meaning is always fixed, but that a reader's reception is variable. The degree of variation and how different elements influence one another are determined by the genre of the text. Anthony C. Thiselton, "Communicative Action," 201-4.

[156] In limiting the scope of hermeneutics for the homiletical focus of this thesis, I will leave aside hermeneutics that largely disavow meaning. Post-structuralist or deconstructive approaches to interpretation offered by Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and others deny that stable meaning exists in the author, the text, or the reader. (For approachable discussions of such theories, see Vanhoozer, *Meaning,* 49-69; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 103-41.) Derrida's larger project, for instance, involves a rejection of Western metaphysics, the denial that language communicates stable meaning, and an understanding of language as an endless web of signs that refer not to extralinguistic reality but only to one another.

On the one hand, deconstructive approaches are a logical extension of ordinary reader-focused hermeneutics. Deconstructive readers play a dominant role in interpretation, exposing dynamic oppositions and incompletions in a text. Less extreme forms of deconstruction, then, can function as reader-focused models and will have some relevance to homiletical theory.

On the other hand, extreme deconstruction has limited application for preaching. Adherents of such models doubt the possibility of meaningful and stable communication. Homiletics, by contrast, normally operates from the presupposition of God's communicative interest, his saving act in Christ, and the meaning inherent

instead of the blossoming of a discipline or a proliferation of ideas. Yet the division is sharper than such terms convey; the fracture has resulted in theories that are not just different but incommensurate, because the four models clash with respect to their goals as well as methodologies.

These approaches conflict, first of all, because of different interpretive goals. Interpreters approach texts with certain purposes in mind. They may seek a message from an author, a free-standing text with multiple potential meanings, a canvas upon which to write their own meaning, or an analysis of manipulative or dishonest communication.[157] In such cases, interpreters are not even attempting to do similar or comparable things. They simply perform different actions on texts for different purposes.

Furthermore, the methodologies of each approach are incommensurate. Author-focused hermeneutics, for example, normally proceeds from theories of textual stability, the objectivity of language, the reliability of written texts in conveying meaning, and readers' ability to neutralize their presuppositions.[158] Author-focused theorists tend to employ analytic philosophy for these tasks, and often make use of Speech-Act Theory.

Text-focused theorists, by contrast, rely on theories of textual autonomy, on ranges of meaning in discourse, and on Gadamer's fusion of horizons. The text, in order to allow for flexibility of meaning, must be divorced from the original author. Advocates employ semiotics, structuralism, or Ricoeur's world in front of the text. Therefore, text-focused hermeneutics relies on theories that are incompatible with author-focused hermeneutics.

Reader-focused hermeneutics argues for textual indeterminacy, for the intractability of readers' presuppositions, and for readers' creation (not discovery) of meaning in texts. Reader-focused approaches offer descriptions of a reader's experience in order to understand how meaning emerges during reading. Such arguments require a loose view of textual constraints on interpretation and give significant weight to readers' pre-judgments.

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in the gospel, in Scripture or in the church. The homiletical focus of this thesis will therefore not make use of extreme deconstructive approaches.

[157] On goals in interpretation, see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning,* 155-56.

[158] See the appendices in Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (465-521).

Finally, critical hermeneutics proceeds by periodically exiting the interpretive process altogether. Its focus is sociological and ethical, and its methodology critiques existing interpretations rather than creating new ones.

Therefore, the goals and methodologies of each branch of hermeneutics differ as substantially as the results do. Consequently, dialogue between the three approaches has proved difficult and unproductive.[159] In the face of such divergent interpretive interests, the possibility or even the desirability of integration in hermeneutics is called into question.

12 Conclusion

The present chapter has argued that the field of hermeneutics since Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is fractured into four distinct approaches. Although the categories are general and allow for subdivisions and mixtures, theorists normally focus on the author, the text, or the reader as the locus of meaning, or on critical hermeneutical questions. This development is not random: Gadamer's work widened an incipient split in the field. His rejection of authorial meaning augmented an isolation of the approaches that look for meaning in authorial intent.[160] At the same time, Gadamer's dual emphasis on the text as the center of meaning and on readers' active appropriation of meaning has paved the way for text- and reader-focused systems. And his model's lacunae surrounding critical concerns has invited those developments from other theorists. Hermeneutics since

[159] Hirsch's work is a case in point of such unproductivity. He is at pains to demonstrate that understanding the propositional content of a sentence is a realistic possibility. However, this is not a point normally under dispute by text-focused interpreters. Palmer, for example, notes that Hirsch has "succeeded brilliantly in his purpose," but that he has also "oversimplified the problem." Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 64-65.

[160] Therefore, it is no coincidence that author-focused hermeneutics has less common ground with text- or reader-focused approaches do with each other. Roger Lundin notes, "The evangelical [author-focused] promoters of Hirschian intentionalism are fighting a lonely battle" ("Interpreting Orphans: Hermeneutics in the Cartesian Tradition," in Lundin, Thiselton and Walhout, *Promise of Hermeneutics*, 37).

Gadamer is fractured.[161] Furthermore, those fragments differ significantly from one another, not just in interpretive results, but also in goals and methodologies.

However, for the homiletical purposes of this thesis, there is more to be said. In subsequent chapters, I will contend that the sharpened hermeneutical focus on biblical interpretation for preaching provides motives and methods for fusing together the disparate pieces. In other words, while general hermeneutics may be irreversibly fractured, the situation in homiletics holds out hope for rapprochement.

Before proceeding with that argument, I will first show that the hermeneutical fracture has produced an echo in contemporary mainline and evangelical North American preaching. The fragments of contemporary hermeneutics emerge in similar guise in homiletics. That is the contention of chapter 3.

[161] Once again, I do not contend that Gadamer created or directly caused this fracture. See the qualifications in "Gadamer's Hermeneutical Legacy" above.

Chapter 3:
Homiletical Echo

All disciplines are dependent upon other disciplines, yet homiletics is particularly so. It is therefore arguably in more danger of adopting uncritically whatever ideology comes along.

—Paul Scott Wilson[1]

Chapter 2 described a fourfold fracture in contemporary hermeneutics. This chapter argues that contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics echoes that fracture: when interpreting the Bible for preaching, homileticians generally locate meaning in the author, text, reader, or critical hermeneutical practice. Such approaches represent incomplete, insufficiently clear methodologies that are unable to assess interpretations.

In chapter 4, I will evaluate these four interpretive approaches as they pertain to homiletics. Part 2 (chapters 5 through 7) will then develop a new hermeneutic specific to homiletics.

1 Qualifications for Homiletics

The schema of author/text/reader/critical hermeneutics uncovered in chapter 2 requires three qualifications in order to apply it to homiletics.

1.1 Homiletic versus Hermeneutic Theory

First, the field of homiletics displays neither the clarity nor complexity of pure hermeneutical theorists.[2] On the one hand this should be expected, as homiletics spans

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[1] Paul Scott Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), 150.

[2] Just as chapter 2 functions as a literature review for hermeneutics, the present chapter does so for homiletics. The reader may also wish to consult some of the existing reviews of homiletical theory, including

several disciplines (theology, hermeneutics, communication studies) and therefore must sometimes choose breadth over depth. On the other hand, this should be lamented: as Wilson states, “Homileticians may try to import categories to homiletics without doing careful spadework to determine how these categories might translate into sermons.”[3] Homiletical theory suffers when perspectives from other fields are adopted uncritically. One goal of the present work is to develop a hermeneutic for homiletics that interacts more extensively than others with pure hermeneutics.

1.2 Relative Weight Rather Than Exclusive Attention

Second, classification of a scholarly field admits exceptions and hybrids, as the present schema does. When one uses labels like "author-focused," "text-focused," "reader-focused," and "critical hermeneutical," these labels do not indicate exclusive approaches. Homileticians normally use multiple foci, even if they favor one.

In particular, nearly every homiletician understands that the author counts. Ronald J. Allen, for instance, although a reader-focused homiletician, writes extensively about matters relating to the historical author, and their import for interpretation.[4] And Richard Eslinger, who labels historical inquiry into an author’s world as “the collapsed historical-critical project,” admits that such inquiry “still has some value, but only as it is bracketed and supplemented by other approaches.”[5] Consensus exists that how a text originated

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the (now dated) bibliography of David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 473-74, 483-86; a review in Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*, 59-115; a review of the New Hermeneutic’s contribution to the New Homiletic in James F. Kay, *Preaching and Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2007), 77-104; or a review based on how homiletics handles the temporal gap between ancient and modern times in Casey C. Barton, *Preaching Through Time: Anachronism as a Way Forward in Preaching* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017), 12-57.

[3] *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*, 21. For a notable exception to this trend, see Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus: The New Directions of Homiletics in Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997).

[4] Ronald J. Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching*, 21-39.

[5] Richard L. Eslinger, preface to *Intersections: Post-Critical Studies in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), xi.

(including who wrote it) and what an author meant matters—even if that original meaning is found to be unclear or is later abandoned.

Likewise, the text matters to homileticians. Even author-focused theorists take into account the genre of a text, its implied author, its structure, and its relation to the canon.[6] Additionally, readers matter to most homileticians. Gadamer has been heard: readers always read with presuppositions that affect interpretation.[7] The debate within homiletics is one of degree: how much do readers' presuppositions matter, and should interpreters use their own presuppositions to determine meaning or attempt to bracket them out?[8]

Finally, homileticians across the hermeneutical spectrum give voice to critical concerns: because the Bible is in some sense authoritative, and because preaching is an authoritative act, issues of manipulation surface in the pulpit. Evangelical Haddon Robinson opines, "Unless you are committed to a honest grappling with a text, you are in danger of stressing partial truth and mistaking it for the whole."[9] And mainline homileticians like Mary Foskett give advice for the use of critical hermeneutics when she advocates interpreting against the grain of "a text that seems not to conform to the mind of Christ."[10] Homiletics is alert to interpretive impropriety.

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[6] See, for instance, David L. Allen, "The Rules of the Game: Seven Steps to Proper Interpretation," in Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, eds., *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 237-41. For the concept of the implied author, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 71-76.

[7] Even Robinson, one of the staunchest advocates of an author-focused approach, notes that interpreters get "locked into presuppositions and worldviews that make understanding difficult" (Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 22).

[8] Willhite writes, "The exegete must 'bracket out' theology and homiletics to ensure accuracy with the A/author's or text's intent." Keith Willhite, "A Bullet versus Buckshot: What Make the Big Idea Work?" in *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, ed. Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 18.

[9] Haddon W. Robinson, "The Relevance of Expository Preaching," in *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 90.

[10] Mary F. Foskett, *Interpreting the Bible,* Elements of Preaching (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), Kindle, loc. 717.

Thus, the four categories in this chapter are indicators of the relative weight interpreters give to author, text, reader, and critical concerns. One final qualification follows.

1.3 Homiletical Complications

The specific reading situation of biblical interpretation for preaching introduces hermeneutical complexity. In other words, homileticians understands the entities of author, text, reader, and critical hermeneutics distinctively, as follows.

The term "author" can mean a variety of things in homiletics. It can indicate the historical author(s*)*.[11] However, it can also mean the character who speaks in the text—for example, Jesus instead of Luke.[12] Additionally, preachers may speak of the intent of a redactor or editor.[13] Stretching the term even further, author-focused homileticians may look to the authorial action of the church*,* who acknowledges the Bible as its canon. Canonical theology focuses on the church's historical identification of biblical books as canon.[14] On this understanding, canonization is akin to authorship: the church binds

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[11] Garrett, for example, in an article on preaching from the Psalter, refers to the "the psalmist's meaning and message." Duane Garrett, "Preaching from the Psalms and Proverbs," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 102.

[12] See, for example, Chapell's sermon "To Make God Come Down" on Luke 17:1-19, in Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons: Models of Redemptive Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 143-55. Chapell ascribes the voice in the text to Jesus, never mentioning Luke.

[13] Greidanus, for instance, recommends that preachers exegete for the intention of the "last substantial redactor" in the development of a text. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 108.

[14] See Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). For a discussion and defense of canonical theology see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 70-79. See also reference to his work in Campbell, *Preaching Jesus,* 9-13; Paul Scott Wilson, "Biblical Studies and Preaching: A Growing Divide?" in Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, eds., *Preaching as a Theological Task* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 144. Canonical theology fits only loosely under the label "author-focused." But theorists' reference to the canon as an achievement and to the role of the church point to a (corporate) human intention, not a textual one.

together disparate writings, acknowledges them as Scripture, and in so doing creates intertextual relationships that generate new meaning. For instance, in Gen 3:15, when God promises that the "seed" of the woman will defeat the "seed" of the serpent, the canonical relationship of Genesis to New Testament texts like Gal 3:16 (which identifies the seed as Christ) informs not only the meaning of Galatians, but also the meaning of Genesis. The people of God have corporately authored one new text that is the complete canon.

"Author" can also refer to God as the divine Author of Scripture. Willhite says, "For preaching, this commitment [to a high view of Scripture] means that God's Word says what God says."[15] While most homileticians agree that God can speak by using a biblical text, some go further and say that God's inspiration of a text implies that his intention is always expressed by that text. Homiletics, then, offers a more complex concept of the author than general hermeneutics. Asking what the author meant is no simple matter.

As for the text, in the field of homiletics the text is not one work but a library of interrelated works, stacked in temporal and theological layers. The Bible is an extraordinarily complex literary entity, and interpreting the Bible for preaching requires an appreciation of that complexity.

This can be seen in a passage like Ps 68.[16] As a song praising God's might in conquest and warfare, an interpreter might focus on the historical events that led to the song's composition. Perhaps a military conflict (or a remembrance of past conflicts) is the ultimate *Sitz im Leben* for the Psalm.[17] As a song for Israel, Ps 68 also likely had an oral pre-

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[15] Willhite, "Bullet versus Buckshot," 15. See also Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 7-23, on God as the divine Speaker in Scripture and preaching. Philip B. Payne makes a careful distinction between the human author and God in biblical interpretation ("The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 243-52).

[16] Tate notes, "The difficulties of interpreting [Psalm] 68 are almost legendary." But the interpretive issues here are simply more obvious and serious than those found elsewhere. They thus emphasize the difficulties faced in preaching from any passage in Scripture. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 170.

[17] Tate cautiously suggests a "post-exilic form" that incorporates earlier historical elements. Goldingay says that such scattered and conflicting historical references make the Psalm "distinctively unspecific" and thus

history, in which it was (or parts of it were) sung during Israel's worship.[18] The sanctuary context (vv 24–27, 29, 35) highlights the use of this song in the worship rendered to YHWH for his deliverance; perhaps Ps 68 could be preached as an exhortation to praise.

It is also possible (but uncertain) that the song underwent redaction by various editors, who modified earlier versions.[19] As Bruns notes, this has hermeneutical consequences: "As a redacted rather than an authored text, the Scriptures are structurally oriented away from an original intention toward the manifold possibilities of future understanding."[20] The editor shapes, and may even broaden, the intent of earlier layers.

Or one could focus simply on the final form of the text as it stands. According to Wilson,

> The original form of a text in history is important in helping to know what the text originally meant, but the form that it currently has in the biblical canon is also important; this is the form the church affirmed in receiving it as the book to guide its faith and life.[21]

Furthermore, Ps 68 is a part of the Psalter. Psalm 68 occupies a place near the end of Book Two, which ends with "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" (Ps 72:20). How might this Psalm function as one of the final commentaries on his reign, or on the prospect of the ultimate reign of God in Book Five (Pss 107–150)?[22] And within the canon at large,

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usable in a variety of Israelite worship contexts. Tate, *Psalms* 174; John Goldingay, *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42-89,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 310.

[18] Even here, the specific nature of its liturgical use cannot be pinned down with confidence. McCann leaves it at this: "It is likely that Israel celebrated liturgically God's sovereignty on some occasion." J. Clinton McCann, "The Book of Psalms," in *The New Interpreter's* Bible, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 944. See Goldingay, *Psalms,* 311.

[19] Albright (cited in Tate, *Psalms,* 171) argues that the entire Psalm is nothing more than collected opening lines of independent hymns linked together! Tate outlines a possible progression from early northern hymns through a Jerusalem tradition to a post-exilic supplicatory setting. Tate, *Psalms,* 174.

[20] Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*, 76.

[21] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 12.

[22] For a study on the editorial shaping of the Psalter, see Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholars, 1985).

how does the triumphalist idea of conquest collide with Israelite defeats at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, or with the nonviolent ethic of Christ expressed in the Sermon on the Mount?

Finally, Paul cites (some would say, misquotes) Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8 in a discussion of spiritual gifts; does that change or at least expand the meaning of the Psalm for the church? The way that the Bible handles its own materials will be important for preachers and will depend upon their understanding of how God speaks through Scripture.[23] From pre-history to canonization, the literary layers of the Bible complicate interpretation. Thus, in biblical interpretation for preaching, the text is complex.

Thus, both author and text are more complex in biblical interpretation for preaching than in general hermeneutics. A third complication: the readers are now preachers who read with the specific goal of sermon preparation. This introduces three modifications.

The first modification is that preachers do not simply read the Bible; they study it. Therefore, their reading will be close, and will be aided by the use of resources like lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and commentaries. If working in the original languages, they may also translate as they read.

The second modification is that preachers normally read a passage with a history of prior engagement. Often, preachers have read it before, or studied it before, or preached from it before, or heard it preached before. Prior exposure to a text conditions one's horizon and thus one's reading of that text. This is not to say that preaching is unique with respect to familiarity with a text, but instead that the degree of familiarity is unusually high.

The third modification is that preachers, when they read Scripture for homiletical ends, do not read alone. Long agrees, stating, "When preachers go to the Scripture, then,

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[23] For different approaches, see Bernard C. Lategan, "Some Unresolved Methodological Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics," in Bernard C. Lategan and Willem S. Vorster, *Text and Reality: Aspects of Reference in Biblical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 17; Prosper Grech, "Inner-Biblical Reinterpretation and Modern Hermeneutics," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Petr Pokorný and Jan Roskovec, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchen zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 221-37; James D.G. Dunn, *The Living Word*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia; Fortress, 2009), 113-38.

they must take the people with them."[24] Preachers read as a part of a larger community of faith—the church. Their reading will thus involve the blending of perspectives, as the preacher reads on behalf of the church, but also as a member of the church.[25]

Fourth, critical hermeneutics has a particular shape in homiletics, because both the text-as-Scripture and the reader-as-preacher raise issues of trust and authority. On the one hand, for many Christians the Bible and the preacher are trustworthy entities: therefore, to intimate that either the text or the reader needs to be protected from one another is disturbing. On the other hand, as I discuss below, homileticians of both mainline and evangelical persuasions feel a particular need to take postures that guard against manipulation. The very condition of an existing trust in the Bible or the preacher provide the potential for abuse. In the section below on critical hermeneutics, I will trace the contours of how these concerns take particular shape in homiletical theory.

The present fourfold division, then, acknowledges less sophisticated interpretive approaches than in general hermeneutics, categorizes approaches on the basis of emphasis rather than absolute difference, and admits of complexity in the homiletical situation. Bearing such qualifications in mind, then, I now outline four varieties of biblical interpretation for preaching.[26]

2 Author-Focused Homiletics

The first homiletical approach searches a biblical passage for the author's meaning. Interpretive practice, on this view, aims at understanding an author's communicative act,

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[24] Long, *Witness,* 64.

[25] See Thomas H. Troeger, "A Poetics of the Pulpit for Post-Modern Times," in Eslinger, *Intersections*, 60; Robert M. Fowler, "Who is 'the Reader' in Reader-Response Criticism?" *Semeia* 31 (1985): 5-23.

[26] As with hermeneutics, there are other ways to categorize interpretation. For example, Jacobsen categorized homiletic biblical interpretation models based on their theology of revelation (David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Homiletical Exegesis and Theologies of Revelation: Biblical Preaching from Text to Sermon in an Age of Methodological Pluralism" *Homiletic* 36 (2011): 14-25.) I have argued in §2.5 for my choice of the present schema.

with a view to expressing that content in the sermon. Greg Scharf expresses it clearly: "Our task as preachers is . . . to discern what God had in mind, what he intended when inspiring the human author to write it."[27] Author-focused homileticians locate meaning in the author.[28]

Many advocates of author-focused homiletics identify as evangelical.[29] This makes sense: interpreting authorial intent aligns with an evangelical understanding of biblical inerrancy,[30] and evangelical hermeneutics construes the meaning of the text as unchanging regardless of the contemporary situation.[31] Some theorists in the African-American tradition also practice an author-centered approach.[32]

However, author-focused homileticians have listened to the hermeneutical conversation. They differ from earlier, less sophisticated approaches in the same three ways that modern author-focused hermeneuts differ from classic versions: in defining an author's intent, in acknowledging the difficulty of discerning it, and in recognizing the role that readers play.[33]

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[27] Greg R. Scharf, "God's Letter of Intent: Six Questions that Reveal What God Meant to Say in a Text", in Robinson and Larson, *Art and Craft*, 230.

[28] It is important to recall that in homiletics, the term "author" may refer to human authors, editors, the church, or God.

[29] To name a few: Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*; Donald R. Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered-Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994).

[30] See "The Chicago Statement on Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy,* ed. Norman L. Geisler, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 493-502.

[31] For example, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in Geisler, *Inerrancy*, 117-24.

[32] Henry Mitchell writes of God speaking through Scripture, stating that black congregations "want to know what *God* has said through the preacher's encounter with the Word." Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 56, emphasis original. Likewise, James Earl Massey writes that the Bible contains "words issued from living persons who took seriously the business of life as seen in the light of God." James Earl Massey, *The Responsible Pulpit* (Anderson: Warner, 1974).

[33] See §2.6.1 for elaboration on the differences between older and more recent author-focused theories of meaning.

First, although finding an author's intent is the goal of study, the text itself is the object of study.[34] This modification shields contemporary author-focused approaches from accusations of "psychologism"—the practice of seeking after the inner mental state of an author.[35]

Second, contemporary author-focused homiletics recognizes that the search for an author's meaning is not always successful. For instance, authorial intent may not be clear. Readers may not have enough tools to understand the intent fully, or even sufficiently.[36] Also, authorial intent may not be preachable. This can happen because of the selection of an incomplete textual unit,[37] or because broader theological considerations demand a meaning at odds with an author's historical intention. For instance, Sidney Greidanus explains, "The message of an Old Testament text will sometimes stand in contrast to that of the New Testament."[38] He recommends that the passage be read and preached "in the light of God's final revelation in Christ and therefore in the light of this possible contrast."[39] Additionally, authorial intent may not be relevant or persuasive.[40] Finally, authorial intent may not be determinative. Some genres, including the parables, operate in an open-ended fashion. The intent of the biblical author may have been multifaceted or indeterminate.[41]

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[34] Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 108.

[35] Though "straw man" attacks of this sort continue. See Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 275-76.

[36] See Duane Litfin's discussion on Greek ambiguities, a biblical book's lack of central purpose, and other obstacles in "New Testament Challenges to Big Idea Preaching," in Willhite and Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, 53-66. As Craddock states, "In some cases, the intent of the writer is simply not recoverable except in a broad and general sense." Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching*, 25th anniv. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 144.

[37] See Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 32-33.

[38] See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 271.

[39] Greidanus, 272.

[40] Robinson says, "Not every Scripture possesses equal profit for a congregation at a particular time." *Biblical Preaching*, 54.

[41] Arthurs, for example, in discussing preaching from Proverbs, argues that interpretation involves collaboration between reader and author, and is, as such, a "risky business." Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 132-35. Craddock

Interpreting an author's intent in this case may not yield a meaning-as-assertion but instead invite different readers' responses.

The third modification made by contemporary author-focused homileticians is a recognition of the reader's influence in the interpretive process. For these theorists, once an interpreter has a sufficient grasp of an author's intentional message, that message comes to a congregation only by passing through the preacher.[42] Contemporary author-focused homiletics therefore insists on what Gadamer calls "application."[43]

To summarize author-focused homiletics: having discerned an author's intention as expressed in a text, this branch of homiletics defines that intention as the meaning of the text. However, contemporary author-focused homileticians understand "intention" to be enacted intention, acknowledge the difficulty of finding an author's meaning, and allow a significant role for readers.

3 Text-Focused Homiletics

A second group of homileticians views the text as a communicative object that carries meaning in its own right. Craddock states that a text "is separated from its writer, its intended readers, and its original context."[44] The emphasis in interpretation, then, falls on the features of the text—not as indicators of what an author meant by writing them, but as independent carriers of meaning. The text is the locus of meaning. Understanding text-

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discusses parables at length, and notes, "The parable as such would be contradicted and destroyed by being explained and applied." Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, rev ed. (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 54.

[42] Robinson is clear on this point in *Biblical Preaching*, 25-27. For discussion with reference to the Old Testament, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227-77.

[43] *TM*, 307-11. Here Gadamer means applying the text to the reader (preacher), not the congregation.

[44] Craddock, *Preaching*, 127. The reader will notice that Craddock was also cited in the author-focused section. His hermeneutic here is not quite clear: although he does say that the text is separated from the author, he also states, "One should be sensitive to and fair with an author's intention" (*Preaching*, 115). Craddock is an example of how homiletical hermeneutics does not always display the clarity of general hermeneutics.

focused homiletics requires an awareness of two influential figures: Karl Barth and Paul Ricoeur.[45]

3.1 Karl Barth

In his *Homiletics*, Barth paved the way for text-focused homiletics with his doctrine of Scripture.[46] In the interests of safeguarding God's absolute freedom to speak, Barth posited a distinction between the Bible and the word of God. For Barth, the Bible is not identical to the word of God, though it may become his word in the event of preaching.[47]

His argument is as follows: Barth's homiletic enjoins a humble submission to the Bible.[48] He states, "Preaching must be exposition of holy scripture. I have not to talk *about* scripture but *from* it. I have not to say something, but merely to repeat something. . . . Our task is simply to follow the distinctive movement of thought in the text, to stay with this, and not with a plan that arises out of it."[49] For Barth, "Preaching is exposition of scripture."[50]

On the other hand, Barth refuses to equate the Bible with the word of God. The "word of God" indicates the event of revelation in which God speaks (such as at Mt. Sinai). The Bible is not the word of God because it cannot be equated with the event of God

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[45] Other movements to a lesser degree also influenced the text-focused school of homiletics. See, for example, Kay's discussion of how New Criticism shaped postliberal homiletics. Kay, *Preaching and Theology,* 109.

[46] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

[47] Although Barth was the first to make this distinction explicit and influential, Kay argues that such a distinction was already implicit in the Second Helvetic Confession (*Preaching and Theology*, 15). See Allen's critique of Barth's distinction and its homiletic consequences in David L. Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 489-515. Allen traces tremendous error in most branches of homiletics to this one theological move.

[48] Buttrick spoke of Barth's "strong, uncompromising biblicism" (David Buttrick, forward to Barth, *Homiletics*, 9).

[49] Barth, *Homiletics,* 49. Emphasis original.

[50] Barth, 75.

speaking. Instead the Bible, as Barth states, "is not revelation itself, but witness to God's revelation."[51] The Bible witnesses to the word of God because it is a record of that event.

Although the Bible is not identical to the word of God, Barth maintains that it can subsequently become the word of God if God chooses to speak through it in the event of the sermon: "In reality we ought to say that the Bible *becomes* God's Word. Whenever it *becomes* God's Word, it *is* God's Word."[52] The Bible and the word of God are distinct but related entities.

Barth's separation between the Bible and the word of God opens the possibility of text-centered homiletics because God is no longer the divine Author of Scripture but instead the divine Speaker who takes the Bible up as his word during preaching. While the text is the focus of preachers' study, the text is not God's word that he wrote; it is a flawed human composition.[53] God's relation to the Bible happens not in the authoring of it, but in the appropriation of it during the sermon.[54] Barth views the sermon as "an event" in which God speaks through the human words of Scripture and sermon.[55] For Barth, the text contains the meaning, but the locus of divine speech has moved away from the text (with its tie to historical authors), and toward the moment of sermon delivery. The text can now be studied as an object, removed from complicated historical questions and human authors, and also from questions of truth and error. Preachers can analyze the text in faith that God will take up the words of the text and speak through them during the sermon delivery.

Consequently, in Barth's hands the text is God's instrument for speaking, not God's word immutable. Working from a Barthian perspective, the fact that the text originated

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[51] Barth, 103.

[52] Barth, 78. It is important here to keep separate two different interpretive moments: that of a preacher interpreting a text in preparation for preaching, and that of a congregation listening to and interpreting a sermon. Though Barth spoke of the possibility of God choosing to speak in the latter moment, the present thesis focuses on the former.

[53] Barth, 101-5.

[54] The concept of God appropriating the biblical text will play a major role in this thesis. See §5.3.

[55] Barth, 78.

with a human author is irrelevant to the preacher; as a human artifact the text must be transformed by something beyond itself to become ultimately meaningful.

Many homileticians have followed Barth in his distinction between the Bible and God's word. Paul Scott Wilson states, "The gospel is not identical to the Bible; God's Word needs to be sought in Scripture."[56] Similarly, Long cautions, "We must make a careful distinction here between the words of Scripture and sermon, on the one hand, and the dynamic word of God, on the other."[57] That distinction allows interpretation to marginalize biblical authors, while the text itself remains central, and God speaks in the pulpit rather than from the page.

3.2 Paul Ricoeur

The second figure behind text-focused homiletics is Paul Ricoeur.[58] His construal of textual discourse—that a discourse, in the act of writing, becomes free from its original context—separates text from author. Instead of referring to the real world, the text now projects a world in front of the text that is distinct from the real world. Interpreters find meaning in that textual world as they imaginatively enter it and may (but are not required to) inhabit the values of that world and live them out. So, it is neither the reader nor the author who generates meaning, but the text itself.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic has proved to be quite popular in homiletics. Across the theological spectrum, homileticians cite his work with approval, and sometimes engage extensively with his thought.[59] Kuruvilla's *Text to Praxis*, for example, proposes an

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[56] *Practice of Preaching*, 35.

[57] *The Witness of Preaching*, 21. For ideas stemming from Barth's concept, see Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* 106; Kay, *Preaching and Theology,* 14-23; Wallace M. Alston, Jr., "The Recovery of Theological Preaching," in *The Power to Comprehend with All the Saints: The Formation and Practice of a Pastor-Theologian*, ed. Wallace M. Alston, Jr. and Cynthia A. Jarvis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 228-29.

[58] See §2.7.3 for a review of Ricoeur's hermeneutic.

[59] See the following homiletic discussions based on Ricoeur's work: Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* 27; Greenhaw, "The Formation of Consciousness," in Long and Farley, eds., *Preaching as a Theological Task,* 10-11; John S. McClure, *Other-wise Preaching: A Post-Modern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 80-81; Lance B. Pape, "Coming to Terms with Barth's 'Third Thing': Hans Frei, Paul Ricoeur, and the

evangelical homiletic based on Ricoeur's notion of world projection.[60] Allen's approach grows in part from the same concept: "As the text is a world into which the reader or listener enters, so the sermon can create a world into which the congregation can enter. . . . The shape, size, and content of the sermonic world will be determined by the text."[61] Many homileticians find Ricoeur's "world in front of the text" beneficial for preaching.

3.3 Text-Focused Homiletical Examples

Therefore, text-focused homiletics, building in large measure off of Barth and Ricoeur, emphasizes the text rather than the author or reader. The New Homiletic, for instance, focuses on the literary features of a text.[62] Or consider Long's *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, an argument for allowing the dynamics of biblical genre to guide interpretation.[63] In a discussion dependent on Ricoeur and reflecting the emphases of the New Homiletic, Long contrasts interpretive processes that focus on the world behind the text with those in the text and in front of the text.[64]

Not all text-focused homiletics are indebted to Ricoeur. Charles Campbell builds a homiletic from the post-liberal hermeneutic of Hans Frei, who advocates a "non-referential literary reading of scripture."[65] For Campbell, "The sacred text continues dynamically to

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Possibility of Postliberal Homiletics**,"** *Homiletic* 38 (2013): 18-27; Gijsbert D. J. Dingemans, "A Hearer in the Pew: Homiletical Reflections and Suggestions," in Long and Farley, *Preaching as a Theological Task,* 44; Thomas G. Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 44.

[60] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue,* Library of New Testament Studies 393 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 11-52.

[61] Allen, *Biblical Interpretation*, 111.

[62] On the New Homiletic, see O. Wesley Allen, Jr., ed., *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 1-18.

[63] Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).

[64] Long, 24.

[65] Charles Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 15. However, it is significant that Frei was deeply influenced by Barth (see Campbell, 5-9).

assert its authority within and over the community."[66] The text, apart from historical referent, carries meaning.

Perhaps the text-focused approach has surfaced regularly in homiletics because a text-focused theory avoids troublesome features of competing models while retaining factors essential for preaching. This model can, for instance, sidestep most historical-critical issues surrounding a text's pre-history and transmission, because the text is no longer bound to its original situation. It also, for the same reason, avoids apologetic questions about whether the events recorded in the Bible actually happened or whether they happened in the way that the Bible presents them.[67] In text-focused interpretation, homiletics is free from historical issues that complicate interpretation.

Yet neither will a text-focused homiletic suffer the tyranny of the reader. A text, although generating multiple valid interpretations, does not allow for any interpretation at all. It places constraints upon meaning. Words, sentences, structure and genre give guidelines and guardrails for interpretation. Text-focused hermeneutics does not have to face the specter of interpretive relativism.

Additionally, text-focused homileticians, because they view the text neither as the communication of an agent nor as referring to the real world, can choose to accept or reject the meaning of a text. Rejecting textual meaning as, for example, untrue or unethical does not imply a rejection of God's voice because the text has not yet become the word of God for the preacher. Consequently, the interpreter is free from any ethical obligation to heed historical authors and their ideas.

One final benefit: If meaning is polysemic within a text,[68] then the preacher's responsibility may not be to communicate a single meaning but merely to offer up the text for the listener's interpretation. Dingemans's view is typical:

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[66] Campbell, 89.

[67] Hans Frei is explicit about leaving aside questions of extra-textual reference and is followed in homiletics by the postliberal school of preaching. See Campbell, *Preaching Jesus,* 12-15; Frei, *Eclipse*, 86-104.

[68] On polysemy, see *HHS*, 44.

> Preaching for a congregation, in my opinion, is not primarily proclaiming the Word of God in an absolute way, but opening texts of the Bible and helping people to discover the power of God's love in the moves and structures of these texts for themselves.[69]

Therefore, sermons help people to discover one of several meanings within a passage.

The text-focused approach has found a warm homiletical reception. This is largely because it allows the preacher to take the biblical text seriously while avoiding some of the challenges of other approaches.

4 Reader-Focused Homiletics

This third set of homiletical theories understands preachers-as-readers to generate meaning as they read. It claims that neither authorial intent nor textual features determine meaning. Instead, texts "mean" only when a reader constructs meaning.

David Buttrick is an influential reader-focused homiletician. His *Homiletic* oriented preaching theory toward a hermeneutic of how preachers (and listeners) construct meaning in the experience of reading or listening. Hermeneutically, Buttrick gives priority to a preacher's faith-oriented experience of a text. Rather than content expressed by an author or within a text, it is the structure of Christian consciousness that determines meaning: "The hermeneutic of Christian preaching is astonishment of being-saved in the world."[70] By this Buttrick means that one's own consciousness of being a Christian provides an interpretive grid through which one reads the Bible and thereby creates meaning. The following passage summarizes Buttrick's approach to interpretation:

> So we will interpret Jesus Christ in the light of our *being-saved-in-the-world*. After all, Christ is good news of our salvation and not merely idle information about past-tense history. Thus, age on age, the particular shape of being-saved-in-the-world will interpret Christ in ever-new ways. . . . The texts we study are not locked up tight in a vault labeled "Original Meaning," but articulate differently as the situation of the being-saved community is

[69] Dingemans, "A Hearer in the Pew," 48.

[70] Buttrick, *Homiletic,* 16.

> reshaped. . . . In short, our awareness of being-saved-in-the-world interprets revelation.[71]

Specifically, Buttrick proposes a homiletic whereby the preacher seeks to understand how a text operates in the consciousness of readers.[72] He describes how the readers of a text will create meaning when hearing or reading that text. For Buttrick, preachers profoundly shape meaning.

Reader-focused homiletics has proliferated since Buttrick's work.[73] Practitioners do not exclude the Bible from interpretation. But they deny that the Bible carries determinate meaning within itself, and instead approach it as one party at the table in constructing meaning. Ronald Allen, for example, offers a conversational model for preaching, in which Scripture has a voice—though not a dominant one: "While [the Bible] is a primal theological guide, it is not imperial; selected passages and themes do not represent

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[71] Buttrick, 259. Buttrick's use of the term "consciousness" is informed by a phenomenological approach to hermeneutics. He understands the double structure of Christian consciousness to include both an awareness of being saved by grace and yet still existing in the present world. This consciousness is not a determinate content*;* it is a frame of awareness. It is that consciousness which guides interpretation, so that changing meanings fit within an unchanging frame of consciousness. See *Homiletic,* 263-81.

[72] Buttrick states, "Thus biblical language is language designed to function in consciousness. Now we are not suggesting that we can probe passages for authorial intent. What we do suppose is that passages may be analyzed as to how they may have operated in the consciousness of an audience." "Interpretation and Preaching," *Interpretation* 35 (1981): 54.

[73] Some examples include: Thomas Troeger, "Poetics of the Pulpit,"; Jana Childers, "Seeing Jesus: Preaching as Incarnational Act," in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, 39-48; Sally A. Brown, "Theological Attentiveness on the Path from Text to Sermon: A Descriptive Approach," in *Homiletical Theology in Action: The Unfinished Theological Task of Preaching*, ed. David Schnasa Jacobsen, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 17-42; Christine Smith, "Preaching: Hospitality, De-centering, Re-membering, and Right Relations," in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, 91-112; Adam Hearlson, "Wet Paint: Matthew 15, the Canaanite Woman, and Painted-over Proclamation," in Jacobsen, *Homiletical Theology*, 43-60.

optimum understandings of God or the divine purposes for the world."[74] The preacher must decide when and whether the Bible represents "optimum understandings of God."[75]

A reader-focused homiletic can also operate ideologically: some reader-focused homileticians are post-colonialist, feminist, womanist, or liberationist interpreters, less concerned with authorial intent or textual meaning than with viewing the text through a particular lens.[76] Preachers create the meaning that holds power and interest for them, even if, to do so, they read "against the grain" of the text: that is, they offer an interpretation which is a correction of the text in light of an ideology.[77] Smith, for example, a homiletician from a liberationist perspective, suggests that central to the purposes of preaching are hospitality (as opposed to authority), de-centering (countering a power imbalance), remembering (especially those whom the text forgets), and right relations (being aware of how little authority preachers have to speak to and for others).[78] All of these concerns center on the preacher's care for listeners. She argues that these concerns should shape the content of sermons. Preachers trump authors and texts.

In light of such an approach, the issues with which author-focused homiletics wrestles (what authors intended and whether they are reliable) and which text-focused homiletics avoids, figure slightly or not at all in a reader-focused homiletic. This school of thought faces a different challenge: that interpretations might be infinitely plastic.[79] What

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[74] Ronald J. Allen, "Preaching as Mutually Critical Correlation Through Conversation," in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, 6.

[75] Foskett, in a homiletical guide to biblical interpretation, states, "Examining the historical world of the Bible places responsibility for how the past is envisioned and valued, as well as how it is appropriated, at the feet of its readers" (*Interpreting the Bible*, loc. 589).

[76] See §2.8.3 for ideological interpretation.

[77] For a discussion of this preaching against the grain of a text, see Foskett, *Interpreting the Bible*, loc. 706-856. Hearlson, in "Wet Paint," uses the analogy of painting over earlier meanings of texts with new ones.

[78] Smith, "Preaching," 91-112.

[79] Wilson agrees: "One result of these multiplying and often competing meanings is the threat to the ability of the Bible to function as the norm for faith and doctrine. Who is to say what meanings are most important?" Paul Scott Wilson, "Preaching as a Theological Venture," in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching*, 147.

limitations exist to prevent a headlong slide into relativism in reader-focused homiletics? Despite the warnings of some, guardrails do exist.[80] I mention two.

First, the Bible itself provides a soft check on interpretation. While it may be merely one voice at the table, it nevertheless can exert influence.[81] But even so, the risk remains that when the Bible confronts the habits of a person or group, they will find the confrontation easy to ignore.[82] And secondly, preachers provide a check on the congregation, and vice versa. There will be times when they must stand their ground in the face of the congregation's interpretation, and other times when they will submit to parishioners' wisdom.

Reader-focused homiletics is a third method for biblical interpretation. It gives greatest weight to the role of the preacher-as-reader in forming meaning during biblical interpretation. The fourth and final variety concerns critical hermeneutical practices in homiletics.

5 Critical Homiletics

Critical homiletics differs from the first three branches in that, rather than being an isolated variant of preaching theory, critical concerns emerge across homiletics. Interestingly, however, different varieties of critical concern appear in different homiletical branches. In chapter 2 I pointed out that according to Schneiders, critical hermeneutics seeks ways "to

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[80] David Allen ("Tale of Two Roads," 499-501) and Scott Gibson ("Critique of the New Homiletic," in Robinson and Larson, *Art and Craft,* 481) both warn against interpretive relativism. Wilson, however, recognizes limits: "Relativism is not the only alternative in this fluid situation. Theological statements can still be evaluated and tested. The process simply needs to be identified within the specific cultural settings of the interpreter." Wilson, *Homiletical Theory,* 27.

[81] Interestingly, this is rarely made explicit in reader-focused homiletics. See, for instance, Ronald Allen, "Correlation Through Conversation," 17, who, when listing possibilities for mutual criticism among Bible, congregation, pastor and culture, does not discuss a situation in which the Bible could challenge cultural, pastoral or congregational values.

[82] For an analysis of such a risk, see Scott M. Gibson, "Biblical Preaching in an Anti-Authority Age," in Scott M. Gibson, ed., *Preaching to a Shifting Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 215-27.

protect the reader from the text and the text from the reader."[83] However, while evangelical homileticians are exercised to do the latter, mainline homileticians focus on the former.

Evangelical theorists worry that preachers, due to their bias, will abuse the biblical text; the Bible needs to be protected from readers (preachers) who would impose their own biases in interpretation. Greidanus, for instance, says, "We must still be watchful that we do not force the text and make it say things it does not say."[84] Kuruvilla sounds a similar note of humble submission to Scripture, encouraging "a faithful reading, a surrender to the substantiality of the text and the will of God, a willingness to inhabit the world in front of the text."[85] In other words, preachers-as-readers must be on guard so that they do not abuse the biblical text.

On the other hand, mainline homileticians sound the alarm against the obverse threat: that unacceptable ideas within the biblical text may override readers and congregations. For instance, Ronald Allen asks, "Do voices in the conversation [including the Bible] ask us to believe and act in ways that are contrary to divine purposes?"[86] In such cases, Allen urges preachers to filter out those voices. Likewise, Buttrick advises preachers to "resist the straitjacket of original meaning."[87] Mainline homileticians are concerned to prevent a text's original or authorial meaning from overriding God's will or drowning out readers' voices.

Thus, critical hermeneutics emerges in relatively distinct forms in evangelical and mainline homiletics. The former tends to protect the text from the reader, and the latter the reader from the text.[88]

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[83] Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 169.

[84] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 37.

[85] *TTP*, 132.

[86] Ronald J. Allen, "Correlation through Conversation," 7.

[87] Buttrick., *Homiletic*, 270.

[88] These are general trends, not absolute laws. It is possible, for example, for mainline homileticians to suspect their own readings and subject them to the ideas of the text. It may also be possible for an evangelical to suspect the text (though this latter possibility would present significant problems for an evangelical framework). However, the normal pattern is the reverse, as the citations below demonstrate.

5.1 The Gospel as Critical Hermeneutical Filter

Protecting preachers and the Bible from one another can happen in several different ways. But many homileticians implement that protection by use of the gospel—the basic content of the Christian faith—as a theological filter. Kay exemplifies such concern when he writes, "This exposition of scripture must itself be normed by the gospel to which the scriptures witness, a principle known as 'the rule of faith and love.' "[89] However, the bi-directional dynamic discussed in critical hermeneutics operates here. In evangelical circles, the "Christ-centered preaching" movement uses the gospel to protect the text from the reader. In mainline homiletics, the "preach-the-gospel" approach uses the gospel to protect the reader from the text.

Advocates of Christ-centered preaching understand every suitably selected biblical text to be in some sense about the gospel: the salvific work of Christ by grace alone through faith alone.[90] Bryan Chapell states, "Prophets, apostles, and the Savior all testify that all the Scriptures ultimately focus on the Redeemer. How then can we rightly expound them and not speak of him? Expository preaching is Christ-centered preaching."[91] Every text is (at least indirectly) about Christ and the good news of his redemption.

This is not to say that every pericope explicitly expounds the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Christ-centered homileticians instead mean that each text, when understood in light of the entire canon, bears a redemptive meaning within that broader context. Keller is clear on this point: "To show how a text fits into its whole canonical context, then, is to show how it points to Christ and gospel salvation, the big idea of the whole Bible."[92] Interpretation for Christ-centered preaching, then, searches a text for a

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[89] Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 18.

[90] Bryan Chapell (*Christ-Centered Preaching*) is the foremost advocate for this school. Others representative works include Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*; Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015); and Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in all of Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003).

[91] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 272.

[92] Keller, *Preaching*, 21.

disclosure of humanity's fallen condition and the gracious provision of redemption in Christ.[93]

Christ-centered preaching is not a filter on the text; proponents believe that every text is already connected to the gospel. Instead, Christ-centered preaching filters preachers' interpretations that are contrary to the gospel and hence are not what the text actually means. In particular, moralistic readings of the Bible (those which implicitly ground people's worth in their moral performance instead of in Christ) are to be shunned—not because the Bible is moralistic, but because people are. Chapell warns, "A message that even inadvertently teaches others that their works win God's acceptance inevitably leads people away from the gospel. Moral maxims and advocacy of ethical conduct fall short of the requirements for biblical preaching."[94] The gospel filters preachers and protects the integrity of the biblical text from the vagaries of human opinion.

The other use of the gospel as a critical hermeneutical filter is known as "preach-the-gospel."[95] Rather than preaching what a text means (however one understands that phrase), one should use a text to preach the gospel. Farley says, "If the world of the gospel embraces the mysteries of God's working, then it will always transcend and even be

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[93] However, proponents remain divided as to how human authorial intent is related to God's. Keller, for example, states that the human and divine intentions (or, as he puts it, the meaning of a text in its immediate context and the truth of the gospel reflected in canonical context) are two different interpretive objects to which readers must pay attention (*Preaching*, 36-43). But Chapell identifies the human and divine intents: the human authors were conscious that everything they, and hence God, wrote was "to make us more like himself." Paul, like other writers living after Christ, "believed he was always preaching about the person and the work of Jesus." (*Christ-Centered Preaching*, 41 and 73, respectively). Greidanus differentiates the two in that the divine intent may incorporate but move beyond the human intent in a form of *sensus plenior* (*Modern Preacher and Ancient Text*, 102-21).

[94] Chapell, 268.

[95] The classic statement here is the article by Edward Farley, "Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel," *Theology Today* 50 (1994): 90-103. Additional examples are not far to seek. Allen notes, "The authority of the gospel supersedes that of the Bible" (Ronald J. Allen, "Why Preach from Passages in the Bible?" in Long and Farley, *Preaching as a Theological Task*, 178). Wilson states, "The text remains one's primary authority for preaching, yet Christ's mandate to preach the gospel determines the sermon direction" (*Practice of Preaching*, 47).

normative toward specific passages of scripture."[96] The values of the gospel regulate the meaning derived from the text.

In the preach-the-gospel approach, the gospel filters not preachers but texts. Some biblical texts do not express the gospel. Therefore, preachers may need to re-interpret them in radical ways or avoid them entirely in order to bring forth the gospel in a sermon.[97]

However, this approach allows for flexibility in defining the term "gospel." The term can indicate a theological principle like "love" or "justice"; it can be understood as a frame of consciousness; it can even be polyvalent, allowing for variation between readers.[98]

Both the Christ-centered preaching and the preach-the-gospel approaches, as sub-types of critical hermeneutics in preaching, use the gospel (differently defined) as a critical hermeneutical filter. But the former, found in evangelical circles, sees the text as always expounding the gospel, while interpreters often fall short in their reading. The latter, found in mainline groups, sees interpreters as the possessors (perhaps even the arbitrators) of the gospel, while the text is the entity that may fall short. Thus, while both use the gospel as a critical hermeneutical filter, Christ-centered preaching guards the text from some readers, while the preach-the-gospel approach protects the reader from some texts.

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[96] Edward Farley, "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching," in Long and Farley, *Theological Task,* 174.

[97] Wilson advises exegetes that the Christ event may "modify, fulfill, or otherwise affect the final meaning of the text at hand" (*Practice of Preaching*, 25). Similarly, Dewey, operating from a particular definition of the message of Christianity, states: "If one believes that the marginalization and oppression of any individuals or groups is contrary to the liberating message of Christianity, then one must take active measures to counter the androcentric bias of the biblical narrative." Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," in Eslinger, *Intersections,* 40.

[98] Allen defines the gospel as "God's unconditional love for every created entity and justice for all." Ronald J. Allen, "Correlation through Conversation," 6. Wilson defined it as "hope" (*Practice of Preaching*, 48-50). Buttrick speaks of the gospel as a form of consciousness of a community that sees itself as "being-saved-in-the-world" (*Homiletic*, 273). Long is less definite: "It would be convenient, of course, if there were some method, some careful step-by-step process, by which we could separate the abiding gospel in a biblical text from the time-conditioned material, but no such procedure exists." Long, *Witness*, 57. Farley bluntly states, "Gospel is not a thing to be defined" ("Preaching the Bible," 101). His struggle to articulate exactly how a community can use an undefined concept as its highest authority is evident in "Toward a New Paradigm."

I have argued that the state of biblical interpretation in homiletics bears a strong resemblance to general hermeneutics: the fracture in hermeneutics into author-focused, text-focused, reader-focused, and critical hermeneutics finds an echo in the approaches of contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics.

6 Homiletical Hybrids

It bears repeating that although the fourfold schema above highlights a theoretical fracture, it may obscure other factors. As Iser says, "All thought systems are bound to exclude certain possibilities, thus automatically giving rise to deficiencies."[99] This schema, for instance, may obscure the fact that some homiletical systems span more than one category. This is such an important caveat to this thesis that it will benefit from examples. I give three.[100]

Thomas Long, at first glance, seems to promote a text-focused hermeneutic:

> The degree to which spoken or written words are autonomous (i.e., from the intentionality of the people who speak or write them) is, of course, a complex matter, but without pressing the point too finely, we can say that the balance of meaning falls cleanly on the side of the words themselves rather than on the intention of the speaker or writer.[101]

He writes that in interpretation, "A claim is made, a voice is heard, a textual will is exerted."[102] For Long, the text leads the way.

Yet Long also grants significant control to the preacher-as-interpreter: "Exegesis . . . finally cannot . . . tell us what the text wishes to say on this occasion to our congregation. . . . It is up to the preacher . . . to discern the reality of this text as it is with us."[103] He writes

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[99] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 73.

[100] These hybrid models comprise skilled attempts to embrace some of the vast complexity that surrounds the concept of "the meaning of a text." I mention them not to denigrate them but simply to point out how theorists have responded to the significant hermeneutical challenge of homiletics.

[101] Long, "The Preacher and the Beast," in Eslinger, *Intersections*, 7-8.

[102] Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 97.

[103] Long, *Witness,* 57.

elsewhere, "While it is true that the biblical text assumes a dominant role in the process of interpretation, meaning erupts in the interaction between text and interpreter. The text controls the process of reading, but what the reader brings to that encounter imposes limits upon and creates possibilities for that process."[104] Readers also shape meaning.

However, yet another look indicates that he adopts a critical hermeneutical stance, because behind and beyond the text comes the filter of the gospel: "The goal of the interpreter is to hear the gospel as a kind of force at work in a biblical text cutting across . . . the static that comes from the text's own cultural world. Every text is a product of a particular time and place and reflects cultural attitudes and assumptions that are not necessarily the gospel."[105] For Long, the gospel filters out textual noise.

In the end Long appears to advocate a text-generated interpretive process, but one that operates under the constraints imposed by the values of the preacher and the content of the gospel.[106] Therefore, although Long's approach is more comprehensive than other homileticians', it is insufficiently clear. It does not show how author, text, reader, and critical hermeneutics interact in interpretation.

Paul Scott Wilson also takes an eclectic approach. He writes that sermons should be constructed from a critical study of passages and their historical contexts, including the authors.[107] But he also believes that one text generates a multitude of ideas, some of which contradict each other—a tenet found in text- and reader-focused approaches.[108] In some cases he admits that, because of the difficulty of some passages, "Perhaps something of a reader response approach is the only means whereby some texts can be preached in our

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[104] Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, 34.

[105] Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 57.

[106] This last sentence expresses Long's approach more explicitly than he himself does. His ambiguity may have been due to development of his thought over time or else by his disinterest in providing a clear interpretive philosophy for preaching.

[107] Wilson's exegetical process may be found in *The Practice of Preaching,* 6-25.

[108] He states, "There are many possible correct understandings of any work of literature, and some contradict each other." Wilson, 15.

day."[109] Author, text, and reader converge in Wilson's hermeneutic. Yet, in a similar manner to Long, Wilson fails to outline how these three mutually interact.[110]

Kuruvilla adopts a text-focused and author-focused outlook but does so in a way that may undercut his system. His homiletic is founded on Ricoeur's text-focused theory, yet he also tries to retain features of author-focused theory. Authorial intent counts for Kuruvilla, and interpretation remains tied to the historical events the author relates.[111] On the other hand, Kuruvilla also employs Ricoeur's world in front of the text as an additional layer of meaning—a concept that Ricoeur says requires the separation of a text from authorial intent.[112] In the end, Kuruvilla understands a biblical text to possess "some degree of freedom of message from the author, [though] it is not a complete severance that would make authorial intent unavailable for interpretation."[113] Kuruvilla's system tries to embrace both text and author without delineating how the world behind the text (the world of the author) functions alongside Ricoeur's world in front of the text.

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[109] Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*, 47.

[110] Wilson, *Practice of Preaching,* 8-25. Though noting that historical, literary, and philosophical concerns all matter and providing a sample exegetical process, Wilson does not explain how these concerns interact.

[111] *TTP*, 28 n. 52.

[112] Though Kuruvilla notes that he is appropriating Ricoeur's work "in a distinctive way" (*TTP* 26 n. 45), he claims that Ricoeur does indeed retain the notion of authorial intention when he speaks of the "intention of the text," (22 n. 28). In spite of Kuruvilla's assurances, elsewhere Ricoeur has written, "The abolition of a first order reference . . . is the condition of possibility for the freeing of a second order reference." (*HHS*, 141). Recently Kevin Koslowsky has written on how evangelicals can appropriate Ricoeur's insights in their own homiletic ("Ricoeur's Narrative Identity for Evangelical Homiletics," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Wake Forest, North Carolina, October 15-17, 2019). He states that "they must not follow Ricoeur to his hermeneutical conclusions" (that the world in front of the text has no ties to the historical world), but instead insist on the tie between the Bible and the historical world (127). Nonetheless, Koslowsky gives no insight into how the basic structure of Ricoeur's hermeneutic can be retained by re-inserting a tie between the biblical world of the text and the historical world. Neither Kuruvilla nor Koslowsky show how Ricoeur's framework can be salvaged while retaining the primary referent of the text.

[113] *TTP*, 22.

The above examples demonstrate two facts. First, rather than a tidy fourfold system, the categories in this chapter serve loosely to group homiletical approaches. Second, these hybrid approaches, though they are more comprehensive than many of the examples from this chapter, lack the clarity necessary to show how authors, readers, texts, and critical hermeneutics operate together in biblical interpretation for preaching.

7 Homiletical Echo

The echo in homiletics to the fracture in hermeneutics is more than an academic problem. Each week preachers interpret biblical passages in preparation for preaching, and in doing so choose an interpretive system. Yet the systems on offer in homiletics texts are incomplete, unclear, and unable to assess interpretations for their value and accuracy.

To begin with, most of the systems presented above are incomplete. Because they emphasize one entity in interpretation (author, reader, text, or critical hermeneutics) to the minimalization of others, they consequently stress only a few of the many actions that preachers perform when interpreting the Bible. In author-focused homiletics texts, for example, there is plenty of guidance for finding an author's intention. But while there may be brief mention of how preacher-readers affect interpretation, that mention is usually a warning not to let one's presuppositions run amok. Nor do they address how texts as independent documents could mean many things, or how a gospel filter may or may not be needed for some texts. The same scenario, *mutatis mutandis,* applies to the others. They are incomplete approaches.

Meanwhile, the systems that incorporate more than one focus such as Long's, Wilson's and Kuruvilla's, are unclear. That is, they do not explain just how texts and readers interact during interpretation, or how authors can factor into a textual world.

The result is an inability to assess interpretations. Because each has different goals and methodologies (as discussed in §2.11), they are difficult to compare. If preacher A says that the author meant one thing and preacher B says that the text itself means something different, how can those interpretations be set alongside one another for reflection and comparison?

In effect, the homiletical fragmentation gives preachers a beggar's choice: either choose a methodology that values only one party (author, text, reader, critical hermeneutics), or else try to muddle through how an author's ideas might pass through critical filters or how textual features might cohere or conflict with a reader's response. The homiletical fracture cries out for repair with a hermeneutic that can embrace and evaluate the many things that preachers actually do when interpreting the Bible.

8 Conclusion

Chapter 2 outlined a fracture in the field of contemporary hermeneutics. There I argued that the hermeneutical landscape since Gadamer has split into four domains centered on author, text, reader, and critical hermeneutical practices. The present chapter has proposed, with important qualifications, a fracture of preaching theory that echoes the preceding one. Homiletical approaches to biblical interpretation also focus on author, text, reader, or critical hermeneutics. This homiletical echo is to be expected because preaching theorists wrestling with interpretive questions take their cues from hermeneuts.[114]

This thesis will ultimately develop a hermeneutic specific to preaching that avoids the weaknesses seen in this homiletical survey. Prior to that development, it remains to evaluate each of the above homiletical stances, specifically with regard to the theological goals of preaching. That evaluation is the subject of the following chapter.

[114] Richard Eslinger, in fact, not only admits as much, but desires that the process would happen more quickly. Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 174.

Chapter 4:
Reading to Preach

The issue is not author or text. The issue is discourse *or text.*

—Nicholas Wolterstorff[1]

Chapter 2 argued that the field of hermeneutics since Gadamer is fractured into approaches that focus on an author's communication, a text's features, a reader's experience, or critical hermeneutical activities. Chapter 3 surveyed contemporary evangelical and mainline homiletics in North America and discovered a similarly fractured approach to biblical interpretation for preaching. Both fields are similarly fractured. What may be said in response to these fragmentations?

Hermeneutics and homiletics merit separate answers because their goals and methods, though overlapping, are not identical. What is acceptable in one field may not be in the other. To that end this chapter will first address the hermeneutical fracture and then the homiletical one. The contrasting evaluations will provide the key for a solution to the fragmented approaches to biblical interpretation for preaching, which is the task of Part II.

1 Responding to the Hermeneutical Fracture

Perhaps the most fitting reaction to the fracture in general hermeneutics is something of a shrug: given the lack of consensus among hermeneuts about the goals of interpretation, a

[1] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Response to Helm, Quinn, and Westphal," *Religious Studies* 37 (2001): 302. Emphasis original.

lack of consensus in methodology should be expected. The hermeneutical fracture is an unsurprising consequence of divergent reading interests. This assertion rests on two premises.

The first is that agreement on interpretive methodology requires agreement on interpretive goals. This is because interpretive methodology involves choices: the term "interpretation" describes a whole host of possible actions, as chapter 2 demonstrated. When readers interpret, they choose to perform some of those actions and not others.

But the reason that readers choose some actions and not others is because they believe that their choices will accomplish certain goals. They are in search of particular things when they interpret. Apel's conception of cognitive interests in the social sciences is helpful here. Scientists use differing methodologies because they have different cognitive interests, or goals, in their research.[2] For instance, two historians may study the same historical event. One searches for causal explanations of that event that can be used to predict future events; another tries to achieve hermeneutic understanding of the human actions involved—why those actions are rational. Consequently, their methods are "answers to kinds of inquiry that differ from one another."[3] They have different cognitive interests (goals) and therefore choose different methods.

Text interpretation involves similar choices of cognitive interests. Some seek historical knowledge; some an understanding of a text's structure; some a critique of a text according to an ideology. Ben Meyer agrees: "It may have escaped the attention of theorists, however, that . . . interpretation might significantly differ, even in kind, in accord with how the interpreter distributes his attention, conation and care."[4] Interpreters' choices reflect their interpretive interests.[5] Therefore, agreement on interpretive method requires

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[2] Apel, *Explanation and Understanding*, 184-231.

[3] Apel, 182.

[4] Meyer, "Tricky Business," 743-744.

[5] Of course, it could come about that interpreters with conflicting goals both happen to choose the same method. But such happy accidents do not reflect a genuine repair of the hermeneutical breach.

agreement on the goals of interpretation.[6] In other words, hermeneuts choose their methodology with reference to a particular interpretive goal.[7]

The second premise is that there is no such agreement in general hermeneutics. Given the scenario of any person reading any text in any situation, interpretive goals vary. Chapter 2 catalogued four clusters of methods and argued that the systems could not easily be reconciled because they pursued different goals: the intent of an author, the meaning of a text, the experience of a reader, and a critical evaluation of readers and texts. Readers read with different goals in mind. These goals may stem from cultural values, theoretical commitments, personal preference or a host of other factors.

Whence the hermeneutical shrug. For if methodology serves goals, then the fractured state of hermeneutics simply results from the fact that different readers have different goals. Stanley Fish admits, "I gave up the project of trying to identify the one true way of reading, but . . . I claimed the right, along with everyone else, to argue for a way of reading, which . . . would be, for a time at least, the true one."[8] Indeed, it is difficult to see how it could or should be otherwise: in the extraordinarily broad context of anyone reading any text in any situation, it seems well-nigh impossible to isolate a single universal goal. Fractured hermeneutics is unsurprising.[9]

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[6] This is not an argument for total hermeneutical relativism. Some interpretive goals may be superior to others. Evaluation of goals in hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this thesis. I am making a more modest claim: that methodological concord necessitates teleological concord.

[7] Hermeneuts of divergent schools affirm that the value of one's interpretive approach depends upon one's interpretive goals. Examples include *DD*, 202-203; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 558-620; Fish, *Is There a Text*, 12-17; Apel, "Scientistics," 324; Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 59-60; and Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 112.

[8] Fish, *Is There a Text*, 16.

[9] This is not an argument for the inevitability of methodological conflict. It is an argument for the expectation of conflict, and an admission that a diversity of goals in hermeneutics makes reconciling methodologies problematic. In addition, I make no claims about whether this conflict is good or bad, helpful or harmful. Such discussion falls well outside the scope of this thesis.

2 Responding to the Homiletical Fracture

The discussion will now move from general hermeneutics to an analysis of the sub-field of biblical interpretation for preaching. In this restricted case, the situation is altered considerably: within homiletics there is both the need to repair the fracture and also the possibility of doing so.

2.1 The Effect of the Restricted Scope of Homiletical Hermeneutics

Instead of analyzing the interpretive choices and practices of any reader in any situation, this thesis examines the case of preachers reading the Bible in preparation for preaching sermons from a biblical text. This restricted scope matters because it gives preachers a set of common goals for interpretation in contrast to that of general hermeneutics. The goal of biblical interpretation for preaching is to preach effective sermons! Later in this section I describe what "effective" preaching entails. Yet before doing so I maintain that concrete goals for reading alter the hermeneutical situation in two important ways: they demand a solution, and they give hope for one.

In the first place, concrete goals demand more than a simple shrug. A review of the homiletical literature for approaches to biblical interpretation reveals a host of incomplete and unclear approaches that do not enable assessment, as chapter 3 demonstrated. Those approaches do not suffice for preaching: preachers need more than a list of possible goals and methods. They need interpretive systems that are comprehensive, clear, and able to assess interpretation. The fracture in biblical interpretation for preaching is harmful to the preaching endeavor and should be rectified.

It will not do to discount the differences between approaches as cultural and therefore acceptable. The fragmentation in interpretive theory may spring in part from cultural differences in preachers and congregations. But the homiletics textbooks under examination in this thesis do not claim that biblical interpretation for preaching is a matter of preference based on culture. They make the more theologically robust claim that their form of interpretation is how homiletics should proceed. Craddock, for instance, asserts, "The whole idea of [traditional exegesis] is fundamentally erroneous and must be

rejected. . . . [This is] a call for a program of biblical study and biblical preaching that is more realistic and more responsible."[10] He then offers such a program, making no allowance for his own cultural perspective. Similar step-by-step outlines are given by Wilson and Long, again without qualifying those outlines as products of their own culture.[11] Their claims are transcultural.[12]

In addition to pointing up the need for a solution to fragmented interpretive theory, restricting the scope of inquiry to biblical interpretation for preaching gives hope for a solution. This thesis contends that concrete goals for effective preaching can lead to a remedy for the fracture, because if homileticians (or a subset of them) can agree substantially on what "effective preaching" means, then the goals involved in delivering an effective sermon can shape the reading practice of pastors in sermon preparation. This section offers an exposition and defense of that contention.

The discussion will proceed as follows. I will first argue—using another sub-field of hermeneutics—that interpretive goals determine which methodologies are acceptable within a discipline. I will then apply that argument to homiletics and advance four goals for preaching that can determine what methodologies are acceptable in biblical interpretation for preaching.

2.2 Literary Criticism: A Helpful Homiletical Parallel

In order to show how goals shape methodology in homiletics, a detour into another sub-field of interpretation is necessary. Literary criticism is another branch of the hermeneutical tree; it involves interpreting particular texts (literary ones) for particular purposes (critical examination and understanding). Wayne Booth is an accomplished literary critic: he was "one of the 20th century's most prominent and influential literary

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[10] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 100-1.

[11] See Long, *Witness,* 69-98; Wilson, *Practice of Preaching*, 6-18.

[12] See still other exegetical processes in Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 51-137; Sunukjian, *Biblical Preaching*, 19-84. One important exception is Mitchell's careful delineation of "The Black Approach to the Bible" (*Black Preaching*, 56-75).

critics," writing extensively and co-founding the journal *Critical Inquiry*.[13] Though perhaps best known for his work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, his *Critical Understanding* is an attempt to understand and reconcile rival methodologies in the hermeneutical sub-field of literary criticism. In that work, Booth develops an argument that I will apply in a modified fashion to the problem of fractured methodologies in homiletics.

Critical Understanding offers an analysis of pluralism in interpretation, examining models that grant "not only accuracy and validity but some degree of adequacy to at least two critical modes."[14] Of particular interest to Booth is what happens when differing models lead to competing methodologies and results. He poses "tough and interesting questions . . . about how the differing truth claims of various perspectives relate and about how they are to be assessed."[15] Because he finds value in multiple methodologies, Booth searches for ways to reconcile them with one another. However, he admits, "I cannot, try as I will, fully harmonize [different interpretive systems] into a single intellectual world."[16] The systems' respective methodologies offer incompatible ways of reading. The similarity to homiletics is patent.

Booth's response to the methodological fragmentation of literary criticism is illuminating. Rejecting both a theoretical monism and a radical skepticism, he chooses to hold together different methodologies based on the practical benefits each offers to the field.[17] In other words, if a methodology can meet the goals of literary criticism, Booth endorses it—even if it conflicts with other approaches. In his view, such a pluralistic response is "the most fruitful attitude for *opening up the world to continuing humanistic life*."[18] This is the crux: if the goal of literary criticism is to offer "humanistic life" to the

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[13] "Wayne Booth, Professor Emeritus of English, 1921-2005," The University of Chicago News Office, October 11, 2005 (online content; available at http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/05/051011.booth.shtml; accessed 9/24/19).

[14] *CU*, 33. The models he examines are those of Ronald Crane, Kenneth Burke and M. H. Abrams.

[15] *CU*, 33.

[16] *CU*, 203.

[17] See his discussion of pragmatism in *CU*, 210-19.

[18] *CU*, 217-18. Emphasis mine.

world, then Booth's system should accept any methodology that can do so. For Booth, "humanistic life" regulates successful criticism.

To clarify his concept of "humanistic life," Booth advances three values that achieve such life: justice (applying like standards to one's own and other approaches), vitality (bringing new insights to the discipline) and understanding (listening sympathetically to competing approaches).[19] Booth uses these three interpretive goals to evaluate critical methodologies. Any methodology that meets these goals is valid for literary criticism; all others have little significance.[20] And to demonstrate that these three goals serve literary criticism, Booth shows that modern literary critics should hold those values, and that they in fact do hold them.[21] In other words, these goals are both right and generally affirmed.

Booth develops a framework for literary criticism that can embrace and evaluate multiple methodologies. (However, in the end he retains these methodologies without reconciling them; they remain incommensurable approaches that have little to say to one another.) Booth's argument works because restricting the scope of hermeneutics to a limited sub-field (literary criticism) provides goals inherent to that sub-field (justice, vitality, and understanding). Those goals can, in turn, regulate what is or is not an acceptable methodology.

This thesis will apply Booth's basic approach—that the goals of a discipline can regulate its methods—to biblical interpretation for preaching. But it will also move beyond Booth in that it will attempt to reconcile rival methodologies within homiletics.

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[19] *CU*, 219-32. One could argue that these goals are both literary (vitality) and ethical (justice and understanding). In either case, the specific values emerge from the nature of literary criticism.

[20] Pragmatic pluralism similar to Booth's (which amounts to methodological eclecticism) appears in the work of general hermeneuts and biblical scholars: Meyer, "A Tricky Business," 743-61; Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 46-65; Howard, *Three Faces*. Each articulates their pluralism differently—though none so baldly as Booth. Meyer bases his on interpretive goals, Palmer on different aspects of the hermeneutic problem, and Howard on different conceptual frameworks.

[21] Booth (*CU*) shows how vitality (220-23), justice (223-28) and understanding (228-32) each contribute to the flourishing of literary criticism. He also notes that vitality is "shared by almost everyone" (220), that "all of us expect and indeed demand justice" (223), and that "we all believe in understanding" (229).

2.3 From Literary Criticism to Homiletics

This thesis applies Booth's arguments to a different hermeneutical sub-field—biblical interpretation for preaching—and reaches similar conclusions. However, I introduce two modifications of Booth's arguments in order to apply them to preaching. First, it may be noted that Booth's goals (justice, vitality, and understanding) appear somewhat arbitrary, or at least merely pragmatic. These three qualities are, for Booth, common sense, and they allow for the flourishing of the discipline. By contrast, I introduce goals for preaching that are biblically grounded and thus have a stronger claim to validity. Second, Booth concludes his argument by merely accepting rival systems of interpretation without being able to reconcile them. He happily accepts conflicting accounts of criticism. I believe that within homiletics, more is possible: rival methods for interpreting the Bible can be encompassed in the same theoretical framework and described using the same language.

Notwithstanding these differences, the argument is analogous to Booth's: in contrast to the group of all hermeneuts, contemporary mainline and evangelical North American homileticians share common goals. Furthermore, in the same way that humanistic goals for literary criticism provide Booth with a key to construct a critical framework, theological goals for preaching provide a way to construct a homiletical framework. This section describes four such goals. Finally, just as Booth's goals led him to embrace a principled pluralism, so these will lead to their own type of pluralism.

2.4 Looking to Theology for Homiletical Goals

In constructing an argument parallel to Booth's, it is necessary to find goals that are commonly held in contemporary North American mainline and evangelical homiletics, just as Booth did for literary criticism. The goals that most readily meet these requirements are theological in nature. This is so for two reasons.

First, when discussing preaching many homileticians grant a central place to theology. Jacobsen seeks to "allow systematic theology to frame homiletical reflection on . . . how to understand the move from text to sermon."[22] Likewise, mainline scholar Edward

[22] Jacobsen, "Homiletical Exegesis," 14.

Farley speaks for many when he writes, with reference to preaching, of the "theological task of interpreting the mysteries of faith."[23] And Allen writes, "Preaching is preeminently a theological act."[24] In the evangelical world, John Stott states with reference to preaching, "Theology is more important than methodology."[25] Bryan Chapell shows an "overarching theological concern" for sermon construction.[26] And Kuruvilla insists, "Every homiletical undertaking must delineate the theology of the pericope."[27]

James Kay, in fact, has written a book-length treatment arguing for the central place of theology in preaching.[28] Eschewing rhetorical and poetic theoretical frames, Kay argues that "a particular theological frame of reference . . . is necessary and primary . . . for a proper understanding of preaching as a Christian practice."[29] His case rests upon the assertion that during the sermon, God is the Speaker. When preachers preach, according to Kay, "God is speaking, and is, therefore, the true Preacher of his own Word. This is the key insight of a theological frame of reference."[30] This insight orients homiletics toward theology, because God's speech can adequately be described only theologically: "Homiletics is no longer a species of rhetoric but a subfield of dogmatics."[31] For Kay and others, preaching is a discipline strongly associated with theology.

Of course, there are some dissenting voices. David Buttrick relegates theology to the postscript of *Homiletic*, giving pride of place to rhetorical concerns.[32] Yet in another volume

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[23] Farley, "Toward a New Paradigm," 169.

[24] Ronald Allen, "Agendae in Homiletics," in *Papers of the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics* (Fuller Theological Seminary, December 5-7, 1991), 35.

[25] John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 92.

[26] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 262.

[27] *TTP*, 161.

[28] Kay, *Preaching and Theology*.

[29] Kay, 5.

[30] Kay, 47-48. Kay develops the notion of God as the Speaker with reference to Scripture (7-23) and Gospel (25-48).

[31] Kay, 35.

[32] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 449-59.

he asserts, "The renewal of the pulpit is, after all a theological task. . . . We are all called by God to speak, and therefore we must become theologians of the word."[33] By and large homileticians grant a central place to theology in preaching.

Secondly, theological goals bear more directly on biblical interpretation than do other goals, because interpreting the Bible is a theological task. The content of the Bible is theological, addressing as it does God's person and work. The act of reading the Bible is also theological, because God is involved in the composition of Scripture and in illuminating readers' understanding. And preachers are theologically informed readers who bring their beliefs to bear upon the text at hand. For all of these reasons, interpreting the Bible is a theological task; therefore, theological goals for homiletics are more properly suited to biblical interpretation for preaching than are other goals.

Homileticians do have non-theological goals. They propose goals for sermon form, as when Lowry calls preaching "a narrative art form."[34] They have goals for sermon delivery, as when Robinson teaches preachers "how to preach so people will listen."[35] And they advance goals for pastoral care as when Adams states, "The purpose of preaching, then, is to effect changes among the members of God's church that build them up individually."[36] However, while those goals may have a tangential impact on interpretation, they mainly pertain to how preachers craft arguments, speak publicly, or care for parishioners while speaking. They affect sermon delivery in the pulpit more than Bible reading in the study. By contrast, theological goals bear directly on the (theological) action of biblical interpretation.

This contention for theological goals parallels Booth's contention: just as literary critics aspire to offer humanistic life, and such life commends three humanistic goals for the practice of criticism, so homileticians aspire to offer theologically informed sermons,

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[33] Buttrick, *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 3.

[34] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 12.

[35] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 201.

[36] Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose: A Comprehensive Textbook on Biblical Preaching* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982) , 13.

and such an aspiration suggests theological goals for biblical interpretation for preaching. I propose four such goals.

2.5 Four Theological Goals for Homiletics

Here I advance four theological goals for homiletics. These goals are phrased as objectives for what should happen during sermon delivery. Yet as I argued above, those goals will bear directly on preachers' biblical interpretation. Hopes for the pulpit will shape reading in the study.

The procedure for outlining these goals will parallel Booth's: this section will demonstrate both that these goals are right and that they are commonly held by mainline and evangelical homileticians.[37] In other words, I will show that homileticians should and do adopt such goals. To accomplish the first, I will examine biblical passages that address preaching. To accomplish the second, I will cite homiletics works to that effect. I will thus argue that each goal is theologically appropriate and then demonstrate that it is commonly held in mainline and evangelical homiletics.

It is important to note that this list of goals is not exhaustive. I do not claim that these goals form the complete list; perhaps others could be advanced that are both theologically appropriate and commonly held. Rather, this list is minimal: it includes enough goals to give sufficient shape to the task of preaching so that biblical interpretation for homiletics will be clarified. Consequently, the development and defense of additional goals would restrict preaching hermeneutics, not broaden it. For instance, suppose a fifth goal were advanced. That goal could further constrain interpretive methodology. It may exclude as unsuccessful some forms of preaching defended here because, though those forms meet the present four goals, they do not meet the fifth. However, adding more goals would not broaden interpretive methodology. Adding more hurdles would not transform a failing method into a successful one.

[37] This is not to deny that there is substantial theological variety among mainline and evangelical homileticians; it is simply to say that their work reveals considerable common ground.

Thus, this thesis claims that these four goals are appropriate to homiletics, commonly held by homileticians, and sufficient to give definitive shape to biblical interpretation for preaching.

(2.5.1) To Preach the Word of God. This first goal follows from the idea that God can and does speak through the preacher during the sermon.[38] The "word of God" here is defined as what God himself speaks. Preaching entails a hope that, somehow, God will speak.

The idea that God speaks through preaching is thoroughly biblical. Prophets like Ezekiel, Amos and Micah equate their preaching with the word of the LORD.[39] In 1 Thess 2:13 Paul (referring to his preaching in Thessalonica) writes, "When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God." When Paul preaches, he believes that God is "making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). The book of Acts is replete with instances in which Christian preaching is simply referred to as the word of God (4:31; 6:2; 17:13; 18:11).[40] God speaks his word through the preacher. To preach is to speak, however mutably, the word of God.[41] Homileticians should adopt this goal.

In fact, they do: this notion is a commonplace in mainline homiletical writings.[42] Long states, "In the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ speaks God's word in the human and

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[38] This thesis focuses on God speaking through preaching. God may also act through preaching in besides speaking. The reason for the focus on God's speech stems from the focus on the words of Scripture, which were somehow spoken by God or will be spoken by God during the sermon. Other divine actions during preaching fall outside the scope of the present project.

[39] See Ezek 20:46; 21:2; Amos 7:16; Mic 2:6–7.

[40] In some contexts in Acts, the "word of God" is delivered not to the church but in a non-Christian public setting. The passages cited here take place among believers.

[41] This is one way to interpret the phrase, "speak the word of God." One could also use it to mean something about the *content* of one's speech. I address that issue in goal 4, and here discuss the idea that God is the Speaker in the sermon. The citations here come from homileticians who show a similar understanding of the phrase.

[42] Citations of homileticians in relation to the four theological goals is representative, not exhaustive. I contend that many homileticians adopt such goals, though there may be exceptions.

frail words of the sermon."[43] Kay devotes an entire chapter to the issue.[44] Buttrick likewise affirms, "Preaching is the 'Word of God.' "[45]

Evangelical writers, though they may have a different understanding of the word of God, also adopt this goal.[46] Keller, for instance, says that in preaching, "Listeners will be able to hear God speaking to them in the exposition. They are listening . . . to the very words of God."[47] Likewise, Robinson writes that preachers are "effective communicators of the Word of God."[48] And Arthurs states, "When ministers preach God's powerful Word as faithful stewards, their words have a derivative power that accomplishes God's will."[49] For both schools, homiletics carries a conviction that God speaks his word in the sermon.

(2.5.2) To Preach with Authority. Preaching involves something weightier than opinion. If God speaks through the words of the sermon, then *ipso facto*, preachers speak with an authority greater than themselves. In other words: God always speaks with authority; when preachers preach, God speaks; therefore, preachers preach with an authority beyond themselves.[50]

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[43] Long, *Witness,* 16. A similar statement can be found in Wilson's *Practice of Preaching*, 5.

[44] Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 7-23.

[45] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 456.

[46] While evangelical homileticians tend to identify the Bible and the word of God, some mainline scholars, following Barth, explicitly separate the two. Long warns, "We must make a careful distinction here between the words of Scripture and sermon, on the one hand, and the dynamic word of God, on the other" (*Witness*, 21). See also James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1970); and Mary Donovan Turner, "Disrupting a Ruptured World," in Childers, *Purposes of Preaching,* 136-37.

[47] Keller, *Preaching*, 4.

[48] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 14.

[49] Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness* (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 49.

[50] The argument from Scripture that follows focuses on God's authority in preaching; it would, however, also be possible to conceive of authority in preaching in alternative modes: perhaps a preacher's authority derives from the congregation, a denomination, or from professional expertise. Such alternative modes would require theological defense as valid forms of authority for preaching. If found to be valid, later conclusions of this thesis could be modified to accommodate such modes of authority. It should also be noted that the

I argued for the second premise above. The first premise states that God's speech is itself always authoritative. This is obvious in some passages of Scripture: at Mt. Sinai God's voice was so powerful that the hearers begged for an interlocutor (Exod 20:18–19). Jesus' emphatic "I am" brought soldiers to their knees (John 18:6). Psalm 29 compares God's voice to the raging of a thunderstorm. It is like fire or like a hammer (Jer 23:29) and gives authority to build up or to tear down (Jer 1:9-10, 2 Cor 13:10).

Yet the biblical writers go further. Even when God speaks in an indirect way or asks questions, his voice carries authority. His questioning of Job bears tremendous authority (Job 38–41), and leaves Job despising himself in dust and ashes (Job 42:1–6). Likewise, although parables function indirectly, in the mouth of Jesus they are nevertheless authoritative. Jesus said in Mark 4 that his parables operate so that listeners "may indeed see but not perceive/ and may indeed hear but not understand, / lest they turn and should be forgiven" (Mark 4:12). Parables execute authoritative judgment on hearers. Even the "still small voice" of God in Elijah's ear (1 Kgs 19:12) commanded the prophet to appoint new rulers over Syria and Israel (vv 15–18). Authority is not a function of the genre of speech, but a function of who is speaking. In Scripture God's voice comes with authority.

Because of this, the Scriptures affirm the authority of preaching. In 1 Tim 2:12 Paul uses the hendiadys "teach or have authority" to describe the preaching or teaching ministry of the elders at Ephesus.[51] In Tit 2:15 he urges his protegee, "Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority." And in Rev 11:3 God says he will "grant authority" to his

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homileticians cited below most often speak of the "authority of the text" rather than that of God or the church. I will show later in this chapter why phrases such as these must be clarified in order to be homiletically useful.

[51] The claim that these two infinitives form a hendiadys, or at least express closely related ideas, has been the subject of debate. For support of this claim, see Philip Barton Payne, 2008. "1 Timothy 2.12 and the Use of Ουδέ to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," *New Testament Studies* 54 (2008): 235–53. For a contrary view, see Andreas Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 53-84.

two witnesses (a symbol for the gospel-preaching church) to prophesy.[52] In each of these passages, preachers preach with authority.

Mainline homileticians affirm that authority matters.[53] Some, like Mitchell, locate authority in the biblical text: "Until you [cite the biblical text] you have no authority."[54] Similarly, Paul Scott Wilson states, "The text remains one's primary authority for preaching."[55] Yet McClure speaks of an "authority behind the text [that] is a disseminated authority . . . somewhere between the lines."[56] No matter where it is located, mainline authors speak often about authority.

Evangelical writers show the same concern, and normally derive authority directly from the Bible. Robinson says that when a preacher speaks from a biblical text, "The preacher speaks with an authority not his or her own."[57] Kuruvilla seeks to derive an interpretation from the Bible "with authority and relevance."[58]

David Allen, referring to mainline and evangelical homiletics, writes, "Every sermon preached presupposes . . . a concept of authority."[59] I concur: authority may be God's, or a

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[52] See G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 572-76.

[53] Homileticians will of course remember Craddock's classic *As One Without Authority*. However, this work is not a case against authority, but against the authoritative form of deductive preaching. He argues for a delivery style that takes listeners on a journey so that they come to conclusions about what God says on their own rather than being told directly (*As One Without Authority,* 43-62). Elsewhere, Craddock does not shy away from endorsing authority in preaching (Craddock, *Preaching*, 8, 24, 128).

[54] Henry Mitchell, "Celebration Renewed," in Allen, *The Renewed Homiletic*, 67.

[55] Wilson, *Practice*, 47. See also his discussion of the authority of the Bible in *Preaching and Homiletical Theory,* 53-54.

[56] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching*, 14.

[57] Haddon W. Robinson, *Making a Difference in Preaching*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 65.

[58] *TTP*, 3.

[59] Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads," 490.

scriptural author's, or the church's. But whatever the answer, preaching is always authoritative.[60]

(2.5.3) To Preach What Has Been Personally Understood. This goal is different than the previous one, because while it is difficult to imagine God speaking without authority, it is quite possible for him to speak through someone who has not been faithfully listening. God may choose to speak through preachers who have not truly applied his words to themselves. Indeed, the Bible relates just such instances (Num 22–24; John 11:49–52; Phil 1:15-20).

Nevertheless, to preach God's word successfully—as he intends for preaching to happen—requires preachers who apply the text to themselves. For only one who has appropriated the message has fully understood it. Gadamer, when discussing biblical interpretation, warns, "Only the person who allows himself to be addressed . . . understands."[61] That is, understanding the Bible requires that readers appropriate (be addressed by) a text's meaning, and respond to that address. In this goal, the word "understood" is used in Gadamer's robust sense (*Verstehen*).[62]

One need not search long for scriptural confirmation. There is clear biblical evidence that powerful preaching goes hand-in-hand with godly character (1 Thess 1:5; Rom 15:4). Such character is evidence of one who has personally appropriated the faith. Paul's advice to Timothy, interweaving as it does advice on preaching and exhortation to godliness, is especially moving (1 Tim 4:6–16).

More specifically, the New Testament associates teaching with believing and practicing what is taught. Jesus lauds those who both "practice and teach" even the least of

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[60] Some scholars may posit a heavy-handed conception of authority, and then reject that concept in favor of a conversational model that invites readers to draw their own conclusions. Such discussions rightly condemn authoritarian preaching (in the sense of coercive or abusive speech), but do not succeed in eliminating the importance of authority in preaching. See Smith, "Preaching: Hospitality, De-centering," 104-5.

[61] *TM*, 332.

[62] Perhaps a more adequate English term than "understood" might be "appropriated." However, the next chapter will talk about Wolterstorff's notion of "appropriated discourse" in a different, technical sense, and so to avoid confusion I use the term "understood."

his commandments (Matt 5:19). Paul requires a preacher to "hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine" (Tit 1:9). In fact, the apostle has harshest words for those who fail to listen to the Scriptures while applying them to others (Rom 2:17–24).

Homileticians from both camps agree. Preaching means giving a word that, as Robinson puts it, "the Holy Spirit applies to the personality and experiences of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."[63] Campbell writes, "the preacher is called to be a disciple, in whom the pattern of Jesus' storied identity is followed . . . in the practice of preaching."[64] Preachers must risk a personal engagement with the text if they ask their congregation to do the same. Craddock says that such engagements are not separate from interpretation but belong essentially to it: "One's appropriation is not a distortion of the event but a part of its structure."[65] Biblical interpretation in the service of preaching requires understanding.

(2.5.4) To Preach According to the Gospel. Preaching is good news. This is so because God speaks during preaching, and when God speaks to his people, he speaks to them according to his gospel.[66] In fact, although Goal 1 (to preach the word of God) defined the "word of God" as God's speech, in the Scriptures the phrase "word of God" is often a synonym for the message of the gospel (see, for instance, Acts 8:14). The word of God is good news.

It is important to note that preaching the gospel is not the same as preaching *according to* the gospel. Not every sermon's content is a summary of the good news of Christ; not every sermon is a paraphrase of John 3:16. Rather, God speaks (and therefore the preacher speaks) according to the gospel. This means that God speaks in alignment with the gracious principles of the new covenant relationship between God and the

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[63] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

[64] Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 212.

[65] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 58.

[66] I will here show that mainline and evangelical homileticians aspire to preach according to the gospel, and below will address the differences in the way that they define that term.

church.[67] God speaks to his people in the context of and according to the principles of his redemption in Christ. He even speaks to those outside the church with an invitation to come to him according to the terms of the gospel: by grace, through faith in Christ.[68]

Therefore, preaching, because it is God speaking, should happen according to the gospel. The message of the preacher must accord with new covenant principles. For this reason, preachers are referred to as ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6). Their job is to declare the message of God's gracious new covenant foretold in the prophets and implemented in Christ (Jer 31:31; Luke 22:20). If preaching happens as a new covenant ministry, then preaching happens according to the gospel of that new covenant.

This explains the association between the words "preach" and "gospel" in the New Testament. To highlight just one example: in Luke 8:1 Jesus "went on through cities and villages, *preaching* (κηρύσσων) and *gospeling* (εὐαγγελιζόμενος) the kingdom of God." In fact, twenty-six times the word "gospel" is the direct object of the verb "preach."[69] Preaching and the gospel go hand-in-hand.

Romans furnishes an excellent example of the close tie between "preaching" and "gospel." At the outset of his letter Paul states that he wants to "preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome" (Rom 1:15). It is unlikely that this means Paul wants to travel to Rome to evangelize the Roman church (who had already heard the gospel, Rom 15:15) or evangelize unbelievers in Rome. With respect to Rom 1:15 Moo notes that " 'preach the gospel' will refer to the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization."[70] In fact, beginning in the next verse, Paul covers topics as varied as

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[67] This phrasing is chosen to be as specific as possible, while allowing for diverging views of the term "gospel" that §3.5.1 noted. See below for discussion of different meanings of the term "gospel."

[68] In this sense, even warnings from God to his people, or to those who overtly reject him, are according to the gospel, because they undercut all human effort towards life and righteousness, and call people to faith and repentance.

[69] Luke 9:6; 20:1; Acts 8:25, 40; 14:7, 21; 16:10; Rom 1:15; 15:20; 16:25; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:16 (twice); 9:18; 15:1; 2 Cor 2:12; 8:18; 10:16; 11:7; Gal 1:8, 9, 11; 3:8; 4:13; 2 Tim 2:8; 1 Pet 4:6.

[70] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 63.

justification, original sin, baptism, sanctification, the indwelling of the Spirit, persecution, Israel's relation to the church, and offering oneself as a living sacrifice. All of this material, through the discourse conclusion in Rom 15:14–16, is "preaching the gospel."

Once again, this affirmation makes regular appearance in mainline and evangelical homiletics.[71] Edward Farley states, "What-is-preached, then, is the world of the gospel."[72] Buttrick, without using the term "gospel," makes the same point: "The purpose of preaching is the purpose of God in Christ, namely, the reconciliation of the world."[73] And Long labels preaching as "the announcing of the good news of Jesus Christ in human words."[74] Mainline homileticians define preaching in gospel terms.

Evangelical authors, though they may define the term somewhat differently, also understanding preaching as a gospel task. Keller encourages ministers to "preach the gospel every time."[75] Likewise, Steven Smith affirms, "We preach the gospel, and the Spirit goes into the human heart and ignites it."[76] And John Stott describes preaching as "the proclamation of a deed, . . . the announcement of Gods supernatural intervention, supremely in the death and resurrection of His Son, for the salvation of mankind."[77] Homileticians of both theological camps advocate preaching according to the gospel.

2.6 Addressing Differences in Meaning

Chapter 3 showed that phrases like "word of God" and "preach the gospel" have different meanings within evangelical and mainline homiletics. It seems that in view of such differences two preachers could interpret a passage in conflicting ways, each claiming that

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[71] I have already noted that the meaning and content of "the gospel" varies by theological tradition, and the relationship of the gospel to the Bible is patient of several views. I address those differences in the next section.

[72] Farley, "Toward a New Paradigm,"168.

[73] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 452.

[74] Long, *Witness*, 13.

[75] Keller, *Preaching*, 47-48.

[76] Steven W. Smith, *Dying to Preach* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 69.

[77] John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 34. The entirety of his chapter on the preacher as herald (33-59) expands on this point.

their own was "according to the gospel," and that the other's was not. How can the goals above still be useful in light of the differences in meaning?

First, it should be noted that though there are differences, they are not radical. Mainline and evangelical homiletics are theologically close enough for productive dialogue. The terms "word of God" and "gospel" in each camp may be different, but neither's will be unrecognizable to the other.

Second, even with some variation in meaning, these goals will serve the purposes of this thesis, because they provide the precision necessary for the assessment of different interpretive methods. In the case of the two preachers above, if both can agree that preaching according to the gospel is a goal for homiletics, and their interpretations conflict, then the source of conflict may be theological rather than hermeneutical: their different interpretations may not spring from faulty interpretation but instead from different understandings of the term "gospel." In that case, discussion can focus on theological differences, instead of becoming mired in fruitless debate about method.

In other words, it will be no surprise if mainline and evangelical homileticians disagree. The point of this thesis is not to reconcile them. It is instead to use the substantial areas in which preachers do agree to clarify where interpretations diverge and why, and to expose those differences for comparison and discussion.[78]

To summarize: the fracture within homiletics may be open to repair, because preaching has specific goals for reading the Bible—goals that can provide standards for interpretation. Theology is a ready source for such goals. From writings within contemporary mainline and evangelical North American homiletics, I have advanced four: to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach a message that has been personally understood, and to preach according to the gospel. The remainder of this chapter shows how these four goals can lead to a new hermeneutic adequate to homiletics.

[78] Chapter 7 will offer examples of such discussion.

However, I must first return briefly to the author/text/reader/critical hermeneutics schema outlined in chapters 2 and 3. I will argue in later chapters that elements from three out of the four hermeneutical methodologies (author, reader, and critical hermeneutics) can be combined to create a new hermeneutic for preaching that successfully meets all four theological goals. I will not, in later chapters, employ the fourth hermeneutical methodology, text-focused hermeneutics. The following section shows why not.

3 The Mirage of Text-Focused Homiletics

Text-focused homiletics is an inappropriate model for biblical interpretation for preaching.[79] This is because the notion of the "meaning of the text" is itself flawed. Careful examination of that phrase, and how text-focused hermeneutics employs it, demonstrate that such interpretation devolves into author- or reader-focused interpretation. Naming the text as the locus of meaning is misleading and is therefore inappropriate for preaching.

3.1 The Troublesome Phrase, "The Meaning of the Text"

I begin with an examination of the troublesome phrase, "the meaning of the text." Does this phrase refer to any potential meaning within a text, or just one? If just one, then how can readers determine that one meaning? Monroe Beardsley, a forceful advocate of text-centered interpretation, offers an answer. He writes, "The literary text, in the final analysis, is the determiner of its meaning. It has a will, or at least a way, of its own."[80] Texts have a meaning independent of their authors.

He then explains how a text conveys a determinate meaning. Beardsley argues that a text's "properties are decisive in checking interpretations and judgments."[81] In other words, proposed interpretations of a text fit the features of that text more or less

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[79] I do not claim that text-focused interpretation is inappropriate for general hermeneutics. That may or may not be the case; but it lies outside the scope of this thesis.

[80] Beardsley, "Authority," 36. Wolterstorff, though no supporter of text-focused hermeneutics, calls this article "one of the best statements" of this model (*DD,* 309 n.7).

[81] Beardsley, 24.

adequately, and therefore can be judged in light of those features.[82] Text-focused hermeneuts believe that the features of a text will welcome some interpretations and bar others, thereby yielding the "meaning of the text." Though initially plausible, his view breaks down on two fronts.

3.2 Two Difficulties with Textual Meaning

The first problem with the idea that a text has a meaning without reference to an author or readers is that it is, strictly speaking, false. As Booth states, "It is only when texts are torn free of intentions that they become uninterpretable."[83] Meaning requires intention.

As hermeneuts of different stripes acknowledge, texts do not technically mean; agents do. Walhout (an author-focused hermeneut) writes, "Words and sentences do not of themselves have intentions."[84] Schneiders (a text-focused hermeneut) admits, "Strictly speaking, texts do not 'mean' any more than musical scores 'sound.' . . . Meaning is not *in* texts but mediated *by* texts."[85] Some homileticians agree: Greenhaw declares, "The text itself contains no independent concept."[86] And Foskett says, "By themselves, words on a page are simply marks on paper or pixels on a screen. It takes a reader to bring them to life."[87] "The meaning of the text" is not a phrase to be taken literally; it is a figure of speech that stands for possible meanings generated or experienced by agents.

Consequently, although interpreters use the phrase "the meaning of the text," when practicing interpretation text-focused hermeneuts speak of agents. Eco is typical: "It is possible to speak of the text's intention only as the result of a conjecture on the part of the

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[82] Eco concurs: "How to prove a conjecture about the *intentio operis*? The only way is to check it upon the text as a coherent whole." *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 65.

[83] *CU*, 265. See also Knapp and Michaels, who argued that intentionless meaning is an absurd concept. Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 723-42.

[84] Walhout, "Texts and Actions," 46.

[85] Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, xxxi-xxxii.

[86] David M. Greenhaw, "As One *with* Authority: Rehabilitating Concepts for Preaching," in Eslinger, *Intersections,* 111.

[87] Foskett, *Interpreting the Bible*, loc. 227.

reader."[88] Readers, for Eco, provide conjectures, which are evaluated against textual features.

There is, then, technically no "meaning of the text." I will have more to say below on the curious habit of speaking as though there is. But immediately before us is a second and larger issue with the contention that a text's features restrict the possible choices of meaning, so that there is one meaning (or at most a handful of them).

Ricoeur's notion of textual meaning brings this problem into focus. According to Ricoeur, writing down a sentence creates a residue of meaning: the meaning is what remains after the event of the discourse ends.[89] When discourse is written down, the text endures after the event of writing; the written word drifts free from the author. The words may now have any meaning that is consistent, not with what the author intended but with what the words will support. Schneiders, who follows Ricoeur, clarifies: "The text now means whatever it can mean by virtue of the semantic range of its language and structures."[90] Texts thus have many potential meanings, and the set of those meaning is delimited by what the features of the text will allow.

Nicholas Wolterstorff points out the difficulty that textual features in fact provide very few limitations.[91] This is true, first of all, because many words such as "bank" and "run" have several meanings. Therefore, sentences have several potential meanings—and not only because of individual words, but also because sentences can function literally or metaphorically. The sentence "The machine ran beside the bank" could indicate several things. But if sentences are thus polyvalent, then in longer texts, the number of potential meanings increases exponentially. If sentence A has four potential meanings and sentence B has six, then the text AB has 6x4=24 potential meanings.

Theorists like Beardsley say that adding sentences actually reduces the number of possible meanings, because some sentence meanings will be ruled out as inconsistent with

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[88] Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 64.

[89] *HHS*, 135-136. See §2.7.3 for details.

[90] Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 143.

[91] For his discussion, upon which I am dependent here, see *DD,* 148-52, 171-82.

meanings of other sentences.[92] If, for one possible meaning of AB, the meaning of A conflicts with the meaning of B, then that potential reading must be discarded as inconsistent. So, when John Locke writes, "Reason is the candle of the Lord," the surrounding sentences make it clear that the text is metaphorical here. Reason is not a literal candle.[93]

But Wolterstorff asks why the text cannot be interpreted either as an inconsistent text (so that sentence meanings A and B conflict), or as a consistent text in which Locke's sentence about reason is literal, but the surrounding sentences are then read metaphorically to support such a reading. Thus, reason is a literal candle, and all of Locke's other sentences are interpreted as ironic or metaphorical to support that notion. This would be an absurd, but consistent, reading.

The reason interpreters reject both possibilities, says Wolterstorff, is that "Locke would have had to be mad to say that seriously, whereas we all know he wasn't mad."[94] In other words, the intentional action of an agent is surreptitiously brought to bear to rule out interpretations which the text could otherwise sustain. Without recourse to that agent, the notion of textual meaning lacks limits.[95]

Wolterstorff offers a clearer discussion of meaning than the text-focused hermeneuts. He does so by showing that while texts can yield a large number of meanings, when agents (authors, readers, or perhaps others) use a text, they select one meaning from that large number. To begin with, the many meanings of a sentence (and there will be more

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[92] Beardsley, "Authority," 29.

[93] Wolterstorff uses this example in *DD*, 172-73.

[94] *DD*, 173.

[95] To "lack limits" on interpretation can indicate at least three things: It can indicate a) that there are an indefinite number of plausible interpretations, b) that there are no wrong interpretations so that any one will do, and c) that there is not always a way to decide if one interpretation is better or more plausible than another. The contention here is that textual sense interpretation yields situations a) and c): an indefinitely large number of interpretations, some of which are impossible to assess comparatively. There will still be some interpretations that that the text will not sustain.

than one, because of the polysemy of words), Wolterstorff calls the "meaning(s) *per se*."[96] So the sentence combination AB above has 24 meanings *per se*. Yet sentences are also things used by agents to communicate something.[97] Therefore, they also have a "meaning in context:" the one meaning among the meanings *per se* that an agent selects by using the sentence.[98]

For instance, suppose I utter the sentence, "I persuaded the board." That sentence, considered independently of my use of it, has at least three meanings *per se*. It may mean that I spoke to a group of people, or that I spoke to a piece of wood. It may also mean, metaphorically, that I skillfully shaped a piece of wood. Yet when I utter the sentence, I normally intend just one of those meanings. Only by reference to me as an agent (and the context in which I utter it) can someone discern the meaning in context. The important distinction is that the many meaning(s) *per se* are functions of a text, while the single meaning in context is a function of an agent's use of a text.[99] As Wolterstorff says, "A *text's* having a meaning is not to be identified with a *person's* meaning something with that text."[100] Picking out those meanings in context requires an agent.

In light of this distinction, it becomes clear that "the meaning of a text," as used by Beardsley, Ricoeur and Eco, refers to a nearly unlimited number of combinations of the meaning(s) *per se* plus metaphorical meanings of a text's sentences. To gain greater specificity, one must invoke an agent, such as an author or a reader.

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[96] For discussion, see *DD*, 189-94.

[97] I use the term "agent" rather than "author," because different agents can use texts in different ways. See §5.3.1 for details.

[98] That meaning in context may be one of the meanings *per se*, or it may be some other meaning attained by an agent's using the sentence metaphorically.

[99] See *DD*, 140, 150-52, 189-94.

[100] Wolterstorff, "Evidence, Entitled Belief, and the Gospels," *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989): 436. Emphasis original.

3.3 Text-Focused Hermeneutics Devolves into Author-Focused or Reader-Focused Hermeneutics

If text-focused hermeneuts, in order to select one potential meaning as the meaning of the text, must appeal to an agent, there are two main candidates: author and reader.[101] Either the text is the instrument of an author's action of composition, or else it is an instrument of a reader's action of reading. Wolterstorff says that often it is the author: "Though we may profess to be engaged in textual-sense interpretation, we all of us, surreptitiously or openly, engage in authorial-discourse interpretation."[102] That is, the meaning of the text is actually what the author intended by inscribing it. Of course, the meaning of the text could also be the product that readers select based on their own values. In either case, the meaning of the text is really the meaning selected by some agent acting on the text.

Wayne Booth, himself an advocate of textual meaning, agrees. He admits that when he uses the term "the meaning of the text," he actually intends either "the implied authors, or . . . the part of me that re-creates them"—the reader.[103] All this is to say that when practicing text-focused hermeneutics, careful examination reveals that the selection of a meaning "in the text" actually proceeds by author-focused or reader-focused hermeneutics. At close quarters, the mirage of text-focused hermeneutics dissipates.

3.4 The Tactic of Personifying the Text

If it is clear that the text, strictly speaking, has no meaning, and if appeals to textual sense devolve into appeals to authors or readers, then why continue to speak of the meaning of the text? More specifically, why continue to speak (as Beardsley does) as if the text has "a

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[101] "Author" and "reader" here could also refer to a corporate entity such as a church.

[102] *DD,* 173. Of course, it is also possible for readers to select a meaning. Though Wolterstorff in this passage overlooks that possibility, elsewhere he acknowledges it (a practice he calls "performance interpretation"): "Textual-sense interpretation cannot but give way to performance interpretation; there is no way to stop the slide." Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," 21.

[103] *CU*, 240-41.

will, or at least a way, of its own"?[104] Answering that question will provide direction for how homiletics should approach text-focused hermeneutics.

One may note first of all a curious fact in text-focused hermeneutics and homiletics: the personification of the text.[105] According to text-focused scholars, texts have desires and intentions, they resist and invite, they permit and forbid. Eco, for example, writes that interpreters seek the *intentio operis* (intention of the work).[106] Buttrick speaks of the "intending of a text."[107] Long states, "A text's claim involves . . . what the text wishes to say and what the text wishes to do through its saying."[108] Other homileticians say that a text "undermines,"[109] or that it may "assert its authority";[110] the text has a "mind,"[111] and can "put [questions] to me";[112] a reader's task is to "hear what the text says to you."[113] Personification appears so frequently that one is tempted to dismiss it as habit of speech. However, something deeper appears to be at work.

The personification of the text functions as more than a linguistic convention. It enables hermeneuts to replace agents with texts. No longer must one invoke an author or appeal to a reader: the text itself intends a meaning. Interpreters can select one of the many meaning(s) *per se* of a text, but then impute their choice to the text.

The consequence, as Wolterstorff notes, is that "One's freedom is at once expanded if one no longer aims to adopt an interpretation which coincides with the author-meaning of these texts."[114] Interpreters can select any possible meaning that a text will bear. But

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[104] Beardsley, "Authority," 36.

[105] While this feature is not exclusive to text-focused approaches, it appears frequently in text-focused authors.

[106] Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 9.

[107] Buttrick, *Homiletics*, 274.

[108] Long, *Witness*, 107.

[109] McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching*, 21.

[110] Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 89.

[111] Jacobsen, "Homiletical Exegesis," 24.

[112] Allen, "Why Preach from Passages in the Bible?" 181-82.

[113] H. Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 55.

[114] Wolterstorff, "Evidence," 440.

rather than defending that selection as a choice on one's part, one can instead impute that choice to a personified text. Such a move shields interpreters, both from questions about authors' intentions and also from responses such as, "That is simply your opinion." They defer to the imagined will of the text.

Additionally, textual personification avoids the ethical implications of a human agent's intention. Wolterstorff explains those implications:

> If it is a person one is engaging, then it will be appropriate to consider whether one is engaging the person justly or unjustly, rightly or wrongly, with charity or not, in an honoring or dishonoring way. But if all one is doing is acting upon an artifact, then moral considerations will enter the picture only when one considers the consequences, for oneself or others, of what one did to the artifact.[115]

Texts, as non-agents, have no rights and no responsibilities. There is no ethical obligation to allow texts a fair hearing; there is no requirement to reckon with the authority or expertise of another human. Interpreters can affirm some meanings, ignore others, and disparage still others without the ethical complications of doing so to another human. This is the mirage of text-focused hermeneutics: to have nearly unlimited hermeneutical and ethical freedom to choose a meaning, without the responsibility of defending one's interpretive choice.[116]

3.5 A Text-Focused Mirage: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic

It may be helpful to see these dynamics at work in a hermeneut portraying author- or reader-focused interpretation as text-focused interpretation. Here I explore how Paul Ricoeur employs dialectical reasoning to remove the need for an agent to specify the meaning of the text.[117]

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[115] Wolterstorff, "Resurrecting the Author," 4.

[116] A central argument of Vanhoozer's *Is There a Meaning* is that interpretation, on a Christian theological understanding, carries an ethical requirement to respect authors and readers (see 367-81).

[117] In this section I use Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory* rather than his *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.* Although the latter work is more philosophically robust, as a collection of essays it lacks the unity and

Ricoeur states that when authors commit their words to writing, "The author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. . . . Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text."[118] In other words, there are two meanings attached to a text—the author's original meaning and a textual meaning that emerges with writing.

For Ricoeur, authorial meaning and textual meaning exist in dialectical tension; each needs the other to function. He declares, "The authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart of the verbal meaning, and they have to be construed in terms of the other."[119] Yet on the same page he also writes, "What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it."[120] Textual intention supersedes authorial intention. By the time we reach Ricoeur's final dialectic of distanciation and appropriation, a textually driven understanding is the only side remaining of the two-sided author/text dialectic.[121] For Ricoeur, in the final analysis, the personified text alone determines meaning.

This is what appears to be happening: Ricoeur knows that meaning requires personal agency, so he cannot jettison the author altogether. He argues that textual and authorial meanings exist in dialectical tension, but later in his argument he grants victory to the text, allowing the author to fade into silence. An author can be summoned up when required but may then be dismissed. Once the author is gone, understanding "takes place in a semantic [textual] space. . . . It may be construed in various ways."[122] This is how Ricoeur personifies the text: as an intending agent that gradually replaces the author.

Ricoeur's argument labels the tension between authorial and textual intention as "dialectical." In a true dialectical relationship, two terms or ideas continue to exert influence on one another, to correct and contradict one another, and out of that tension

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progress of his lecture series that became *Interpretation Theory*. In that work it is easier to see how his concepts progress from author-inclusion to author-eclipse.

[118] *IT*, 31.

[119] *IT*, 30.

[120] *IT*, 30.

[121] *IT*, 92-95.

[122] *IT*, 76.

new or greater understanding emerges.[123] But in Ricoeur's hands, the relation between authorial and textual intent appears to be domination rather than dialectic.

Thus, Ricoeur first uses authorial intent to legitimize the text as a meaningful object, then discards the author. The mirage of text-focused hermeneutics allows him to attribute agency to the text.

3.6 Text-Focused Homiletics: Conclusion

I have argued in this section that text-focused hermeneutics, by personifying the text and masking the intent of another agent, devolves into author-focused or reader-focused hermeneutics. Such agential legerdemain requires that homiletics shun text-focused approaches, for reasons of ethics and reasons of authority.[124] First, homileticians must pay attention to the ethics of attribution. Vanhoozer states, "Textual interpretation is fundamentally about imputation: the ascription of meanings and intentions to a communicative agent."[125] Imputation is an ethical concern, and as such, impinges on preaching. To knowingly, improperly attribute meaning—to disguise agency—is deceptive. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians with respect to his own preaching, "We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Additionally, I have argued that preaching involves issues of authority. Authority is closely tied to the Bible. Preachers know that many in a congregation consider the Bible to be God's word. To label something the "meaning of the (sacred) text"—which listeners may

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[123] Chapter 2, n. 112 defined dialectic in Ricoeur's work as "an approach through which [Ricoeur] seeks to find the middle term that can mediate between two polar terms and allow us to move back and forth between them. Locating such a mediating term leads to enhanced understanding."

[124] This may not be reason enough to discard text-focused interpretation within general hermeneutics. Perhaps there are reading situations in which readers value a certain sleight-of-hand; perhaps readers have reasons for pretending that their own values and choices exist independently within the text. I can think of none myself but am unwilling to defend the statement that there is no reading situation whatsoever that will benefit from text-focused interpretation.

[125] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 236.

equate with God's intention—but to proclaim instead a reader-generated meaning risks an inappropriate claim of divine authority for a preacher's personal reading experience.[126]

Therefore, I offer two conclusions: First, text-focused interpretation is an inappropriate mode of biblical interpretation for preaching. This, of course, does not imply that textual features are irrelevant; it simply means that they matter as instruments of an agent (author or reader) to convey meaning, and that it is incumbent upon a preacher candidly to identify that agent. Interpreters should address textual features using explicit rather than metaphorical language.

Secondly, a phrase such as "preach the text" is a cipher for other values: to preach the intent of the human author; to preach the intent of God as he inspired this text; to preach the intent of the church who canonized this book; to preach the intent of the preacher-as-reader; to preach the meaning understood by an "ideal reader";[127] to preach the intent of some particular person who might, by writing such-and-such, mean so-and-so. Preachers must determine which, if any, of these they are doing when they "preach the text." One objective of this thesis is to develop a hermeneutic for preaching that allows preachers to do so.

4 A Theological Framework for a Preaching Hermeneutic

The four theological goals above can help to build a hermeneutic adequate to homiletics. Therefore, I will use these goals to structure a new hermeneutic, rather than the author/text/reader/critical hermeneutics schema. That schema was helpful in understanding why hermeneutics is fractured, and why homiletics echoes the fracture; it explained the parties involved in interpretation; and by isolating the text as one party in interpretation, it allowed a critical analysis of text-focused hermeneutics.

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[126] This practice would be acceptable, of course, if preachers made their stance explicit. They could deny that the Scripture is God's word and assert that they proclaim merely their own reactions and responses to the text. In my experience, few preachers do so.

[127] On the ideal reader, see Iser, *Act of Reading*, 27-30.

However, the author/text/reader/critical hermeneutics schema does not aid in the pursuit of hermeneutic adequate to the demands of homiletics. This is because, first of all, it is organized around competing entities operating under incommensurate theories.[128] The approaches have labels that compete with one another: meaning comes from an author *or* from a reader, and so forth. Such a schema gives no insight as to how these different methodologies can operate in harmony.

By contrast, the four theological goals discussed above are not phrased in direct competition with one another. There is no reason, for example, why preachers cannot understand a text personally and also speak with authority; or why they may not speak the word of God and do so according to the gospel.

Second, the four entities of the schema are methodologies rather than goals; they describe action rather than assign value. In reader-focused interpretation, for example, it is one thing to describe how readers generate meaning when they read; it is another to say that they, in a particular situation, should do so. The latter statement must be supported by values: why should readers generate meaning? A framework for preaching must be able to answer those questions. Theological goals can give answers: they are value-laden concepts that can provide criteria not just for what may happen in interpretation, but what should happen. Therefore, in the coming chapters I will utilize this framework to build a hermeneutic for preaching. This framework, however, will result in a plurality of interpretive options.

5 A Pluralistic Framework for a Preaching Hermeneutic

Booth uses humanistic goals—justice, vitality, and understanding—to norm methodologies for literary criticism. Yet the discussion of Booth above yielded an important (if surprising) result. His goals permit evaluation of interpretive approaches, but do not reduce the list acceptable approaches to one. Booth's system leads neither to monism nor to relativism,

[128] See §2.11.

but to a principled pluralism.[129] Any interpretive approach that meets these three goals is, for Booth, adequate for literary criticism. Any methodology that meets his three goals will do.

In the same way, *mutatis mutandis*, the theological goals particular to homiletics permit a similar pluralism. Any hermeneutical approach to homiletics that meets the four theological goals will be judged adequate to the practice of biblical interpretation for preaching.

And there may be many such methods. Preachers do not have to interpret the Bible in one way only—they simply have to do so in ways that meet the goals of preaching. I therefore commend a methodological pluralism for biblical interpretation for preaching. Such pluralism will be able to endorse many (though not all) of the things that preachers actually do with the biblical text.[130]

6 Conclusion

This chapter has evaluated the fractured state of contemporary hermeneutics and contemporary North American evangelical and mainline homiletics. In the case of hermeneutics, it has asserted that such a fracture simply reflects the diversity of interpretive goals that readers bring to a text.

However, in homiletics more is needed—and more is possible. The theological goals specific to homiletics provide a framework around which to design a hermeneutic specific

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[129] One should not confuse such pluralism with a radical relativism that grants validity to any approach. It is, rather, a principled pluralism that permits multiple systems and methodologies, provided that each can sufficiently justify its own practice relative to critical goals.

[130] The interpretive approaches of New Testament authors when reading the Old Testament show a similar methodological pluralism in pursuit of the theological goal of presenting Christ. Interpreters then as well as now do different and apparently effective things with the Bible. For helpful introductions to this issue, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1999)*;* G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

to biblical interpretation for preaching. Therefore, this thesis will replace the author/text/reader/critical hermeneutics schema with this theological one. It includes authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics, but organizes interpretation around theological goals rather than methodologies. By contrast, the chapter found that text-focused homiletics, because of the ethical requirements of preaching, comprises an inappropriate methodology for homiletics.

The chapter also argued that, in the same way that literary goals allow for plural methodologies in Booth's theory of criticism, theological goals will allow for multiple approaches to biblical interpretation for preaching. Homiletics should be methodologically pluralistic.

In short, we now know the quarry we hunt: a new approach to biblical interpretation for preaching that embraces the plurality of things preachers do with texts; that explains how authors, readers and critical hermeneutics interact; and that uses four theological goals to determine whether an interpretation is valid. In other words, it must be comprehensive, clear, and able to assess interpretations. If such a hermeneutic can be developed it will provide preachers with an array of valid options for biblical interpretation.

In the second part of this thesis we will be on the hunt, with Nicholas Wolterstorff as our guide. Chapter 5 introduces and modifies two concepts developed by Wolterstorff. Chapter 6 uses those concepts to build a new hermeneutic adequate to homiletics, and chapter 7 engages and evaluates that hermeneutic.

Part II:
A Solution to the Homiletical Fracture

The second half of this thesis proposes a new hermeneutic for homiletics that comprises a solution to the problem of fragmentation described in Part I. Chapter 5 introduces the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff, describing two of his notions (world projection and appropriated discourse) and adapting them for use in biblical interpretation for preaching. Chapter 6 uses those two notions to build a new hermeneutic for homiletics: Projection Interpretation. Projection Interpretation is a hermeneutic that organizes interpretive methodologies around the world-projecting actions of agents on the biblical text.

Chapters 6 and 7 together will show that Projection Interpretation has three strengths: it is comprehensive, in that it is able to describe the many things that preachers do with the biblical text under the umbrella term "interpretation"; it is clear, in that it shows how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact in interpretation; and it is able to assess biblical interpretations for their value and accuracy. It is thus a successful solution to the problem of fractured hermeneutics for homiletics.

Chapter 5:
Two Wolterstorffian Notions

The ultimate Agent of the Word of God rightly preached is the divine Speaker. . . . [This] raises the issue of "double agency," or how God's act and the human act in preaching are related. In my judgment, this is a question of which many a sermon and much homiletical theory falter.

—James Kay[1]

I have described the fractured status of contemporary hermeneutics (chapter 2) and the similar state of North American homiletics (chapter 3). Both fields employ models for biblical interpretation that focus on the author, the text, the reader, or on critical hermeneutical practice. My analysis (chapter 4) found that, although such a state is unsurprising for general hermeneutics, theological goals in mainline and evangelical homiletics give direction for moving beyond fractured approaches to biblical interpretation for preaching. I introduced and defended four such theological goals for preaching: to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach a message that has been personally understood, and to preach according to the gospel. A hermeneutic adequate to homiletics will clarify which methods of interpretation meet these goals. In addition, I argued that the four goals under discussion do not necessitate a single interpretive approach: any methodology that meets these goals will do. The result will be a plurality of acceptable methods for homiletical interpretation.

Here I begin to develop a hermeneutic for preaching that is adequate to the four theological goals for homiletics outlined in the previous chapter, and that is methodologically pluralistic. It will therefore be a clear approach (able to explain how

[1] James Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 23.

authors, texts, readers and critical hermeneutics interact), comprehensive enough to embrace the many things preachers do with texts, which is able to assess the homiletical value of different approaches to interpretation.

To construct such a hermeneutic, I here introduce the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff. Specifically, I review two of his notions that will lead to a successful preaching hermeneutic: "world projection" and "appropriated discourse." At the end of the chapter I modify and expand these notions in order to render them suitable for homiletics. Subsequent chapters will utilize these notions to construct a new hermeneutic for homiletics.

1 Nicholas Wolterstorff and Homiletics

Nicholas Wolterstorff is an American philosopher whose writings span the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His teaching career has been spent mostly at Calvin College and Yale University, and he has written or edited 18 books and numerous articles. His interests include analytic philosophy, ontology, hermeneutics, social justice, and higher education.

Wolterstorff's work is particularly suited to the purposes of this thesis. Other hermeneuts, of course, could have been chosen. In chapter 2 I surveyed the approaches of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Apel.[2] However, these theorists offer models that are not attuned to

[2] Homileticians have employed both Gadamer and Ricoeur. See, for example, the use of Gadamer in David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Homiletical Exegesis," 18; and of Ricoeur in *TTP*.

the theological aspects of hermeneutics, and their systems are not amenable to plural modes of interpretation.[3] Therefore, their work will not serve the goals of this thesis.[4]

Compared to these theorists, Nicholas Wolterstorff provides a more apt approach to homiletical hermeneutics, both because of the theological qualities of his work and because his work encompasses a plurality of interpretive options. First, his hermeneutic is quite open to theological use.[5] Wolterstorff shows an interest in biblical interpretation and preaching. He states, for example, "We should recapture the . . . conviction . . . that God speaks in one's own day through the preacher's interpretation and proclamation of Scripture."[6] Though he has not written extensively on homiletics, he does his work with his eye on the church and its use of Scripture, including preaching. Wolterstorff cares about biblical interpretation in the church.

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[3] Though Gadamer speaks of theology, his hermeneutical model is not theologically oriented. See *TM*, 330-31. Ricoeur often addresses theological topics (see, for example, "The Canon Between the Text and the Community," in Pokorný and Roskovec, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, 7-26). However, his system of world projection is monolithic and therefore unable to embrace a plurality of hermeneutical methods. Apel's work is pluralistic, but his focus is social sciences rather than theology.

[4] There are still other options. Ben Meyer, for instance, proposes a critical-realist account of hermeneutics that draws from the work of Bernard Lonergan (Meyer, *Critical Realism*). Anthony Thiselton (*New Horizons,* 558-604) embraces an array of hermeneutical approaches, which he organizes according to a text's genre. Charles Wood offers a hermeneutic that considers the aims of interpretation for Christians, the proper conditions for developing interpretive skills, and the relation of interpretation to the norm of the canon (Charles M. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding: Theological Hermeneutics* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1993), 29). However, none of them offers the philosophical depth and potential for pluralistic integration that Wolterstorff does.

[5] Two of Wolterstorff's major works, *DD* and *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) are overtly theological.

[6] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Importance of Hermeneutics for a Christian Worldview," in *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective*, ed. Roger Lundin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 33. See also his comments on preaching in "Canon and Criterion," *The Reformed Journal* 19 (1969): 13.

Consequently, Wolterstorff covers philosophical territory relevant to theology and preaching. He is a philosopher in the analytic tradition,[7] and has authored works on ontology, aesthetics, epistemology, and biblical hermeneutics.[8] The theological leaning of his work will have direct application to homiletics, which (as chapter 4 argued) is theologically oriented.

Secondly, Wolterstorff's interests in multiple hermeneutical methodologies render his work conducive to pluralism. As an analytic philosopher he appeals to author-focused hermeneuts.[9] As an aesthetic theorist he is concerned with how meaning is derived from literary texts.[10] As a philosopher with an interest in epistemology, he explores the roles of beliefs in knowledge formation, touching on reader-focused and critical hermeneutics.[11] Because this thesis contends that a pluralistic approach to homiletics is necessary, his interdisciplinary style will suit the present purposes nicely.

For these reasons, I will use Wolterstorff's work to construct a hermeneutic adequate to preaching. The following sections introduce two concepts from Wolterstorff's work—world projection and the Bible as appropriated discourse—that will structure such a hermeneutic. As the discussion proceeds it will become clear how crucial are those concepts to the task at hand.

2 World Projection

Wolterstorff's first hermeneutical contribution, "world projection," connects authors, texts, readers, and ethics in a system that describes how an agent uses a text to perform

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[7] Wolterstorff, "True Words," in *But Is It All True? The Bible and the Question of Truth,* ed. Alan G. Padgett and Patrick R. Keifert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 37.

[8] See, for ontology, *OU*; for aesthetics, his *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), and *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); for epistemology, his *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*; and for biblical interpretation, *DD.*

[9] Both Anthony Thiselton and Grant Osborne (author-focused hermeneuts) discuss his work favorably. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 570-575; Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 488, 515.

[10] See *WWA*.

[11] See Wolterstorff's *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*.

hermeneutically significant actions. World projection will play a central role in showing how reading the Bible for preaching can indeed meet the four theological goals outlined in chapter 4.

World projection describes how agents use works of art (like texts) as instruments of action.[12] When agents write or read a text, they can thereby project a world. In this section I outline the concepts that undergird world projection, explain how world projection works, and argue that, in contrast to Ricoeur's work, Wolterstorff's model is nicely suited to homiletics.

Wolterstorff offers several concepts that ground the idea of world projection. To simplify an otherwise cumbersome discussion, I note that in this subsection, unless otherwise stated the theories I present are Wolterstorff's. After I explain them here, I will critique them below, and in chapter 6 deploy modified versions for the construction of a new preaching hermeneutic. Also, for the sake of clarity, I will locate technical details in the footnotes. While such details may appear to burden the discussion, I believe they should be included. In chapter 3 I was at pains to show that homileticians sometimes adopt hermeneutical systems without awareness of the details of those systems. Therefore, I will engage in a close study of Wolterstorff's work and use footnotes to elaborate.

To begin with, world projection is a theory that explains what texts are, and also what authors or other agents do with texts. I first discuss what texts are—their ontology—and then address what agents do with them. Reading to preach, as an action of agents (preachers) using a text (the Bible), requires a rigorous understanding of both.

2.1 Texts as Kinds

A text, as a work of art, has an unusual ontology, or mode of existence.[13] A musical composition provides a helpful illustration: a song exists as a performance, and also as

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[12] Wolterstorff proposes a fully general model for world projection in *WWA* (238); he modifies some of his constructions in "Why Animals Don't Speak," *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (1987): 463-85.

[13] Wolterstorff's conception of "art" is quite broad. He includes not only most forms of fine art (literature, painting, sculpture, drama, architecture) but also other textual works like history and philosophy. *WWA*, xv. See also his discussion of borderline cases of fit for categories in "Response to Helm," 300.

notes on paper. It exists in one sense only when it is played, but in another sense its existence endures on paper (or in people's minds) between performances. Likewise, a text exists as a physical object, but also exists in the event of its reading.

Wolterstorff captures this dynamic in his concepts of "kinds." Ontologically, works of art are kinds of things. Kinds are entities that have examples.[14] Kinds occur not only in art but in nature: "lion" is a kind of animal whose examples are actual lions. The entity "lion" is more than any one example of a lion; the kind exists independently of its examples. Likewise, works of art are kinds, whose examples are performances of those works. A text is a kind of work, whose examples are readings of those texts.[15] As such, the text includes the events of its readings but is not limited to them.[16]

The implication of texts as kinds is significant: kinds admit various examples without changing their essential nature. Consequently, texts (like the Bible) have differing readings that nonetheless do not alter the nature of the text. This theory allows for variegated readings of a single enduring text. This aspect of Wolterstorff's theory separates the text as a stable object from the many interpretations derived from it.

2.2 Count Generation and Speech-Act Theory

In addition to being kinds, texts are also instruments and objects of actions. Agents act on or by means of texts. The term "count generation" describes how an agent (such as an author or a reader) can perform an action using a text.

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[14] *OU*, 158-69, 235-62. The term "kind" is a technical one that he differentiates from the concept of a set. The former is defined by its characteristics and the latter by its members.

[15] Wolterstorff supplements this heuristic example with a detailed account of kinds, and explains how, ontologically, both lion-as-kind and text-as-kind satisfy the definition of "kind." For details, see *OU*, 235-62.

[16] More specifically, art works (including texts) are "norm kinds:" kinds whose examples are capable of malformation. There can be lions with three legs or no tails that are nevertheless lions. There can be poor or incorrect readings of texts or performances of plays that are, nevertheless, readings and performances of those works. *WWA,* 56-57.

Agents can perform an enormous number of acts on texts. As Wolterstorff says, "By doing one thing a person may also be doing many other things."[17] Authors, for instance, write texts, but by writing those texts they may also communicate ideas, anger readers, make money, condemn enemies, praise friends, use paper, or waste time. To complicate matters further, authors are not the only agents who act on texts. Editors, readers, listeners—each one acts on texts in different ways.

Chapter 4 argued that hermeneutics for homiletics requires an analysis of the actions of agents (authors, editors, readers) upon texts. Preachers should know just who is doing what with the Bible, and to what effect.[18] Wolterstorff provides a tool for such analysis in his concept of "count generation."[19] One action sometimes "counts as" an additional, separate action. For instance, someone can flip a switch in their car to activate a blinker.[20] That action counts, in certain circumstances, as signaling a left turn.[21] In other circumstances (for instance, while parked in a closed garage) the same action would not count as a public signal to turn. Similarly, writing a text can count as other actions like telling a story, proclaiming the gospel, or delivering an insult.[22]

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[17] *OU*, 64. He expands upon this in *WWA*, 21: "In general, by creating some work of art an artist generates an enormous multiplicity of actions. Some of these he may have wanted to generate, others not. . . . To a great extent what he does is unintended, unwelcome, unanticipated, or unknown."

[18] In other words, agent-less textuality is a mirage that disguises actions and obscures ethical issues.

[19] See *WWA* (198-239) for the full discussion of count generation.

[20] Wolterstorff develops "count generation" in contrast to "causal generation." My stepping on the gas pedal of a car generates another action—that of increasing my speed. But there is no social convention governing the generation of the second act by the first. The first directly causes the second. Count generation occurs when one action generates another by virtue of some set of rules or conventions that are in place. See *WWA,* 6.

[21] Wolterstorff did not invent count generation. John Searle earlier proposed, as a part of his Speech-Act Theory, that some actions (like saying "guilty" as the gavel descends) count as others (condemning a criminal). See Searle, *Speech Acts,* 34-35. But Wolterstorff's view of count generation as an ethical concern and his idea of how count generation occurs, both discussed below, constitute a decisive advance over Searle's theory.

[22] It is also true that reading a text in certain ways can count-generate other actions. See §6.4-6.6 for details.

According to Wolterstorff, count generation is a normative or ethical concept.[23] In other words, count generation works on the basis of rights and responsibilities. When someone performs action A that counts as action B, that person acquires the rights and responsibilities of someone who has performed action B. So, when a driver activates a blinker, that driver in certain circumstances acquires the rights and responsibilities of someone who has publicly communicated an intention to turn left soon.[24] Count generation, as I will show, is a hermeneutically valuable way of describing the actions that agents (authors, preachers, or God) perform on texts.

Count generation was originally associated with Speech-Act Theory. Austin introduced the idea of performative language—doing something by saying something—in 1955.[25] For Austin (and later John Searle), the action under consideration is the uttering of a sentence.[26] A speaker's locution (words uttered) counts as an illocution (such as making a

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[23] "Speaking is, through and through, a normative engagement" (*DD*, 88). This statement applies, as he makes clear in *WWA*, to more actions than speaking.

[24] Wolterstorff clarifies how people acquire the rights and responsibilities involved in count generation. The process occurs when an "action system" is in place: stocks of possible actions are paired with other actions in certain circumstances. Activating a blinker is paired with signaling a turn. To give another example: the rules of baseball comprise an action system. In the action system of baseball an umpire's saying "Strike!" at a certain time is paired with charging a strike to a batter. Human language is another such system. When someone in certain circumstances says, "You cut me in line," in American English that locution counts as more than an assertion. It is a censure, or perhaps a request for an apology or a change of conduct. Action systems are only in effect in certain circumstances at certain times (*WWA*, 215).

Once an action system is in place, count generation can happen by *convention* (social understandings such as laws, customs, game rules, or traditions); by *stipulation* (in which case agents explicitly communicate that when they do X that it should be interpreted as Y); or by *salience* (in which case one uses actions in ways that communicate by virtue of the listener's awareness and reasoning). For instance, in a baseball game, count generation can occur by convention (in which a ball hit over a fence counts as a home run), by stipulation (when a batting coach tells a batter before the game what hand signal will indicate a bunt), or by salience (when a fan makes a gesture towards his throat to indicate choking). For details see *WWA*, 216-17. For modifications made subsequent to that work, see "Why Animals Don't Speak," 467, 480-83.

[25] See *How to Do Things with Words*, 4-7. As I noted above, Searle introduced the language of X counting as Y in context Z.

[26] See Searle's *Speech Acts*.

promise). However, Wolterstorff makes use of count generation in two ways that move beyond traditional Speech-Act Theory, rendering his concepts superior to Austin's and Searle's for homiletical application.[27]

First, he broadens the notion of count generation from uttering sentences to actions in general. Saying words, painting a portrait, performing a sonata—all of these actions count-generate other actions. The illocution generated by a speech act is one special case. This extended system is better equipped than traditional Speech-Act Theory to handle issues surrounding biblical interpretation for preaching, which also encompasses more actions than speaking: authoring a text, editing it, inspiring it, canonizing it, and reading it are all actions that count-generate others.

Second, as discussed above, Wolterstorff conceives of count generation as an ethical process whereby agents acquire the rights and responsibilities that accrue to their actions, whereas traditional Speech-Act Theory discusses only social conventions.[28] In chapter 4 I argued that homiletics must be concerned with agency and responsibility: who exactly is

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[27] It will be helpful here to outline the details of how Wolterstorff's terminology compares with Austin's and with Searle's. In short, it appears that Wolterstorff prefers Austin's terms but Searle's concepts. Austin (*How to Do Things*, 92-101) speaks of the locution (the speech utterance, which also includes the sense and reference), the illocution and the perlocution. Wolterstorff (*DD,* 304 n. 1) uses locution/illocution/perlocution but modifies Austin's concept of the locution by emptying it of sense and reference. Wolterstorff's locution is the mere utterance (or what Austin calls the phonetic act—making noise—plus the phatic act—uttering words with grammatical structure). Wolterstorff's system is closer to Searle's scheme (*Speech Acts*, 23-25), which is fourfold: the utterance act (phonetic/phatic), the propositional act (sense and reference), the illocution and the perlocution.

Of course, this raises the question, "Where did the sense and reference go?" Wolterstorff speaks of the noematic and designative content of a speech act (*DD*, 138-39), which roughly correspond to these. He calls the two of them together the "propositional content" (*DD*, 139). There thus seem to be four components for Wolterstorff: the locution (utterance), the propositional content (noematic and designative content), the illocution, and the perlocution. This is close to Searle's fourfold scheme. Wolterstorff describes and employs these four levels, (though never in one section of the book) but continues to use Austin's threefold terminology. In spite of reservations about such practice, I will use Wolterstorff's nomenclature, in order to keep clear the present work's relationship to Wolterstorff's theories.

[28] Searle, *Speech Acts*, 45-70.

doing something with the biblical text matters for preaching. Wolterstorff's ethical approach gives such concerns a central place.

To put Wolterstorff's view of count generation in Speech-Act terms: speech acts, as count-generated actions, are normative affairs, because locutions (words spoken or texts written) count as illocutions (making assertions, issuing warnings, making promises), the speaker thereby acquiring the rights and responsibilities attendant upon the illocution.[29] When agents use texts—by composing them, reading them, performing them, preaching from them, or burning them—those uses count-generate illocutions by granting rights and responsibilities to the agents.

Count generation is a helpful tool for biblical hermeneutics because it elucidates how different agents (authors, editors, preachers) use texts. Authors, for instance, perform the action of composing a text, which counts as (gives them the rights and responsibilities of) performing other actions—for instance, asserting or promising the sentences in the text. Count generation also encompasses other agents' uses of texts: when readers read a text, they may thereby use that text to count generate their own actions, which may or may not be connected with the text's author. The same can be said for those who edit, canonize, or otherwise act upon a text. Count generation's flexibility as a concept grants it wide hermeneutical application; nevertheless, it requires that interpreters identify which agent acts on a text and what action that agent performs.

The application to homiletics is immediate, because readers, preachers, authors, the church, and God all act on the text of Scripture in different ways. Preaching ascribes theological value to those agents and actions, and count generation offers a way to identify

[29] This will be true even if the action is missed or misunderstood by others, so long as systems are in place such that they should have known (*DD*, 84). This is important as regards text interpretation, because what an author does with a text depends not on what a reader understands, but on what a reader ought to have understood. This normative ascription of rights and responsibilities differs from Austin and Searle, who both require that the hearer understand the speaker's intention in order for an illocution to occur. See Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 116-17, and Searle, *Speech Acts*, 45-54.

and analyze those actions. One count-generated action in particular, world projection, plays a central role in biblical interpretation for preaching.

2.3 Projecting a World with a Text

Of all of the count-generated actions that a person can perform by authoring or using a text, one of the most important for homiletical purposes is the action of "world projection." World projection is a count-generated action of an agent upon a text.[30] Authors, readers, or other agents use texts to project worlds. The details are as follows.

The "world" of a text is the state of affairs described by the text. The world of Ruth is the world of certain people living in Moab and Bethlehem at a certain time in Israel's history. To "project a world" is to take up an illocutionary stance toward that state of affairs. Authors can take up stances of assertion ("this world existed"), imagination ("this world could happen"), commendation ("this world ought to happen"), and so on.[31] For example, someone reading Acts 17 might conclude that Luke, in writing that chapter, asserts that Paul's sermon in Athens happened, invites readers to imagine it, affirms the truth of Paul's words, and commends a similar form of evangelism for Christians. By writing Acts 17 Luke projects (takes up all of these illocutionary stances toward) a world

[30] *WWA*, 238-39.

[31] A detailed account of world projection: Illocutionary acts involve an agent, an action, and a state of affairs. For example, Jeff (agent) commands (action) that the door be closed (state of affairs). Furthermore, illocutionary acts involve an "illocutionary stance" (what Wolterstorff calls a "mood stance") toward that state of affairs. (His discussion of mood stances is more complex than this, but the details do not affect the present discussion. See *WWA*, 221-231.) In other words, they may assert that a state of affairs occurs, they may promise that it will, question whether it will, invite someone to imagine that it does, and so on. In the case of a historical text, for instance, the author asserts that these states of affairs occurred. In the case of fictional texts, the author presents a state of affairs for consideration.
Specifically, world projection is when an author, by writing a text, takes up one or more illocutionary stances (presenting, promising, etc.) toward a state of affairs. The illocutionary act of world projection is the collection of all of these separate illocutionary acts. The fully general formulation of world projection, including the use of non-linguistic media in art, can be found in *WWA,* 238.

with the text.[32] See Figure 1. The initial act of an author or other agent to compose or use a text is represented by the dotted arrow. That action count generates other actions (solid arrows), the most salient for present purposes being world projection. The lower arrows in Figure 1 indicate that by composing a text an agent also does many other things that are not world projection (using up paper, angering readers, and so on). The figure shows how authors or other agents act upon a text and, by count generation, project a world with it.

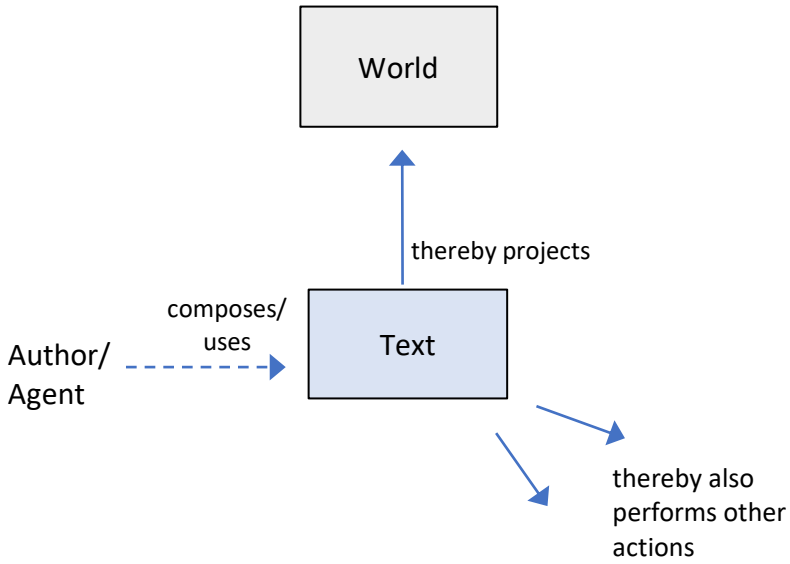

Figure 1: World Projection

Additionally, although the most familiar version of world projection is when an author composes a text, there are other ways for agents to project worlds, as I discuss in chapter 6. Thus, world projection is able to describe more than one methodology for hermeneutics, because multiple agents can perform multiple actions on a single text. World

[32] The obvious question raised is how one knows exactly which world Luke is projecting, and what his illocutionary stances were. Such questions in this case reduce to questions about what conventions or stipulations were in place that would give Luke certain rights and responsibilities. These are properly historical and literary questions. In cases of other agents (readers or preachers) using Acts 17 to project a world, different methods must be used to interpret those actions. See §6.4-6.6 for details.

projection thus prepares the way for a comprehensive hermeneutic that can describe the many things preachers do with the biblical text.

Wolterstorff's notion of world projection possesses two features that will prove useful in chapters 6 and 7 for biblical interpretation for preaching. In the first place, a text's world can have a variety of ties to the real world. Some textual worlds actually occur; other worlds are fantasy. Some historical fiction is an intermingling of both.[33] Charles Dickens's works refer to events in London: some actually occurred, while others he invented. Interpretation requires asking how textual worlds are connected to the real world. When the text is the Bible, the ties between textual world and real world are variously understood, and those understandings will affect interpretation. World projection allows (even requires) preachers to clarify their own understanding of those ties.

Second, in interpreting a projected world, preachers as readers play a role that precedes their perlocutionary response outlined in Speech-Act Theory. World projection stipulates that readers' beliefs affect how they understand a text before they respond to it. This happens as follows.

In Wolterstorff's terms, understanding a text requires that readers "elucidate," or make explicit, what an author implies, and also that they "extrapolate" what might be true of the projected world yet was not implied by the author.[34] Readers of the parable of the secret seed in Mark 4:26–29, for example, may elucidate Mark's implication that, as seeds multiply biologically, so the kingdom of God grows numerically. Though this seems to be a part of Mark's meaning, he never states it; readers elucidate that meaning. Readers may also extrapolate things that Mark neither states nor implies: that Jesus somehow learned about farming when he was young, or that farms in Palestine must have had irrigation

[33] *WWA*, 106-15, 188-90.

[34] This simplified explanation does not cover how readers may understand a world in which impossible things happen. For details see *WWA*, 118-19.

systems in place. Mark never suggests these, but they may have been true, given the details of the passage. Readers extrapolate or fill in gaps.[35]

If this is so, then the way that readers elucidate and extrapolate depends on their values and experiences. Wolterstorff says as much when he writes, "Observation of the practice of extrapolation makes clear that different practitioners operate with different principles; and obviously, different principles of extrapolation will normally yield different worlds."[36] Readers, in other words, bring their presuppositions to bear on the interpretation of another's action. Understanding a text involves readers as much as it does authors. This is important to this thesis because it shows how readers and authors both contribute to interpretation: authors take up stances toward states of affairs, but readers must use their own pre-understandings to reconstruct and elaborate states of affairs and authorial stances.

Therefore, world projection, though it focuses on the action of an agent, ties the world of the text to the real world and also to the reader. Therefore, it can include concepts that appear in author- and reader-focused hermeneutics. World projection sets the stage for a hermeneutic that is clear, showing just how authors and readers interact during interpretation.

2.4 Interpreting Projected Worlds

A hermeneutic for homiletics must show how agents project worlds and also how preachers interpret those worlds. Although world projection is a complex concept, interpreting a projected world is relatively simple: it requires understanding the

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[35] Wolterstorff's notion of extrapolation may be compared with Iser's conceptions of the blanks within texts. Iser's system is more sophisticated. For him, blanks in the text are not merely gaps in the description of a world, but gaps in the system of the text—the text does not give instructions for how to harmonize its various segments and points of view. Those systemic gaps stimulate a reader's imagination, and the reader fills them in according to her or his own convictions (see Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 180-231). On the whole I find Iser's explanation more comprehensive, but Wolterstorff's more comprehensible. In this thesis I will use Wolterstorff's terminology.

[36] Wolterstorff, "Living Within a Text," in *Faith and Narrative*, ed. Keith E. Yandell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 206.

propositional content of a text (what a text says and the things to which it refers), and the various illocutionary stances taken toward that content by the agent who projects that world.[37] Understanding Mark's action of world projection in the parable of Mark 4 means understanding what he conveys (Jesus telling a story about a seed), knowing the object to which the story refers (the kingdom of God), and comprehending the stances (affirmation, promise, suggestion) that Mark takes in telling it.

To summarize: world projection is a count-generated action. It occurs when an agent uses a text to take up illocutionary stances toward the world described by that text. The benefits of world projection to biblical interpretation for homiletics will emerge fully in chapter 6, where I will use world projection to construct a hermeneutic for homiletics. That hermeneutic will describe the manner in which agents (authors, editors, readers, and God) use the Bible to project worlds and will evaluate those projected worlds according to the theological goals of homiletics.

2.5 Wolterstorff's World Projection, Ricoeur's World in Front of the Text, and Homiletics

Wolterstorff's theory of world projection is not unique in describing how works of art project "worlds." Ricoeur offers his own notion of the world in front of the text, which is widely used in homiletics.[38] Here I compare the two and argue that Ricoeur's model suffers from two deficiencies specific to preaching.[39]

First, Ricoeur limits the applicability of his model to "literary," "poetic," or "fictional" texts.[40] He briefly mentions historical and other non-fictional works,[41] but they fall outside

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[37] Recall that propositional content, according to Wolterstorff, is a combination of noematic and designative content. "Noematic content" refers to the meaning of the words as the author uses them, while "designative content" refers to the entities indicated in the real world. They are roughly equivalent to sense and reference, respectively.

[38] The most accessible treatment is found in *IT*. For one example of many that incorporates Ricoeur's world in front of the text into homiletics, see Ronald J. Allen, *Biblical Interpretation for Preaching,* 131.

[39] This critique is separate from and in addition to my analysis of his text-focused hermeneutic.

[40] His terminology shifts (*IT,* 34-37).

[41] Non-fictional texts, for Ricoeur, "restructure for their readers the conditions of ostensive reference." That is, by virtue of a shared real world the text can give a reader the "equivalent" of a genuine referent (*IT*, 35).

of his model which "concerns literature more than writing."[42] Only literary or poetic modes of discourse project a world in front of themselves. That world—the secondary, projected world in front of the text—is severed from its original referents. The text no longer refers to the world out of which it was written (what Ricoeur calls "ostensive reference").[43] It now has a secondary, literary referent: the world in front of the text.[44] Interpretation involves grasping this secondary referent.[45]

Ricoeur's hermeneutical exclusion of real-world references in texts will not do for interpreting the Bible. The Bible is literature, but it is also history, theology, liturgy, genealogy, and so forth. If Ricoeur's world in front of the text refers only to literary (non-real) worlds and objects, it will not be able to adequately encompass the Bible's non-literary (historical and theological) features—where biblical authors make direct claims about real world objects and persons.[46] It is unacceptable to say, for example, that the Bible, being written discourse, no longer refers to an actual person named Saul of Tarsus, or to actual places like Jerusalem. The price to be paid for Ricoeur's world in front of the text—the abolishing of a text's first-order referent—is too high to accept.[47]

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[42] *IT*, 36.

[43] *IT*, 37.

[44] Ricoeur does not use the precise phrase "world in front of the text" in this work. However, he does speak of the "non-ostensive reference" of a text, a "world opened up," and says, "The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it" (87). He does use the phrase in *HHS,* 140-42.

[45] *IT*, 86-87.

[46] Ricoeur's work here seems to use the adjective "literary" to mean "fictional" or at least to exclude real-world referents. Wolterstorff makes a similar point in *DD,* 145.

[47] Though Ricoeur is clear about this (he says reference is "shattered by writing," *IT*, 35), the point is sometimes lost on homileticians. Abraham Kuruvilla offers a hermeneutic for preaching based on Ricoeur's world in front of the text. In only one place (*TTP,* 28 n. 52) does he discuss the idea that Ricoeur's theories abolish first-order reference in order to generate the secondary world in front of the text. Here, however, Kuruvilla asserts, "*Both* first- and second-order referents are preserved." He then cites Ricoeur's article "The Narrative Function," *Semeia* 13 (1978): 194. But there Ricoeur states the following:

> The *suppression of a first order reference* . . . is the condition of the possibility of a second order reference which we are here calling the redescription of the world. A literary work, it seems to me, is

By contrast, Wolterstorff's world projection applies to nearly any text, acknowledging texts not just as literature but also as history, science, theology, and so on. Agents can use nearly any text to project a world.[48] Additionally, that text's world retains connections to the real world; written discourse does not sever original referents. Wide application and referential capacity are clear advantages of Wolterstorff's model over Ricoeur's.

A second difference is that Ricoeur is not clear on just how texts project worlds. His mechanism for projection is opaque, because as a text-focused hermeneut he attributes actions and intentions to texts rather than agents. Disguising agency by personifying the texts makes it difficult to say just who is doing what when a text is composed or read. As I argued in chapter 4, Ricoeur's work gives no clarity on these matters.[49] Yet homiletics requires clarity. Preaching involves the authority and responsibility of various agents (preachers, authors, readers, God, and the church). To impute an action (projection) to an object (the text) is to disguise an agency about which preaching must be candid. By contrast, Wolterstorff provides a thorough account of how various agents use texts in different ways to project worlds.

In summary, Wolterstorff's first hermeneutical contribution, world projection, connects agents, texts, readers, and ethics in a system describes the actions of agents on texts. As such it holds great promise for a hermeneutic that is both clear and comprehensive. At the end of this chapter I will offer modifications and expansions of world projection. I now turn to Wolterstorff's second contribution: appropriated discourse.

> not a work without reference, but a work with a *split* reference, i.e., a work whose ultimate reference has as its condition a *suspension of the referential claim* of conventional language. (Emphasis mine.)

The original referent is shattered, suppressed, suspended. Though Kuruvilla acknowledges that he is appropriating Ricoeur in "a distinctive way," (*TTP* 26 n. 45), it is not clear how he can modify a major tenet of Ricoeur's theory while preserving its other aspects.

[48] This is not to say that when agents use a text that they always project a world. The text must be used by an author to present a state of affairs and must take an illocutionary stance toward that state of affairs.

[49] See also Wolterstorff's incisive questions in *DD*, 144-45.

3 The Bible as Appropriated Discourse

Thus far I have discussed the actions of various human agents with respect to the Bible. But if the Bible was written by humans, how is God involved? "Appropriated discourse" is a notion that Wolterstorff uses to explain God's action with respect to the Bible. Namely, it explains how God speaks through Scripture—how the Bible can be simultaneously human and divine communication. As chapter 4 asserted, preachers seek to hear and to proclaim the word of God; appropriated discourse offers a structure for how that happens. It will therefore feature prominently in future chapters, as I construct a hermeneutic adequate to the theological goal of preaching the word of God. As in the previous section, I here summarize Wolterstorff, footnoting technical details and reserving my critique for later in the chapter.

3.1 Appropriated Discourse

According to Wolterstorff, when human authors speak via the Bible, God also speaks. When David says that it is blessed to be forgiven (Ps 32:1), somehow God says that as well. Those who identify the Bible as the word of God affirm this, as do those who say that one can find the word of God in the Bible.[50] Mainline and evangelical homileticians affirm that biblical discourse is therefore what Wolterstorff calls "double agency discourse:" the human author(s) and God both speak via the same words.[51]

In double agency discourse two agents play a part in a single communicative act.[52] Such double agency is a common occurrence: an executive dictates a letter to an assistant; an ambassador speaks in behalf of a head of state; one person seconds the motion of another at a meeting; people buy greeting cards and sign their names to them. In each case

[50] See §4.2.5 for a discussion of different views of the word of God.

[51] See, for instance, Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 124; Barth, *Homiletics*, 44; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 28; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 19.

[52] *DD*, 38-42.

two agents participate in one discourse. One agent composes or delivers an utterance, and a second agent endorses, adopts, or authorizes that utterance as his or her own.[53]

For our purposes, the essential type of double agency discourse (and the major model for biblical interpretation) is appropriated discourse.[54] In appropriated discourse, an agent adopts or appropriates the freestanding discourse (or illocution) of another agent. Wolterstorff notes, "In such cases, one is not just appropriating *the text* of the first person as the medium of one's own discourse; one is appropriating *the discourse* of that other person."[55] There are thus two complete acts of discourse (illocutions): that of the composer, and that of the appropriator. Person A makes a motion at a meeting—a freestanding illocution, recommending that an action be performed. Person B seconds that motion—saying, in effect, that person A speaks for him or her also.

While some theologians such as Barth affirm that God speaks through the Scripture, appropriated discourse explains just how the Bible can encompass both human and divine voices: Most biblical passages are freestanding illocutions of human authors—songs of

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[53] Acts of double discourse vary in their manner of authorization: in some cases (like the instance of dictation), an agent authorizes the composition of a specific utterance. In others (like the ambassador), an agent authorizes someone else to speak in his or her name beforehand. In still other cases (like the greeting card), authorization (signing one's name) may not occur until long after the utterance is composed. Acts of double discourse also vary in their degree of supervision: agents can closely supervise—even dictate—the contents of an utterance, or they can leave it to the ambassador to come up with specific words and phrases that represent the perspective of the head of state. Or there may, as in the case of the greeting card, be no supervision at all. See *DD*, 38-51.

[54] Another mode of double agency discourse features in the Scriptures—"deputized discourse," in which one agent deputizes another to speak on behalf of the first (*DD*, 42-45). The ambassador's speaking is an instance of deputized discourse. The Old Testament prophets functioned as deputies of God in that they spoke on his behalf (*DD,* 45-51). In his earlier work Wolterstorff maintained that deputized discourse is the primary mode of biblical discourse. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "How God Speaks," *The Reformed Journal* 19 (1969). *Divine Discourse* represents an evolution of his views.

[55] *DD*, 52. Emphasis original. Here, Wolterstorff's terms "text" and "discourse" are equivalent to "locution" and "illocution," respectively.

David, narratives of Luke, letters of John.[56] After human authors compose or edit utterances, God appropriates those illocutions as his own. He speaks words to people that were written by others.

In developing his notion of appropriated discourse, Wolterstorff incorporates the theological concepts of inspiration and canon in distinct ways. First, he advances a unique version of biblical inspiration: God, in some sense, authored biblical words by means of a human agent. He somehow supervised their composition, editing and canonization so that they would serve the purpose of his later appropriation. It is not that he spoke them as he inspired them (as some traditional concepts of inspiration have it); it is that he inspired them so as later to appropriate and thereby speak them.[57]

This description is slightly different from both evangelical and mainline interpretations of how God's voice and the human author's voice interact in Scripture. In contrast to evangelical hermeneutics, appropriated discourse conceives of the human-divine discourses primarily in terms of appropriation, not inspiration.[58] In contrast to mainline understandings, Wolterstorff offers a more precise explanation of just how God's voice relates to the human author's, without devaluing the latter.[59] Chapter 8 will discuss inspiration in more detail.[60]

Wolterstorff also relates appropriated discourse to the canon. In his view, God's appropriation is the single act of appropriating the entire canon. It is not that God

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[56] Some passages (such as the Decalogue) report the actual spoken voice of God. This case complicates things significantly, because Moses is quoting God who then may be re-appropriating his own words. I here focus on the more basic cases of God appropriating human speech, in which humans compose illocutions of their own and God appropriates them.

[57] *DD*, 54, 283-84.

[58] Compare Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Vern H. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986): 241-79; Payne, "Fallacy"; Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

[59] Compare Long, *Witness*, 21; Wilson, *Practice of Preaching*, 35; Allen, *Biblical Interpretation*, 121, 131.

[60] For a response to Wolterstorff's view and a contention for a more robust place for inspiration, see Ward, *Word and Supplement*, 104-5.

appropriates Eph 2:10 or Ephesians as a whole. God adopts the complete canon as his illocution: "The literary unit relevant for determining the meaning of a token sentence from, say, the Gospel of Matthew, is not just the text of Matthew, and certainly not some small pericope from Matthew, but the text of the whole Bible."[61] The canon is the text that God speaks to his people.

3.2 Interpreting Appropriated Discourse

If God appropriates human speech in the Bible, then interpretation will take that fact into account. Doing so involves the recognition that appropriated discourse is a special case of count generation: when person B appropriates the discourse of person A, then the utterance of person A counts as the utterance of person B. That is, person B acquires the rights and responsibilities of having said and meant what person A said and meant. In fact, one agent may project a world (take up an illocutionary stance toward a state of affairs) by appropriating the words of another.

This is precisely the way in which Wolterstorff understands biblical discourse. God appropriates a human agent's written discourse, using that discourse to project a world. This means that interpreting appropriated discourse proceeds in the same way as interpreting any other projected world: preachers as readers strive to understand the propositional content of the discourse, and the illocutionary stances taken up toward that content.

Of course, both agents (the human author and God) use the same text to project a world. There are thus two projected worlds—the human author's and God's. Therefore, interpreting appropriated discourse proceeds in two stages: first, an interpreter must interpret the human illocution (that is, the world projected by the human author), and second, interpret the divine illocution that appropriates the first.[62]

Three implications arise from this two-stage process: First, biblical interpretation for preaching done along these lines must make choices about which actions of which

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[61] *DD*, 205.

[62] *DD*, 183-222.

agents to analyze. Preachers may choose to interpret the human author's action or God's. Such choices will lead to different interpretations, because they interpret different worlds.

Second, when interpreting appropriated discourse, human authors and their original intentions matter. If preachers choose to interpret God's appropriated discourse, they must first interpret the discourse of the human author(s) or editor(s). One cannot know what God means in Ecclesiastes until one knows what Qoheleth meant. Interpretation, however, goes beyond the human author's intention to inquire after God's appropriating intent.

Finally, appropriated discourse allows for cases of mismatch between the human and divine illocutions. When person B appropriates person A's discourse, person B may not mean precisely the same thing as person A. For instance, if person A creates a greeting card addressed to "my wife, on our Anniversary" and person B buys, signs and delivers the card to his wife, these are different illocutions. They refer to different people and different situations. The same is true in biblical discourse: when Peter commands believers to "honor the emperor" (1 Pet 2:17), he addresses a specific group of people and refers to a specific person. If God appropriated that sentence, he might mean something more general for all Christians.[63]

A preacher's beliefs about what God could or would mean by a text will determine whether and how there may be a mismatch between human and divine illocutions.

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[63] Discovering and analyzing such mismatch works as follows: in general, interpreters should assume, unless they have good reason to do otherwise, that God means what the human authors meant. If Paul affirms that Christ died for our sins, then barring good reason to think otherwise, one should understand God to affirm the same thing. Where it exists, "good reason" will come from what an interpreter believes about the kinds of things that God would say (*DD*, 204). Differentiation between the human and divine illocutions may take several forms. First, there is "rhetorico-conceptual" differentiation: Paul may be speaking in the first person and speaking to the Romans, while God would be understood as speaking in the third person and speaking to all Christians. This is straightforward enough. However, sometimes what the human author meant by his illocution is not what God means by his. The human author may be mistaken about a fact, may be speaking literally when God intends the text figuratively, or may be speaking specifically when God is speaking more generally (*DD*, 208-15).

Appropriated discourse thus grants significant weight to readers' beliefs about God and the Bible. Conservative interpreters, for instance, may assume a close coordination between human and divine intention, while progressive interpreters may assume more differentiation between the two.[64] Wolterstorff's notion of appropriated discourse allows for both.

Thus, Wolterstorff advocates an interpretive methodology that first examines what the human author said, and secondly what God said by appropriating the human illocution. He thereby takes into account preachers' presuppositions. I will argue in chapter 6 that appropriated discourse enables preachers to interpret the Bible in ways that meet the four theological goals covered above: to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach a personally appropriated message, and to preach according to the gospel.

Before leaving this second Wolterstorffian notion, I explain two variations of appropriated discourse which surface commonly in preaching and upon which Wolterstorff's model is able to shed needed light.

3.3 Other Agents and Other Actions on Texts

Wolterstorff's notion of appropriated discourse concentrates on "authorial discourse interpretation": finding out what an author intended. However, as I argued above, authors are not the only agents who use texts to act, and authoring is not the only action that they perform on texts. Other agents perform other actions, and some of those bear directly on homiletics.

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[64] This raises the concern that a reader's beliefs will factor so strongly into an interpretation as to render it a mere reflection of that reader's pre-understandings, so that, as Wolterstorff says, readers "miss discerning what God said and . . . conclude that God said what God did not say" (*DD*, 236). He continues, "The anxiety is appropriate. . . . The risks cannot be evaded. But they can be diminished" (236). They can be diminished because the human discourse grounds the divine discourse, and unless one asserts that God completely ignores the human illocution, a human author's intent in a text will set bounds on one's understanding of God's intent. Additionally, interpretive humility, comparative practices, and continuing education will all lessen the risk of error (223-39).

Specifically, two other modes of interpretation developed by Wolterstorff will play major roles in my own construction, because preachers commonly practice them when interpreting the Bible. Appropriated discourse can describe these practices adequately and assess them theologically.

The first mode is called "presentational discourse."[65] This variant of appropriated discourse is a common interpretive practice. It happens as follows: Rather than agents appropriating a discourse (that is, adopting another illocution as their own), it is possible for agents simply to present someone else's words to a person, without regard for the discourse's original meaning. For instance, person A may write a love letter to person B. Person B may then present that love letter to person C in order to mock person A. The illocutionary stance of persons A and B are not related as they would be in appropriated discourse; they are directly at odds.

This is crucial for preaching: God may not only appropriate a text of Scripture (and thereby communicate something to all readers of that text), but instead may present a text to an individual in a way that disregards his own original illocution. God is not appropriating the illocution as his own; he is appropriating the locution (the words alone) for his own purposes. Wolterstorff relates the example of St. Antony, who went into a church and heard a portion of Matthew's gospel being read: "Go home and sell all that belongs to you." Antony understood God as speaking to him via that text, and he therefore sold his possessions and assumed a monastic life. According to Wolterstorff, God did not mean by appropriating that text that every Christian should go home and sell all they have, but by presenting that text in a liturgical reading, he may have meant that to Antony at that moment.[66] If preachers, as they read the Scripture, have a moment of insight like Antony's, they can ask whether that insight is what God means to all readers by God appropriating

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[65] *DD*, 54-56.

[66] *DD*, 188-89. This is different from a case of mismatch between human and divine authorial intent discussed above. Presentational discourse is the presentation of a text one time, to one person, for one purpose. God may present a text to different people with different meanings. This is not the same as saying that he authored that text to mean something for any reader who reads it in the future—even if that meaning differs from the human author's own.

this text (appropriated discourse), or whether this is what God means to oneself by presenting this text (presentational discourse). That decision could alter how preachers understand the authority of such an insight, and whether and how to preach it. The hermeneutic constructed in chapter 6 will incorporate presentational discourse as a methodology for interpreting the Bible for preaching.

A second variation is "performance interpretation." Sometimes interpreters are simply not interested in what an author meant by a text. Sometimes they are interested in what someone who shares their beliefs and presuppositions might have meant if that person had authored the text.[67] If Mark, in recording Jesus' words, "Let us go to the other side" (Mark 4:35), meant that Jesus wanted to cross the Sea of Galilee, an interpreter might respond: "What of it? I am more interested in what I mean when I say, 'Let us go to the other side.' I care about the way this sentence relates to my own concerns: crossing to the other side of ethnic barriers for racial reconciliation or crossing linguistic barriers for evangelization."

Performance interpretation is alive and well in preaching. It is one of the many ways that preachers interpret the Bible. If this is so, then a hermeneutic adequate to homiletics must take account of it and assess it according to the theological goals of homiletics. Thus, performance interpretation will be one of the methods expounded in the hermeneutic developed in chapter 6.

Presentational discourse and performance interpretation are both activities that minimize an author's action of composition in favor of other actions or other agents. The former does so by an agent's presenting rather than authoring a text, the latter by a person's interpreting a text as if someone else had written it. Because preachers often practice both of these modes of interpretation, the hermeneutic under construction in this thesis will describe such practices and evaluate them theologically.

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[67] *DD*, 171-82. Wolterstorff calls this performance interpretation because it is akin to taking a musical score and performing it in ways that comport with one's own understanding of the piece. He borrows the metaphor from Ricoeur. Ben Meyer ("Tricky Business") proposes a similar concept with the term "ascription." Readers may ignore original meaning and ascribe new meaning to old texts.

In fact, we are already underway in the pursuit of a methodologically pluralistic hermeneutic. When preachers read the Scriptures, they can interpret any of the following: what a human author/editor meant by authoring a passage, what the church meant by including it in the canon, what God meant by appropriating it, what God means now by presenting it, or what someone who has certain values might have meant if they had composed such a text. I will argue that preachers engage in all of these types of interpretation, and that each can be evaluated according to the four theological goals of homiletics. Some will be found more valuable for preaching than others.

4 World Projection and Appropriated Discourse: Conclusion

I have introduced Nicholas Wolterstorff, arguing that some of his theories comprise an apt choice for homiletical hermeneutics. I have also presented two Wolterstorffian notions that will feature in my own homiletical proposals: world projection and the Bible as appropriated discourse. However, this thesis will not adopt Wolterstorff's theories wholesale. Bald application of his work to biblical interpretation for preaching would produce significant weaknesses. Accordingly, I now suggest several modifications and expansions.

5 Modifications and Expansions

Deploying Wolterstorff's theories for homiletics requires modifications and expansions. One reason for this is that Wolterstorff has a narrow hermeneutical interest: in *Divine Discourse,* his focus is on interpreting God's authorial discourse in the Bible. My concern is broader, addressing any use of the biblical text by any agent for the purposes of preaching. Wolterstorff recognizes other modes of interpretation only in order to distinguish them from his central concern. He is clear about this when he says, "I shall focus my attention on that particular interpretive practice which . . . seeks to discern what God was saying by way

of that passage."[68] Therefore, he leaves aside other interests, some of which are relevant to homiletics.[69]

In order to apply his notions to preaching more generally, I suggest four modifications or expansions: acknowledging the complexity of biblical studies, expanding the role of the reader, including critical hermeneutics, and assessing interpretations. These changes will render Wolterstorff's theories more amenable to preaching without undermining their basic structure. They will also render his ideas more compatible with the four theological values for preaching.

5.1 Acknowledging the Complexity of Biblical Studies

Wolterstorff is a philosopher, not a biblical scholar.[70] While his theories pay strict attention to problems of epistemology and ethics, he passes over some concerns of interpretation that arise from the unique nature of the Bible. The first theological goal for preaching is to preach the word of God. In order for preachers to do so, they must be clear exactly on how God's voice relates, not to just any text, but to the particular text that is the Bible. I suggest three modifications stemming from the unique nature of the Bible.

(5.1.1) Interpreting a Layered Text. The Bible is a layered document: most of its material came into existence through oral pre-histories, stages of composition, redaction by editors, and inclusion in larger corpora.[71] As a result, biblical texts contain layers of discourse. In Acts 20:35, for example, Paul quotes a saying of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This sentence is a part of the church's canon giving Luke's record of Paul's citation

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[68] *DD,* 131. His other works on art and textuality in general (*Art in Action* and *WWA*) do have broader application, but they do not include the concept of appropriated discourse.

[69] *DD*, 16-18.

[70] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "On God Speaking," *The Reformed Journal* 19 (1969): 7.

[71] For a brief overview of these concerns as regards the Old Testament, see Antony F. Campbell, S. J., "Preparatory Issues in Approaching Biblical Texts," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 3-18. For a lucid introduction to the major form of this problem in the New Testament (the Synoptic problem), see R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1989), 21-49.

of Jesus' statement. Who is the "author"? To refer to one "author" of a biblical text is to oversimplify.

Therefore, Wolterstorff's two-stage interpretive process (human author-divine appropriator) does not go far enough for biblical interpretation: before considering God's appropriation of a text, interpreters must reckon with the multiple-agency human discourse that lies behind the Bible. Human authors and editors, at each stage of a text's development, appropriated the existing illocutions of others.[72] Instead of a simple interpretive movement from a human author's discourse to God' appropriation, interpreters may need to move from oral histories to recorders to editors and compilers, and so on—and then finally to God. For example, Proverbs may be considered in isolation or as part of a larger collection; Chronicles appears to be dependent upon Kings; Synoptic authors appropriate earlier material; Paul may quote Christian hymns in Eph 5 and Phil 2. Interpreters must clarify which appropriation they are interpreting, because that will make a difference to preachers.[73] To expand on one instance: in Phil 2:5–11, interpreting the world projected by the original author of a hymn to Christ might involve understanding what the anonymous writer was saying about Christ's incarnation. On the other hand, interpreting the world projected by Paul's appropriation of this hymn will focus on the apostle's encouragement toward humble unity in the Philippian church. Those two worlds can lead to different interpretations and different sermons, one addressing the theology of the incarnation and the other commending humility among Christians. Layered texts show evidence of chains of appropriation by multiple agents. Homiletics must acknowledge such complexity if it is to specify an agent acting on a text.

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[72] Of course, the situation may be more complicated than this, because there is no reason that an author's or editor's action must be *appropriation*: editors may engage in *presentation* by using earlier locutions without regard for earlier illocutionary intent. Wolterstorff notes that in the case of the New Testament citing the Old Testament, it is often not the case that authors are appropriating authorial discourse. They are using earlier utterances for their own theological purposes ("Evidence," 442). Also relevant here are cases in which the Bible cites other texts (Acts 17:28), or in which intertextual dependencies (Kings/Chronicles, the synoptic Gospels) are apparent.

[73] This point has been made in homiletics. Craddock, *Preaching*, 117-118, 146. See also Long, *Witness*, 90.

(5.1.2) Interpreting a Literary Text. The Bible is literature, and its literary features impact interpretation.[74] Though Wolterstorff acknowledges this in the abstract, his discussion of interpretation does not deal adequately with the literary richness of Scripture.[75] This lacuna emerges most clearly in the examples in *Divine Discourse*. They are, almost without exception, single sentences. For example, he spends considerable time with the sentence, "The queen is dead."[76] But single sentences may not exhibit more complicated literary devices. Wolterstorff provides no examples of literary units such as entire poems, stories with complete plots, or whole epistles.

Yet preachers usually preach on units larger than sentences, and in those cases literary features matter. Theological symbols (water, light, exodus, cross, shepherd, king), ironic discourse, foreshadowing, formal devices (meter, parallelism, paronomasia, chiasm, inclusio), intertextuality—these are but a few of the techniques that biblical authors utilize.[77] Preachers will interpret such devices as methods that authors or other agents use to project worlds with texts.

Likewise, the issue of genre, so prevalent in biblical studies and homiletics, receives scant attention in Wolterstorff's hermeneutics.[78] Thiselton, by contrast, pays close attention to generic features and advocates a pluralistic hermeneutic based on the genre of the text.[79] Thiselton's ideas can enrich Wolterstorff's hermeneutic. For surely, praise

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[74] I have clarified above that calling the Bible literature does not preclude a recognition that it is also history and theology.

[75] *DD*, 191-93.

[76] *DD*, 138-40. Ollenberger notes this with frustration, and rightly asks how Wolterstorff's theories would change if the text to be studied were an entire book and not just a sentence. (Ben C. Ollenberger, "Pursuing the Truth of Scripture: Reflections on Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse*" in Padgett and Keifert, *But Is It All True?*, 50-51).

[77] Wolterstorff does acknowledge irony, double entendre, and other features (*DD*, 192-93). It is not that he is ignorant of such features; it is that he is trying to stay within his chosen topic.

[78] Wolterstorff does mention parables and other forms of what he calls "transitive discourse" in *DD*, 213-15.

[79] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 558-620. Thiselton, in fact, goes so far as to reject the concept of a universal theory of texts, because different texts work differently ("Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models, and the Parables of Jesus," in Lundin, Thiselton, and Walhout, *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*, 80-82). This is,

hymns, miracle stories, didactic exhortation, and apocalyptic visions indicate different illocutionary stances. If readers and listeners matter in preaching—and I have argued that they do—then genre must have a place in a hermeneutic for homiletics. I will expand Wolterstorff's hermeneutic to include it.

(5.1.3) Interpreting a Canonical Text. Wolterstorff's stance on when and how God appropriates biblical discourse needs modification with reference to the canon. The Bible is a collection of books, the association of which into a canon affects its interpretation. Wolterstorff argues that God appropriates the entire canon as his own single discourse: "The event which *counts as* God's appropriating this totality as the medium of God's own discourse is presumably that rather drawn out event consisting of the Church's settling on this totality as its canon."[80] God's communication to us is the total canon.

However, there is a historical difficulty with this view. In Wolterstorff's scheme, human authors wrote and compiled various texts, which were merely human speech, until, centuries after they were composed, God appropriated those texts as canon.[81] I find this reconstruction problematic. It leaves the original addressees of such texts without communication from God, and it also leaves all the people of God without scriptural witness until the fourth century A.D. Only then did the Bible become God's speech via canonization.

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in general, sound advice: the activity of interpretation is so varied as to defy attempts at a comprehensive scheme. On the other hand, I believe that interpretive interests serve as a better classifier for hermeneutics than genre. Genre does change how an author uses a text; but the question of interpretive aims—whether an interpreter is interested in how an author is using a text—is prior to generic questions. Once readers state their goals, then genre may give those readers direction as to how to accomplish those goals with reference to a particular text.

[80] *DD*, 54. Emphasis original.

[81] He does speak of canonization as a "drawn out" process, and affirms, "By way of that process, God was authorizing these books" (*DD*, 295). It is difficult to know what he means by this. Either Wolterstorff means that the canonization process began for each book upon being written—in which case his view and mine align and canonization is a host of separate historical actions creating a host of separate appropriations—or else he means that the process of canonization, which began centuries after some books were composed, took a long time. In that case my criticism here applies.

Furthermore, it makes canonization itself an inexplicable act: why should books be recognized as bearing the speech of God if they never had been so before?

God may have appropriated the entire canon at some point—but it makes better sense to think of God's appropriation as repeated, occurring in periods as early as the oral stage of a text (in the case of the Old Testament prophets), and as late as its canonization. On this view, God has been speaking via the Scriptures ever since they were first created. Ancient believers were not bereft of his word prior to the church's recognition of the canon.

Such a modification grants preachers hermeneutical flexibility. Because God appropriated single oracles, book-length collections, and the entire canon at different times, each may be interpreted as God's speech: a pericope can function independently as an utterance from God, or it may function as a part of the book in which it is found, or as part of the Testament, or as part of the canon.

For example, the fourth commandment in Exod 20 indicates that God spoke the Sabbath commandment directly (Exod 20:1).[82] He commanded the Israelites dwelling at the foot of Sinai to honor the Sabbath. Subsequently these words were recorded as a part of the narrative of the Exodus,[83] and God appropriated that command, thereby addressing all of those descended from the original audience. Later still, the text was incorporated into the Torah, which God also appropriated, giving the Sabbath command intertextual relationships with the Sabbath narrative in Num 15 and with the slightly different version of the Decalogue in Deut 5. At this level Sabbath is a command related to social justice and breaking that command merits punishment. Furthermore, God appropriated this text as a part of the Old Testament, in which it serves as the ground for prophetic excoriation and reinterpretation in Isa 58. And finally, God appropriated the Sabbath commandment as a part of the canon, in which it stands now as a shadow of the reality of Christ (Col 2:16-17).[84] Such flexibility coheres with a methodologically pluralistic hermeneutic, which is what this thesis seeks.

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[82] Theological prejudgments may modify such a statement significantly.

[83] The details of that process, which are as controversial as they are opaque, need not detain us here.

[84] I should note that Wolterstorff explicitly denies this possibility. He states,

The Bible is a complex document: historically, literarily, and canonically. I have adjusted Wolterstorff's hermeneutic without altering its basic structure in order to account for the richness of scriptural discourse. Only a hermeneutic that recognizes that richness will be adequate to biblical interpretation for preaching.

5.2 Expanding the Role of the Reader

Though Wolterstorff allows for the influence of a reader's presuppositions, he does not say enough (for a homiletically focused mind) about a reader's response to a text. His theory requires development in this regard. Wolterstorff states that the goal of authorial-discourse interpretation is to discover the propositional content of an utterance and the illocutionary stance of the author.[85] Wolterstorff, the burden of whose project is to make the case for the viability of authorial-discourse interpretation, has virtually nothing to say on the matter of how a reader responds to those entities. In fact, when speaking of how art elicits emotional responses, he admits, "To these questions we have, I say, no good answers."[86]

Preaching, however, requires good answers.

This is so for two reasons. The first is that understanding without response is impoverished understanding. Gadamer's notion of self-involved understanding (*Verstehen)* is important for homiletics. A detached comprehension of a discourse is only the beginning of true comprehension. As Gadamer argues, understanding "really risks itself."[87] That is, readers of literature open their horizons to a text—their emotions, habits, convictions, and

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> The situation is not that for a sentence occurring in so-called second Isaiah, there is one thing which is its meaning all by itself, perhaps another thing which is its meaning in the text of second Isaiah, perhaps another thing which is its meaning in the text of Isaiah, perhaps another which is its meaning in the text of the Old Testament, and perhaps yet one more thing which is its meaning in the text of the Bible (*DD*, 205).

However, once his theory is modified so that the moment of canonization is not the only moment of divine appropriation, his words here describe the hermeneutical situation precisely.

[85] *DD*, 187.

[86] *WWA*, 366.

[87] *TM*, 332. This is a more comprehensive model for understanding the world of the text than Wolterstorff's extrapolation theory that he explores in *WWA*. I believe that Wolterstorff is right about extrapolation, but never addresses what happens after a reader has an intellectual grasp of a projected world.

beliefs. They risk having them altered by the horizon of the work. How much more do preachers open themselves to the Bible! True understanding takes place when horizons fuse and preachers personally engage a text. Understanding, one of the four theological goals of this thesis, requires wholistic response.

Second, the biblical authors' use of genre carries an expectation that readers respond—intellectually, emotionally, volitionally. Jesus used parables to invite listeners to change their views about the kingdom of God. Paul wrote epistles so that the churches would repent and grow in faith. The authors of the psalms gave voice to praise—and invited others to join in. Preaching means preaching genres, and agents use genres to invite response. Interpreting an agent's world projection involves allowing the genre to have its intended effect—or even resisting that effect. In either case, a reader's response matters.

Thus, readers and their responses to texts need a place in an interpretive theory for preaching. In chapter 6, I will extend the concept of world projection to delineate an essential role for the reader's response in biblical interpretation.

5.3 Including Critical Hermeneutics

Critical hermeneutics protects the text from the reader and the reader from the text. Wolterstorff largely leaves these issues to the side, but I have argued in chapter 3 that critical hermeneutics must play a role in biblical interpretation for preaching.[88] In fact, the fourth theological goal for preaching is to preach according to the gospel, and the gospel functions as a critical hermeneutical filter in Christian preaching. In order to allow the gospel to play this role, there must be a place for critical hermeneutics in a successful preaching hermeneutic. Homiletics should describe when and how preachers interrupt a sympathetic reading of a text to question themselves, the text, and the projecting agent.

In light of this concern I will incorporate Apel's critical hermeneutics into Wolterstorff's basic framework.[89] Apel's theory intersperses moments of trust with

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[88] He does mention the danger involved in trusting corrupt traditions: "Our problems with traditions remain. . . . Traditions are still the source of benightedness, chicanery, and oppression." "Evidence," 456.

[89] See my discussion of Apel in §2.9.

moments of suspicion on the part of readers. Such suspicion, I have argued, can apply to the Bible (protecting the reader from the text) or the preacher (protecting the text from the reader). Apel's critical hermeneutic will provide a helpful supplement to Wolterstorff's system. In trying to find out what an agent said, preachers will have moments of suspicion, in which they move from a posture of sympathetic listening to one of critical analysis: of the biblical text, one's interpretive environment, one's presuppositions, and oneself.

5.4 Assessing Interpretations for Value and Accuracy

A final concern is that Wolterstorff gives little guidance for determining when an interpretation is right.[90] He insists that texts are underdetermined; that is, they do not carry sufficient information to rule out all but a single interpretation.[91] This gives little comfort to preachers seeking certainty, or at least confidence, in understanding a text.

Critics of Wolterstorff have noted this feature of his work. Westphal, for instance, complains, "Wolterstorff's own account of the indeterminacy of the text precludes any simple, single understanding of what a 'correct' or 'true' interpretation would be, such as getting the right answer."[92] To be clear, Wolterstorff states that there is a correct view of what an author said with a text, but he does not think one can prove conclusively that one has found it.[93]

While I will argue in chapter 7 that single, correct interpretations are normally out of reach, I believe that Wolterstorff's theories provide a means for moving beyond his own expressed uncertainty. While there may be no process for producing infallible

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[90] He does discuss the power of readers' beliefs on interpretation and therefore the risk, in any interpretation, that Scripture can be turned into a "wax nose," and bent to the reader's liking. *DD*, 223-39. See note 64 above.

[91] *DD*, 185, 200-1.

[92] Merold Westphal, "Theology as Talking About a God Who Talks," review of *Divine Discourse,* by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 535-36. See similar concerns in Michael Levine, "God Speak," review of *Divine Discourse,* by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religious Studies* 34 (1998): 12-13, and Ollenberger, "Pursuing the Truth," 63-64.

[93] *DD*, 200.

interpretations, homiletics needs ways to analyze why interpretations differ and to assess them against one another.

It will be helpful at this point to introduce a distinction between the value of an interpretation and the accuracy of an interpretation. Both value and accuracy matter, and each plays a role in assessing interpretations of biblical passages.

First, interpretations can be more or less valuable. "Value" as used here is a judgment on the goals of interpreters. If interpreters can choose to interpret different actions of different agents on a text, some of those actions will be more valuable for preaching than others. For example, it may be more valuable to know what Paul meant by his use of a Christian hymn in Phil 2 than to know what the hymn originally meant. Some interpretive choices are more valuable than others. The four theological goals developed in chapter 4 comprise a standard by which such value may be measured.

Second, given a preacher's particular goals, interpretations can be more or less accurate. While value asks, "How worthwhile was it to try to hit that target?" accuracy asks, "Did the preacher hit it?" If preachers aim to find out what a human author meant by a text; if they attempt to find out what God is saying by presenting a text; if they try to find out what someone like themselves would have meant by authoring a text; if they use a text for an entirely different purpose—how successful were they? The aim of an interpreter will not only provide standards for measuring accuracy, but also determine which data are relevant to the question. For instance, if preachers are trying to determine what someone like themselves would have meant by writing Ecclesiastes 3, then historical data are irrelevant. Instead what will matter is how those words resonate with preachers.

The hermeneutic advanced in later chapters will address both value and accuracy. It will assess value by examining methods relative to the theological goals of homiletics. In other words, it will ask whether a given method for interpreting a passage of Scripture (such as asking what God meant by presenting a text to a preacher), if successfully performed, will accomplish the four theological goals for preaching. I will argue that, relative to those goals, some methods hold more value for preaching than others.

This hermeneutic will also provide tools for assessing when one interpretation is more accurate than another. By clarifying what interpreters' goals are when they read—what action of which agent they are interpreting—this system will enable assessment of accuracy. Delineating value and accuracy go beyond Wolterstorff's hermeneutical uncertainty. Although this new hermeneutic will not guarantee correct interpretations, it will be able assess interpretations comparatively by showing which questions to ask.

5.5 An Expanded Wolterstorffian Framework

The modifications introduced here do not undermine the basic tenets of world projection and appropriated discourse; they expand the framework to embrace dynamics of the biblical text, to include readers and critical hermeneutics, and to assess interpretations for value and accuracy. These expansions render Wolterstorff's notions amenable to the theological goals of this thesis: to preach the word of God, to preach an understood message, to preach according to the gospel, and to preach with authority.

6 Conclusion

Christian preaching needs a theologically framed, pluralistic approach to biblical interpretation. Such an approach must be comprehensive, clear, and able to assess interpretations. In this chapter I have introduced Nicholas Wolterstorff as a qualified hermeneut for the concerns of this thesis. I have presented two of his notions, world projection and appropriated discourse, which I will use to build a hermeneutic specific to preaching. Finally, I have proposed that Wolterstorff's work be modified and expanded for homiletical application.

The next chapters will contain the bulk of the original contribution of this thesis. Chapter 6 will develop a model for biblical interpretation for the purposes of preaching. Chapter 7 will employ the model to assess methods and examples of biblical interpretation. Chapter 8 will summarize the thesis, draw conclusions for preaching, and offer areas for further exploration.

Chapter 6:
Projection Interpretation

Few texts of Scripture have a single meaning limited to the intent of the original author. Scripture has multiple complex senses given by God.

—William H. Willimon[1]

In this chapter I offer a new hermeneutic for homiletics. To review the discussion thus far: this thesis has called for an approach to biblical interpretation that is adequate to the demands of homiletics. After reviewing four major hermeneutical models (author-focused, text-focused, reader-focused, and critical) and showing how those models emerge in homiletical approaches to biblical interpretation, it was argued that none of them by itself sufficiently describes the interaction between God, the Scripture, and the preacher that homiletics requires. They are incomplete, insufficiently clear, and unable to assess interpretations.

Biblical interpretation for preaching requires a hermeneutic that describes not just one method but the many methods that preachers use when reading the Bible; that can show how author, reader, and critical hermeneutics interact; and that can assess those methods according to shared theological goals. Homiletics needs a hermeneutic that is comprehensive, clear, and able to assess interpretations. Additionally, the previous chapters concluded that a plurality of methods is appropriate, as long as each method meets the four theological goals proposed. Those goals are to preach the word of God, to

[1] William H. Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 47.

preach with authority, to preach an understood message, and to preach according to the gospel.

In chapter 5, in preparation for the construction of such a hermeneutic, I presented, expanded and modified two notions from the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff: world projection and appropriated discourse. In the current chapter I present a model for biblical interpretation for preaching, derived from Wolterstorff's contributions and sufficient for preaching.

The chapter proceeds as follows: first, I review the limited homiletical use of Wolterstorff's work. Then I develop a concept, "inhabitation," which forms the necessary link between a biblical author, a preacher, and critical hermeneutics. Using the concepts of world projection, appropriated discourse, and inhabitation, I then present a new hermeneutic for homiletics: Projection Interpretation. Projection Interpretation is a hermeneutic that embraces a plurality of interpretive methods; that shows how authors, texts, readers and critical hermeneutics interact; and that can assess those methods against the theological goals of homiletics. It is thus a successful (but perhaps not unique) solution to the problem of fractured hermeneutics in homiletics.

The present chapter will introduce Projection Interpretation and use it to describe multiple interpretive methodologies. The assessment of those methodologies—whether this or that approach to interpretation is valuable or accurate—will be the task of chapter 7.

1 Wolterstorff's Work in Homiletics

There are only a handful of instances in which Wolterstorff's concepts make their appearance in homiletical works. Steven Mathewson, for instance, mentions Wolterstorff's arguments to bolster the place given to the author in interpretation.[2] Clayton Libolt, in a review of *Divine Discourse,* remarks briefly on how Wolterstorff's ideas might impact the

[2] Mathewson, *Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 37, 39.

act of preaching.[3] And David Jacobsen nods in Wolterstorff's direction when he notes that in worship, God's promise "takes its unique contextual form in a kind of double agency [Wolterstorff''s term], where divine locution becomes human illocution."[4]

Abraham Kuruvilla's engagement with Wolterstorff is more thorough than those above. Beyond labeling the Bible as "divine discourse" and using double-agency terminology,[5] Kuruvilla is aware of Wolterstorff's version of world projection, and specifically of count generation.[6] However, ultimately Kuruvilla opts to use Ricoeur's framework of the "world in front of the text," with which I have interacted in chapter 5.

Finally, James Kay writes:

> In preaching, of course, a human being proclaims the promise or Word of God speaking "on behalf of" the Word of God. . . . But this no more vitiates the promise as God's than when an ambassador, speaking for a head of state, conveys official greetings or pronouncements. . . . Such "double agency" is a common feature of everyday language, and it is characteristic of preaching.[7]

Other than these brief interactions with Wolterstorff, I have discovered no other homileticians who have appropriated his work. I do so here, and in order to construct a hermeneutic for preaching will first introduce an extension of the concept of world projection, which I call "inhabitation."

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[3] Clayton Libolt, "God's Speech: A Conversation with Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse,*" *CRUX* 43 (2007): 29. I should also mention Casey Barton's *Preaching Through Time,* in which he includes Wolterstorff's theory of world projection among the many "spatially oriented" homiletical models (197).

[4] David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Promise and Cross: Homiletical Theology, the Vocative Word Extra Nos, and the Task of a Revisionist Eschatology," in *Homiletical Theology in Action: The Unfinished Theological Task of Preaching,* ed. David Schnasa Jacobsen (Eugene: Cascade, 2015), 114. This evaluation of preaching as human illocution appropriating divine locution seems to me incorrect, or at least seriously incomplete. See §8.3.5 for indications of how Wolterstorff's work can frame not just biblical interpretation, but also the act of sermon delivery.

[5] *TTP,* 9, 79, 108.

[6] *TTP*, 33-34.

[7] Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 12. Kay uses the term double agency discourse and Wolterstorff's example of an ambassador but does not cite *Divine Discourse*. It seems clear, in spite of this oversight, that he is indebted to Wolterstorff's work.

2 Supplementing Wolterstorff's Work with Inhabitation

As chapters 2 and 3 argued, the hermeneutical fragmentation within homiletics has led to incompatible methodologies for interpretation, whereby authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics appear to be at odds with one another. A hermeneutic adequate to homiletics must be able to explain how those entities cooperate or conflict in the interpretive process. The concept of inhabitation provides the needed link.

The reader will recall that in this thesis, "readers" of the text are preachers interpreting the Bible. Also, the term "author" in biblical studies is flexible, including original authors, editors, the canonizing church, and God.

2.1 The Need for a Supplement to Wolterstorff's Hermeneutic

Chapter 5 contended that world projection must be supplemented with a robust description of how preachers respond to projected worlds. According to Wolterstorff, understanding a projected world consists of comprehending two things: the propositional content (roughly corresponding to sense and reference) that the biblical author conveyed by the text and the illocutionary stance(s) that the author took toward that content.

In reading Eph 1:3–14, for example, I may conclude that Paul projects a world where God blesses his people with abundant spiritual blessings as a result of the Father's eternal plan, the Son's obedient death and resurrection, and the Spirit's application of those blessings. The propositional content is about God's actions on behalf of people, and refers to the Godhead, to Ephesian Christians, and perhaps to other believers. I may also conclude that Paul takes up illocutionary stances by asserting this state of affairs to be true, by rendering thanks to God, and by prompting his readers to praise God for his "glorious grace."[8]

While I agree that preachers should interpret propositional content and illocutionary stance, their practice of interpretation includes more than comprehension. It

[8] Not to overburden the discussion, I leave to the side Wolterstorff's ideas that God appropriates this discourse as a part of the canon, and that a second move in interpretation would be to discern the divine action of world projection from this text.

involves a robust personal involvement with and response to the biblical text. But only in one article does Wolterstorff hint at what such personal involvement entails.[9]

Here I introduce a concept to describe that involvement: "inhabitation." The discussion proceeds as follows: I first develop the idea of inhabitation using the Speech-Act category of perlocution. Next, I outline how preachers discern an author's perlocutionary attempts, and finally I propose a process for inhabitation when interpreting a biblical passage.

2.2 Inhabitation as a Type of Perlocution

Inhabiting a projected world is what preachers do in order to understand a text personally.[10] Inhabitation is built on the Speech-Act term "perlocution." Recall that an agent, in speaking or writing, creates a locution (a speech or a text), which has propositional content. The agent takes up an illocutionary stances toward that locution (asserting, warning, teaching, confessing, and so on), and the hearer or reader makes a perlocutionary response (believing, doubting, heeding, contradicting, and so on).[11] This element of Speech-Act Theory—perlocution—though neglected by Wolterstorff, bolsters his hermeneutic in a homiletically helpful way. I will make use of perlocution to develop the idea of inhabitation.[12]

In order to do so it will help to distinguish the perlocutionary *attempt* from the perlocutionary *response*.[13] An author or speaker may attempt to have an audience respond

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[9] Wolterstorff, "Living within a Text," 202-13. Here he suggests that what he calls "living within a text" is best described by someone trying to live in conformity with the world projected by the text. However, he does not elaborate on this concept.

[10] Once again, I use the term "understand" in Gadamer's robust sense of personal engagement and application.

[11] The reader will recall that this is Wolterstorff's version of Speech-Act Theory. For details on how it differs from Austin's and Searle's versions, see the discussion in §5.2.2.

[12] Discussions of perlocution in Searle and Austin are tantalizingly brief. They focused instead on illocution. Austin, *How to Do Things*, 101-3; Searle, *Speech Acts*, 25-26.

[13] In his discussion of perlocution, Vanhoozer refers not to the perlocutionary *attempt*, but to the perlocutionary *intention*. This confuses things, because intent may refer to mental content, not enacted reality. I use the term *attempt* here (an action-oriented term) for clarity. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a*

in a certain way: Paul attempted to inspire his contemporaries, upon hearing Ephesians 1:3-14, to praise God. However, their perlocutionary response is another matter: the original readers may have indeed praised God—or they may have become confused by his complex sentence or objected to the idea of predestination. The perlocutionary attempt is authorial and is part of the author's illocution.[14] However, the perlocutionary act belongs to the audience, and can result in as many responses as there are readers.

Thus, the perlocutionary response is a preacher's response to the discerned perlocutionary attempt of an author. Inhabitation of a projected world is the set of perlocutionary responses of a preacher in response to the world projection (the set of illocutions) of the author. Consequently, in the Ephesians example, inhabitation would not refer to Paul's attempt to get all readers to praise God, but to a preacher's subsequent action of praising God. I first discuss how preachers can discern an author's perlocutionary attempt, and then analyze the preacher's perlocutionary response.

2.3 Discerning the Perlocutionary Attempt

Perlocutionary attempts form a subset of the author's illocutions.[15] Therefore discerning perlocutionary attempts is one part of discerning the author's act of world projection.[16] Once preachers understand an author's illocutions, they will recognize some of those as perlocutionary attempts. For example, preachers reading Eph 1 may conclude that Paul

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Meaning, 251. Austin himself (*How to Do Things with Words*, 118) distinguishes between the perlocutionary *object* (which may or may not happen) and the *sequel* (which is what does in fact happen).

[14] This confusing terminology is unfortunate because it uses the adjective "perlocutionary" in regard to what is an author's action—to what is an illocution. Briggs notes this when he writes, "Intended effect is not a sharp enough tool to distinguish between illocution and perlocution" (*Words in Action,* 67). But Speech-Act Theory contains no separate category for what it is that an illocution attempts to do in another person. In general, Vanhoozer's otherwise excellent discussion evinces this confusion between a perlocutionary attempt or intention and a perlocutionary response (*Is There a Meaning*, 202-65). I retain the term perlocutionary attempt for consistency with other work in Speech-Act Theory.

[15] That is because some illocutions (baptizing, naming, etc.) may not be an attempt to elicit responses but are simply a way of doing something by saying something.

[16] §5.2.2 outlined how that discernment takes place. Authors use convention, stipulation, and salience to convey their illocutions to readers.

accomplishes three illocutions: he commands his readers to praise God, he asserts the truth of his statements, and he renders thanks to God. When Paul commands his readers to praise God, he makes a perlocutionary attempt. In fact, when he asserts the truth of his statements, he thereby probably attempts to get his readers to agree. It is also possible but not certain that when he renders thanks to God, he is also trying to get his readers to give thanks as well. Some or all of his illocutions will include perlocutionary attempts. In general, when an agent projects a world by means of a text, readers (whether original readers, preachers, or anyone else) comprehend an agent's perlocutionary attempts by discerning as many as possible of the agent's illocutionary stances.

However, it is important to qualify the above discussion, in that perlocutionary attempts may be open-ended.[17] Authors of some texts, such as parables or the radical wisdom literature, do not attempt to elicit specific responses. They may invite an indeterminate number of responses, depending on any reader's particular situation. For instance, what is Jesus' perlocutionary attempt when telling the parable of the Prodigal Son? Is he trying to get his listeners to marvel at God's forgiveness? To repent of judgmentalism? To welcome sinners home? Any of these might fit in with a positive, cooperative response to the parable, and may depend on the listener's situation. Yet, other texts attempt fairly concrete responses: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Tim 2:1).

Thus, a hermeneutic for homiletics requires that preacher-interpreters attempt to comprehend the propositional content of an agent's world projection, as well as that agent's illocutionary stances toward that world. Some of those stances will be an attempt on the part of the author to elicit a perlocutionary response. The preacher comprehends those attempts and then responds to them. I now move from a discussion of an author's perlocutionary attempts to a preacher's perlocutionary responses.

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[17] On the notion of open and closed texts, see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 3-11.

2.4 Types of Perlocutionary Responses

Preachers' perlocutionary responses are variable, because human responses to requests are variable. Preachers may respond to perlocutionary attempts cooperatively (as when an author asserts and a preacher believes that assertion); they may respond contrarily (as when an author commands and a preacher refuses); they may respond irrespectively (as when an author warns and a preacher, understanding the warning, celebrates); or they may respond mistakenly (as when an author warns and a preacher, misunderstanding the warning, mocks the author).[18]

Audiences and readers have been making such responses for centuries. For instance, those who heard the Old Testament prophets displayed all of these responses to perlocutionary attempts. The king of Ninevah and his people responded cooperatively to Jonah's words (Jonah 3:5-9). The king of Judah responded to Jeremiah's warnings contrarily, burning up the scroll of the prophet's words (Jer 36:20–26). Hezekiah responded irrespectively to Isaiah's prediction of doom when he concluded, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?" (2 Kgs 20:16–19). And the exiles in Babylon responded mistakenly to Ezekiel when they supposed his warnings of disaster were mere parables (Ezek 20:46–49). Just like those who listened to the prophets, preachers-as-readers respond to perlocutionary attempts in the Bible. Once authors make perlocutionary attempts, preachers make perlocutionary responses.

Inhabitation of a world is thus the set of a preacher's perlocutionary responses. It occurs in response to an agent's attempts which that agent made when projecting a world via that text.[19]

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[18] This is one way to categorize perlocutionary responses. One could also organize them, as Robinson does, by the likelihood that an author would condone them. Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," in Robinson and Larson, *Art and Craft*, 309.

[19] Of course, if most or all of a reader's perlocutionary responses are contrary, irrespective, or mistaken, then "inhabitation" would be a poor descriptor. For the purposes of preaching, however, it may be assumed that, to some degree, Christian preachers will attempt to cooperate with many of the illocutions of the text. Complete, conscious resistance to or disregard of a text is hardly standard homiletical practice.

2.5 Inhabitation Links Author, Reader and Critical Hermeneutics

Inhabitation explains how preachers and authors interact during interpretation. It also allows a robust place for critical hermeneutics. I illustrate this process with a single passage (Ps 23) and assume that preachers interpret the Psalm for the world projected by King David.[20]

First, the author (David) projects a world by composing the text of Ps 23. He takes up illocutionary stances towards certain states of affairs. In interpretation, preachers then attempt to comprehend the propositional content and the set of illocutionary stances that David took toward that content. A preacher may decide that David metaphorically expressed God's care for him (David) in the midst of his own life circumstances as king of Israel (propositional content). The preacher may also decide that David was taking illocutionary stances like asserting this state of affairs as true, suggesting that this state of affairs holds for all of God's people, and commending an attitude of trust in God's providential care.

Note the complexity of the process. The Psalm contains metaphors, mentions shepherding practices, and refers to YHWH, the covenant God of Israel. Understanding these features will require exegetical skill, literary sensitivity, historical inquiry, and theological awareness. In addition, a preacher's presuppositions will play an enormous role in interpretation from the start. Beliefs and knowledge about the identity of YHWH, about King David's actual words and how closely they may have been preserved in the Psalm, about the role of shepherds in the Ancient Near East, and preachers' own experiences akin to the "valley of the shadow of death" will affect their understanding of the world projected by the author.

Once preachers grasp what they believe to be the author's action of world projection, they inhabit that world. That is, they respond to David's illocutions: cooperatively, contrarily, irrespectively, and mistakenly. As above, their presuppositions

[20] The following discussion can be easily modified to accommodate other views on the original authorship of Ps 23.

will influence the process. One preacher may decide to respond with trust to the author's commendation of God's care; another, because of painful life experiences, will reject David's overture. Authors and readers (preacher) work together and will both contribute to interpretation. While the author is the one who projects the world, preachers' presuppositions and inhabitation of that world are their own.

Furthermore, interpretation is a process perforated with critical hermeneutical moments. Bible readers do not just comprehend and respond: they suspect, interrogate, double-check, and experiment. Preachers will have moments when they doubt the text, doubt their own understandings of the text, doubt the author, and doubt the very process of interpretation. As earlier chapters discussed, preachers, in Apel's terms, exit the language game of a sympathetic listener and participate in a language game akin to psychoanalysis.[21] Those studying the assurances of God's comfort in darkness in Ps 23 may back away from the text, and ask questions such as, "Does the switch of metaphors in v 5 mean the poem is the result of clumsy redactional activity? Has David experienced the same type of pain and distress that I have? Can I trust his experience to guide my own? Have I been blinded to aspects of this text by its familiarity in my life? Is this text merely trying to lull me into a fatalistic acceptance of whatever comes along?" Preachers hit speed bumps during the study process when they suspend their listening posture in order to examine power dynamics in the text and may even conclude that a discourse is malformed.[22]

Two qualifications pertain. First, projecting a world involves a *set* of illocutionary stances. By means of a single text authors do many things. That means, of course, that preachers respond to each of those illocutionary actions. And each action may elicit multiple (and perhaps contradictory) responses. For example, a preacher reading Ps 23 may respond cooperatively to the psalmist's assertion that goodness and mercy will follow God's people, but she or he may also respond contrarily to David's notion of being led in

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[21] Apel, "Scientistics," 338-39. See §2.9 for discussion. Wolterstorff makes a similar point, saying, "It's in therapeutic types of situations that we divert our attention from what a person says to what their saying reveals about themselves" ("Response to Helm," 294).

[22] On the "fallback option" of concluding that a discourse is malformed, see *DD,* 88, 194.

paths of righteousness. In other words, one may draw comfort from a promise in the Psalm yet reject the assertion that God demands righteousness. Inhabitation, then, is a single word for the vast array of preachers' responses.

The second qualification is that, as others have noted, the hermeneutical process is not linear but circular.[23] Comprehension becomes refined over time with repeated readings and life experience. It is likely that a first reading of Ps 23 will change as preachers read the text over and over again. As Ollenberger notes, readings of a text are "revisable hypotheses."[24] For example, a preacher may come to an initial conclusion that God's presence in the shadowy valley means that God's people will never be harmed. Experience teaches otherwise and forces the preacher back to the text to generate different perlocutionary responses, which in turn will set the process going again. It is no wonder that sermon preparation cannot be done well in one sitting.[25] Preachers must inhabit a world—try it on for size, as it were—and then return to the study again and again, in a circular fashion.

Inhabitation, then, refers to the set of perlocutionary responses to an author's act of world projection. It occurs in a circular process as one gradually comprehends that world, and it is perforated by moments of critical distanciation. It thus links together author, reader (preacher) and critical hermeneutics. See Figure 2.

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[23] Others have noted that interpretation involves a back-and-forth motion in which provisional understandings are refined. See, for example, *IT*, 75-88; Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 22-23.

[24] Ollenberger, "Pursuing the Truth," 53.

[25] See, for instance, Long, *Witness*, 70.

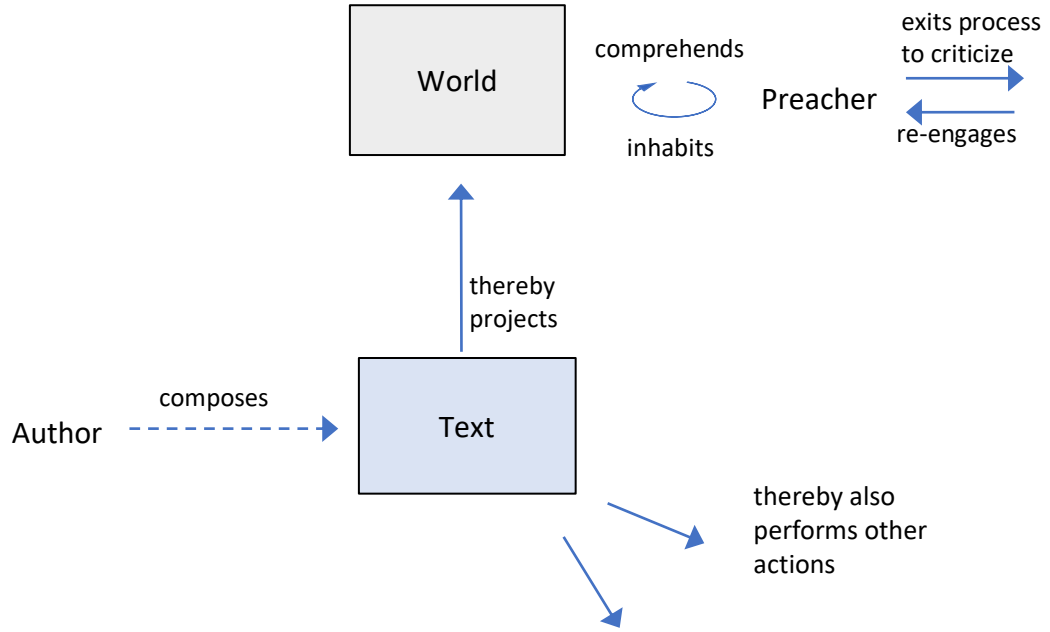

Figure 2: Inhabitation as Part of Interpretation

As in Figure 1, arrows represent the actions of various agents. An author composes a text—and thereby count generates other actions, including the action of projecting a world. Inhabitation and comprehension comprise an action loop as described above. Additionally, at various point in the process, preachers disengage from interpretation to perform critical analysis, of their own interpretive action. The complexity of the diagram is a reflection of the complexity of the act of interpretation. Furthermore, in the discussion below, various parts of the diagram will be modified or supplemented to describe specific types of interpretation.

To review, this thesis proposes a new hermeneutic for homiletics that combines world projection, appropriated discourse and inhabitation to describe the many things that preachers do with the biblical text in sermon preparation. The remainder of this chapter explains the hermeneutic, while chapter 7 will use theological goals to evaluate each variant. Therefore, the present discussion will be descriptive, explaining and illustrating a wide variety of interpretive methods—to some of which, no doubt, readers of this thesis

will object. Only in the following chapter will the discussion turn to the prescriptive, investigating the value and accuracy of those methods.

3 Projection Interpretation: A New Hermeneutic

Projection Interpretation is a hermeneutic that pays close attention to the projected worlds of different agents, how those agents appropriate the discourse of others in order to project a world, and how preachers subsequently inhabit those worlds.

Chapter 5's discussion of world projection and appropriated discourse listed the many agents that are capable of projecting a world with a text, and the variety of ways they can do so. When the text is the Bible, potential agents who can use the text to project a world include human authors/editors, God, the church, and preachers themselves. The actions that agents perform to project those worlds include authoring or editing a text, appropriating (adopting the freestanding illocutions of) a text, presenting (adopting merely the locutions of) a text, or performing (imagining what someone who is like oneself might mean by composing) a text.[26]

Projection Interpretation is able to describe the interpretation of any of these worlds projected by any of the agents above. Furthermore, it shows how different agents and actions will project different worlds. In other words, Projection Interpretation is able to describe (and evaluate) a host of possible interpretive practices that preachers adopt in biblical interpretation for preaching. As such, it is a comprehensive model.

This hermeneutic thus helps preachers make their methodological choices explicit when they interpret and reveals how those choices affect the process. When interpreting the Bible, preachers choose which agent and which world-projecting action of that agent they will interpret. For example, they can choose to interpret what God is saying by this

[26] The reader will recall from §1.3 that the type of interpretation which this thesis analyzes is the interpretation of a biblical passage in preparation for preaching in Christian worship. The interpretation of multiple texts or non-biblical texts falls outside the scope of this thesis.

text, what Mark is saying, or what they might have said if they had written it. Projection Interpretation makes those choices—and their theological consequences—explicit.

Making such choices evident is crucial for proper interpretation because it keeps preachers honest and congregations informed.[27] It makes explicit whose voice (God's, the church's, the preacher's, and so on) is speaking by means of a text and what authority that voice carries. Without such clarification, it will be too easy to take the thoughts of a preacher, a human author, or the church and ascribe to them the authority that belongs to God alone. Agents and actions must be made clear, and Projection Interpretation does that.

In order to describe the great variety of preachers' interpretive actions, Projection Interpretation is divided into three variants, or hermeneutical subspecies. Each variant is a modification of the general picture of textual interpretation presented in Figure 2. Together these three variants comprise the new hermeneutic for homiletics, Projection Interpretation.

I explain the three variants of Projection Interpretation using an example passage to illustrate the process. Because narrative texts tend to be more amenable than other genres to different interpretive modes, I use the narrative of Rahab and the Israelite spies found in Josh 2 and 6.

4 Variant 1: Agential-Discourse Interpretation[28]

In this first sub-type of Projection Interpretation, preachers interpret a world projected by another agent (see Figure 3). Agential-Discourse Interpretation proceeds thus: First, preachers choose which agent and which world-projecting action of that agent they will interpret. Then preachers comprehend the world projected by that agent and inhabit it.

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[27] This is a central benefit of removing the text as a house of meaning. The text, as discussed in §4.3, can function as a cipher for God, for an author, or for a reader, and can mask the consequences of choosing an interpretive agent.

[28] This name derives from Wolterstorff's concept of "authorial-discourse interpretation," which he develops in *Divine Discourse*. I have modified it here by broadening it to include non-authorial agents (like editors and God) who use a text to project a world.

That process includes robust roles for preachers-as-readers and is interspersed with critical hermeneutical acts. A discussion of the process follows.

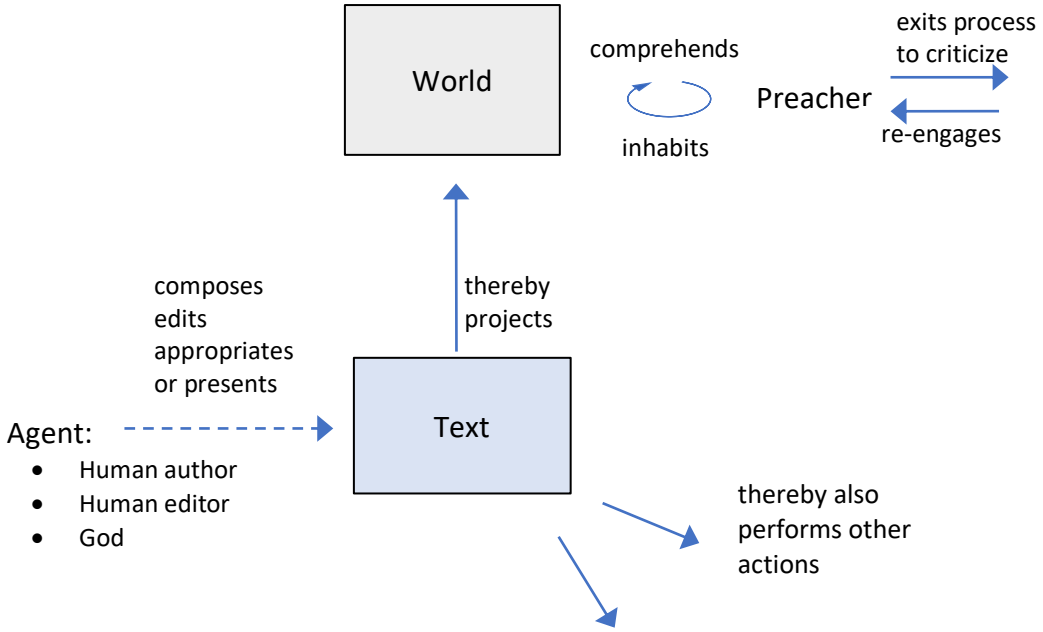

Figure 3: Agential-Discourse Interpretation

4.1 Preachers Make Choices in Agential-Discourse Interpretation

Because world projection requires an agent, preachers first choose the agent whose world projection they will study. The candidates in the case of a biblical text include not only the human authors or editors who were involved in the creation, arrangement, or canonization of the text, but also God. With reference to Josh 2 and 6, one may try to comprehend the world projected by, for example, an original author of Joshua, by later editors who incorporated this work into the canon, or by God. I consider each agent in turn and show how the choice of that agent might shape the preacher's interpretation of the passage.

First, preachers can choose to interpret the world projected by the original human author or an early editor/compiler.[29] An Israelite near the time of the conquest of Canaan may have recorded Rahab's story as an illustration of YHWH's power and the fame of his deeds, as well as YHWH's gracious rescue of a faithful Canaanite.[30] Consequently, the world projected by the human author is one where YHWH's mighty works have gone before him to testify to his greatness, and where he can use a Canaanite prostitute for his proclamatory purposes. The author asserts the truth of this world and urges readers to believe these things.

However, preachers may choose to interpret the action of other agents, like later authors or editors who appropriated the discourse in Josh 2 and 6 for their own purposes. For instance, the inclusion of Rahab in the genealogy of Christ in Matt 1 indicates that the gospel author views Rahab as an Old Testament witness to God's plans for the salvation of all nations. Similarly, the author of Hebrews lists Rahab as an example of faith. By including Matthew's genealogy in the canon, the church projects a different world using Josh 2 and 6. Preachers who select the church as the entity that adopts the entire canon will take these factors into account. The world that the church projects is one in which Rahab's faith rather than YHWH's power is at the center.[31]

Third, preachers may ask what God intended to communicate when he appropriated this text. As Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse* indicates, this will involve interpreting a human discourse first, and then asking whether and how God's

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[29] Josh 6:25 ("She has lived in Israel to this day") indicates a contemporary narrator, though some see this as a literary fiction for rhetorical effect Details about the identity and social location of such a person will depend to a large degree on the preacher's own views of the history of composition of Joshua. Thus, even from the first step, preachers' presuppositions have a powerful impact on interpretation.

[30] Evidence that this is the world projected by the human author would include, for example, Rahab's speech in Josh 2:9–14, in which she "knows" that YHWH has given the land to Israel, and that the hearts of the Canaanites have melted in fear.

[31] This is not to be confused with a preacher interpreting Matt 1 or Heb 11. Rather, this is a preacher interpreting Josh 2 and 6 against the canonical backdrop that views Rahab as a model of faith. The text appropriated is the canon, a part of which is Joshua.

appropriation of this text differs, if at all, from the human author's use of it.[32] For example, how does God's appropriation of the genocide at Jericho—wiping out men, women, and children—differ, if at all, from the original human author's? Some preachers, based on their theological convictions about God's relation to Scripture, would conclude that God meant exactly what a human author meant. There is no difference between God's voice and the human author's, and therefore God approves of the destruction of Jericho. Other preachers with dissimilar theological commitments would see significant differences between what an Israelite wrote and what God meant by appropriating that text. They might believe that God would strongly condemn such genocidal action. Thus, such preachers may conclude that God's appropriation of that text shows how God can work salvation even in the midst of horrible human evil.

Thus, different agents will project different worlds with the same text. Preachers reading the text may therefore choose to interpret this story as one that heralds God's power, one that commends the faith of Rahab as an example, or one that shows God's mercy during disaster. Each choice would lead to significantly different sermons. There is more than one projected world to choose from, because there is more than one agent using the text.[33]

However, the options are not exhausted yet. For after choosing an agent, preachers choose an action of that agent as the object of their interpretation, asking exactly what the agent did that counts as projecting a world. In the case of human agents, there is usually only one choice per agent: the author authored it, the editor edited it, and the church canonized it. In the case of divine agency, however, two possibilities exist: One can choose to interpret what God did by *authoring and then appropriating* this text, or one can choose to interpret what God does by *presenting* this text to the preacher. The difference is significant. God's authoring and appropriating a text indicates that he takes up the

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[32] *DD*, 183-222. The complexity of Agential-Discourse Interpretation grows when one considers that God may appropriate Josh 2 and 6, or else may appropriate the entire canon—or any historical layer in between. See §5.5.1 for discussion.

[33] These three are just examples; any agent who appropriated the text of Josh 2 and 6, thereby projecting a world, is a candidate for a preacher's interpretive efforts.

illocution of a human agent, and (with possible modifications), adopts it as his own to all future readers. But God's presentational discourse occurs when he adopts the locution of a text without regard for its original propositional content or illocutionary stance and presents the words in this one instance to one preacher.

Consequently, if God is simply presenting a text to a preacher, God could intend virtually any meaning that the words—the locution of the text—can sustain. For instance, God's presenting to me the text, "I know that the LORD has given you the land" (Josh 2:9) might be a metaphorical way of telling me that God wants my church to buy land for a new building. This is not what the original author meant, nor what God means for the entire church in appropriating this text—it is just what I think God means to me right now by presenting this text to me. Obviously, interpreting God's appropriation and God's presentation of the same text can lead to completely different interpretations and sermons. Agential-Discourse Interpretation encompasses all of these possibilities.[34] Preachers' choices of agents and actions are thus crucial to the interpretive process, because different agents and actions project different worlds.

4.2 Preachers Comprehend the Projected World and Inhabit It

Once preachers select an agent and a projected world, they engage in the circular process of comprehending the world projected and inhabiting that world, as explained earlier. That is, they ascertain the content of the projected world and the agent's illocutionary stances toward it, and then respond to those stances in various ways. For instance, suppose I select the church's canonical appropriation of Rahab's narrative. I conclude, among other things, that the world projected is a state of affairs in which God includes a Canaanite prostitute in the lineage of Christ.[35] I conclude that the church, by adopting both Joshua and Matthew into the canon, asserts that Rahab was an ancestor of Christ, that it thereby affirms God's inclusion of all nations into his kingdom, and that it also thereby urges readers to welcome

[34] §7.2 will use the theological goals for preaching as a grid for assessing these possibilities for their preaching value.

[35] All sorts of exegetical details are assumed here for the sake of brevity. Those who view Rahab or her inclusion into Matthew differently will, of course, perceive different projected worlds.

into the church social outsiders and notoriously sinful people. I thereby comprehend the world that the church projects.

Inhabiting that world (responding to those illocutions), on the other hand, may be problematic for me. Perhaps I have reservations about welcoming sex workers and sex-trafficked women into my local church. Perhaps I have preconceived notions of what these people are like. I react with significant discomfort and resistance. This is my perlocutionary response to the church's illocution. It may also lead in a circular fashion to a re-engagement with the text, and a deeper comprehension of how the church (and perhaps God) views Rahab, as respects not only her livelihood but her courage and her faith. My responses to the text begin to soften, and I imagine our church becoming more radically open to some groups of people. The circle of comprehension-inhabitation continues.

This is the process for Agential-Discourse Interpretation. Although it focuses on the discourse produced by another agent such as an author, Agential-Discourse Interpretation also includes important roles for preachers and for critical hermeneutics, and shows how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact.

4.3 Agential-Discourse Interpretation Includes Robust Roles for Preachers-as-Readers

Agential-Discourse Interpretation appears similar to Author-Focused Interpretation (in which readers try to discern the meaning communicated by an author via a text) but goes beyond it to account for the fact that the preacher-as-reader exerts significant influence on the interpretation. This is true in three ways.

First, in contrast to author-focused hermeneutics in which interpreters are set the single task of finding what "the author" said, in Agential-Discourse Interpretation preachers select the agent and the action to be interpreted. This is normally a matter of interpretive interest: what do preachers care about when they read a text? What world are they looking for? Preachers can choose an agent and an action based on personal preference, exegetical habit, theological conviction, liturgical considerations, and so on. Preachers' choices come first.

Second, when preachers comprehend an agent's projected world, they approach a text with a host of presuppositions: background knowledge, theological beliefs, life

experiences, prior understanding of the text,[36] what action systems are in place for count generation, and what questions they will have for the text. Additionally, as they attempt to comprehend the text, they elucidate and extrapolate from the clues of the text what an author suggests and what else may also be true about the world of the text. That guesswork can greatly affect the world preachers believe that an agent projected. Preachers in Rwanda may approach a text about ethnic cleansing significantly differently than preachers in monoethnic cultures. Agential-Discourse Interpretation takes those factors into account.

Third, preachers contribute their perlocutionary response to an interpretation. (This process is rarely mentioned in author-focused hermeneutics.) How they inhabit the world of the projecting agent is something over which that agent has no control. On the contrary: it is preachers-as-readers who decide how they will respond to another agent's illocutions. If preachers decide to reject an author's illocutions, or use them for entirely different purposes, there is nothing to prevent them.

4.4 Agential-Discourse Interpretation Includes Critical Hermeneutical Moments

Agential-Discourse Interpretation recognizes that preachers sit, as it were, in two chairs. They engage in sympathetic listening, comprehending and inhabiting the world projected by an agent. But they also engage in critical reflection on the discourse situation by being attuned to power dynamics, manipulative discourse, and also by examining themselves for ways in which their prejudices are operating. Projection Interpretation includes a recognition that in the process of interpretation preachers pull back, engage in critical reflection, and then return to interpretation.

In particular, the critical hermeneutical filter most often applied in homiletics is the filter of the gospel. The gospel, for evangelical preachers, protects the text from the reader, and for mainline preachers, protects the reader from the text.[37]

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[36] This includes the reader's view of the Bible as a single unified work. See Wolterstorff, "The Unity Behind the Canon," in *One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical Theological, and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Christine Helmer and Christof Landmesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 222-25.

[37] See the discussion of critical hermeneutics in homiletics in §3.5.

So, for evangelical preachers, there may be moments in the comprehension/inhabitation of Josh 2 and 6 when they step back from the interpretive process and evaluate their own interpretations by the filter of the gospel. For instance, evangelical preachers may find themselves admiring Rahab's courage in the face of danger, her magnanimous attitude to the Israelite spies, and her compassionate inclusion of her family in her own rescue. But as they step back, they remember: the gospel as they understand it cautions them that this passage is not about human bravery or nobility. The Bible is not about human bravery and nobility. The Bible is about God's grace in Christ. For all of Rahab's courage, she could never save herself. In the face of judgment, it is God alone who provides a way of rescue. Critical reflection on the gospel allows them to modify their approach to a text, and to protect that text from their own moralistic interpretation.

Conversely, mainline preachers use the gospel to protect the reader from the text: when the text does not advance values consistent with their understanding of the gospel, the gospel must be used to evaluate and perhaps reject elements in the text. Mainline preachers may conclude that the human author views most Canaanites as the proper objects of genocide. As they read the text, they may begin to see the inhabitants of Jericho as evil and deserving of God's wrath. But the gospel (as they understand it) pulls them up short: it protects them from sub-gospel ideas in the text. It can lead them to criticize or reject the stance of the human author, and even to preach against the text. In both cases, evangelical and mainline, critical hermeneutical moments interrupt the interpretation process, causing preachers to question proposed interpretations.

4.5 Agential-Discourse Interpretation: Conclusion

Agential-Discourse Interpretation, the first variant of Projection Interpretation, happens when preachers interpret a world projected via the biblical text by another agent. Preachers choose the agent (human author, editor, church, God) and the world-projecting action of that agent (authoring, editing, canonizing, presenting). Those choices allow preachers to isolate one projected world out of many possible projected worlds. They then comprehend and inhabit that world, a process which will be interrupted by moments of critical distanciation.

Agential-Discourse Interpretation has three features that render it a successful solution to the problem of fragmented hermeneutics for homiletics. First, it is comprehensive. It embraces a variety of interpretive practices that preachers actually adopt when they study the Bible in preparation for preaching. Because many agents project many worlds from a single text, and because interpretation of that world involves the influence of preachers and critical hermeneutics, the single narrative of Rahab and Jericho's fall can lead to widely diverse projected worlds, which will lead to many distinct interpretations and different sermons.[38]

Second, Agential-Discourse Interpretation is clear: it explains how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics all operate together during the act of interpretation. None of the three need be excluded to make room for the others.

Third, by clarifying those divergent interpretations as springing from different agents, actions, and projected worlds, Agential-Discourse Interpretation allows for the theological assessment of such interpretations. In other words, it is possible to judge the value and accuracy of a particular interpretation according to the theological goals of homiletics. This is because each interpretation comprises one analysis of one action (world projection) by one agent. For instance, if I interpret God's presentational discourse to me by means of Joshua 2 and 6—his personal communication to me in my time and place by appropriating the words of the passage—then I may also ask whether such private communication between God and me can produce a sermon with sufficient authority for preaching and whether it can be regulated by the values of the gospel. Clarifying that God means such-and-such to only me at this specific time may have a bearing on whether that meaning is authoritative for the church. Agential-Discourse Interpretation, by elucidating the source of an interpretation, can help to assess its theological value. Such assessment, in fact, will occupy the majority of the next chapter.

For all its variety, Agential-Discourse Interpretation is only one of three variants of Projection Interpretation. The second is called "Self-Discourse Interpretation."

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[38] The reader will note that this is but one variant of Projection Interpretation. The next two variants will introduce yet more possible interpretations and sermons from Josh 2 and 6.

5 Variant 2: Self-Discourse Interpretation[39]

In this variant, the preacher assumes the role of the world-projecting agent. That is, the preacher uses a biblical text to project a world, and then inhabits that world. See Figure 4.

[39] Self-Discourse Interpretation is related to what Wolterstorff (*DD*, 171-82) labels "performance interpretation." In performance interpretation, readers ask the question, "What might someone who shared my convictions have said by inscribing the words [of a text]?" (177). I have introduced the term "Self-Discourse Interpretation" to indicate the differences between Wolterstorff's notions and my own. They are as follows. Wolterstorff does not label performance interpretation as discourse, because there is only one party (the reader), rather than two (author and reader). However, talking to oneself is a valid form of discourse. Wolterstorff also denies that performance interpretation is an appropriation of a text, because readers adopt only the locution and not the illocution of authors. In this I believe he is correct, but I would go on to affirm that what he calls performance interpretation is a form of presentational discourse: it is the presentation of a text (locution) to oneself in a discourse event. In the same way that God can present a text to a person, so can readers present a text to themselves—taking the locution and adopting their own illocutionary stance toward it. In Self-Discourse Interpretation, rather than using God or another agent to mask the preacher's own values, the designation of this activity as self-discourse makes explicit the attribution of actions to agents in interpretation.

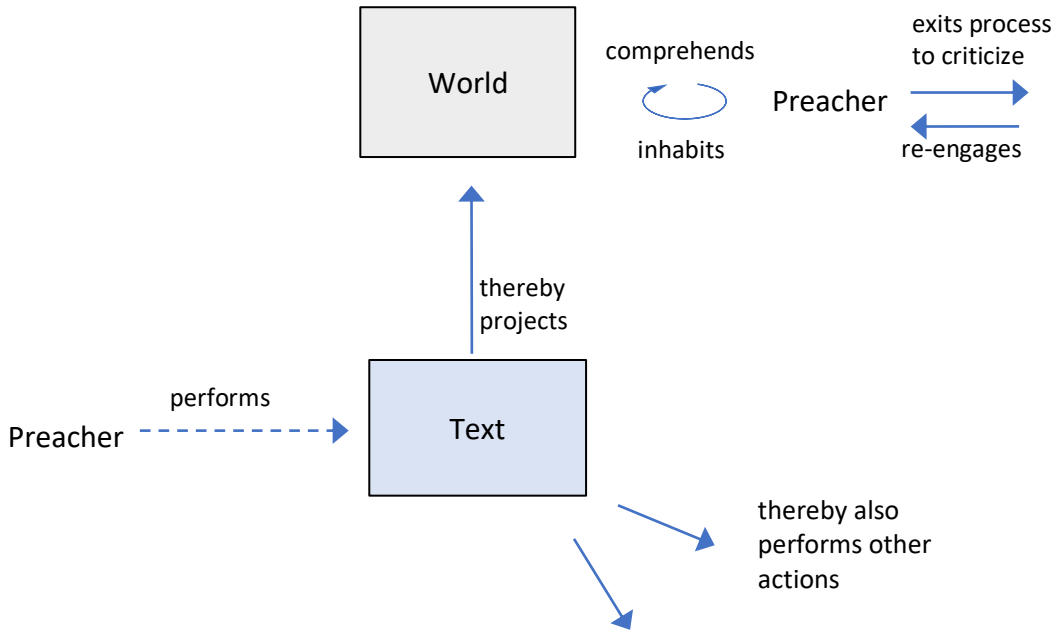

Figure 4: Self-Discourse Interpretation

5.1 Self-Discourse Interpretation: Projecting and Inhabiting a World

As in Agential-Discourse Interpretation, the preacher comprehends and inhabits the world projected by an agent. However, that agent is the preacher. Preachers imaginatively ask, "What might I, or someone like me, have meant by means of this text?" The propositional content and the illocutionary stance are determined with reference to what preachers themselves would mean by this text. Neither authors, editors, nor God feature in the interpretive process. For instance, in reading Josh 2 and 6, preachers may imagine Rahab as the villain of the story. They may, because of values that they hold, use this text to project a state of affairs in which Rahab sinfully abandons her people to powerful Israelite invaders. The story now reads as a richly ironic portrayal of a traitor. It may function as an illustration of the fact that "the Bible was produced . . . almost exclusively by the 'historical

winners,' " because Israel—the victorious nation that adopted Rahab—wrote this story to paint her and themselves in a positive light.[40]

Alternatively, preachers may imagine someone using this narrative to construct an elaborate allegory, in which Rahab represents the contemporary Western church, comfortable in her modern society (Jericho). The Israelite invaders are immigrants from the majority world, which their country sees as a threat. Immigrants appear to be coming to destroy their culture and way of life. But the church, in order to survive, must shelter these immigrants, knowing that they are the future of society.

These readings happen without reference to a historical author or what the author meant by composing the text. They are based on choices and preferences that originate in the preacher. Preachers are the ones listening to the text and speaking via the text; they both project and interpret a world. This is self-discourse.[41]

Just as in Variant 1 (Agential-Discourse Interpretation), subsequent to projecting a world, preachers inhabit that world in various ways. They engage in the hermeneutical circle of comprehension/inhabitation. They also practice the same gospel-filter critical hermeneutics as they interpret.

In Self-Discourse Interpretation, preachers do not simply assert what they already know or what they already want to say. This is possible, but not necessary. Preachers use the text as a sort of prism that refracts their thoughts through the textual lens. They may learn new facts, change their minds, and discover things that they had forgotten or things about themselves of which they had not been aware. Self-Discourse Interpretation, because it proceeds via the text, represents a genuine interpretive process.

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[40] Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 120.

[41] Walton, in his review of *Divine Discourse*, speaks of the act of world projection as a special type of illocution, that does not require an agent: he thinks that texts, like other types of art, can project worlds without an agent. My response is that rather than ascribe actions to inert objects, why not ascribe the action of projection to the only agent present—the reader? Kendall L. Walton, Review of *Works and Worlds of Art* by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 190-92.

Some may find Self-Discourse Interpretation a bizarre way to read a text. However, as the next section shows, it describes a variety of common interpretive practices.

5.2 Examples of Self-Discourse Interpretation

Readers use some interpretive practices to ask questions that the text's authors never intended the text to answer.[42] For example, one may ask what the Rahab narrative reveals about urban economic practices or flax production in ancient Canaan. Such approaches are examples of Self-Discourse Interpretation. I give several more examples below, showing how they are instances of readers presenting a text to themselves in order to project various worlds.[43]

Culler's "overinterpretation"—or the creation of novel and unlikely interpretations for their own sake—is a species of self-discourse.[44] Asking what an interpreter with a penchant for originality might mean by this text is an instance of self-discourse. The reading I mentioned above that viewed Rahab as a traitor in an ironic narrative is an example of overinterpretation.

Ideological interpretations fall here as well, because preachers use a text to project a world where certain ideologies come to prominence. Authors may or may not have been aware of how their composition reflects, conflicts with, or vindicates certain ideologies. But preachers can use texts to project worlds where those ideologies take center stage. A feminist interpreter of Rahab's narrative, for example, might use the text to portray a world where patriarchy and social conditions leave women with no other vocational option than prostitution.[45] Rahab, the heroine, rejects her unjust society and finds a place in the alternative community of God's people, where she regains her family and her social status.

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[42] See §2.9. Booth uses "overstanding" as a catchall term for interpretive actions that ask questions of the text that the authors were not trying to answer. *CU*, 242.

[43] My purpose here is not to dismiss these interpretive practices, but to categorize them and to show how the concept of Self-Discourse Interpretation adequately describes them. Note that these are not all homiletical interpretations but come from general hermeneutics as well.

[44] See Culler, "In Defense of Overinterpretation," 109-23.

[45] See the excellent introduction to feminist interpretation in Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 180-86.

Whether or not the historical authors or editors were aware of or cared approved feminist ideas is irrelevant. Preachers care, and therefore they use this text to project a world that comments on feminist issues. Similarly, a post-colonialist interpreter might use the text to project a world where imperial conquerors co-opt insiders from a native society in order to infiltrate and subjugate other peoples. Rahab in this interpretation is the victim of colonial imperialism.

Stanley Fish's model, focused on the values of an interpretive community, is self-discourse on a communal level.[46] Preachers ask, what might someone in my community who holds my values mean by this text? What, for example, does my community believe about divine judgment? If my community does not affirm the reality of divine judgment, I may use the text as evidence of benighted ancient superstition, rather than righteous action on God's part. I project a world where ignorant Israelites wrongly impute their own false narratives about judgment to YHWH. In my community, the Rahab narrative becomes a cautionary tale, warning against unenlightened views of God.

The practice of "accommodation" falls here as well. Schneiders defines accommodation as the application of a text to a novel situation without regard for its original context.[47] This is self-discourse interpretation, because it asks, "What might someone in this novel situation mean by these words?" Josh 2:14 reads, "Our life for yours, even unto death!" Preachers can accommodate this sentence at a wedding to express the idea that spouses are bound together for life. The preacher presents these words to the couple without regard for their original illocutionary force. Accommodation is yet another species of self-discourse.

Finally, some forms of Rorty's socio-pragmatism may be considered self-discourse.[48] Rorty views texts not in terms of meaning but in terms of use. How do people want to use texts? Of course, one such use is to project worlds for various purposes. Perhaps I want to

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[46] Fish, *Is There a Text*.

[47] Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 163-64.

[48] For a sample of Rorty's approach to text interpretation, see Rorty, "The Pragmatist's Process," 89-108.

use this text to tell an exciting story of espionage, or to stir up my friends against immigration or against neighborhood violence. This too is a species of Self-Discourse.

The point of this brief review is to show how Self-Discourse Interpretation can describe many hermeneutical methods that are available to preachers. In chapters 2 and 3 interpretive systems like these appeared to be completely at odds with traditional author-focused interpretation. But the tools of Projection Interpretation show them both to be variants of the same event: interpreting worlds projected by agents who use texts. They are connected by the concepts of world projection and appropriated discourse. Furthermore, subsuming these methodologies under the same overarching concepts enables hermeneutical and theological comparisons. If both variants are just different instances of world projection, then how do they compare in their theological value for preaching? Chapter 7 will be devoted to answering such questions.

5.3 Why Abandon the Author?

Even if Self-Discourse Interpretation includes these forms of discourse, preachers who favor author-focused hermeneutics may ask tough questions of Self-Discourse Interpretation. They may ask, "Even if such methods can be incorporated into a hermeneutic, why would one want to do so? Why would one want to practice Self-Discourse Interpretation, when authors, editors and God stand ready at hand?" Four replies come to mind.

First, Self-Discourse Interpretation appears in this hermeneutical model for homiletics because this is what some preachers do. Projection Interpretation describes the fractured state of hermeneutics and homiletics, and to this point my aim has been to describe interpretive practice as it does occur before proceeding to how it ought to occur.

Second, not only is this what some preachers do, this is also what some supposedly author-focused preachers do. Author-focused hermeneuts sometimes practice self-discourse in spite of their professed theories. For instance, the idea that the "scarlet cord" Rahab hung out of her window (Josh 2:18) is somehow related to the blood of Christ has no possible source in the human author, nor is there any indication in the canon that this connection is intended by the church or by God. But it is nearly irresistible, to someone

who holds certain theological convictions, to read the story that way.[49] This is self-discourse.

Third, Self-Discourse Interpretation produces interesting results that are relevant to preachers and their congregations. In the current cultural context of the United States, issues of immigration feature prominently and regularly in the news. The church is thinking and talking about immigration. Though Israel's invasion of Canaan is not a parallel case, the words and events in the story stir the imagination and get preachers asking questions. Self-Discourse interpretation allows those questions to see the light of day in a way that author-focused interpretation may not.

Fourth, an accusation lurks beneath questions about Self-Discourse Interpretation: that what truly makes Self-Discourse Interpretation suspect is that it has no limits. If by "no limits" one means an indefinite number of interpretations, this is clearly true. But if by that phrase one means interpretations at the will of the preacher—any interpretation whatsoever—then this is false; the text itself, though by no means univocal, will not substantiate any reading whatsoever. Rahab's narrative may function in many ways in different hands, but it is not a literal, intelligent, successful discussion of college football—no matter who is reading.[50]

Nonetheless, the accusation (that Self-Discourse Interpretation has no limits) has teeth. Self-Discourse Interpretation does produce a large number of conflicting readings of the same text. Yet so does Agential-Discourse Interpretation. The problem, it seems, is not that there are a large number of possible readings, but that there has not been an obvious way to evaluate those readings against one another because they hold to disparate

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[49] This interpretation has been on offer since the Church Fathers. See 1 Clement 12:7.

[50] Careful definition is needed here. To have "no limits" on interpretation can mean one of three things: It can mean a) that there are an indefinitely large number of interpretations, b) that there are no wrong interpretations so that any one will do, and c) that there is never a way to decide if one interpretation is better or more plausible than another. I am here stating that Self-Discourse Interpretation produces interpretations that are unlimited in sense a) alone. There are interpretations that the text will not substantiate. Furthermore, I argue that Projection Interpretation does give tools for assessing the value of different interpretations.

understandings of texts, authors, readers, and interpretations. Projection Interpretation, in contrast, brings all of these methodologies under one roof and, as I will show in chapter 7, is able to assess them.

5.4 Self-Discourse Interpretation: Conclusion

The second variant of Projection Interpretation, Self-Discourse Interpretation, describes a group of interpretive practices whereby preachers use a biblical text to project a world according to their preferred values, and then inhabit that world. Self-Discourse Interpretation, like Agential-Discourse Interpretation, is clear: it shows how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact in interpretation. Of course, in Self-Discourse authors contribute only the locution—the words of the text. The illocutions and perlocutionary responses are up to the preacher.

Also, like Agential-Discourse Interpretation, Self-Discourse Interpretation is comprehensive. It is able to describe a variety of interpretive methodologies within a single conceptual frame. Finally, I will show in chapter 7 that Self-Discourse Interpretation, because it clearly identifies and describes the actions of agents on texts, allows for a theological assessment of its value for homiletics.

6 Variant 3: Non-Discourse Interpretation

This final mode covers any action on a text by a preacher other than world projection. It is the most general of the three, embracing preachers' miscellaneous uses of Scripture. See Figure 5.

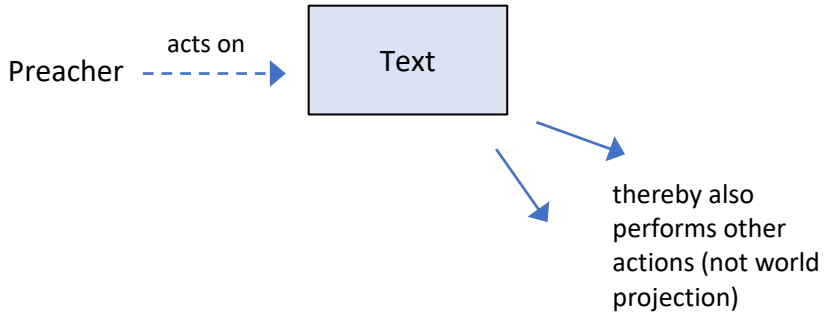

Figure 5: Non-Discourse Interpretation

Non-Discourse Interpretation is a recognition that some uses of the Bible for preaching simply are not cases of an agent taking an illocutionary stance toward a state of affairs. The examples that follow demonstrate that sometimes preachers do not interpret a projected world when they interpret the Bible.[51]

6.1 Examples of Non-Discourse Interpretation

Many of the ways that preachers use texts turn out to be examples of Non-Discourse Interpretation. I mention several. The majority represent attempts to get behind the text: to leverage the text in order to gather information about its antecedents. I mention four such practices.[52]

Schleiermacher's hermeneutical goal—to understand the mental state of the author—uses Non-Discourse Interpretation.[53] Interpreters here are not interested in the

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[51] From this description it is clear that Non-Discourse Interpretation is not a type of world projection at all. The entire hermeneutic, however is called "Projection Interpretation." This name is not intended to imply that any type of interpretation is a case of world projection; instead it indicates that world projection is the lens through which interpretive methodologies are viewed. Non-Discourse Interpretation includes all methodologies that fall outside that descriptor.

[52] Once again, I discuss these modes not to dismiss them, but to show how Projection Interpretation is able to categorize a wide variety of interpretive methodologies. Even labeling a methodology as *not* world projection will be helpful in assessing its theological value.

[53] See chapter 2 n. 59 for a discussion of this claim.

locutions or illocutions of the text. They are interested in making inferences about the thought life of an author. Such interpretations might ask, for example, whether the author of Joshua was bitter that he had not been born a Jew, and therefore invented a story to vindicate outsiders who joined the nation of Israel. Views about the author's psychological state are not illocutionary stances taken up toward states of affairs in the text. They are assertions about persons not in the text. This is not world projection.

A second example of Non-Discourse Interpretation involves some types of historical criticism. For some, this practice is about recovering the original communicative content and context of a text.[54] But in some practices of historical criticism, the world of the text is not in view. Scholars instead search for what the text betrays about its historical origins. For example, what is the likelihood that the text relates an actual historical event in the fall of Jericho? And what in the text can give clues for or against its veracity? Historical inquiry of this sort uses the text as evidence in other matters, not as a tool for projection. Of course, a historical author may have used this text to assert that these events really took place. However, historical criticism normally does not take such assertions at face value. Instead it sets aside those assertions in order to examine what an author unconsciously reveals—not what the author asserts—about the historical context of its composition. Therefore, historical criticism ignores authorial illocutions in order to draw historical conclusions.

Additionally, some types of theological use of the Scriptures fall here. Perhaps all a preacher cares about is what the narrative of Josh 2 and 6 contributes to the concept of missiology. For instance, what can be gleaned from Rahab's inclusion into Israel that might help recent converts from Muslim backgrounds to assimilate into their new Christian context? In this case interpreters do not analyze world-projecting actions of an agent, but instead query a text for what it can reveal about a pre-selected topic.

Non-Discourse Interpretation includes still other practices. The term describes virtually any use of a biblical text in preparation for preaching other than interpreting the world-projecting actions of agents. Sometimes preachers study a passage in order to

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[54] In this case, of course, practicing historical criticism more closely approximates Agential-Discourse Interpretation.

prepare to read it liturgically, use a passage as an illustration in a sermon based primarily on another passage, or include a poignant biblical phrase in a poem or a song for the liturgy. For instance, a sermon on Luke 15:4–7 (the parable of the lost sheep) may include a passing reference to Rahab's story: "God will find his lost sheep, especially the ones who have wandered far. He found Matthew the tax collector; he found Rahab the prostitute; he found Paul the persecutor of his church. God will find his lost sheep." Such a use of the text does not require that the preacher inhabit an agent's projected world from Josh 2 and 6. It is simply a passing reference to a well-known story in order to illustrate a point. The possibilities for Non-Discourse Interpretation are limited only by the theological stance and the creativity of the preacher.[55]

6.2 Non-Discourse Interpretation: Conclusion

Non-Discourse Interpretation describes any use of a biblical text for purposes other than comprehending and inhabiting a world projected from that text. It is a catch-all category, housing techniques as diverse as historical-critical analysis and the illustration of a point.

Because this type of interpretation does not include world projection or appropriated discourse, the dynamics of count generation, world projection, and inhabitation are not necessarily present. Chapter 7 will take these factors into account when assessing the theological value of various methods of Non-Discourse Interpretation.

7 Strengths of Projection Interpretation

The chapter thus far has introduced a new hermeneutic for homiletics, Projection Interpretation. First, it developed the concept of inhabitation as a necessary complement to world projection and appropriated discourse. The discussion showed how an agent's world projection is followed by a preacher's comprehension and inhabitation of that projected world and is interspersed with critical hermeneutical moments. The chapter then

[55] Borderline cases exist. Preparing to read Joshua 2 liturgically could merely involve practice pronouncing unfamiliar words. But it could also involve deeper and more imaginative engagement with the text, verging on inhabiting a projected world.

introduced the three variants of Projection Interpretation: Agential-Discourse Interpretation, Self-Discourse Interpretation, and Non-Discourse Interpretation. Each variant is organized around different agents performing different actions on the biblical text.

It is difficult at first glance to see how Projection Interpretation comprises a single hermeneutic. Instead it seems to be an array of exegetical methods used by preachers in studying the biblical text. All of the interpretations of Josh 2 and 6 proposed above, plus many others, would fit under the model. How can Projection Interpretation not just describe but also regulate biblical interpretation?

The answer is that description precedes prescription. Part of the value of Projection Interpretation is its ability to define significantly different methodologies using the same concepts and terminology: world projection and appropriated discourse. The diverse interpretations above are all depicted in those terms. This feature of Projection Interpretation—the way that it incorporates diverse methodologies un a single framework—gives it three strengths that are of conspicuous value to homiletics.

First, as a pluralistic hermeneutic, it is comprehensive. It describes not merely one thing, but the many things that preachers do with the biblical text. It does not ignore or outright dismiss the varied methods that preachers actually employ when interpreting the Bible. The framework of projected worlds and appropriated discourse can sympathetically describe each method, and by doing so clarify which action of which agent is the object of a preacher's interpretive efforts.

Second, it is clear. It shows how the entities of author, reader, and critical hermeneutics work together to produce interpretations. Instead of looking to an author or a text or a preacher for meaning, Projection Interpretation shows how preachers and authors work in cooperation (or competition) to produce and inhabit textual worlds. It also shows how the circular process of comprehension and inhabitation is interrupted by the distanciation of critical hermeneutical moments. These interruptions use the gospel to protect the text from the reader and the reader from the text. Projection Interpretation unites fragmented hermeneutics for preaching.

Finally, because it is able to house those various methodologies under one roof, Projection Interpretation can assess those methodologies for preaching. Projection Interpretation's unified way of describing different methodologies will be able to show which methods are most valuable for preaching, and whether one method is superior to another in its results. Such analysis will be the subject of the following chapter.

8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the contours of a new hermeneutic for homiletics: Projection Interpretation. Projection Interpretation is a hermeneutic that organizes interpretive methodologies around the world-projecting actions of agents on the biblical text.

This chapter first introduced the concept of inhabitation as a necessary complement to Wolterstorff's notions of world projection and appropriated discourse. It showed how an agent's world projection is followed by a preacher's comprehension and inhabitation of that projected world and is interspersed with critical hermeneutical moments in interpretation. The chapter then introduced the three variants of Projection Interpretation: Agential-Discourse Interpretation, Self-Discourse Interpretation, and Non-Discourse Interpretation. Each variant is organized around different agents performing different actions on the biblical text.

This chapter contended that Projection Interpretation, unlike the other systems, is comprehensive and clear enough to embrace and describe a plurality of methodologies for interpretation. It also claimed that Projection Interpretation can analyze those methodologies for their preaching value. That last claim is the subject of chapter 7.

Chapter 7:
Assessing Methods and Examples of Biblical Interpretation

We must seek whatever kind of argument is able to show that one kind of human intention . . . is for some reason superior to other kinds.

—Wayne C. Booth[1]

This thesis began by defining a problem in contemporary mainline and evangelical North American homiletics: systems for biblical interpretation in the discipline are fragmented into incomplete and unclear approaches that focus on author, text, reader, or critical hermeneutics. It demonstrated that such fragmentation followed a similar split in general hermeneutics in the twentieth century. It then argued that solving the problem will require a new hermeneutic that is comprehensive (that can accommodate multiple interpretive methodologies), that is clear (that can show how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics work together in interpretation), and that can assess those methodologies with reference to the theological goals to which mainline and evangelical homileticians subscribe.

Using hermeneutical concepts developed from Nicholas Wolterstorff, the previous chapter presented such a new hermeneutic: Projection Interpretation. The chapter began to show that Projection Interpretation has the strengths required to be a successful solution to the problem of fractured approaches to biblical interpretation for preaching. It

[1] *CU*, 52.

is able to describe multiple methods of interpretation. It also includes authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics in one hermeneutical system.

The present chapter completes the argument for Projection Interpretation's success as a homiletical hermeneutic. It will show that Projection Interpretation is able to assess interpretations. Projection Interpretation is thus a successful solution to the problem of fragmented hermeneutics for homiletics. The chapter proceeds as follows: I first revisit the distinction raised earlier between an interpretation's value and its accuracy. Next, I assess the value of the three variants of Projection Interpretation. Finally, I review six homiletical interpretations of a biblical passage, and assess them for value and accuracy.

1 Assessing for Value and Accuracy

Assessing biblical interpretations requires a differentiation between questions of accuracy and questions of value. Without this differentiation, it will be all too easy to jump to questions like, "Which interpretation is right?" After all, preachers rarely set out to interpret the Bible incorrectly. Even a homiletician like Buttrick, whose views on biblical interpretation are far from conservative, states, "While we may well resist the straitjacket of original meaning, most of us would not wish to turn texts into Rorschach ink blots," and asks, "Are we fenced in by original meaning? If not, is there *any* limit to interpretation?" He wants to be able to approve some interpretations and reject others.[2]

Preachers hope to interpret the Scriptures faithfully, to be able to reject faulty methodology, and to embrace systems that produce sound results. Foskett is not alone in wondering, "What makes an interpretation sound? What makes it faithful?"[3] She is, in fact, only restating the import of older words: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (1 Tim 2:15).

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[2] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 270-71.

[3] Foskett, *Interpreting the Bible*, loc. 186.

Is there, though, such a thing as one single correct interpretation of a pericope? Chapters 5 and 6 have cast serious doubt on that possibility. Those chapters showed that interpretation is not monolithic; different preachers come to texts with different goals. The success or failure of each interpretation should be judged based on the interpreter's goal. Finding out what Mark meant by his narrative of John the Baptist is not the same as finding out what I might mean by telling the same narrative, which is different again from looking at ways that the text betrays its historical origins or sociological slants. Different goals produce different interpretations--irreducibly different. Even conservative hermeneuts who seek the original author's intention have acknowledged that single, correct interpretations are normally non-existent or unattainable in practice.[4] I find such a stance entirely reasonable.

This is not, however, the end of the story. Homiletics need not resign itself to interpretive anarchy. Preachers can assess interpretations if they first distinguish questions of value from questions of accuracy. Value and accuracy are two different ways to take the measure of an interpretation, and the difference can be clarified by analogy—shooting an arrow at a target. When preachers interpret, they are attempting to do something; they aim at a particular goal. As chapter 6 explained, they may try to understand what an author did, what God said, or what they themselves might have meant. These are different targets, and much like archers, preachers shoot at different targets.

Assessing an interpretation for its value asks whether the target was worth aiming at in the first place. If preachers succeed in hitting that target, how valuable will that action be for preaching? For instance, if a preacher tries to discern how Luke arranged preexisting materials to form his gospel, the information may be of little homiletical value even if the

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[4] Wolterstorff asserts, "Interpreting for divine discourse is directly at the mercy of the vagaries of human belief." There is a constant risk of false interpretations, and according to him, "The risks cannot be eliminated." *DD*, 226, 236. Even an evangelical hermeneut like Osborne admits that it is "usually" the case that "texts are not so much objectively understood as they are read anew in each situation." His contention is that sometimes readers can engage in a stepwise, never-ending approach to an author's meaning: a hermeneutical spiral coming ever-closer (but never finally) to an accurate understanding. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 466.

interpretation succeeds. Assessing value asks about the homiletical worth of particular methodologies.

Chapter 4 argued that questions of value should be asked with reference to the goals shared by homileticians. This thesis has looked to theology for goals against which hermeneutical methodologies may be assessed. In other words, the theological values of preaching determine which targets are worth aiming for.

Assessing for accuracy is a different matter. It asks, "Did the preacher hit the target?" That is, given a particular set of goals, did the preacher meet those goals? For instance, given the goal of finding out how a Luke arranged his material, did the interpreter find the right answer? Assessing for accuracy asks whether an interpretation is successful according to its goals.

Projection Interpretation, I will argue, is able to assess interpretations in comparison with one another. It can show which of several interpretations is most valuable, or which is most accurate. In many cases, it will show that two different interpretations are attempts to hit two different targets. In these cases, assessment must be value-based. It will make little sense to ask which one was closer to the bullseye, because there are two different bullseyes. Instead one must ask which bullseye was more a more valuable target. Projection Interpretation can reveal when assessment should be value-based and can give guidance for which target holds more value for preaching. In other cases, Projection Interpretation can be used to show that two conflicting interpretations do in fact aim at the same target. Then questions of accuracy—which interpretation is closest to the bullseye—will come into play.

This chapter will thus show that Projection Interpretation can be used to assess biblical interpretations for preaching comparatively. The discussion proceeds as follows: First, I will assess methods of interpretation. That is, I will show that the three variants of Projection Interpretation—Agential-Discourse Interpretation, Self-Discourse Interpretation, and Non-Discourse Interpretation—have different values relative to theological goals for homiletics. There are multiple legitimate methodologies for

interpretation, but some hold more value than others. Projection Interpretation thus ranks different methods of biblical interpretation by their theological value.

Second, I will assess particular examples of interpretation. By using homileticians' published interpretations of a biblical passage, I will show that Projection Interpretation can categorize examples of interpretation into the three variants. Doing so will reveal whether two interpretations were aiming at the same target, and therefore whether they should be compared for value or accuracy. Projection Interpretation will thus be able to assess interpretations comparatively, according to either their theological value or their interpretive accuracy.

2 Assessing Methods: The Theological Value of the Three Variants

This section assesses not specific interpretations but general methods, weighing the three variants of Projection Interpretation for their theological value. The reader will recall from chapter 6 that when interpreting the Bible, preachers can discern the world projection of another agent such as God or a human author (Agential-Discourse Interpretation), use the text to project their own world (Self-Discourse Interpretation), or perform some other action on the text (Non-Discourse Interpretation).

In order to assess these variants, I will use the four theological goals developed earlier, which most mainline and evangelical homileticians endorse: to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach a message that has been personally understood, and to preach according to the gospel. Any methodology that can produce sermons that meet these four goals has value for preaching. For instance, if preachers use the text to project their own worlds (Self-Discourse Interpretation), and such projection allows them to preach a personally understood word of God with authority according to the gospel, then Self-Discourse Interpretation would be a valuable way to interpret the Bible for preaching.

Table 1 below displays the answers to the following question for each goal: "Can biblical interpretation done according to this variant assure that preachers will meet this goal when they preach?" It asks about the theological value of each variant.

Table 1: Can biblical interpretation done according to this variant assure that preachers can meet this goal when they preach?

Projection Interpretation Variant	To preach the word of God	To preach with authority	To preach a personally understood message	To preach according to the gospel
Agential-Discourse Interpretation	YES	YES	YES	TWO-WAY
Self-Discourse Interpretation	NO	NO	YES	ONE-WAY
Non-Discourse Interpretation	NO	NO	YES	ONE-WAY

The phrasing of the question above the table is deliberate. First, it asks not whether a variant *will* meet a goal, but whether it *can.* For example, the discussion below will show that Agential-Discourse Interpretation can meet the first goal (to preach the word of God) when done in specific ways. It will not always meet that goal, but it can. On the other hand, I will argue that Self-Discourse Interpretation can never meet this goal no matter how it is done.

Second, the question's phrasing asks whether *biblical interpretation*—the practice of reading and understanding a text—can meet the goal. In other words, it asks whether that goal is accomplished when preachers read and interpret the text, not when they pray or when they construct the sermon or when they preach. While preachers' other actions may meet that goal, this question focuses on the interpretive moment of reading and understanding the biblical text.

The next section discusses each variant in turn, explaining how it does or does not accomplish the four goals, and draws conclusions about its preaching value. For clarity, I

reprint the relevant section of Table 1 and use many of the examples of interpretations of Josh 2 and 6 which were offered in chapter 6.

2.1 Agential-Discourse Interpretation Can Meet Four Goals

Projection Interpretation Variant	To preach the word of God	To preach with authority	To preach a personally understood message	To preach according to the gospel
Agential-Discourse Interpretation	YES	YES	YES	TWO-WAY

When preachers interpret the world projection of another agent, such interpretation can satisfy all four goals.

(2.1.1) To Preach the Word of God. The first theological goal is to preach the word of God: to preach what God speaks. Agential-Discourse Interpretation can meet that goal when preachers interpret either 1) God's appropriation of a biblical text, or 2) God's presentation of that text to the preacher. Chapter 5 distinguished between these two concepts, in that God's appropriation of a text means his adoption of an agent's illocutionary stances as his own; his presentation of a text means his use of the text's locutions to one specific person at one time.

In the example from the book of Joshua, preachers who ask how God appropriated a human discourse—say, the original author's narrative of Rahab, or the narrative as part of the Christian canon—could meet the first goal. Thus, a preacher who believes God appropriated the story to tell people of his ability to rescue the faithful would be interpreting God's speech. Additionally, a preacher who believes that God would never condone Canaanite genocide and thinks God appropriated this narrative to show how he can work good in the midst of evil would also interpret God's own speech. These two preachers arrive at different understandings of what God said via this text, because they

have different beliefs about God's relationship to Scripture. Nonetheless, they both are interested in interpreting God's speech.[5]

Furthermore, preachers who believe that God is presenting this text to them—who believe (for instance) that Rahab's statement, "I know the LORD has given you the land" (Josh 2:9) implies God wants them to buy land for a new church building—would also be interpreting God's voice and could lay claim to hearing the word of God. In each case, preachers interpret God's speech, and thus can later preach that word of God.[6]

(2.1.2) To Preach with Authority. Because preachers in this variant convey the message of an agent other than themselves, they speak with the authority of that agent. They speak, for example, with the authority of the author of Joshua, or the authority of the canonizing church, or the authority of God who appropriated the message. They preach as heralds of another. This goal, however, is about preaching not with the authority of another human, but with God's authority (see the discussion in §4.2.5). Thus, just as with the first goal, preachers who interpret God's voice as he appropriates or presents a text can meet this goal.

However, in the case of interpreting God's presentational discourse (his one-time presentation of a text to a single person) it will be difficult to demonstrate that authority to others. Preachers will, in essence, tell congregations that God spoke personally to them via this text. Evidence for such a claim cannot come from historical, literary or social sources. Perhaps such a claim could be supported by a congregation's trust in the preacher's character.

(2.1.3) To Preach a Personally Understood Message. Homileticians rightly insist that biblical texts must be understood (in Gadamer's robust sense of the word) before they are preached. Agential-Discourse Interpretation can also meet this third goal. Interpreting a projected world involves not only the comprehension of that world but also the

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[5] Asking which interpretation is correct is a question of accuracy. See below for discussion.

[6] On the other hand, interpreting the human author's discourse, or an editor's, or the church's, is merely attempting to understand the communication of another human. It is not the word of God and therefore would not meet this goal.

inhabitation of that world by preachers. For instance, if preachers interpret the Rahab narrative as part of the canon, and believe God appropriates that story to hold out Rahab as an example of faith, then preachers can inhabit that world. They can make perlocutionary responses to God's illocutions. They may agree, or take heart, or imitate Rahab in her unwavering trust. In any case, when preachers inhabit a world in this way, they understand the message for themselves.

(2.1.4) To Preach According to the Gospel. Agential-Discourse Interpretation can also meet the final goal, which refers to the use of the gospel as a critical hermeneutical filter to protect the "text" (the agent's world projection) from the "reader" (the preacher) and vice versa.[7]

A brief note on the terminology of Table 1: the entries in the last column give two answers ("one-way" and "two-way"), because "preaching according to the gospel" can have two meanings in homiletics.[8] It can mean protecting the text from the reader or protecting the reader from the text. The gospel, in other words, can act as a critical filter that either causes preachers to suspect their own interpretations in light of what some agent projects, or to suspect that agent's meaning in light of the preacher's understanding of the gospel. Critical hermeneutics can move in either direction in homiletics.

In Agential-Discourse Interpretation, both directions are possible. Preachers can use the gospel to question both themselves and also the world projected by another agent. For example, preachers who interpret a human author's composition of Josh 2 may think that Rahab survived because of her cleverness and foresight. The interpretation may be something like, "Be clever and think about your future." However, a gospel filter (as it operates in Christ-centered preaching) can protect the author's projection from such a sub-gospel interpretation. The gospel can help preachers recognize and reject interpretations

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[7] Once again, nomenclature issues arise. Schneiders's pithy phrase about protecting texts and readers from one another will take on different guises under different world-projecting scenarios. Here, for instance, the "text" is the world projected by another agent, and the "reader" is the preacher. In other variants (below) the labels will shift somewhat.

[8] See the discussion of the gospel as critical hermeneutical filter in §3.5.1.

that commend self-reliance in favor of readings that emphasize God's grace. Instead of seeing Rahab as a model of cleverness, the gospel encourages preachers to see her as an object of God's grace. She deserves destruction, but God rescues her.[9]

On the other hand, the gospel can protect the preacher from an agent's projected world. Preachers reading Josh 6 may recoil at the slaughter of every living thing in Jericho (Josh 6:21). A human author's contention that God commanded such a thing does not conform to the gospel, or as Foskett says, "the mind of Christ."[10] The gospel as a theological filter rejects the author's endorsement of genocide and urges preachers to preach against the grain of the text. In that case, the preacher would condemn what happened in Josh 6 and point out how we should instead love our enemies.

Agential-Discourse Interpretation allows for critical action in either direction, because it involves two distinct voices in interpretation: the projecting agent and the preacher. When those voices conflict, the gospel filter can subject either one to the other.

(2.1.5) The Homiletical Value of Agential-Discourse Interpretation. Because Agential-Discourse Interpretation can meet all four theological goals, this variant holds great value for preaching. However, it meets those goals only when preachers interpret God's appropriated or presentational discourse, not human communication alone. Interpreting the world projection of a human author, editor, or the church does not lead to authoritative interpretation or to preaching the word of God.

It bears repeating that this section is an assessment of value, not accuracy. Simply engaging in Agential-Discourse Interpretation does not mean that one will succeed in discovering God's speech via a biblical text. Whether such engagement succeeds is a matter of accuracy and applies not to a method but to case-by-case examples of that method, as examined below.

Some readers of this thesis may object that interpreting God's appropriated or presentational discourse represents a limited hermeneutical method. However,

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[9] See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 280-86, for similar ways that the gospel protects the text from "moralistic" interpretation.

[10] Foskett, *Interpreting the Bible*, loc. 717. In the same chapter she discusses this example.

"interpreting God's discourse" encompasses far more than just two projected worlds (appropriation and presentation). First of all, when interpreting his appropriated discourse preachers can choose to interpret any of God's many historical acts of appropriation: his use of a human author's original narrative, his use of that work as incorporated into larger corpora, or his use of the entire canon. God's appropriation of the Rahab narrative means something different when it includes Matthew's genealogy, as discussed in chapter 6.

Beyond choosing which of God's acts to interpret, preachers will also posit more or less distinction between God's appropriation and the human text. Does God agree with everything that the narrator wrote? Some preachers think so, and others not. These will produce different worlds and therefore different interpretations.

There is yet more variety to God's appropriation: even when choosing one of God's appropriating actions, preachers will bring different values to bear in how they comprehend and inhabit that projected world. Their own presuppositions and reactions will generate different interpretations. A preacher's personal experiences with immigrants could lead to an interpretation celebrating God's protection of the exile, or a tortured wrestling with how God can accept those who seem not to belong.

Thus, Agential-Discourse Appropriation is valuable for preaching and offers a plurality of interpretative options. I next perform a similar assessment on the second variant of Projection Interpretation.

2.2 Self-Discourse Interpretation Can Meet Two Goals

Projection Interpretation Variant	**To preach the word of God**	**To preach with authority**	**To preach a personally understood message**	**To preach according to the gospel**
Self-Discourse Interpretation	NO	NO	YES	ONE-WAY

When preachers practice Self-Discourse (that is, when they use the locutions of a text to project a world in accordance with their chosen values), they are able to meet only two of the four theological goals for preaching. Nonetheless, I will argue that Self-Discourse Interpretation still holds value for preaching.

(2.2.1) To Preach the Word of God and to Preach with Authority. Preachers practice Self-Discourse Interpretation by asking, "What would I or someone who holds certain values mean by composing this text?" Therefore, they do not ask what God, or any other agent, means by this text. They simply appropriate the locution of the text (its words) to project their own world. Chapter 6 offered an example of reading Joshua 2 and 6 as a story of betrayal, with Rahab as the villain. That is, someone might have written this narrative as a cautionary tale about betraying one's own culture.

In Self-Discourse Interpretation, God does not speak—preachers do. Preachers are the ones projecting worlds. Therefore, Self-Discourse Interpretation does not include the word of God. It involves words (the locutions of the text), but not God's speech (his illocutions). Therefore, it fails to meet the goal of preaching God's word. Additionally, because preachers are the ones generating meaning, that meaning carries only the authority of the preachers themselves. There is no greater authority behind such an interpretation. It is the preacher's own assertions. Consequently, Self-Discourse Interpretation fails to meet the first two goals: interpretations do not discern God's word or bear his authority.

(2.2.2) To Preach an Understood Message and to Preach According to the Gospel. Nonetheless, preachers who practice Self-Discourse can comprehend and inhabit projected worlds. Although that world is one that preachers themselves have projected, they can respond to the illocutions of that world. In the example above, preachers can respond to the Rahab interpretation by feeling anger over her betrayal of her city, by reflecting on their commitment to their own ethnic group, and by resolving never to betray their own cultural identity. Preachers can thus understand the message personally. Self-Discourse Interpretation allows for this and even commends it.

When it comes to the gospel as a critical filter, preachers practicing Self-Discourse can only employ that filter in one direction. This is because in Self-Discourse only one party speaks—the preacher—whereas in Agential-Discourse, two parties speak—the agent and the preacher. Preachers project and inhabit their own world. Protecting the "text" from the "reader" or vice versa only involves one party, because the preacher fills both roles (the projecting agent and the reader). Therefore, preachers can subject their own world projections to critical gospel evaluation. They can ask whether their projected world lines up with gospel values. Perhaps, in the example above, an Asian American preacher uses Josh 2 and 6 to project a world in which people are warned not to betray their own culture. The preacher responds by redoubling his commitment to his own ethnic group. Yet in a moment of critical reflection, he thinks about how the gospel of Christ embraces people of every tribe, tongue, and nation. The international and multiethnic emphasis of the gospel cause him to question his first interpretation. He may decide that his commitment to his own subculture must be tempered by an openness to all people in the name of Christ. It is therefore possible for the gospel to protect preachers-as-readers from themselves. There is only one voice in the conversation, and therefore only one perspective to criticize.

(2.2.3) The Homiletical Value of Self-Discourse Interpretation. Although interpreters who use Self-Discourse Interpretation can only meet two of four theological goals, this variant can still be employed fruitfully in preaching, because preachers could find other ways to meet the goals of preaching the word of God or preaching with authority. For example, if God does not speak during interpretation, perhaps he will speak in the pulpit. Preachers who hold to a Barthian conception of the word of God (that the Bible becomes God's word as it is preached) can use the text to project their own world and preach that world during the sermon.[11] They do so in the hope that God will use the "human and frail words" of the sermon to speak his divine word to his people.[12] If this happens, their preaching will in fact meet all four goals. For if God speaks through the preacher during the sermon, even if that preacher's interpretation is manifestly not what God meant by this text, surely that speech

[11] "Whenever [the Bible] *becomes* God's word it *is* God's word. What we have here [in preaching] is an event." Barth, *Homiletics,* 78. Emphasis original.

[12] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 16.

will come with God's own authority. God's speech, though it does not occur during interpretation, could happen during sermon delivery.

Nonetheless, such a possibility brings additional difficulties. Because it represents a different conception of how God relates to the Scriptures, it places theological and ethical burdens on preachers who practice it. In Self-Discourse Interpretation God does not speak via the Scriptures, either by inspiring them or by appropriating them. He does not speak at all during biblical interpretation. Preachers do the talking as they read, project worlds, and inhabit those words.[13] Instead, God speaks only through the mouths of preachers as they proclaim their own understandings of the worlds they have projected. Thus, there is a significant gap between the reading of the Bible and the moment when God speaks.

This places a theological burden on the preacher to demonstrate why God would take up a preacher's self-discourse as his own. In a traditional understanding the Bible is God's word; in a neo-orthodox framework the Bible becomes God's word. But in Self-Discourse, the illocutions attached to the Bible—the worlds projected by authors or by God—are left behind entirely. What the preacher brings to an interpretation and a sermon are the mere locutions (words) of a text, which God does not appropriate. Consequently, if God chooses to speak during a sermon, the speech that he adopts as his own is not the discourse of human authors, or even his own appropriated discourse. He instead adopts the preacher's self-discourse as his own.

In our running example, the interpretation that would become God's word during the sermon is the assertion that Rahab is a traitor. This is the preacher's self-discourse that God would then speak through that preacher in the pulpit—although it is almost certainly not what the story originally meant to its author or audience. The contention that God would choose to speak this way needs theological argumentation. Preachers must be able to articulate why God would adopt their self-discourse as his own.[14]

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[13] Of course, God may guide preachers in some other manner—as he may guide people doing any other activity—but his speech, his words, do not come through the Scriptures.

[14] This will be a significant challenge for Barthians. Barth believed that the Bible could become God's word in the event of preaching, but for Barth, the reason that God speaks through Scripture and not elsewhere is that

It also places an ethical demand on preachers for transparency with their congregation. If preachers choose to practice Self-Discourse Interpretation, then they should be clear with their congregations that they are doing so, explaining to listeners that the thoughts presented in a sermon are personal reflections and are perhaps unrelated to what God or an author meant by this text. In our example, it might run thus: "The author portrays Rahab as the heroine of this story who shows great faith. But I imagine different things when I hear it. When I read this passage, I imagine her as the villain. I try to place myself in the shoes of her fellow Canaanites and ask what they think of her running off to join the enemy." Such explanation would be necessary for ethical preaching because many parishioners, when listening to a sermon, do not understand it to be generated by self-discourse.[15] They do not come to listen to personal musings. It is illegitimate to speak one's own thoughts, aware that they are unrelated to God's discourse, and claim (even implicitly) that they are God's. Self-Discourse Interpretation should be accompanied by a candid disclosure of the source of the sermon. I next assess the final variant of Projection Interpretation for its theological value.

2.3 Non-Discourse Interpretation Can Meet Two Goals

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the Bible has a specific historical value as an illocution. Barth asks, "What is the task of preaching? It has simply to repeat the testimony by which the church is constituted. It has to be witness to that witness, to the revelation attested by holy scripture. We are thus brought up against the fact that the sermon must be a text sermon. Preaching has to be *biblical* preaching" (*Homiletics,* 62). The Bible is unique for Barth because of its witness to historical acts of revelation—in Speech-Act terms, because of its illocutions. It will require an entirely new argument to show why God would choose to speak each Sunday, not through the illocution of the text as a historical witness, but only through the locutions as re-intended by a preacher.

[15] As Wolterstorff notes, "None of us practices performance interpretation [what I have labeled Self-Discourse] most of the time." "Resurrecting the Author," 22.

Projection Interpretation Variant	To preach the word of God	To preach with authority	To preach a personally understood message	To preach according to the gospel
Non-Discourse Interpretation	NO	NO	YES	ONE-WAY

Chapter 6 described ways that preachers can use texts which do not project worlds. They can use psychological, historical or theological tools to look behind the text and ask what those tools reveal; they can read the text during the liturgy; they can use it to illustrate a point; and so on. The discussion of how Non-Discourse Interpretation can meet theological goals must therefore take into account the array of actions that preachers can perform on the biblical text.

(2.3.1) To Preach the Word of God. Non-Discourse Interpretation fails to meet this goal. It is similar to Self-Discourse Interpretation in that there is only one agent acting: the preacher. God, in this view, does not speak in order to project a world to the preacher. The preacher simply acts upon the text.

(2.3.2) To Preach with Authority. Though preachers can claim an authority beyond themselves when they practice Non-Discourse Interpretation, it will not satisfy the specifics of this goal. For instance, in practicing historical criticism, the tools and methods of that discipline lend authority to the preacher's ideas. If historical-critical analysis leads a preacher to draw conclusions about the historical fall of Jericho—that it never happened, that it happened later or in a different manner than Joshua 6 relates, or that it happened precisely in that manner—the scientific methods of historical criticism will undergird such an interpretation.[16]

[16] Evidence could be brought to bear to support any of these conclusions about Jericho. See, for instance, the contrasting discussions of the topic in Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids:

Although it can carry the authority of a discipline, such as archaeology or psychology, Non-Discourse Interpretation does not carry God's authority. Chapter 4 argued that it was God's authority that preachers should and do aim for when they preach. Therefore, Non-Discourse Interpretation fails to meet this goal.

(2.3.3) To Preach an Understood Message. The conclusions regarding this goal are the same as those regarding Self-Discourse Interpretation: namely, preachers can indeed understand a message derived from Non-Discourse Interpretation. All that is required is to comprehend the interpretation and to respond to it. Preachers do not inhabit a projected world, but as long as they have a perlocutionary response to a statement, they meet this goal. A preacher could, for example, conclude that the biblical record of the fall of Jericho is historically accurate and respond with gratitude that the Bible can be trusted.

(2.3.4) To Preach According to the Gospel. Because Non-Discourse Interpretation involves the use of a text by an agent, it does not include the back-and-forth discourse between one agent and another. There is, in other words, only one agent involved in interpretation. Therefore, the situation is similar to that of Self-Discourse Interpretation. In each case, preachers are able to reflect critically on their own action, and they criticize that action according to the values of the gospel. The gospel can protect preachers from themselves.

In chapter 6, for example, one case of Non-Discourse Interpretation involved a theological use of Scripture. In that case preachers use the Rahab narrative to shape missiology among Muslim background believers. Preachers, using this text as source material for missiological practice in their context, might read Josh 6:23, in which the two spies brought out Rahab and her family from Jericho and put them "outside the camp of Israel." They could draw an initial conclusion that Muslim background believers should, upon conversion to the Christian faith, similarly be placed in separate faith communities until they learn to assimilate to the culture of the local Christian church.

It is possible for preachers to use the gospel as a critical filter to reconsider such an interpretation. Preachers could step back and ask, "Is this interpretation in line with gospel

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Baker, 1998), 205-10, and William G. Dever, "Archaeology and the History of Israel," in Perdue, *Blackwell Companion*, 119-26.

values?" For many, the gospel carries an understanding that in Christ racial and cultural barriers must not be allowed to separate believers or to force minority believers to assimilate to majority cultures. The gospel could thus lead preachers to reject any requirement that Muslim background believers assimilate culturally to the local Christian context, or to be kept separate from it until they do. The gospel filters some interpretations; however, because there is only one party (the preacher) acting on the text, there is no other agent that the gospel can protect. Critical hermeneutics operates in a one-way fashion.

(2.3.5) The Homiletical Value of Non-Discourse Interpretation. Because this third variant of Projection Interpretation functions as a catch-all for anything a preacher does with a text besides world projection, conclusions of homiletical value must be on a case-by-case basis. There are some actions a preacher can perform on a text, as discussed above, which do show merit and can meet two out of the four theological goals.

Yet even in those cases, preachers will have to show how God can speak with authority via an interpretation. They will thus operate under the same theological and ethical demands placed on those who use Self-Discourse Interpretation: they should articulate their understanding of how and why God would choose to speak through the actions that they have performed on the biblical text, and they should be transparent about those values when they preach.

Perhaps the strongest claims to homiletical value for Non-Discourse Interpretation can be made for readings of Scripture during the liturgy, or during the sermon.[17] In such cases preachers may not project a world as they prepare to read it aloud. But skillful preachers will choose the scriptural passages with care and place them in a context in which their meaning aligns with the service.[18] The reading will then either be a part of the sermon or will coordinate with the thrust of the sermon. When preachers use the

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[17] See Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture: The Transforming Power of the Well-Spoken Word* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 13-33.

[18] See David A. Currie, *The Big Idea of Biblical Worship: The Development and Leadership of Expository Services* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2017), 15-16.

Scriptures this way, they may expect God to speak during the reading with his own authority. This would be a Non-Discourse use of the Bible with great homiletical value.

2.4 Assessing Variants: Conclusion

Projection Interpretation is a pluralistic hermeneutic. Any method that can meet the theological goals for preaching is considered a worthwhile methodology. Of the three variants (Agential-Discourse, Self-Discourse, and Non-Discourse Interpretation), certain forms of Agential-Discourse Interpretation hold the most value as interpretive methodologies for preaching because they meet all four goals.

Having said that, some types of Self-Discourse Interpretation and Non-Discourse Interpretation can also be of value for preachers. Though they do not meet the goals of preaching God's word or preaching with authority, it is possible that those goals could be met at other moments of the preaching process. Homileticians could make a theological case for God's authoritative speech occurring at moments other than the preacher's study of the text. In such cases, preachers would also have an ethical responsibility to be clear about their methodology when practicing these modes of interpretation.

While any of the three modes may find a place in homiletics, certain forms of Agential-Discourse Interpretation are most valuable when assessed according to the four goals outlined above. Other modes have value but should be used judiciously and with transparency.

3 Assessing Examples Using Projection Interpretation

The second half of the chapter moves from assessing variants to assessing particular interpretations. I demonstrate that Projection Interpretation can describe interpretations of a biblical text in ways that enable their comparative assessment. I do so as follows: first, I describe six published interpretations of a biblical passage and use Projection Interpretation to categorize those interpretations, showing that each is an instance of either Agential-Discourse, Self-Discourse, or Non-Discourse Interpretation. Doing so will then allow me to compare interpretations *of different variants* for their homiletical value.

Finally, I will compare interpretations *within variants*, and show where and how questions of accuracy can fruitfully be brought to bear.

3.1 Describing Six Homiletical Interpretations Using Projection Interpretation

This section describes six interpretations of a biblical passage using Projection Interpretation. Some are published sermons, others are exegetical studies published to aid preachers in sermon development, and one is a published devotional thought. All are written by mainline or evangelical North American homileticians. Thus, they all represent homiletical interpretations within the scope of this thesis.

This section will use evidence from the sermon or the homiletician's notes to classify each interpretation as Agential-Discourse, Self-Discourse, or Non-Discourse Interpretation. In each selection the authors indicate their view of the passage and also give clues as to how they went about interpreting it.

I have selected these six interpretations for three reasons. First, they come from respected preachers and homileticians in North American mainline and evangelical homiletics.[19] They thus offer relevant and skillful examples of homiletical practice. Second, as I demonstrate below, they show significant variety, not only in their conclusions but in their methodology and underlying theological stance. Finally, they facilitate direct comparison because all focus on the same passage of Scripture: the narrative in 2 Sam 11–12 of David's adultery with Bathsheba, his murder of Uriah the Hittite, his conviction, and his repentance.[20] See Table 2 for a summary.

[19] The scholars highlighted here are both homileticians (theorists) as well as preachers (practitioners). I selected preachers who are also theorists because their offerings are more likely to be hermeneutically sophisticated and self-aware than weekly sermons offered by non-academic preachers.

[20] The interpretations do not all cover both chapters. In fact, one selects only a small portion of the text. But I will show that the differences in scope are a result of the interpretive methodology itself.

Table 2: Six Biblical Interpretations of 2 Sam 11–12

Homiletician	Variant	Main Idea
Borden	Agential-Discourse	Do not despise the grace of God.
Robinson	Agential-Discourse	When you fail to walk with God in mid-life, you walk on the edge of an abyss.[21]
Kuruvilla	Agential-Discourse	God demands a humble faithfulness perfectly modeled by Christ.
Brooks	Self-Discourse	Christian charity sacrifices itself to impart character to the poor.
Troeger	Self-Discourse	Christ honored and empowered women, and thereby redeemed the title, "Son of David."
Taylor	Non-Discourse	David's strong desire rendered him useful to God.

(3.1.1) Agential-Discourse Interpretation of 2 Sam 11–12. The first three homileticians approach the narrative as a human discourse appropriated by God, and ask what God meant by appropriating this text as his own. God projects a world using this text, and these homileticians comprehend and inhabit that world. I first describe their interpretations and then show why they fit in this category.

Paul Borden's sermon, "The High Cost of Lamb," interprets 2 Sam 11–12 as a condemnation of David's sin.[22] According to Borden, David "despises [God's] grace."[23]

[21] Though Robinson does not include the clause "in mid-life" here, his lengthy discussion of the perils of David's mid-life and ours warrant this clarification.

[22] Paul Borden, "The High Cost of Lamb," in Mathewson, *Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 189-99.

[23] Borden, 195.

David was not content with what God had providentially given and overstepped his rights as king. However, later in the narrative David accepts God's providential decree that the child born from the adulterous relationship would die. He has thus learned to accept when God is gracious (giving David wealth and power) and when he is not (forbidding adultery, allowing the child to die).[24] Borden encourages listeners to repent of similar sins, and to "accept what the grace of God has given them and what the grace of God has not."[25] This story, for Borden, serves as a warning to God's people against ingratitude and discontent.

Haddon Robinson, in "King David's Midlife Crisis," paints a vivid picture of David as he enters middle age.[26] Robinson imaginatively reconstructs David's reflections in the king's 47th year: "But then, of course, there was the paunch. . . . His tailors were able to cover it with robes, and nobody noticed. But David did. And it bothered him."[27] Robinson goes on to narrate David's affair in detail, and to draw a parallel to listeners' midlife crises. He exhorts them: "In the middle years when you've attained your goals and life has settled down, when you feel more secure, more successful, you must remember that in any age of life, when you fail to walk with God, you walk on the edge of an abyss."[28] For Robinson, David's narrative is a warning about the dangers to faith in the middle stage of life.

Finally, Abraham Kuruvilla offers his own interpretation of the same story:

> Unfaithfulness to God, the true sovereign, negates blessing and promises punishment with tragic consequences for individual, family, community and society; such faithfulness as God demands—perfectly modelled by Christ, the Son of David, the righteous King—embraces an utmost regard for the word of God and the reputation of God, and is manifested in the restriction of sexual desires and in the reined exercise of power.[29]

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[24] Borden, 194, 197.

[25] Borden, 199.

[26] Haddon Robinson, "King David's Midlife Crisis (2 Samuel 11)," in Bill Turpie, ed., *Ten Great Preachers: Messages and Interviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 96-110.

[27] Robinson, 99.

[28] Robinson, 109.

[29] *TTP*, 173.

On Kuruvilla's reading, the narrative highlights YHWH's kingship as prior to and outranking David's kingship. Defying that hierarchy led to disastrous consequences.[30] Furthermore, Kuruvilla contends that David's negative example in the story contrasts with Jesus Christ as the positive example of faithful submission to God's will. He writes, "Any sermon fashioned from this pericope must therefore proffer Christ as the paragon of fidelity."[31] Where David failed, Christ succeeded.

These three interpretations, though they differ in conclusions, use the same general methodology: Agential-Discourse Interpretation. Each interpreter is interested in the world projected by the human author of 2 Samuel and appropriated by God. This is evident, first, because each preacher makes references to the human author's words and intentions. Robinson speaks of "the ancient historian"; Kuruvilla of what "the storyteller" allows in the narrative; and in a separate article on interpretation, Borden speaks of "the human authors."[32] Each homiletician states that when he reads the text he reads it as a communication by the human author.

However, each homiletician also ascribes the words of the text to God. Borden, for example, when referring to the prophet Nathan's question, "Why did you despise the word of the LORD?" (2 Sam 12:9), understands Nathan's question as God's own. He paraphrases the question as an accusation spoken by God: "In committing this package of sins you despised me. You despised my word."[33] For Borden, the words of Nathan, relayed through the words of the human author, are the words of God. This is divine appropriation.

Robinson does not explicitly attribute the scriptural words to God in his sermon, but elsewhere he is clear that he does hold this view: "God speaks through the Scriptures to all people in all times."[34] And Kuruvilla, when explaining how he interprets this passage,

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[30] See *TTP*, 164-74 for his exegesis of the passage, summarized on 172.

[31] *TTP*, 169.

[32] Respectively, Robinson, "Midlife Crisis," 102; *TTP*, 170; Borden, "Is There Really One Big Idea in that Story?" in *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Wilhite and Gibson, 67.

[33] Borden, "High Cost," 193. See also his repetition of the phrase "God says," 194-95.

[34] Robinson, "What is Expository Preaching?" in *Making a Difference in Preaching*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 63.

actually calls it "divine discourse" that "projects a world in front of the text."[35] Each of these homileticians reveals that he interprets the human author's discourse as appropriated by God.

This is Agential-Discourse Interpretation. The exegete aims to understand the story as a projected world (David sins and is punished) plus an illocutionary stance (affirmation and warning). Preachers inhabit that world by responding to those warnings and repeating them to others (do not despise God's grace, walk with God in mid-life, exercise power humbly). Below, I will demonstrate that classifying all of these as Agential-Discourse Interpretation will enable the assessment of each for value and accuracy.

(3.1.2) Self-Discourse Interpretation of 2 Sam 11–12. The next two homileticians interpret the same narrative but practice Self-Discourse Interpretation. Phillips Brooks, in a sermon entitled "Christian Charity," preaches from Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam 12:1–4) in which the prophet confronts the king about his adultery and murder.[36] Nathan tells David a parable about a rich man who, on being called to host visitors, refuses to sacrifice his own sheep and instead robs a poor man of his only lamb. In the biblical narrative the parable depicts an outrageous act meant to stir David to anger. The parable brought conviction when Nathan revealed (v 7) that he had been describing David's own murderous sins.

However, Brooks interprets the parable as a stand-alone allegory that shows how modern rich people give charity to the poor in ways that cost them nothing. Brooks states, "A man meaning to be charitable, and perhaps freely bestowing his money on the poor, still spares to take of that which is most truly and intimately his own to give to the [poor]."[37] That is, modern Christians practice charity, but do so without sacrificing anything of real worth to themselves. Instead of a moral outrage, the parable in Brooks's hands describes

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[35] *TTP*, 174. His indebtedness to Wolterstorff is clear here, though, as §3.3.2 explained, his hermeneutic actually follows Ricoeur's model.

[36] Phillips Brooks, "Christian Charity," in *The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1903), 336-54.

[37] Brooks, 338.

reasonable, mild acts of charity that cost the givers nothing. In his sermon Brooks urges Christians to practice costly self-sacrifice instead.

Brooks, as his comments reveal, engages in Self-Discourse Interpretation: The locution (words) of the passage remains unchanged, but the illocution (use of those words) is different than that of the human author or editors. Brooks begins, "These verses from the Old Testament suggest . . . in the way of metaphor and parable, the full gospel truth at which I hope that we shall be able to arrive."[38] In other words, Brooks has a "gospel truth" already in mind, at which he hopes to arrive. He has a pre-selected destination, and the passage is a vehicle to get there. The text, instead of being a discourse with another agent, is a prism through which his own thoughts on charitable giving are refracted. This can be seen from the following.

First of all, Brooks mentions the passage only at the beginning and end of the sermon. He spends two pages on the passage, then seventeen with no mention, then returns to it on the final page. The passage merely serves to highlight the problem which Brooks wants to discuss: "Christian Charity."

Second, he ignores the context of Nathan's words. The fact that Nathan's parable applies to David's adultery and abuse of power do not concern Brooks, because he is not seeking the original author's meaning.[39] He wants to know what this parable means for affluent urbanites like himself. Brooks seems to ask, "What would someone like me who is concerned with Christian charity mean by telling this story?" He engages in self-discourse.[40]

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[38] Brooks, 336. Later, however, Brooks says he is trying to give an "almost literal application" of this parable.

[39] Readers may object that the comparison between Brooks and other homileticians is illegitimate, because they do not preach on exactly the same text. But this is the point: in Self-Discourse Interpretation, the totality of a narrative does not matter. All that matters are these specific words and what someone like Brooks might mean by them.

[40] It is also possible that Brooks is interpreting God's presentational discourse—that this is what God is saying to him via this text. However, there is no indication in the sermon that this is how he understands his own interpretation. He instead discusses the topic of the sermon quite openly from his own perspective. He begins by stating his intention thus: "I want to speak to you this morning of the relations between the rich and the

Third, though Brooks begins with Nathan's parable, he wanders fast and far. He quickly moves from the parable's negative example to his proposed alternative: that true charity imparts not just goods to poor people, but character: "I wanted to make clear . . . that no relief of need is satisfactory . . . which stops short of at least the effort to inspire character."[41] And again: "Men are coming more and more to feel that the rich man does not do his duty by the poor man . . . unless by some outflow of itself it gives these qualities."[42] And again: "You cannot do your duty to the poor by a society. You must touch their life. . . . The poor are always with us . . . and as they come, with their white faces and their poor scuffling feet, they are our judges."[43] By the end of the sermon, it is clear that Brooks has no concern for how the author of 2 Samuel has used this text, or how God appropriated it. The parable functions for him as a springboard into his chosen topic: Christian charity. This is Self-Discourse Interpretation.

Thomas Troeger offers another example of Self-Discourse Interpretation.[44] He tells the story from the perspective of Bathsheba, not the narrator: "Imagine what it is like for Bathsheba."[45] Troeger narrates the episode by highlighting David's royal power and Bathsheba's helplessness. Though, he says, "We do not have a diary or journal of Bathsheba to tell us her exact thoughts and feelings," he fills in the blanks and concludes, "It is probably accurate to say that David rapes Bathsheba."[46] The issue that this raises for Troeger is not that David sins and finds forgiveness; it is that Jesus Christ is (problematically) called "the son of David." Troeger asks, "What are the theological implications of designating Christ as 'the son of David,' as the son of a king who raped a

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poor in our city life" (336). He then notes how the text functions (as a parable) and then addresses charity. He does not cite as God as the one presenting the text.

[41] Brooks, "Christian Charity," 341.

[42] Brooks, 342.

[43] Brooks, 354.

[44] Thomas H. Troeger, "Homiletical Perspective, 2 Samuel 11:1-15," in *Feasting on the Word Year B: Additional Essays* [PDF]; available from https://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/Products/Default.aspx?bookid=FC033, accessed 1/17/19.

[45] Troeger, 4.

[46] Troeger, 4.

man's wife and then devised a scheme to have the innocent husband killed?"[47] His solution is as follows:

> For me the answer lies in the character and nature of Christ. His acceptance of women who minister to him and his appearing to them on the first Easter honors and empowers women. . . . Christ transforms the meaning of "son of David" . . . by extending David's compassion and justice to all women and men alike. . . . Christ, the "son of David," gives us a more perfect kingship than David.[48]

Troeger interprets the narrative as one that creates a theological problem for the identity of Christ—how the Son of God can be a "son of David" the rapist—and solves it by showing how Jesus' treatment of women reversed and overcame David's shameful lineage.

Troeger, like Brooks, engages in Self-Discourse. He is not interested in what the original human author(s) or editor(s) communicated by this story. As far as the plot of Samuel is concerned, the author's focus is on David, his sin, his forgiveness, and the consequences of that sin for generations to come (see, for instance, 2 Sam 12:10—"The sword shall never depart from your house"—and ch 13's narrative of Amnon raping Tamar). Nor do later New Testament authors treat the story as Troeger does. The one New Testament reference to David's sin is in Rom 4:5-8, where Paul speaks of God's gracious forgiveness. In other words, Troeger is interested not in another agent's projected world but in his own.[49]

The problem Troeger has with 2 Sam 11–12 is his own. His interpretation captures own convictions and discomforts, were he to write this narrative. He focuses on the theological problem the story creates for someone who abhors the abuse of women. He takes up the narrative, projects a (theologically problematic) world with it, and then inhabits that world by solving the dilemma.

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[47] Troeger, 6.

[48] Troeger, 6.

[49] Neither is Troeger concerned with God's appropriation of this story: he is not dealing with the illocutions of the human author and how those might be modified by God's appropriation. He is focused on a question that seems never to have entered the mind of the original author or any other biblical author. Nor does he attribute his approach to God. He says, "*For me* the answer lies . . ." This is Self-Discourse.

(3.1.3) Non-Discourse Interpretation of 2 Sam 11–12. The label "Non-Discourse Interpretation," as the previous chapter showed, encompasses a miscellaneous collection of ways that preachers use the Scriptures. Here I review one such use that illustrates the kinds of outliers that this category contains.

In her book *Leaving Church*, Barbara Brown Taylor offers a brief view of David's adultery with Bathsheba:

> When I read the stories in the Bible about people such as Sarah, Jacob, or David, what stands out is not their virtue but their very strong wants. Sarah wanted her son to prevail over Hagar's son, Jacob wanted his older brother's blessing, and David wanted Bathsheba. While these cravings clearly bought them all kinds of well-deserved trouble, they also kept these characters very, very alive. Their desires propelled them in ways that God could use, better than God could use those who never colored outside the lines.[50]

Taylor uses David's story as an example of desire—a desire that rendered him useful to God.

Taylor's brief mention does not constitute an explanation of what the story is about—for an author, for her, or for God. It is instead a use of one part of the story as an illustration of strong desire. In fact, it may not even qualify as an "interpretation," depending on one's understanding of that word. It is a use of a Scripture. Taylor is doing something with the narrative besides projecting or inhabiting a world.

This is Non-Discourse Interpretation. Taylor is not seeking the world that another agent projected. The human author nowhere indicates that David's desire kept him very alive, nor does Taylor imply that this is what God meant by 2 Sam 11–12. Yet, neither does she use the text to project her own world. World projection is a set of illocutionary stances taken toward a state of affairs. The brevity of her mention precludes such extensive action.

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[50] Barbara Brown Taylor, *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* (New York: Harper One, 2006), 7. This is actually a memoir, not a sermon. Nonetheless, it is an example of a use of Scripture by a prominent mainline homiletician, which I will show to be Non-Discourse Interpretation.

She merely mentions David as a character whose desire is conspicuous. He is an example. This is Non-Discourse Interpretation.[51]

(3.1.4) Conclusion. This section has presented six homiletical uses of 2 Sam 11–12 and classified them according to the hermeneutic of Projection Interpretation. The next sections will show how such classification can lead to an assessment of each for its value and accuracy.

3.2 Assessing Interpretations Between Variants: A Question of Value

The previous section examined six interpretations and categorized them as variants of Projection Interpretation. This section will present the first half of the payoff of that work. It will compare interpretations from *different variants*. In this case, I will argue that such comparisons are fruitful only when asking which interpretation is more valuable—not which is more accurate. The next section will zoom in to compare interpretations from *the same variant*. I will show that in those cases it can be fruitful to ask which interpretation is more accurate.

In Table 2 the most obvious difference between interpretations comes from the three variants of Projection Interpretation. Borden, Kuruvilla and Robinson interpret God's appropriation of a human author (Agential-Discourse Interpretation); Brooks and Troeger use the locution of the text to project a world in accordance with their own values (Self-Discourse Interpretation); Taylor uses David's story as an illustration (Non-Discourse Interpretation).

Such differences are not due to skill or accuracy. The preachers are doing different things with the text because they have different aims. Consequently, it is futile to ask whether Borden (despising God's grace) or Brooks (Christian charity) is more accurate. Pointing out to Brooks that he ignores the passage's context or that he plays down God's forgiveness would likely not matter to him, because he is not interested in the world

[51] The reader will note that Taylor is here on the way to making a larger point. Thus, her use of 2 Samuel is an illustrative addition to the main point of her chapter. Non-Discourse Interpretation functions well in such an ancillary role.

projected by the human agent. He is interested in modern urban attempts to alleviate poverty. Similarly, it is unlikely that Borden would be persuaded if someone talked to him about the urgency of urban poverty, or the problems with contemporary charitable actions in the church. Borden could very well believe in charity, but when preaching from this passage, such concerns are irrelevant to him.

Likewise, trying to pit the interpretation that leads to Troeger's sermon (in which David's lust is a horror and a theological affront) against Taylor's interpretation (in which David's passion renders him useful to God) will likely lead nowhere. Troeger and Taylor are doing different things because they aim at different targets: Troeger wants to show how Christ addresses the ethical dilemmas that people like himself face when reading the story, and Taylor just wants to use David as an example of passion. Conversations about who is "right" will only founder. One strength of Projection Interpretation is that by clarifying the actions of preachers and the goals that leads those actions, it shows why conversations about accuracy fail, and redirects inquiries to issues of theological value.

Interpretations of different variants cannot be compared for accuracy, because they aim at different targets. Instead, the proper question to ask is, "Is that a target worth hitting?" In other words, which target is more valuable for the concerns of Christian preaching: to ask what God did in appropriating this passage, or to ask what this passage could mean for modern Christian charity practices? These are questions of value.

Once again, Projection Interpretation helps, because labeling an interpretation as one of three variants gives a rough guide to its homiletical value. This is because certain forms of Agential-Discourse Interpretation (namely, those that interpret God's appropriation or presentation of a text) can meet all four theological goals: to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach an understood message, and to preach according to the gospel. Therefore, the sermons offered by Borden, Kuruvilla, and Robinson hold the most obvious homiletical value because they meet the four theological goals.[52]

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[52] This statement assumes that each interpretation was done skillfully and consistently with the aims of Agential-Discourse Interpretation. Projection Interpretation does not justify sloppy interpretation of any stripe.

Because they all attempt to interpret God's own appropriation of Scripture, those homileticians can make a credible claim to relay God's word with authority. They can inhabit the projected worlds and show that they have personally applied the message to themselves. And they can critically evaluate the message according to the gospel.

Nonetheless, I argued above that other forms of preaching can also meet those goals, provided they are used judiciously and transparently. For Troeger and Brooks, it does not appear that they can claim God spoke to them through the Scripture as they engaged in interpretation. Rather, they used the text to project a world of their own making: they used personal language to talk about what the text means to them or the issues the text raises for them. This is Self-Discourse.

Therefore, to make a theologically valuable use of the story Troeger and Brooks would need to show how they can otherwise meet the goals of preaching the word of God and preaching with authority. They would need to suggest how (and why) God would appropriate their own words to speak to the congregation. How and why will their words become the word of God? Only then will they be able to claim to speak God's word or to speak with authority. Furthermore, they would both need to be transparent about how they are using the text, in order to avoid misleading people into thinking that their interpretation represents an attempt to hear God's voice.[53] If they succeed, then their interpretations will offer the same theological value as the first three.

Taylor would face the same challenges that Troeger and Brooks face regarding God's speech and authority. However, in this case it may be that her use of 2 Samuel could function in tandem with other interpretations. For instance, Taylor's reference to David might align well with an interpretation like Borden's or Robinson's. Perhaps David's strong passions *did* render him suitable to God (as a warrior, poet, and king). Nonetheless, those passions nearly undid him, because he despised the grace of God (Borden), or because he failed to walk with God in mid-life (Robinson). Taylor's Non-Discourse Interpretation can make a homiletical contribution if it is coupled with other variants.

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[53] Comments from both homileticians about what matters to them personally (see above) seem to meet that standard.

In general, then, Agential-Discourse Interpretation holds the clearest value for preaching, but others, when used judiciously and transparently, may also meet the four theological goals, and may therefore comprise worthwhile interpretive methods. Thus, it makes little sense to ask of different variants, "Which interpretation is more accurate?" It is more fruitful to ask, "Which interpretation is more valuable?"

3.3 Assessing Interpretations from the Same Variant: A Question of Accuracy

Interpretations from homileticians who practice the same variant (see Table 2) can also be comparatively assessed. For example, the three preachers employing Agential-Discourse Interpretation all interpret the world projected by God as he appropriates the text. Yet even so, their interpretations differ substantially. The same holds true between the two examples of Self-Discourse Interpretation.

When comparing two interpretations from within the same variant, it will not help to ask which is more valuable. Their respective theological values are equal: because they are examples of the same variant, they each meet the same number of theological goals for preaching. Both Borden and Kuruvilla meet all four theological goals; both Troeger and Brooks meet two goals (and could make a case that they can meet the other two).

Nonetheless, Projection Interpretation can still help. By elucidating the choices that the preachers make regarding agents and actions, it can show just why two interpretations from the same variant differ, and whether the interpretations can be fruitfully compared for accuracy. I analyze three pairs of interpretations in this way.

(3.3.1) Comparing Borden and Kuruvilla. Borden and Kuruvilla part ways in their choice of agent and action, and this difference makes the accuracy of each unrelated to that of the other. The major difference between Borden's sermon (do not despise the grace of God) and Kuruvilla's (Christ is the model of faithfulness) is that Borden's sermon does not mention Christ, but instead moves directly from the historical circumstances of 2 Samuel to the contemporary church. However, Kuruvilla explicitly appeals to Christ as the perfect model of humble obedience.

Projection Interpretation can explain that difference. Borden, who understands God to speak through the text, understands "the text" to be this specific pericope rather than the

entire canon. God appropriates this passage in order to project a world. In this world Christ is not historically present, and therefore the main idea of the sermon does not include Christ.

For Kuruvilla, by contrast, God uses this text as part of the canon to project a world. In that canonical world, Christ is the perfect son of David, and the one to whom David's life points. Thus, the sermon "must proffer Christ."[54] The "text" which Kuruvilla understands God to use in projecting a world is the entire canon.[55]

These two homileticians' interpretations differ because they analyze different divine actions: Borden interprets God's appropriation of 2 Sam 11–12, and Kuruvilla interprets God's appropriation of the canon. Each appropriation projects a different world. Kuruvilla and Borden inhabit those different worlds and their interpretations reflect that difference. Therefore, when comparing Borden's work with Kuruvilla's, it makes little sense to ask which is more accurate. Each could be quite accurate but, because they analyze different worlds, offer distinct interpretations.[56] In such cases, each interpretation has the same value (meeting all four goals), and each interpretation may be an accurate representation of the world projected. Because they analyze different actions of God, the comparison can go no further.[57]

(3.3.2) Comparing Brooks and Troeger. A similar situation obtains in the comparison between Brooks's and Troeger's sermons. Both Brooks (Christian charity) and Troeger (Christ empowered women) practice Self-Discourse; they ask, in effect, what the passage

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[54] *TTP*, 169.

[55] In fact, Kuruvilla is explicit that every sermon must interpret passages in light of the canon—a requirement that he labels the "Rule of Singularity" (*TTP*, 106).

[56] This raises the intriguing question of whether the worlds that God projects via Scripture can ever contradict one another. Can two of God's projected worlds be mutually exclusive? No doubt this is yet another instance when interpreters' theological convictions will shape their decisions about what God can or will do.

[57] It is cases like this that show how there can be multiple valid interpretations of a biblical passage, because there are multiple valuable worlds projected by means of that passage, and each can be interpreted accurately.

would mean if someone who has particular values wrote it. They project a world and inhabit that world.

It should come as no surprise that the resulting worlds are different because Brooks and Troeger are different. Various details in the narrative strike them as important or problematic. Brooks's nineteenth-century world is a state of affairs in which true Christian charity imparts character; Troeger's twentieth-century world is a state of affairs in which Christ's empowerment of women redeems the problematic name "son of David." Each world is projected by the preacher himself, according to his own values and concerns. Because both interpretations are instances of the same variant (Self-Discourse), they both have the same value. They both meet two theological goals out of four. Additionally, because they project different worlds, the accuracy of the one does not affect the accuracy of the other. It is possible that both are accurate when measured by the question, "What would someone who holds values that I do mean by writing this text?"[58] They do not align with one another because Troeger and Brooks are different human beings, yet each can be assessed for accuracy according to the rules of Self-Discourse.

This case may be generalized to all instances of Self-Discourse: because the "self" that projects the world is different for each interpreter, and because Self-Discourse relies so heavily on the values and preferences of the preacher, any two preachers will arrive at different interpretations. The accuracy of each interpretation has no bearing upon the

[58] For that matter, they may both be inaccurate: perhaps the preachers were thoughtless or not sufficiently self-aware when they studied the passage. In either case, the accuracy of one does not affect the accuracy of the other.

accuracy of the other.[59] Comparative accuracy in the realm of Self-Discourse is a nonsensical metric. Each interpretation stands on its own.[60]

(3.3.3) Comparing Borden and Robinson. Here at last, accuracy comes into play. Borden's sermon (do not despise the grace of God) and Robinson's (when you fail to walk with God in mid-life, you walk on the edge of an abyss), though both instances of Agential-Discourse Interpretation, differ substantially. The disparity between the two is that Robinson preaches about the spiritual doldrums that can afflict people in mid-life. For Borden, the danger comes not from age but from presumption upon God's grace. The difference does not stem from interpreting two different speech acts of God. They both interpret this pericope, authored by a human, appropriated by God, in its historical context. They study the same action of the same agent; they aim at the same target.

In the specific case of two preachers aiming at the same target, it makes sense to ask which one is closer to the bullseye. Which one is more accurate? In this case it is Borden's. Direct comparison is possible, and Borden's interpretation is more accurate than Robinson's, because Borden's interpretation is more fully substantiated by the textual evidence than is Robinson's.

Robinson justifies his focus on middle age by relating David's impressive prior accomplishments, and by stating that the story occurs in David's 47th year. From these two facts—a notable royal resume and David's age—Robinson concludes that his successes and age are what account for his transgressions of God's law. While Robinson's rehearsal of David's achievements is accurate and forms the broader context of his story, the text is

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[59] Of course, this will not prevent preachers (and congregants!) from making other judgments about the interpretation. Such judgments may apply to an interpretation's authenticity, charity, relevance to a congregation, delivery, and so on. I make the limited claim that when examining Self-Discourse Interpretation, it makes no sense to ask which one is the correct one.

[60] Incidentally, the same logic would apply to various types of Non-Discourse Interpretation. Even if it makes sense to ask if that which a preacher does to a text is accurate (and it will not always make sense), unless two agents are doing the exact same thing it will be useless to ask questions of comparative accuracy.

actually silent on David's age.[61] And nowhere does the author state that David's age had anything to do with his fall from grace. Robinson infers (or "extrapolates," in Wolterstorff's terminology) that the reason David stayed home from war, had a wandering eye, and behaved so shamefully was his success and his age.

By contrast, Borden's sermon gives ample evidence from the text that David's problem was pride, not stage of life. Borden, in addition to reviewing the historical and literary context of the story, highlights God's rebuke to David in 2 Sam 12:9–12, focusing on God's accusation that David "despised the word of the LORD" (2 Sam 12:9).[62] This moment in the narrative is pivotal. Nathan the prophet explains why David will face consequences: because he despises the word of the LORD. The author, rather than concentrating on middle age as the reason for David's sin, reveals the nature of that sin itself: despising God's word. The human author (and also God) tells this story to narrate the disastrous results of rebellion and pride by those who are recipients of God's grace.[63] Comparing the evidence on offer for each interpretation, it is clear that the human author projects a world where pride, not middle age, is David's problem.

Because Robinson and Borden attempt the same thing—to interpret the world projected by God as he appropriates the human author's narrative—their interpretations are amenable to comparative analysis for accuracy. Borden's interpretation is substantiated by evidence from the human author, and hence is more accurate than Robinson's.

3.4 Conclusion: Assessing Examples of Biblical Interpretation

It turns out that of the six interpretations, only one pair yielded any meaningful answer to the question, "Which one is more accurate?" A tight match between two interpretations is

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[61] Robinson apparently calculates from the last mention of David's age in 2 Samuel 5, when he was thirty years old.

[62] Borden, "High Cost," 190-92, and 193, respectively.

[63] Kuruvilla provides further evidence that Borden is correct. He discusses the context of 1–2 Samuel, the narrator's use of the verb "to send" (שלח), the reciprocal interactions between David and Uriah, the irony of the narrative, and the chiastic framework of the whole (*TTP,* 164-71).

required in order to make a direct comparison for accuracy. Asking whether an interpretation is "right" (or more accurate than others) is rarely a helpful question.

Nonetheless, this does not consign hermeneutics for homiletics to interpretive relativism. Instead, one should start with the question, "What did these preachers try to do?" In other words, "Which projected world (if any) did they attempt to interpret?" The second question is then normally, "Which attempt was more valuable?" Focusing on precise description of a preacher's interpretation and a theological assessment of value can avoid fruitless discussion about which interpretation is correct, and instead render theologically informed judgments about the interpretations' comparative values.

In the rare case of two preachers making the same attempt at Agential-Discourse Interpretation, the final question may then be, "Which one was more accurate?" Literary and historical evidence can be brought to bear in order to make an informed judgment about accuracy.

Projection Interpretation has showed its strength. It can isolate and answer questions of value and accuracy, and thereby assess biblical interpretations for preaching.

4 Conclusion

This chapter has used Projection Interpretation to assess methods and examples of biblical interpretation. First, it assessed the value of each of the three variants of Projection Interpretation and found that certain forms of Agential-Discourse Interpretation are able to meet all four theological goals for homiletics. It also found that the other two variants may also meet those goals but should be used judiciously and transparently. Second, the chapter described six homiletical interpretations of 2 Sam 11–12, classifying each as Agential-Discourse, Self-Discourse, or Non-Discourse Interpretation. Finally, the chapter used Projection Interpretation to compare these six interpretations. It revealed the proper questions to pose (of value or accuracy), and then answered them where possible.

This thesis has been in search of a new hermeneutic adequate to the demands of homiletics. Current hermeneutical systems for preaching are fragmented into approaches that are incomplete (only employing one methodology), unclear (on how authors, readers,

texts, and critical hermeneutics interact), and unable to assess methods and interpretations comparatively.

In response this thesis introduced Projection Interpretation, which displays the following strengths: It is a comprehensive homiletic, able to describe and analyze the plurality of things that preachers actually do with the biblical text. Furthermore, it is clear in how it integrates author, reader, and critical hermeneutics into a single hermeneutic. Finally, it is able to assess interpretive methodology according to theological goals commended by contemporary mainline and evangelical North American homileticians. It thus comprises one successful solution to the problem of fragmented preaching hermeneutics. The final chapter will draw conclusions, discuss the limitations of the thesis, and indicate further directions of study.

Chapter 8:
Toward a Hermeneutic for Homiletics

Preach the word.

—Paul (2 Tim 4:2)

This thesis has argued that preaching faces a problem: the hermeneutic that provides its grounding is fractured. Approaches to biblical interpretation for preaching generally focus on either authors, texts, readers, or critical hermeneutics. These approaches comprise incomplete and unclear hermeneutical methodologies which are unable to assess interpretations for their value and accuracy.

A new hermeneutic is required that arises from the theological nature and demands of preaching. In these pages I have pursued the development of such a hermeneutic. The thesis began by tracing the fracture in homiletics to a prior fragmentation in general hermeneutics since Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. It found that the homiletical situation is merely an echo of an earlier hermeneutical fracture. The thesis concluded that, even if the fracture may be acceptable in general hermeneutics, homiletics requires a remedy.

The theological nature of homiletics gives hope for such a remedy. Much like the tenets of literary criticism that allowed Booth to shape a pluralistic approach to his own field, the theological goals of preaching (to preach the word of God, to preach with authority, to preach a personally understood message, and to preach according to the gospel) provide guidance for a hermeneutic adequate to homiletics.

This thesis then introduced the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff in order to construct that new hermeneutic. Wolterstorff's concepts for interpretation have been crucial for this

endeavor, because they can adequately describe the several actions that agents perform on the biblical text. And because theology has proved to be of central value in describing effective preaching, his theologically oriented hermeneutical concepts have been homiletically helpful.

I have adopted and adapted Wolterstorff's notions in order to construct a new hermeneutic for homiletics called "Projection Interpretation." I did this first by developing the concept of "inhabitation" and using that concept to explain how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics participate in interpretation. Then, using world projection, appropriated discourse, and inhabitation, I outlined three variants of how preachers interpret the world-projecting actions of agents on texts: Agential-Discourse, Self-Discourse, and Non-Discourse Interpretation. Each variant described how preachers, biblical authors, God, and the critical hermeneutical filter of the gospel operate to produce an interpretation of a biblical text.

Consequently, Projection Interpretation is comprehensive—it describes the many things that preachers do with the biblical text as they interpret it. It is also clearer than other hermeneutical models. I use Projection Interpretation to explain how authors, readers, and critical hermeneutics interact. Furthermore, by using theological goals specific to the task of preaching, Projection Interpretation provides theologically grounded assessments of biblical interpretation. It is able to appraise *methods* of interpretation for their preaching value as well as *examples* of interpretations for accuracy.

Therefore preachers, rather than having to choose from several incompatible approaches, can use Projection Interpretation as an overarching hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible. That hermeneutic will enable them to understand the various methods of biblical interpretation and the respective homiletical value of each. Preachers can then select, based on their own theological commitments and the demands of their particular pastoral context, an appropriate method of biblical interpretation for preaching.

Because it provides a clear and comprehensive approach to interpretation, and because it enables assessment of different interpretive methods, Projection Interpretation comprises one solution to the problem of fractured hermeneutics for homiletics. This thesis

makes no claim that Projection Interpretation is the only solution to fragmented hermeneutics for homiletics. Instead it argues that any successful solution to the problem must have certain characteristics, and that Projection Interpretation has them.

1 Conclusions for Preaching

This thesis has reached several conclusions about the nature of biblical interpretation for preaching. Though the development of Projection Interpretation was the central contribution of this thesis, these conclusions are significant enough for homiletics that they deserve to be highlighted here.

1.1 Reading to Preach Is Best Understood in Terms of Agents and Actions

Categorizing hermeneutical methodologies in terms of the actions of agents brings clarity to biblical interpretation for preaching. Such clarity is needed: reading a text is an enormously complicated endeavor. Preachers' prejudgments and perlocutionary responses, social conventions (past and present), authorial intentions, literary and structural features, self-reflective critical activity—all of these entities operate simultaneously in cooperation or conflict in the one act of interpretation. Hermeneutics is a metacognitive attempt to untangle the separate threads of an intuitive whole cloth, isolating and naming what does (and what should) happen as readers read.

Moreover, when readers are preachers who read the Bible to preach, interpretation becomes even more complex. Earlier chapters noted that such complexity arises because of the historical layers of the canon, the social and communal nature of the pastorate, the theological weight of preaching's task, and preachers' belief in a God who speaks. Terms like "author," "text," and "reader" can denote different entities. Reading to preach is particularly complicated.

The result can be hermeneutical fog. For instance, in chapter 2 I showed that, when reading about the woman who anointed Jesus in Mark 14, text-focused interpretation may argue that the text emphasizes the idea of "worth." Yet author-focused hermeneuts could say that Mark intended the story to compare spending resources on acts of worship

favorably with giving alms to the poor. And reader-focused interpreters may explore what reactions the term "leprosy" garners in different preachers. These three interpretations not only differ but are incompatible, because they frame interpretation as coming from different (and competing) entities—author, text, and reader. When each interpretation is described in those terms, it is difficult to compare one against another.

A more effective way to make sense of such complexity is to describe every interpretation in terms of the actions of specific agents. If all of the interpretations above are actions that agents perform on texts, then their actions can be more easily compared and evaluated. In fact, Projection Interpretation shows that they are all instances of the action of world projection. Within that framework, these interpretations can be compared, because Projection Interpretation shows which agent is projecting which world from the text. Describing disparate biblical interpretations in terms of actions and agents has the potential to dissipate the hermeneutical fog.

1.2 Text-Focused Hermeneutics is Inappropriate for Homiletics

In the process of framing hermeneutical methods in terms of actions and agents I argued that text-focused hermeneutics is an inappropriate methodology for homiletics, because attributing intention to inert texts disguises agency. For instance, in the discussion above, a text-focused interpretation of Mark 14 might note the recurrence of terms and concepts revolving around the concept of "worth" in the passage. But who precisely projects a world where "worth" is a pivotal concept? Who is trying to communicate that? It could be the author, or the preacher, or God. Saying that the text intends to say something about worth merely hides a personal action behind an impersonal object. The interpreter who personifies the text is actually making a claim about what an agent—the preacher, author, or God—is doing with the text.

Texts do not "mean"; they are the objects and instruments of agents' actions. Careful analysis of text-focused homiletics revealed that text-focused interpretation devolves into author-focused or reader-focused interpretation. It is thus an inappropriate model for homiletical interpretation because it disguises the agency that a hermeneutic for homiletics requires.

1.3 The Ethics of Preaching Demand Clarity

The prior two sections—describing interpretation as the actions of agents and eliminating the text as the house of meaning—touch on the ethical requirements of preaching. Specifically, when one preaches, issues of authority and trust are paramount. Preachers preach with an authority beyond themselves, and many parishioners expect to hear God's voice during pulpit proclamation.

The problem comes when preachers interpret a text in ways that do not include the voice of God, but then imply in the sermon that they are in fact speaking God's word. For instance, preachers can practice reader-focused interpretation on Mark 14 and project a world where leprosy is the focus, and the disciples' spiritual leprosy is worse than Simon the Leper's physical condition. It is the preacher-as-reader, not God, who generates this interpretation. Yet if preachers present that interpretation in a sermon without clarifying that it is their own appropriation of the text, hearers may conclude that God is saying something to them about their own spiritual state of numbness. That sermon would fail ethically, because it would encourage hearers to ascribe God's authority to a preacher's perspective.

Projection Interpretation, by clarifying which agent projects which world, delineates when God speaks and when other agents speak. For instance, in the interpretation just discussed, preachers practice Self-Discourse Interpretation. That is, they project a world with the text, and then inhabit that world. God does not speak. It is incumbent upon preachers to make that clear in the sermon, lest they violate congregations' trust. The ethics of preaching demands clarity about who is speaking.

1.4 Interpretations for Preaching Can Be Assessed

A final conclusion about preaching relates to assessment. The field of homiletics is divided on whether interpretations can be assessed as right or wrong, better or worse. Some homileticians argue that a passage of Scripture has a single, correct meaning; others flirt

with interpretive relativism by endorsing an unlimited number of interpretations.[1] This thesis has steered a middle course, affirming the view that multiple valuable interpretations exist for every passage, while also contending that those multiple interpretations can in fact be assessed. It advocates a principled pluralism that is more nuanced than a simple pronouncement of right and wrong.

Such assessment takes place, first, by differentiating value from accuracy. Assessing value asks how worthwhile an interpreter's goal is; assessing accuracy asks how close an interpreter came to that goal. To illustrate the difference: when interpreting Mark 14, preachers can ask what God meant when he appropriated Mark's narrative as his own (a form of Agential-Discourse Interpretation). Or, they can ask what someone like themselves would have meant by writing that text (Self-Discourse Interpretation). These two interpretations cannot be compared for accuracy because they aim at different goals. Asking which one was closer to the goal is a non-starter. Instead, they can be assessed by asking which goal (understanding God's speech or their own) is more valuable for preaching.

On the other hand, two interpretations that aim at the same goal can be compared for accuracy. For instance, if both ask what God meant when he appropriated Mark's narrative, then they can be compared for accuracy. They aim for the same target, and so it is legitimate to ask which one was closest to the bullseye. Projection Interpretation, by differentiating value and accuracy, can embrace multiple valid interpretations for a single passage, and yet retain the ability to assess those interpretations against one another.

2 Limitations

Although this thesis has provided a solution to the problem of fragmented homiletics, it has limitations. This stands to reason: any study that tries to combine two sprawling disciplines like hermeneutics and homiletics needs constraints. Therefore, first, I have demarcated

[1] For an example of the former, see Sunukjian's affirmation of "one central truth" for each passage (*Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 72). For an instance of the latter, see McClure's discussion of how texts "deconstruct themselves" and have "endless permutations" (*Other-Wise Preaching*, 16 and 24, respectively).

contemporary North American evangelical and mainline homiletics as the scope of this thesis. Yet in addition to this initial restriction, this thesis has two significant limitations.

The first is that the thesis presents only one solution to the problem of hermeneutical fragmentation. Perhaps there are others. Perhaps there are alternative ways of describing interpretation that can embrace the many things that preachers do with texts; that can show how authors, readers, texts, and critical hermeneutics interact; and that can assess biblical interpretations according to the four theological goals of preaching. The staggering complexity of biblical interpretation suggests that other hermeneutics could be developed. Some of those hermeneutics may comprise additional solutions to the problem of fragmentation.

The second limitation has to do with the four theological goals developed in chapter 4. I used those goals as a metric for assessing interpretive methodologies like Agential-Discourse or Self-Discourse Interpretation. But as I noted earlier, this list is minimal, not exhaustive. That is, any study of homiletical hermeneutics should include these four, but there may be other goals to which evangelical and mainline homileticians should and do ascribe.

Thus, it is appropriate that this thesis bears the subtitle, "*Toward* a New Hermeneutic for Homiletics." Hermeneutics for preaching is a continuing discussion among scholars, preachers, and congregations. I have tried to listen to those who have been speaking, learn from their ideas, and contribute to the ongoing conversation.

3 Directions for Further Study

Now that Projection Interpretation has joined the conversation, it will develop and change as new ideas emerge and new voices contribute. In this final section I sketch five possibilities for further developing Projection Interpretation.

3.1 Changing the Scope

Expanding or contracting the scope of investigation could lead to different approaches to interpretation. For instance, sharpening the focus to mainline homiletics only, or

broadening the geographical limits to include majority world homiletics, or selecting an entirely different focus could all lead to goals for preaching other than the four advanced here. In that case, hermeneutics other than Projection Interpretation could provide successful solutions.

For example, one could explore the hermeneutics of contemporary sub-Saharan African homiletics. That exploration could generate a different list of theological goals for preaching. Perhaps in light of those goals, a hermeneutic other than Projection Interpretation would be more suitable. Hypothetically, any scope for preaching could generate a new set of goals for preaching, which could lead to different solutions to the hermeneutical fracture.

3.2 Exploring Inspiration

This study could lead to additional exploration of the inspiration of Scripture. As noted in chapter 5, under the terms of Projection Interpretation, God's inspiration of Scripture means that he somehow supervised its composition in order to render it suitable for his later appropriation.

This notion differs from both evangelical and mainline views of inspiration and does so in opposite ways. For evangelicals this notion may downgrade God's involvement in Scripture's composition. It may be difficult for them to reconcile the indirect notion of appropriation with the more direct affirmation that "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). They may ask, "Did God breathe out the words of Scripture, or did he just supervise their composition for later appropriation?" On the other hand, appropriation could strike mainline homileticians as an uncomfortable upgrade. Mainline views of inspiration range from outright rejection of the doctrine to general affirmations that God somehow renders the Scriptures useful to himself and to the church.[2] The idea that God

[2] For instance, Kay argues that The Second Helvetic Confession formulates a doctrine of Scripture without reference to inspiration at all (Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 14). However, Ricoeur suggests "a more subordinate role" for inspiration (Ricoeur, "Canon Between Text and Community," 20).

appropriates the biblical text—so that he personally adopts biblical discourse as his own words—may be problematic for some mainline theologians.

In either case, if preachers find Projection Interpretation a helpful hermeneutic for preaching, they would need to ask whether and how inspiration-as-appropriation could fit in their own theological systems. It might require a refinement of the meaning of inspiration. One example of such an exploration is provided by Ward, who prefers to retain a conservative view of inspiration (whereby God inspires every word of Scripture) yet affirms that God appropriates the words of the Bible during canonization. For Ward, appropriation is an addendum to inspiration.[3] Investigations like these will be necessary for both mainline and evangelical scholars if Projection Interpretation is to be integrated into existing theological systems.[4]

3.3 Examining Biblical Layers

A third area for further study concerns the layers of the biblical text. Chapters 3 and 5 described Scripture as a historically multi-layered collection. From oral precursors to editorial arrangement, the Bible bears the marks of multiple human agents, who in many cases appropriate the discourse of earlier agents. It is also possible that God appropriated

[3] See Ward, *Word and Supplement*, 104-5.

[4] It is also possible that some views of inspiration would entail the modification or outright rejection of Projection Interpretation. For instance, a "dictation theory," according to which God spoke the exact words of Scripture to the biblical authors, who then simply inscribed them, would find the notion of God's later appropriation to be unnecessary. On this view, Scripture would be double-agency discourse without any differentiation between the human and divine discourse. God would then directly project a world by dictating a text. This would reduce some of the rich variety found in the above discussion of Agential-Discourse Interpretation. On the other side of the theological spectrum, views that completely reject God's involvement in the formation of the Bible would likely have no more room for appropriation than they do for inspiration. In this case, all of God's speaking in preaching would come from places other than the Bible, and no mode of interpretation could thereby make the claim to successfully preach the word of God or preach with God's authority. Thus, the more extreme the perspective on inspiration, the less fulsome and helpful Projection Interpretation would be as a framework.

any or all of these layers as his own discourse—and any of these appropriations are suitable objects of preachers' interpretation.

Two of those layers received scant attention in this thesis, the examination of which could yield significant returns. First, acts of appropriation that occur after canonization could be useful for preaching. As earlier chapters noted, the church performs the act of canonization, whereby it appropriates the entire canon. But later agents (copyists, translators, and preachers) have continued to act on the Scriptures, appropriating them in order to project worlds. Intriguing questions surround these actions. For instance, is biblical translation an act of appropriation? When Greek-speaking Jews slowly formed and compiled what we know as the Septuagint, did that count as a world-projecting appropriation, and if so, what is its theological value?[5] Moving to later time periods, does the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (interpretation history) of a biblical text generate new projected worlds, and if so, what is their significance for preaching? If these actions are genuine appropriations of the biblical text, they may also be world projections, and if so, then they can be interpreted and preached. For instance, preachers could develop sermons based on a late ninth century scribal change to the book of Matthew or based on Calvin's commentary on Romans. Further study is needed to say whether preaching such late appropriations is theologically valid.

Second, this thesis virtually ignored the intertextual nature of the Bible, as when authors quote, paraphrase or allude to pre-existing biblical material.[6] Describing intertextuality in terms of appropriation and world projection could lead to significant insights. For example, the author of Hebrews quotes Ps 8:4-5, applying the psalmist's words about humanity to Jesus Christ. Scholars are divided as to whether such a striking

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[5] For a helpful introduction to the field of Septuagint studies, see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

[6] The bulk of such intertextuality occurs when New Testament authors use Old Testament material. For a classic study of such use, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, new ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

use of Ps 8 respects the Old Testament context or violates it.[7] Perhaps describing the author of Hebrews' action as appropriation could find a way forward. After all, appropriation is an action that takes up an existing illocution but may also modify it. It embraces continuity as well as change. Under the auspices of Projection Interpretation, intertextual links in the Bible become world-projecting actions of later agents who appropriate earlier discourse for specific purposes.

3.4 Teaching Projection Interpretation

Fourth, Projection Interpretation could develop as a constructive device as well as an analytical one. This thesis has used Projection Interpretation mainly as a way to understand and assess interpretive methodology in homiletics. It has thus focused on existing theory and practice in preaching. But the central task of preachers as they read the Bible is not to assess interpretations; it is to produce them. More work remains to be done to turn Projection Interpretation into a viable homiletical pedagogy, whereby it can be used to train preachers to select world-projecting actions and agents as they read, and to produce theologically sound biblical interpretation that can lead to effective sermons.

3.5 Considering the Preaching Moment

Finally, Projection Interpretation can be applied not just to the reading of the Scriptures but, in an entirely different way, to the preaching moment. When preachers preach, that action could be analyzed according to the notions of world projection and appropriated discourse. In that case, the "text" is no longer the Bible; it is now the sermon. Preachers are no longer the "readers"; they are now the "authors" who compose the sermon. The new "readers" are the congregation: those who hear the text (sermon) and comprehend it.

Projection Interpretation could then be used to describe how congregations interpret sermons, as opposed to how preachers interpret the Bible. As preachers preach, they use the text (the sermon) to project a world for the readers (the congregation). But

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[7] See the extended exchanges in Beale, *Right Doctrine*. For a homiletical exploration of these issues, see Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007).

perhaps God appropriates the sermon and projects his own world with it. Or listeners could use the preacher's locutions to project a world that reflects their values. Congregations can practice the same hermeneutical devices on the sermon as preachers do on the Bible. That is, congregations can choose which projected world to interpret (which action of an agent to try to understand): they can ask what a preacher means by preaching the sermon; what God means by appropriating the preacher's words; what God means by presenting this sermon to them; what they themselves might mean, had they written the sermon; or they can choose to use the sermon in some other way.

Preachers who preach regularly quickly discover the perplexing ways that hearers understand their sermons. Some hearers comprehend clearly what a preacher intended; others who heard the same sermon come away with an entirely different message, or only remember the story about the dog, or seem to have heard from God in a way that bypasses the sermon altogether. Though at times unclear sermons may be the culprit of such communicative mayhem, perhaps much of the variety in understanding comes from the several worlds projected, the several voices speaking in each sermon.

4 Conclusion: A Hermeneutic for Homiletics

This thesis has proposed a solution to the problem of fractured hermeneutics for homiletics by introducing Projection Interpretation, a comprehensive hermeneutic that is clear about how authors, readers and critical hermeneutics interact, and that is able to assess methods and examples of biblical interpretation for preaching. Rather than endorsing just one correct meaning of a biblical passage, Projection Interpretation describes how multiple agents can perform multiple actions on a text: they write, edit, canonize, appropriate, and present texts in order to project worlds, which preachers then comprehend and inhabit. And rather than describing or endorsing only a single method of interpretation for preachers, it embraces and evaluates the many different things that preachers do with texts. The intricacies involved in Projection Interpretation underscore just how complex are the dynamics of Paul's laconic charge, "Preach the word."

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