The Redemptive-Historical View

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The terms *redemptive history* and *salvation history* have a fairly broad currency.[1] My own use will emerge as I sketch the basic elements, as I understand them, of a redemptive-historical (or biblical-theological) approach to interpreting the Bible and then discuss the selected passage in Matthew 2.

IDENTIFYING A REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL APPROACH

The German terms *Heilsgeschichte* and *heilsgeschichtlich* ("salvation history" and "salvation-historical") appeared for the first time about the middle of the nineteenth century.[2] The approach taken in this chapter, however, does not stem, at least in any direct or substantial way, from the developments that gave rise to this term and its English equivalents above. Rather, its roots are earlier, in developments present in the Reformation and in post-Reformation Protestant, especially Reformed, theology. More specifically, it builds directly on the work of Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949), first occupant of the then newly created chair of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1893 until his retirement in 1932.[3]

Writing in 1916, Vos observed of Reformed theology that

> it has from the beginning shown itself possessed of a true historic sense in the apprehension of the progressive character of the deliverance of truth. Its doctrine of the covenants on its historical side represents the first attempt at constructing a

[1] Robert W. Yarborough, "Paul and Salvation History," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism,* vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul,* ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), pp. 297–322, 339–42. His focus on Paul has a broader sweep and also notes how various salvation-historical views have been and continue to be contested or rejected, often emphatically.

[2] A. Josef Grieg, "A Critical Note on the Origin of the Term Heilsgeschichte," *ExpTim* 87 (1976): 118–19, cited in Yarbrough, "Paul and Salvation History," p. 310.

[3] Richard Gaffin, "Vos, Geerhardus," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters,* ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007), p. 1016. Some material from this article (pp. 1016–19) is incorporated in this chapter. See also my introduction to Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2001), pp. ix–xxiii.

> history of revelation and may be justly considered the precursor of what is at present called biblical theology.[4]

Vos saw essential continuity between his own work in biblical theology or, using what he deemed a more suitable designation, "History of Special Revelation,"[5] and this earlier appreciation of the historical character of revelation present in Reformation and post-Reformation orthodoxy. His work is an effort to provide an alternative to the dominant view of biblical theology that had begun emerging a century earlier with the late Enlightenment (e.g., Johann Philipp Gabler). This view is wedded to the historical-critical method with its controlling commitment to the rational autonomy of the interpreter and its correlative rejection of Protestant orthodoxy's understanding of the Bible's canonicity and inspiration/divine authorship (e.g., the seminal and highly influential work of Johann Salomo Semler).[6]

At the same time, Vos recognized the need for more adequate attention to the historical aspect of revelation than was present in earlier Protestant orthodoxy. That perception is reflected in two statements that bracket his life's work, the first from his 1894 Princeton inaugural address and the second written in retirement: "It is certainly not without significance that God has embodied the contents of revelation, not in a dogmatic system, but in a book of history, the parallel to which in dramatic interest and simple eloquence is nowhere to be found"; and, "The Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest."[7] Along with the positive point expressed, the "nots" in these statements point to Vos's concern to redress perceived traces of an intellectualistic or unduly notional understanding of revelation within Protestant evangelicalism more broadly and his own tradition of confessional Reformed orthodoxy in particular, a tradition to which he remained fully and cordially committed. The hermeneutical stance elaborated in this chapter is in this tradition.[8]

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[4] Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation,* p. 232.

[5] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), preface, p. 23. Vos rarely uses the expression "redemptive-historical" (or "redemptive history"). Still, it aptly describes his hermeneutical approach.

[6] For further information on Gabler and Semler, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research,* vol. 1, *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 117–26, 183–93.

[7] Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, p. 23; idem, *Biblical Theology*, p. 26; "The circle of revelation is not a school, but a 'covenant' " (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 17).

[8] The opening chapter of his *Biblical Theology* ("Introduction: The Nature and Method of Biblical Theology," pp. 11–27) is still among the best introductory statements of a redemptive-historical approach; cf. "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation,* pp. 3–24.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF A REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL OR REVELATION-HISTORICAL APPROACH

1. *Distinct from but always within the context of his self-revelation in creation and history (or "general revelation"), God's special revelation has two basic modes: deed revelation and word revelation.* These modes may also be distinguished as redemptive deed and revelatory word, or redemption and (verbal) revelation.[9] Though the point cannot be developed here, apart from general revelation and a biblical understanding of creation and general revelation, redemptive special revelation is basically unintelligible.

2. *Redemption/revelation is historical.* It has its truth and validity as it occurs in history, as multiple historical events that together constitute an organically unfolding whole, a completed history.[10] This history begins when into God's original creation, which he saw was "very good" (Gen 1:31), human sin subsequently enters with its curse-incurring and death-dealing consequences (Gen 3). In its organic and progressive[11] unfolding, it incorporates the history of Israel, his covenant nation, until it culminates in Christ. The history of (verbal) revelation may be viewed as a stream within and conforming to the contours of the history of redemption, in its uneven movement marked by epochal junctures (e.g., exodus, Davidic monarchy, exile).

3. *Jesus Christ in his person and work, centered in his death and resurrection (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3–4), is the culmination of the history of redemption (revelation)*. As its final goal, realized "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), Christ is also, either explicitly or implicitly, its ubiquitous focus throughout, from beginning to end. He does not simply end that history. As the Triune God's final and supreme redemptive self-revelation, he is history's consummation, nothing less than its eschatological omega point, by which redemption restores creation from the ravages of sin and perfects it.

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[9] As these interchangeable expressions show, "redemption" and "revelation" overlap in their senses. The distinction between verbal and nonverbal is irreducible, but God's nonverbal acts are always revelatory and his verbal activity is redemptive, that is, in the interest of his realizing his redemptive purposes.

[10] "Redemption" ("salvation") here and throughout refers to its completed, once-for-all accomplishment *(historia salutis),* in distinction from its ongoing application, its individual and corporate appropriation *(ordo salutis).*

[11] "Progressive" is not the most apt word here, particularly if taken in the sense of smoothly evolving advancement or steady and untroubled improvement. This description hardly characterizes Israel's history. Marked by constantly recurring decline and apostasy and eventual exile, it is apparently the opposite of redemptive history, *Unheilsgeschichte*. Yet "progressive" is properly retained in view of the inexorable forward movement of this history, in all of its twists and turns, toward its intended goal, Christ.

4. *The subject matter of revelation is redemption.* Revelation—excluding prefall, preredemptive revelation in Eden[12]—is the interpretation of redemption, as revelation either attests or explains, describes or elaborates. There is no hard and fast line between these two revelatory functions; both are always selective and so interpretive. In this sense (verbal) revelation is derivative, relative to God's nonverbal redemptive and revelatory acts. Verbal revelation is always focused on or oriented toward God's activity in history as Creator and Redeemer.

This generalization only holds with an important qualification. As verbal revelation documents and explains God's activity in history, so it also points beyond history to his antecedent self-existence (aseity) in its ultimate incomprehensibility and the ultimate impenetrability of his all-controlling pretemporal purpose ("before the foundation of the world," e.g., Eph 1:4). As the one who dwells with the contrite and the humble, he is, as such, the one who lives in a high and holy place and inhabits eternity (Is 57:15), whose thoughts and ways, ultimately, are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth (Is 55:9). God is not exhausted in his redemptive/revelatory activity, nor is his person actualized in that activity. As Creator and Redeemer he is more than Creator and Redeemer, infinitely and incomprehensibly more.

With that essential qualification kept in view, however, invariably God's speech is related to his actions, his word to his work. Given the fall, redemptive deed is the raison d'être for the revelatory word. "Revelation is so interwoven with redemption that, unless allowed to consider the latter, it would be suspended in air."[13]

5. *Scripture is itself revelation, not somehow less than revelation.* The Bible may be fairly characterized as a record of the actual history of redemption (revelation), as a witness to revelation. As such its own origin, including each of the constituent documents as well as the whole, is an integral part of this history, of which it is the permanent record and witness. In this sense, the redemptive-historical approach in view here is a canonical approach. Our only revelatory access to the history of

[12] This exclusion hardly means that special revelation prior to the fall has little or no significance for the history of redemption. In fact, as special revelation is unintelligible apart from general revelation, so redemptive revelation is inexplicable apart from God's purposes in view for the creation, especially for his image-bearing creatures, from the beginning. The consummation forfeited in Adam has been realized in Christ (e.g., Rom 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 44–49). "The eschatological is an older strand in revelation than the soteric" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 157). Redemption restores and perfects creation.

[13] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 15.

redemption is the biblical canon.[14] The limits set by the canon provide the boundary to what we can know by revelation about the history of redemption.[15]

6. *To focus the preceding points hermeneutically: As revelation is the interpretation of redemption, so the interpretation of Scripture is always derivative, the interpretation of interpretation.* Biblical interpretation is not autonomous assessment of a distanced textual datum but receptive appropriation of the God-authored preinterpretation of redemptive history consummated in Christ, preinterpretation that includes the revelation of his will for loving service to him and others.

Any valid interpretive approach ought presumably to be appropriate to the text and its subject matter. On that assumption—self-evident, it would seem, even in our hermeneutically turbulent and contentious times—Hebrews 1:1–2 provides a particularly instructive biblical instance of and thus warrant for the redemptive-historical approach just sketched. Along with a couple of other closely correlative references to God's speaking in Hebrews 2:2–3 and Hebrews 3:5–6,[16] this declaration both substantiates and facilitates elaboration of the points made above about a redemptive-historical approach.

> God, having formerly spoken at many times and in various ways to our fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us through the Son.[17]

This declaration covers, umbrella-like, all, or at least much, of what the writer goes on to say in the rest of the document. As such, it also provides a sweeping, overarching perspective on God's speech or revelation, a controlling perspective arguably shared, more or less explicitly, by the other New Testament writings. Several interrelated factors may be noted about this assertion, reducible to the definitive nuclear assertion "God has spoken."

First, revelation is in view as a historical phenomenon. Further, revelation has taken place as an ongoing history, a history that unfolds in two basic stages. The contrast between

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[14] For a redemptive-historical approach to issues of canon, see esp. Herman N. Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures* (revised trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 1988), pp. vii–x, 1–47; cf. my "The New Testament as Canon," in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate,* ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 165–83.

[15] In this regard, John H. Sailhamer's basic criticisms of Vos seem misplaced (*Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], pp. 67–70, 111–12; cf. pp. 153, 185, 215). Vos's interest is not a reconstructed history that goes beyond the Bible, but the history that is the subject matter of the biblical text, however factored, considered within the context of the canon as a whole and what "by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.6).

[16] Likewise with *theos* as the explicit or implied subject of forms of *laleō*.

[17] Scripture translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

the old and new covenants prominent later, especially in Hebrews 8–10, is fairly seen as implicit or anticipated in the twofold division of Hebrews 1:1–2 as well as in Hebrews 2:2–3 and Hebrews 3:5–6. The writer's revelation-historical outlook is as such a covenant-historical outlook.

Second, God's Son is the consummate and integrating focus of this history. The history of revelation is both complete and a unity. God's having spoken "in the Son" is his "last-days" speaking. Any thought that this speech might be surpassed or superseded is plainly foreign, not only here but everywhere else in the New Testament as well. God's Son-speech has nothing less than eschatological finality.

The history completed by the Son is also unified in him. Overall christocentric unity is particularly clear in Hebrews 3:5–6. Here instead of the prophets (Heb 1:1) or angels (Heb 2:2), Moses stands for the whole of the old covenant, for the law (Heb 2:2) as well as the prophets.[18] As such, in his servant capacity "in all God's house,"[19] he is the key witness to "the things that would be spoken,"[20] that is, to those things spoken by God in Christ, to God's future last-days speech in the Son.[21] All told, the old functions as a witness that looks toward and anticipates the new. Explicitly, more clearly than in the other two passages, God's revelation in his Son terminates the covenant-historical house-building process, as he is its completion. He is the *telos* (cf. Rom 10:4), the goal that gives unity and coherence to the history of revelation, old covenant as well as new, in its entirety.

This focus on Christ, as comprehensive and completing as it is unifying, shows clearly that the history of postfall revelation, considered in terms of its subject matter, is in fact the history of *redemption*. God's speech "in the Son" is "salvation … spoken through the Lord" (Heb 2:3), with both its realized and still future (Heb 9:28) aspects. He embodies, climactically and uniquely, both word (verbal) revelation and deed revelation (cf. Jn 1:1) with the former interpreting the latter.

Third, this Christ-centered history, complete and unified in its basic two-stage unfolding, is marked by diversity. The diversity of old-covenant revelation is accented by the adverbs *polymerōs* and *polytropōs* and by their position in the Greek text as the opening words in Hebrews 1:1. If, as seems likely, a distinction is to be made between them (they

[18] "Moses" (Heb 2:2, 5) as well as "prophets" (Heb 1:1) and perhaps "angels" (Heb 2:2) are each plausibly taken as synecdochic for the whole of the old-covenant period, both before and after Moses.
[19] Note, *all* he does is in God's *one, single* covenant-house building project in history.
[20] The implied speaker of the substantive future passive participle *tōn lalēthēsomenōn* is God.
[21] Cf. Jn 5:46, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (NIV).

occur nowhere else in the New Testament), the first has in view different parts or instances (different times and places), the second, different modes and genres.[22]

Whether or not directly within the purview of the text, this emphasis on diversity accommodates and even sponsors the kinds of concerns that have increasingly occupied biblical interpretation in the modern period, but with a basic proviso. For the author of Hebrews, literary interests and historical interests are never competitive or even independent of or indifferent to each other. Genre factors, no doubt semantically significant, and essential theological considerations do not override or supplant but subserve more basic redemptive-historical concerns as those concerns always involve reliable reference to actual historical occurrence.

The diversity of God's speaking is a function of its taking place "through the prophets." With an eye to the preposition "through" *(en)* we may speak advisedly of the prophets as instruments. The way the author of Hebrews views the activity of Old Testament authors is instructive in this regard. In Hebrews 4:7, the quotation from Psalm 95 (Ps 94 lxx) is what God (the implied subject from Heb 4:3–5) is saying "through David," while in Hebrews 3:7 the same quoted material is, without qualification, what "the Holy Spirit says." The Holy Spirit utilizes David such that what David says in the psalm is primarily and more ultimately what the Holy Spirit says. Similarly in Hebrews 9:8 both the actual Day of Atonement ritual and the account of it in Exodus and Leviticus seen together (word focused on deed) are what "the Holy Spirit indicates." In Hebrews 10:15, the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 is what the Holy Spirit "bears witness to" and "says."[23]

A redemptive-historical orientation requires giving careful attention to this instrumental role of the human authors of the biblical documents, but that is not due to captivation with the "humanity" of Scripture or at the expense of downplaying its primary divine authorship. A concern with revelation as a historical process should inevitably draw one to the varied human instrumentality that is an integral factor in giving shape to that process. The distinguishing characteristics and peculiarities of each of the human authors and what they have written are essential to revelation as historically differentiated. But divine and human authorship, the unity and diversity of Scripture, are not in tension. Attention to the writings of the various authors in all their respective individuality and particularity serves to disclose in its rich diversity the organic unity and coherence of the Bible as revelation. Nothing in Hebrews suggests that diversity involves conflict or

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[22] "At many times and in many ways" (ESV), "at many times and in various ways" (NIV).
LXX Septuagint

[23] Accordingly, Hebrews supports something like the classical distinction between God as the primary author of Scripture and the human authors as secondary.

disunity. Every indication is to the contrary. Hebrews 9–10 particularly works out the unity of the old-new relationship in terms of the organic tie between type and its antitype, shadow and the reality shadowed.

A couple of final observations may serve to round out this presentation of the redemptive-historical method.

First, a primary concern of this method is fidelity to the fundamental hermeneutical proposition given with the Reformation's *sola Scriptura*, the well-known "Scripture interprets Scripture."[24] The sense of this self-interpretation, which focuses the general interpretive principle that a text is to be interpreted in the light of its context, is that the diverse teaching of Scripture, as God's written Word, is a concordant unity. Any one part is located within an expanding horizon of God-given contexts that, with whatever imponderables involved, serve to clarify. Biblical revelation is self-elucidating because in all its parts it is a unified whole.

This overall unity, considered in terms of its subject matter, is redemptive-historical. Biblical revelation faithfully records the actual history of special revelation. That history, in turn, is unified as the ongoing interpretation of redemptive history, which, centered on Christ, unfolds organically, like a maturing organism. Exegesis controlled by this redemptive-historical, eschatological framework, established by Scripture itself, will not only be prone to reach more thoroughly biblical conclusions but will also tend to begin with the right questions. Not only for Paul and Hebrews but also for the other biblical writers the principle holds, "The historical was first, then the theological"[25]—and, we may add, with the theological, the literary.

Second, redemptive-historical interpretation is marked by a sense of *continuity* between the interpreter today and the New Testament writers. While essential categorical differences—inspired and uninspired, canonical and noncanonical—need to be properly maintained and safeguarded, at the same time both the New Testament writers and their interpreters share a common concern in their subject matter, the history of redemption, and they share that concern from within basically the same redemptive-historical, eschatological context, bracketed by Christ's resurrection and his return. The church today, like the Thessalonian church, is made up of those who have "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:9–10 esv).

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[24] The concept is already clear in Luther, e.g., Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," in *Martin Luther's Works*, vol. 33, *Career of the Reformer* III, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), pp. 25–26. My thanks to Carl R. Trueman for this reference.

[25] Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 41.

An indispensable aspect of this "waiting service" of the church is the interpretation of the New Testament, along with the Old, as the redemptive-historically focused, Christ-centered revelation sufficient for the life and needs of the church in every generation as long as this interim continues. If one grants that theology ought to be essentially exegetical, based on interpretation of Scripture, then along with due consideration of differences also involved (apostolic and postapostolic), awareness of this redemptive-historical continuity, compounded in terms of context as well as content, tends to ensure a more rigorously biblical focus and more biblical boundaries to the entire theological enterprise.

MATTHEW 2:7–15

Since the most-discussed issue facing interpretation of Matthew 2:7–15 is the use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15, before we look at this passage, some general though necessarily brief comment about the New Testament use of the Old is in order.[26]

The New Testament use of the Old. The use of the Old Testament in the New has two basic aspects: (1) the specific and varied ways in which the New Testament quotes, appeals to and otherwise utilizes the Old, and (2) general statements about the Old, whether as a whole or in part. Each aspect informs the other and both need to be explored. To ignore or otherwise obscure either will likely result in a distorted understanding of the place and function of the Old Testament in the New.

From a redemptive- or revelation-historical and canonical perspective, hermeneutical priority belongs to New Testament statements, especially overall generalizations, about the Old. These statements with their implications provide a controlling framework for understanding numerous instances of quotation like Matthew 2:15, as well as other uses of the Old throughout the New. Two such general statements, particularly instructive, are Luke 24:44–47 and 1 Peter 1:10–12.

Luke 24:44–49 lacks a specific time marker and so is best taken as showing what was typical or characteristic between the resurrection (Lk 24:1–43) and the ascension (Lk 24:50–53). Luke 24:44–47 shows it to be a period marked largely by instruction (cf. Acts 1:3), a forty-day intersession, as we might picture it, in which Jesus gave a crash course in Old Testament hermeneutics and theology from a postresurrection perspective.

Two things about this teaching are clear. First, its substance (Lk 24:44–45), pre- ("while I was still with you") as well as postresurrection, was the necessary fulfillment of

[26] The comments that follow adapt some material from my " 'For Our Sakes Also': Christ in the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *The Hope Fulfilled: Essays in Honor of Dr. O. Palmer Robertson,* ed. Robert L. Penny (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2008), pp. 61–81.

everything written about him "in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms." The scope of this prepositional phrase (cf. "in all the Scriptures," Lk 24:27) is best taken as all-inclusive and comprehensive, not partial. It covers the Jewish Scriptures in their entirety, not just certain strands within each of the three major sections of the canon.

The summary nature of the passage just noted favors this conclusion. It is highly implausible that throughout this period Jesus only discussed certain parts of the Old Testament and kept the rest a closed book. More decisive is Luke 24:45: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (esv; cf. Lk 24:32). The content of the teaching was not "these Scriptures" in distinction from others, not a specific set of Scriptures or a particular aspect of the Old Testament but simply "the Scriptures," a conventional designation within contemporary Judaism and the New Testament for the Old Testament as a whole. Nothing in the Old Testament, Jesus taught, is not "about me." In its entirety the Old Testament is essentially forward-looking and, in that sense, prophetic. Further, the focus of that fundamentally prophetic outlook is Christ.

Second, if Luke 24:44–45 circumscribes the Old Testament's outlook, then Luke 24:46–47 specifies its center: "written" there are the Messiah's suffering, his resurrection and, syntactically coordinate, world-wide preaching of the gospel or, with an eye to the effective outcome of that proclamation, the church. "Everything about me" written in the Law, Prophets and Psalms (Lk 24:44) has its central focus in Christ's death, his resurrection and the consequent worldwide, church-building preaching of the gospel.

Since no one Old Testament passage mentions together the Messiah's death, his resurrection and the church, either verbatim or as a paraphrase, "it is written" is best read here in a looser, more general sense. Christ is foreseen in the Old Testament as a whole in the sense that his death and resurrection are its integrating focus. The various parts and diverse teaching of the Old Testament have their coherence and unity in him. He is "the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole," to borrow the language of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1.5).

In 1 Peter 1:10–12, the general concern of the Old Testament prophets with the grace that would come to New Testament believers has an even more direct bearing on Matthew 2:15. We can see this in three ways.

First, given that "this salvation," predicated on Christ's resurrection, is in view in its present-future comprehensiveness (1 Pet 1:3–9) and considering as well the compound Greek verbs in 1 Peter 1:10 (they "searched intently and with the greatest care," NIV), the prophets' preoccupation was both comprehensive and intensive, as absorbing as it was complete.

Especially pertinent is the indication of the prophets' comprehension of what they wrote. With all that was undoubtedly limited and shadowy about their understanding, these verses express an essential and pervasive continuity between their limited understanding and the divine intention of what they wrote. They also indicate the organic flow from the prophets' seedlike grasp of what they wrote to the final and fully flowered revelation of the New Testament.

A specific instance is the Evangelist's comment in John 12:41 (cf. Jn 12:38–40): "Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him" (niv). Not only did Isaiah speak (or write) but also, in speaking, he himself saw or understood. In fact, with an eye to the syntax of John 12:41, he spoke "because he saw"; he said it because he saw it.

Further, in ministering as each did in his own time and place, the prophets understood, by revelation (1 Pet 1:12), that ultimately they were not serving themselves and their contemporaries but New Testament believers. This passage, in other words, affirms continuity between the ministries of the prophets, including the Scriptures they wrote, and the post-Pentecostal, Spirit-empowered proclamation of the gospel.

Second, what the various prophets say is unified and integrated, for ultimately the one Spirit, as "the Spirit of Christ,"[27] was indicating and predicting through each of them. Because of this overarching activity of the Spirit, "the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole" is present and discoverable in Old Testament prophecy as a whole. The prophets' multiauthored diversity constitutes an organically unfolding and divinely determined didactic unity.

Third, at the center of the comprehensive and integrated body of Old Testament prophecy is "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." Its overall focus is messianic humiliation and exaltation, the same centering outlook on prophecy as a whole present in Luke 24 for the Old Testament as a whole.

The global and unifying outlook of Luke 24 and 1 Peter 1 as well as Hebrews 3 (Moses, standing for the entire old covenant, as witness to Christ; Heb 3:5–6), fairly taken as representing the remaining New Testament writers, hardly squares with the view that the Old Testament comprises unrelated or discordant trajectories of meaning. Instead, a unidirectional path or set of multiple paths leads to Christ, however obscure and difficult at points the way may be to follow. In any event, multivalent, even contradictory,

[27] As the subject of the verb in its clause, this expression is best taken to refer to the unified activity of the preincarnate Christ along with the Holy Spirit under the old covenant (cf. 1 Cor 10:4), adumbrating their conjoint post-Pentecost activity, based on the cross and resurrection (e.g., Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9–10; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17; Eph 3:16–17).

trajectories will appear to be the case when the Old Testament documents are read "on their own terms" in the sense of bracketing out fulfillment in Christ and the interpretive bearing of the New Testament. For new-covenant readers submissive to both the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, such a disjunctive reading of the Old Testament is illegitimate, as well as redemptive-historically (and canonically) anachronistic. To seek to interpret the various Old Testament documents for themselves and apart from the vantage point of the New exposes one ultimately to misinterpreting them. The Old Testament is to be read in the light of the New not only because Jesus and the New Testament writers read it this way, but also because Jesus and the New Testament writers are clear about the continuity in intention and meaning that exists between themselves and the various Old Testament authors and what those authors wrote in their own time and place.

Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15. The fulfillment of Scripture is a central theme in all four Gospels, as each is concerned in its own way with showing that Jesus as God's Son is Israel's promised Messiah. That motif is particularly in evidence in Matthew, with more than double the number of Old Testament quotations of any of the other Gospels.[28] Fulfillment is an especially prominent theme in the infancy narrative (Mt 1:18–2:23), which contains five of the ten (or eleven) "formula quotations" distinctive to Matthew.[29] Without being insistent here on one particular way of subdividing this narrative, the passage does lend itself to being considered in five sections, each marked by one of the quotations: Matthew 1:18–25, 2:1–6, 2:7–15, 2:16–18, 2:19–23. In the four units in Matthew 2, the quotation provides the conclusion. In Matthew 2:7–15, the quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15 is pivotal. It not only concludes the account of the divine measures taken in the face of Herod's murderous duplicity but also sets the direction for the narration to the end of the chapter.[30]

A good number of past and current commentators and other interpreters, probably a majority presently, recognizes here an instance of some form of typology, a way of handling Old Testament texts present elsewhere in Matthew and throughout the rest of the New Testament (notably Hebrews).[31] The validity of this typological use, however,

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[28] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), p. 30.

[29] On Matthew's use of these quotations, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 10–14; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), pp. liv–lvii.

[30] On the historical reliability of the narrative in chapter 2, assumed here, see R. T. France, "Scripture, Tradition and History in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew," in *Gospel Perspective: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels,* ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 2:239–66, esp. 260–61; on the historicity of Mt 2:13–23, see Hagner, *Matthew,* p. 35.

[31] With Goppelt, "Only historical facts—persons, actions, events, and institutions—are material for typological interpretation," and "only if they are considered to be divinely ordained representations or types of future realities that will be greater and even more complete" (Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The*

has long been a matter of considerable debate. On that question, the redemptive-historical and canonical view of this chapter holds that Matthew's use is true to the sense of Hosea 11:1, in terms of its both divine and human authorship.

Some supporting reflections can be facilitated by reference to a couple of other treatments of this passage. A brief consideration of Calvin's view will show that the difficulties often perceived in this text and other New Testament uses of the Old have clear "premodern" roots and do not stem basically from our post-Enlightenment situatedness or "modern" expectations shaped by historical-critical or full-blown grammatical-historical methods.

Calvin discusses Matthew's use of Hosea in both his *Harmony of the Evangelists* (1555) and his Hosea commentary (1557), interestingly at greater length in the latter.[32] Matthew makes more than "only a comparison"[33] but draws "this analogy,"[34] where the exodus is one among Old Testament events and persons that are "types of Christ."[35] By arguing that this analogy involves Matthew doing "nothing inconsistent,"[36] Calvin distances himself from the view of some[37]

> that the intention of the prophet was different from what is here stated, and have supposed the meaning to be, that the Jews act foolishly in opposing and endeavoring to oppress the Son of God, because the Father hath called him out of Egypt. In this way, they grievously pervert the words of the prophet, the design of which is, to establish a charge of ingratitude against the Jews.[38]

He adds, "Beyond all question, the passage ought not to be restricted to the person of Christ: and yet it is not tortured by Matthew, but skillfully applied to the matter in hand."[39] While Matthew "accommodates this passage" to Christ,

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Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New, trans. Donald H. Madvig [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], pp. 17–18); cf. France, *Matthew,* p. 11: "OT people, events, or institutions which may serve as models for understanding the continuity of God's purpose as now supremely focused in the coming of Christ."

[32] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:156–58; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets,* vol. 1, *Hosea*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 386–88.

[33] Calvin, *Hosea,* p. 387.

[34] Calvin, *Matthew,* p. 157.

[35] Calvin, *Hosea,* p. 388.

[36] Ibid., p. 388.

[37] He does not identify them.

[38] Calvin, *Matthew,* p. 156.

[39] Ibid., p. 157.

> they who have not been well versed in Scripture have confidently applied to Christ this place [Hos 11:1]; yet the context is opposed to this. Hence it has happened, that scoffers have attempted to disturb the whole religion of Christ, as though the Evangelist had misapplied the declaration of the Prophet.[40]

Whether Matthew's typological understanding, as Calvin views it, is consistent with Hosea or has misapplied him may be addressed in light of a fairly recent interchange on this issue.[41] John Sailhamer is insistent that "Matthew did not resort to typology"[42] but instead cites the literal sense of Hosea as intended by its human author, based, in turn, on the literal sense of the Pentateuch. In response, Dan McCartney and Peter Enns emphatically reject this view. They hold that Matthew, following current Second Temple interpretive methods, adopts a christological or typological reading of Hosea. However, they are at best unclear how the literal sense intended by Hosea (the human author) is compatible with Matthew's reading.[43]

The view consonant with the redemptive-historical approach of this chapter lies between these two. On the one hand, Sailhamer overstates Hosea's own grasp of the messianic future in view in what he wrote and is wrong in rejecting Matthew's use as an instance of typology. (Much of the exegesis of Hosea he offers in fact serves a typological reading.) On the other hand, a typological reading of the Old Testament, like Matthew's, is only as sound as it is continuous and concordant with the sense intended by the human author.[44]

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[40] Calvin, *Hosea,* pp. 386–87.

[41] John H. Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 87–96; Dan McCartney and Peter Enns, "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 97–105. Enns has subsequently expressed his view in *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 132–34, 153, and in his contribution to *Three Views of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), pp. 198–202, 206, 208, 210; cf. pp. 161, 163–64.

[42] Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," p. 96.

[43] Subsequently, Enns is clear, even emphatic, about the discontinuity he sees between the human authorial meaning of Hosea and Matthew. As something of a bottom line to his view, he states: "And so Hosea's words, which in their original historical context (the intention of the human author, Hosea) did not speak of Jesus of Nazareth, now do" (*Inspiration and Incarnation,* p. 153), a statement repeated in *Three Views of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,* p. 202, without the parenthesis but, as far as I can see, still saying the same thing (see n. 45 below).

[44] McCartney and Enns stress the importance of distinguishing between method and goal in the New Testament use of the Old ("Matthew and Hosea," pp. 99–100), certainly a valid distinction. But the goal (finding Christ in the Old Testament) hardly justifies using just any means. A method that ignores or is at odds with the meaning intended by the human author, regardless of accepted Second Temple hermeneutical conventions, has to be judged invalid.

This is true for at least three reasons. First, as we have seen, 1 Peter 1:10–11 says so. Or, to take another, Matthean example, when Jesus, speaking of himself and his ministry, says, "Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Mt 13:17 esv; cf. Lk 10:24), are we to conclude that he meant to exclude Hosea?[45]

Second, and with an importance I cannot begin to address adequately here, if there is not continuity or basic agreement in intention between God as the primary author and the human authors of the Old Testament in what they wrote, then the Bible, as a whole and in its parts, textually considered, is basically incoherent and any meaningful notion of its divine authorship excluded.

Third, and related to the preceding point, if this basic congruence is lacking, then it is also difficult to see how the unity of biblical religion—salvation by old-covenant faith in God's promises in continuity with new-covenant faith based on their fulfillment in Christ—can be maintained—as Hebrews 11:1–12:2, for one, does.

How then should we understand the particular instance of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15? In answer, the following sketch, necessarily brief, builds on more extensive discussions of others.[46] Craig Keener writes, "When Matthew quotes Hosea, he knows Hosea's context."[47] To this key consideration, which there is no good reason to question, we may add, "When Hosea wrote Hosea, he knew Hosea's context." It is thoroughly gratuitous to hold that Matthew takes out of context and gives a future reference to a statement Hosea makes about the past and no less groundless to hold that Hosea made that statement with no thought of the future.[48]

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[45] At issue here, if it needs to be said, is *not* that, in the light of the fulfillment in Christ, the New Testament writers (and many readers) undoubtedly have a deeper, fuller and richer understanding of the Old Testament authors they cite than those authors (and their contemporary and subsequent readers) had. Enns, however, envisioning Matthew going back in time and telling Hosea about Jesus and his death and resurrection, maintains, "I am not sure if Hosea would have known what to make of it" (*Inspiration and Incarnation*, p. 153; *Three Views of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 201). A thoroughgoing disjunction or lack of any continuity in understanding between the two seems to be the point of this scenario.

[46] See esp. John Murray, "The Unity of the Old and New Testaments," in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 1:25–26; G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and the Apostles Teach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (October 2006): 21–23.

[47] Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVPNTC 1 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 70.

[48] Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 140–41: "It is one thing to assert that Matthew's hermeneutical methods were far from ours, quite another to imply that he could not comprehend the plain sense of a Hebrew sentence. Surely, it is reasonable, at least, initially to assume that he knew what Hosea intended to say." This comes close to saying that along with his

There are multiple references to Egypt in Hosea.[49] Together these constitute an unmistakable pattern with central theological, that is, redemptive-historical, significance. A number of these references, like Hosea 11:1, have the exodus in view as a past event (Hos 2:15; 12:9, 13; 13:4), while others speak of an impending return to Egypt (Hos 7:16; 8:13; 9:3, 6). Further, these references do not merely point to an isolated occurrence in distant antiquity, however memorable, but to what throughout the Old Testament is the preeminent event of salvation, the nation-constituting event of deliverance, which has contemporary significance.[50] In Hosea this enduring relevance is clearest in Hosea 13:4, "But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior" (esv). The exodus is the archetypal evidence that the Lord God is the savior of his people.

At the same time the future references just noted link Egypt with Assyria as a place of exile (Hos 9:3; 10:6; 11:5, 11), an association compounded by Israel/Ephraim's currently ongoing disobedient political maneuvering with both Assyria and Egypt (Hos 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1). These associations along with the other references to Egypt point to what some fairly see as Hosea's Egypt typology. One of its functions, plain enough in the context of the document as a whole, is to highlight that Assyrian exile—Israel's punishment for persisting apostasy and hardened rebellion—amounts to a reversal of the exodus. Impending exile in Egypt-Assyria will be like having to go back to the ancient Egyptian "house of slaves" (Ex 20:2).

The subunit comprising Hosea 11:1–11 opens by recalling Israel's primeval exodus-redemption as "my [God's] son" (cf. Ex 4:22). The verses immediately following (Hos 11:2–4), "the design of which," as Calvin says, "is to establish a charge of ingratitude against the Jews,"[51] lead to the grim prospect of exile as the consequence of this persisting disregard of God's gracious "call" and constant care (Hos 11:5–7). Yet that dark reality will not be God's final dealings with his unrepentant son (Hos 11:8–11). "In wrath [he will] remember mercy" (Hab 3:2; cf. Is 60:2). Israel will return from exile in Egypt-Assyria (Hos 11:11). The exile-reversal of the exodus will itself be reversed. This climactic promise

typological approach (however one assesses it), Matthew also possessed incipient grammatical-historical sensibilities.

[49] The following reflections hold for the canonical form of Hosea, seen here as having a single author, the eighth-century-B.C. preexilic prophet identified in Hosea 1:1, perhaps with a few subsequent additions (e.g., some of the references to Judah); see, e.g., Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 354–55.

[50] See, e.g., the survey of Rikki E. Watts, "Exodus," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 478–84.

[51] Calvin, *Matthew*, p. 156.

of future exodus-deliverance fills Israel's horizon with prophetic hope in the face of the presently unresolved consequences of its sinful rebellion.

By quoting Hosea 11:1, Matthew taps directly into the whole of Hosea 11:1–11, which is marked by its realized-future Egypt typology with related allusions and associations within the overall context of Hosea. Significantly, as frequently noted, instead of the Septuagint with "his children" (plural), he cites (or correctly translates) the Hebrew with the singular, "my son." This singular, collective here for Israel as God's chosen son-nation is linked to references elsewhere to a royal individual, to a chosen son set apart from the rest of the nation yet in solidarity with it (e.g., Ps 2:2, 6–7, 12; 80:15, 17; 89:26–27).[52]

The intrinsic, integral tie between these two senses is plain in prophetic literature from the same preexilic period as Hosea (or from the same section of the canon), namely, the prominence of references to the servant of the Lord in Isaiah. Collectively, Israel, called out as the Lord's firstborn son (Ex 4:22), is to be his servant. However, what Israel has failed to be, the one who is set apart as the Lord's anointed servant will be in its stead (e.g., Is 42:1–4; 49:1–13). This messianic servant, as sin-bearer (Is 52:13–53:12), will do for the servant-nation what they cannot do for themselves because they are a nation of sinners, and the outcome will be salvation for sinners not only in Israel but also in all nations (e.g., Is 49:6). From a revelation-historical and canonical perspective the prophetic outlooks of Isaiah and Hosea inform each other. The promised exodus-salvation of the sinful son-servant nation in view in Hosea 11:11, for which return from Assyrian exile was and could be only a pointer, will be accomplished by the messianic servant-son.

Matthew's use of Hosea, far from being a grammatical-historically indefensible or inexplicable textual grab, lays hold of the single Old Testament passage, including the intention of its human author, that perhaps better than any other serves what Matthew chooses to highlight about Jesus of Nazareth. Hosea's typology of slavery/exile-exodus, both realized and future, has been fulfilled in Christ. Jesus in his person and activity fulfills Israel's prophetic, forward-looking history by recapitulating its central thread through his identity as God's Messiah-Son and his messianic task "to fulfill all righteousness" confirmed by his submission to John's water baptism, a sign of his solidarity with the repentant as their sin-bearer (Mt 3:13–17). Jesus goes to Egypt, the primeval place of God's people's enslavement and perennial sign of the need for deliverance caused by human sin, so that he may be called out from there to an exodus ordeal of wilderness testing, leading to salvation for sinners, not only in Israel but also in all nations. The immediate duress of the desert events of Matthew 4:1–11 sets the tone for

[52] Plausibly in the background here, for either Hosea or Matthew or both, are Balaam's otherwise identical dual oracular utterances, one plural, one singular, to God "bringing [Jacob] out of Egypt" ("them," Num 23:22; "him," Num 24:8); cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, p. 37; France, *Matthew*, p. 80 n. 17.

the subsequent course of Jesus' entire ministry. The testing of his messianic faithfulness that culminates in his death and resurrection secures eschatological deliverance from sin and its consequences.[53]

One need not flatten out the differences between the Old and New Testaments nor lose sight of clearer and fuller understanding after the cross and resurrection in order to recognize in the text of Hosea an incipient and seminal grasp, however otherwise shadowy and inchoate, of the messianic plant whose eventual full flowering in Christ Matthew documents and explicates. What Jesus said of Abraham is also true of Hosea in his time and place—commensurate with and certainly not at odds with grammatical-historical reflections—he "rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56 NASB).

CONCLUSION

Comments in two areas may serve to provide a closing perspective on the hermeneutical outlook of this essay.

First, while the language and explicit concept of "salvation history" is relatively recent, the significance of the redemptive-historical view sketched in this chapter is not its novelty or distance from all earlier forms of exegesis. The factor of continuity needs to be appreciated. A credible case can be made that already in the second century, the confrontation with Gnosticism indelibly impressed upon the church the controlling biblical insight of a redemptive-historical approach: salvation resides ultimately not in who God is or even in what he has said but in what he has *done* in history, once for all, in Christ. Virtually from its beginning on and more or less consistently, especially beginning with the Reformation, the approach of the church to the Bible has been incipiently redemptive-historical or biblical-theological.

Second, on the much-debated issue of the relationship between biblical theology (biblical interpretation) and systematic theology (dogmatics), the redemptive-historical approach of this chapter entails a noncompetitive, mutually dependent relationship in which biblical theology is the indispensable servant of systematic theology. The former serves the latter on the understanding that systematic theology aims for a presentation of the overall teaching of the Bible as God's Word under appropriate topics. To that end, redemptive-historical interpretation is indispensable because sound exegesis is the lifeblood of systematic theology, and it is essential for sound exegesis to pay careful

[53] "The beginning of the Decalogue ('I am the LORD, your God, who has led you out of Egypt, the house of slavery') comes to stand on a firm foundation when God the Father led our King Jesus out of Egypt" (Jakob van Bruggen, *Matteüs: Het evangelie voor Israël* [Kampen: Kok, 1994], p. 54).

attention to the redemptive-historical subject matter of Scripture and to the revelation-historical context of the various biblical documents.[54]

This reciprocal relationship may be aptly compared to literary analysis of a great epic drama. Biblical theology is concerned with the redemptive-historical plot as it unfolds scene by scene. With an eye to that entire plot, systematic theology considers the roles of the primary actors, God and humanity. It notes in particular the constants that mark their characters and the dynamics of their ongoing activities and interactions. A focus on this reciprocal relationship within a redemptive-historical approach minimizes the tendency, often present in systematic theology, toward unwarranted speculation and "dehistoricizing" in its formulations, and yet maintains the importance of systematic theology for biblical interpretation.[55]

[54] At any one point in actual practice the relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology is of course reciprocal. As systematic theology builds on biblical theology, so biblical theology inevitably is influenced, at least implicitly, by some operating form of systematic theology and assessment of the Bible as a whole.

[55] Gaffin, R. B., Jr. (2012). "The Redemptive-Historical View." In S. E. Porter & B. M. Stovell (Eds.), *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (pp. 89–110). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.