

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Grace Theological Journal* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_grace-theological-journal.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_grace-theological-journal.php)

# THE SINGLE INTENT OF SCRIPTURE— CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT

RAJU D. KUNJUMMEN

*Evangelicals currently debate whether the Bible always has a "single intent" or if there is sometimes a "fuller meaning" (sensus plenior) due to divine inspiration. The literary theory of E. D. Hirsch indicates that meaning is to be associated with authorial intent. Examination of key passages of Scripture indicates that the authorial intent of the divine author sometimes contains implications that extend beyond those intended by the human author.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

THE issue of hermeneutical theory in relation to biblical interpretation is prominent today. By all indications, hermeneutics will continue to be in the forefront of evangelical concerns. Therefore, there is an ongoing need to examine the validity of various theories in this discipline.

Hermeneutics is not a discipline isolated from theology, though it may be true that biblical and exegetical theology has relied to some extent on a hermeneutical theory derived from the humanism of the Renaissance. It has been pointed out that the "problem of hermeneutics is always subordinate to the problem of revelation, for one's view of the Bible will determine his interpretation."<sup>1</sup> It is imperative that interpretive theory be tested by Scripture. The present study proposes to examine the hermeneutical principle of a "single intent of Scripture."

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., the foremost proponent of this principle in contemporary evangelicalism, has affirmed the following:

<sup>1</sup>Don H. McGaughey, "The Problem of Biblical Hermeneutics," *Restoration Quarterly* 5 (1961) 236-47. The quotation was taken from its abstract in *Religious and Theological Abstracts* 7 (1964) 325.

God's meaning and revelatory-intention in any passage of Scripture may be accurately and confidently ascertained only by studying the verbal meanings of the divinely delegated and inspired human writers.<sup>2</sup>

No definition of interpretation could be more fundamental than this: *To interpret we must in every case reproduce the sense the Scriptural writer intended for his own words.* The first step in the interpretive process is to link only those ideas with the author's language that he connected with them.<sup>3</sup>

Only the doctrine and the theology prior to the time of the writer's composition of his revelation (which theology we propose to call here the "Analogy of Scripture") may be legitimately used in the task of theological exegesis, in other words, where the writer directly cites or obviously alludes to the theology that preceded his writing and formed a backdrop against which he cast his own message. Only the discipline of biblical theology, if it traces the buildup of doctrine from era to era within each of the Testaments, will supply the extremely important theological data necessary to rescue an otherwise dull philological and grammatical exercise. The "analogy of Scripture" then was the "pre-understanding" of both the writer and of those in his audience who were alert to what God had revealed prior to this new word or revelation.<sup>4</sup>

Kaiser also cites the question raised by Bruce Vawter concerning *sensus plenior*:

If this . . . deeper meaning was reserved by God to Himself and did not enter into the writer's purview at all, do we not postulate a Biblical word effected outside the control of the human author's will and judgment . . . and therefore not produced through a truly *human* instrumentality?<sup>5</sup>

Both Vawter and Kaiser would answer this question in the affirmative and then deny its validity. Elsewhere, Kaiser makes the following affirmation:

What is it that the whole or unity of Scripture teaches that cannot be found in the individual parts by grammar and syntax? And if we must

<sup>2</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots: A Tribute to Wilbur Smith*, ed. Kenneth Kantzer (Nashville: Nelson, 1978) 138.

<sup>3</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 118.

<sup>4</sup>Kaiser, "Single Intent," 140.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 115; Walter C. Kaiser, "The Current Crisis in Exegesis and the Apostolic Use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in I Corinthians 9:8-10," *JETS* 21 (March 1978) 8. Vawter had stated his view elsewhere without the question. See Bruce Vawter, "The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations," *CBQ* 26 (1964) 115.

answer that a *different sense* is taught which went beyond the consciousness of the original instrumental agent who wrote that text, then we must argue that such is not an objective *sensus plenior*. In fact, we must deny that such a different sense is Scriptural (i.e., *graphē*, "written") at all.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that the concepts associated with "Single Intent" defy the apparent simplicity of the term. The issue at hand, therefore, is evident. What is the nature of divine revelation? Can divine and human authorship in the case of Scripture be distinguished? Should they be distinguished? Does such a distinction deny what authorial function Scripture does affirm to be present on the part of the human author of Scripture? Can we discern, at least in specific instances in Scripture, a distinction between divine and human authorial intentions? The following investigation is directed toward answering these questions. It does not delineate an exegetical methodology which spells out the details of how to approach the interpretation of a given text. The present concern is primarily a doctrinal one—the nature of special revelation.

It is necessary to discuss what is meant by intention before one can meaningfully treat the subject of "authorial intent." Wimsatt and Beardsley, speaking on the subject of poetry, have defined intention as "design or plan in the author's mind."<sup>7</sup> Elliott Johnson, after discussing what intention does not mean, affirms that it is "to be identified with the 'sense of the whole' by which the author arranges and relates each particular meaning of his composition."<sup>8</sup> Geisler discusses the various meanings of "intention" and concludes that "the proper meaning of the *intention* of the author is the *expressed meaning* in the text."<sup>9</sup> It seems necessary for the present writer in light of the use of the term to define "authorial intention" pertaining to a written document as *the purpose of the author which governs the meaning of the text, to be discerned from the text and relevant context*.<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>6</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "A Response to 'Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation,'" in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1984) 444f. See also similar statements in Kaiser's critique of John Goldingay's *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1981) in *JETS* 26 (1983) 485.

<sup>7</sup>W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon* by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (N.p.: The Noonday Press, 1960) 4. See also Elliott Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, 413.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 412-17.

<sup>9</sup>Norman L. Geisler, "The Relation of Purpose and Meaning in Interpreting Scripture," *GTJ* 5 (1984) 231. See also his "A Response to 'Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics,'" in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, 54.

<sup>10</sup>There is a limitation in determining the author's intention in an ancient text because where questions exist, direct clarification is not possible. One must also speak

matter of authorial intention pertaining to Scripture will be considered by giving attention to the following: (1) the hermeneutic theory of E. D. Hirsch, Jr.; (2) the dynamics of revelation; and (3) indicators of biblical hermeneutics derived from the results of grammatico-historical exegesis.

EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE AND THE HERMENEUTIC THEORY OF  
E. D. HIRSCH, JR.

*Some Salient Aspects of Hirsch's Theory*

Meaning and Significance

E. D. Hirsch has figured prominently in recent discussions on hermeneutics, as a survey of the literature will show.<sup>11</sup> Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* affirmed the rightful place of authorial intention in the determination of meaning. His hermeneutic theory has hinged on the distinction between "meaning" and "significance."<sup>12</sup> "Meaning is 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."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the former is the

---

of the "relevant context" because this may vary for different texts. The writer has in mind such things as literary and theological contexts, *Sitz im Leben*, etc. Also, note the following statements of G. E. M. Anscombe (*Intention*, [2d ed.; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1976] 7-9): "How do we tell someone's intentions? . . . If you want to say at least some true things about a man's intentions, you have a strong chance of success if you mention what he actually did or is doing. For whatever else he may intend, or whatever may be his intentions in doing what he does, the greater number of the things which you would say straight off a man did or was doing, will be things he intends. . . . In most cases what you will say is that [*sic*] the man himself knows; and again in most, though indeed in fewer, cases you will be reporting not merely what he is doing, but an intention of his—namely, to do that thing. What is more, if it is not an intention of his, this will for the most part be clear without asking him."

<sup>11</sup>I would mention here only the extensive interaction with Hirsch's theory in P. D. Juhl, *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1980) 16-44. Cf. Johnson, "Author's Intention," 411f.

<sup>12</sup>E. D. Hirsch, *Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 1ff.

<sup>13</sup>E. D. Hirsch, *Validity of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale, 1967) 8. Hirsch writes, "Significance would be any meaning which has a relation to the verbal meaning so defined—no matter how neutral, descriptive, or tame the related meaning might be. . . . Significance is always 'meaning-to' never 'meaning-in.' Significance always entails a relationship between what is in a man's verbal meaning and what is outside it" (pp. 62-63). This statement of Hirsch should not be construed to mean that significance can be "anything imaginable." Significance names the *relationship between* meaning and anything extraneous to the author's meaning that can be imagined.

object of interpretation. The latter falls within the domain of (literary) criticism.

### Meaning and Implication

Hirsch also sought to distinguish the implications of a text from its meaning and its significance. Implications are part of the meaning of the text.<sup>14</sup> "The crucial problem in the theory and practice of interpretation is to distinguish between possible implications that do belong to the meaning of a text and those that do not belong."<sup>15</sup> Even though implications and meaning may be viewed in terms of sub-meanings and the whole respectively, Hirsch points out that "A merely spatial conception of the part-whole relationship is inadequate. The peculiarity of a whole meaning is that it retains its integrity and completeness even if all its implications have not been articulated."<sup>16</sup> The above distinctions are useful for biblical hermeneutics.

Hirsch emphasizes that prior knowledge is essential in the elucidation of implications. Thus, to use Hirsch's illustration of a right triangle,<sup>17</sup> an author can imply (whether consciously or unconsciously) the relationship between the lengths of the sides of the triangle as stated in the Pythagorean theorem only if he first knew the theorem. A reader/interpreter can discern the implication of such a relationship only if he also knows the theorem.

### Meaning and Intrinsic Genre

Another Hirschian<sup>18</sup> concept from which evangelical interpreters can benefit is the idea of *intrinsic genre*. He defines this as "that sense

<sup>14</sup>As Hirsch (*Validity*, 61–62) states, "To say that a particular meaning is implied by an utterance is *not* to insist that it is always 'unsaid' or 'secondary,' but only that it is a component within a larger whole. The distinction is between a submeaning of an utterance and the whole array of submeanings that it carries. This array, along with the principles for generating it, I call the 'meaning' of the utterance, and any submeaning belonging to the array I call an implication." Hirsch (*ibid.*, 63–64) also distinguishes *significance* from *implication* in that significance is "meaning-to" (someone or something) and therefore limitless. Implications are not limitless; "implications lie within the meaning as a whole and are circumscribed by some kind of boundary, which delimits that meaning."

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 64. Furthermore, when meaning is viewed as a willed type which is shared, "an implication belongs to a meaning as a trait belongs to a type" (p. 66).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>18</sup>By "Hirschian" here and elsewhere in this paper I only mean to acknowledge direct dependence upon his work for the definitions of the particular terms and elucidation of the underlying concepts. Evidently, meanings, implications, significances and genres have existed as long as communication itself.

of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part in its determinacy."<sup>19</sup> When one reads a text he first approaches it with a certain expectation of its content (meaning). As the reading (or hearing) progresses, "this conception of the meaning of the whole" may be revised, corrected, re-adjusted, or changed. This "overarching notion" of the sense of the whole text or communication which controls the conception of the whole by "embracing a system of expectations" is the genre.<sup>20</sup>

An interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands, and this remains the case unless and until that generic conception is altered.<sup>21</sup>

All understanding of meaning is necessarily genre-bound.<sup>22</sup>

This description of the genre-bound character of understanding is, of course, a version of the hermeneutic circle, which in its classical formulation has been described as the interdependence of part and whole: the whole can be understood only through its parts, but the parts can be understood only through the whole.<sup>23</sup>

Intrinsic genre as defined by Hirsch is both heuristic and constitutive.<sup>24</sup> The interpreter discerns intrinsic genre intuitively and on the basis of increased understanding. However, it is a genuine characteristic of the text. The intrinsic genre of a text is subsumed under what is generally considered "context," i.e., "the *givens that accompany* constructions that are part of a text's meaning."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 86. Thus, Hirsch's "intrinsic genre" should not be strictly identified with the notion of "literary genre."

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 74. This statement is elaborated fully in the following remarks: "If the generic idea of the meaning as a whole could not be defeated and baffled by the experience of subsequent details, then we would never recognize that we had misunderstood. On the other hand, it is essential to notice that in most cases our expectations are not baffled and defeated. We found the types of meanings we expected to find, because what we found was in fact powerfully influenced by what we expected. All along the way we construe *this* meaning instead of *that* because *this* meaning belongs to the type of meaning we are interpreting while *that* does not. If we happen to encounter something which can only be construed as *that*, then we have to start all over and postulate another type of meaning altogether in which *that* will be at home. However, in the very act of revising our generic conception we will have started all over again, and ultimately everything we understand will have been constituted and partly determined by the new generic conception" (pp. 71ff.)

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Hirsch does not prefer the traditional formulation of the hermeneutic circle. He would define it in terms of "genre" and "trait" (p. 77).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 87. Note the discussion on "context" on p. 86ff.

*The Application of Hirschian Concepts for Biblical Hermeneutics*  
 Meaning and Significance<sup>26</sup>

In discussing the usefulness of Hirsch's theory for biblical exegesis, it must be noted that he was not writing to provide an interpretive theory for divine revelation. The importance of this should not be underestimated. Hirsch's primary purpose was to counteract existential approaches to literary interpretation. The present writer agrees with Hirsch's definition of meaning as that which the author intended. But ordinary literature does not have associated with it the miraculous phenomenon of simultaneous authorship by an omniscient God.

Some evangelicals have employed the distinction between significance and meaning in order to argue that the divine author's meaning cannot be distinguished from that of the human author. An important discussion has centered around John 11:49-52.<sup>27</sup> Many who believe that the divine and human authorial intentions behind the text of Scripture can be distinguished invoke this example in support of their perspective. This distinction of authorial intentions is disallowed by Kaiser who seeks to resolve the apparent problem by an appeal to the meaning-significance distinction. John 11:49-52 reads as follows (*NASB*):

But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and the whole nation not perish."

Now this he did not say of his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that He might gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

<sup>26</sup>Kaiser, who has often utilized the Hirschian distinction between meaning and significance, rightly recognizes that the latter's view of "meaning" as elucidated in *Aims of Interpretation* is in part unacceptable to those who insist that *valid* meaning is the meaning of the author. Cf. Kaiser, "The Current Crisis in Exegesis," 3-4; and "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 457, n. 10. Hirsch (*Aims*, 20) argues that intuitionism is legitimate interpretation. He (incorrectly) justifies the basis of such a practice by saying, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (*ibid.*). The following statements should reveal Hirsch's view: "In some respects, intuitionism almost certainly is correct. . . . The intuitionist . . . is right to see that the same linguistic form can sponsor different meanings" (p. 21); "Self-evidently, a text can mean anything it has been understood to mean" (p. 77); and "The normative dimension of interpretation is always in the last analysis an ethical dimension" (*ibid.*).

<sup>27</sup>The discussion of this passage in this connection is more than just recent. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, qn. 173, art. 4.

Kaiser deals with the problem in the following manner: "The truth-intention of Caiaphas (v. 50)" constitutes the meaning. The apostle John found a "*significance*" in the words of Caiaphas and this is stated in v 51. Furthermore, John "*corrected* Caiaphas's provincial statement with its ethnocentricities and turned it into a comprehensive statement of the universal implication of Jesus' death (v. 52)." Kaiser's explanation of the dynamics oversimplifies the whole matter. According to him, the point of v 51 is not the "*method* in which Caiaphas spoke (unconscious or involuntary prediction), but that since he was in the office of high priest when he gave this somewhat bitter proverb, it had the *significance* of an official prediction." Furthermore, "John is not giving us the contents of Caiaphas's prophecy, but only . . . the significance of his otherwise witty speech." Kaiser concludes then, concerning the utterance of Caiaphas, that "when an official like himself . . . gave a verdict that could take on a proverbial status and significance which accorded with the plan of God, only the God of providence could be praised, for now the wrath of men had been turned into the glory of God."<sup>28</sup>

Two conclusions can be deduced from Kaiser's statements. First, Caiaphas was *not* speaking or functioning as a prophet. He made a "witty" statement which because of providence took on a different sense. Second, John is not giving the *meaning* of the words of Caiaphas, but only the *significance*. It will be argued shortly that different *meanings*, not merely the difference between meaning and significance, are involved. These conclusions seem to be inconsistent and are not based on the verbal meaning of John's statements.

In the first place, it can be argued that Kaiser does not apply the meaning-significance distinction properly. When Caiaphas said "it is better for you that one man should die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (*NIV*), he had in mind averting Roman military action so that the rulers along with the people could continue to retain their position and national privilege. The idea of "perishing" intended by Caiaphas was the destruction of temporal things. "One man dying for the people" meant one man, namely Jesus, being put to death by the Romans so that the Jewish nation with its people would not incur the wrath of the imperial power. Any *significances* one finds in Caiaphas's statement must come from this meaning. If a significance does not properly derive from the actual meaning of a statement, it is not a valid significance.<sup>29</sup>

The need for validity in significance (a matter not dealt with at any length by Hirsch) is just as crucial as the need for validity in

<sup>28</sup>Kaiser, "The Single Intent," 128-31.

<sup>29</sup>See Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, p. 32 where he says, "note well, it [i.e., significance] must be linked [to meaning]."

interpretation. This matter is at the heart of all attempts to make application of Scripture dependent on and deriving from its meaning (the product of exegesis). The point can be illustrated. Many, perhaps even Hirsch,<sup>30</sup> misconstrue the meaning of 2 Cor 3:6 ("The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life") to mean that the words of Scripture have to be interpreted "spiritually" (i.e., non-literally) in order to have impact upon lives. Based upon this misinterpretation of the meaning of 2 Cor 3:6, they make this application: "Scripture must be spiritualized to communicate God's message to others." But this cannot be admitted as a proper interpretation of 2 Cor 3:6. A significance cannot be valid when it is not based on valid meaning.

The point of the matter is that if the apostle John is suggesting a "significance" of the statement of Caiaphas, he has suggested an invalid significance because it is not supported by the meaning of v 50. He retained the words, but changed their meaning. To treat the problem this way is to imply that inspiration canonizes false significances while the meaning of the human author is unchangeable.

A second, and more serious, aspect of Kaiser's explanation of this problem is his interpretation of v 51.<sup>31</sup> He takes ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ as meaning "of his own authority." It is not clear that John's statement in v 51 can be construed to mean that Caiaphas's "bitter proverb" had "the significance of an official prediction" because of the office of Caiaphas. The preposition ἀπό followed by a reflexive pronoun occurs thirteen times in John's gospel and once elsewhere in the NT (2 Cor 3:5). The phrases are found in the gospel modifying λαλεῖν/λέγειν (7:17, 18; 11:51; 14:10; 16:13; 18:34), ποιεῖν (5:19, 30; 8:28), ἔρχεσθαι (8:42), τιθέσθαι (10:18) and καρπὸν φέρειν (15:4), and in 2 Cor 3:5, ἰκανὸς εἶναι. It is not possible to convey the idea behind all these usages with one English phrase. In general the phrase designates *source*, whether of message (John 7:17; 14:10; 16:13), action (5:19; 8:28—note also the lack of distinction between "speaking" and "doing" in 14:10), commission (8:42), power for fruit-bearing (15:4), or sufficiency for the Christian ministry (2 Cor 3:5). In John 10:18, the phrase seems to refer to Christ's *will*. He lays down His life of His own initiative. The case is similar in 18:34—was Pilate repeating the words of someone else or was the question his own? It appears that the way in which *NASB* renders the phrase in John 11:51 is quite appropriate: "Now this he did not say on his own initiative."

The words of Caiaphas did not ultimately come from himself. John's authoritative explanation of the dynamics behind Caiaphas's utterance is found in v 51. He was not speaking *from himself*—he

<sup>30</sup>Hirsch, *Aims*, 20.

<sup>31</sup>Kaiser, "The Single Intent," 130-31.

was *prophesying*.<sup>32</sup> John is using irony here but he is not sarcastic about the fact of Caiaphas prophesying. To explain that Caiaphas's prophecy (ἐπροφήτευσαν) merely assumed "the significance of an official prediction" is not proper,<sup>33</sup> especially in light of the explanation, "he did not say this of himself/of his own initiative."

There is another aspect of this problem that needs to be dealt with. It pertains to John's "correcting" the "ethnocentricities" of Caiaphas's statement and giving it universal scope. It would appear that if Caiaphas was really prophesying (speaking forth a word from God), the apostle is giving the true meaning (i.e., theological meaning intended by God) of the statement in his explanation. "One man dying" refers to substitution, and "the people" indicates all the people of God, including "those who were scattered abroad." It is just as cogent to argue that John is giving the "meaning" as it is to say that he is "correcting" or "adding," for there is little contextual evidence to support the latter contention.

The crux of the problem in this passage may now be analyzed. God spoke through the high priest a prophetic word concerning Christ. The high priest was a wicked man and intended evil by his words. But God had a different intention through that prophecy so that John was able to discern the message of a substitutionary atonement. It is not simply a matter of distinguishing meaning from significance that is involved here. It is, rather, a matter of multiple (two) meanings. We may say that the statement was a pun. But Caiaphas did not intend it as a pun—only God did. The revelatory dynamic involved in this passage is admittedly rather unique. But the previous discussion shows that the Hirschian distinction between meaning and significance is not properly used by Kaiser. Distinct meanings should be treated as distinct *meanings*. Furthermore, attention must be given to the matter of validity of significance.

If this argument against Kaiser's analysis is correct, does it have relevance for the nature of prophetic revelation and the single intent? I believe it does. In the first place, it calls into question the *a priori* assumption of constant confluence between human and divine meaning intentions. Second, it opens the possibility that God may through a later author explain more of what he had in mind in an earlier statement in a manner similar to how he clarified through John his intention through Caiaphas's prophecy. This is not an outlandish thought despite the limited analogy between Caiaphas and the OT prophets.

<sup>32</sup>For other Johannine usages besides John 11:51, see Rev 10:11, 11:3.

<sup>33</sup>BAGD (723) gives the following meanings for προφήτεω: a. proclaim a divine revelation; b. prophetically reveal what is hidden; c. foretell the future, prophesy.

## Meaning and Implication

In the case of the Scriptures, the problem of implications is a crucial one. There is need to identify the place of divine knowledge and that of man as they apply to the unravelling of implications contained in the text.

A valuable discussion of implication in biblical interpretation as it applies to authorial intention is that of Johnson.<sup>34</sup> Using Gottlob Frege's terms, he speaks of "sense" and "reference." "Reference concerns implications of meaning which are apparent when the sense is related to the historical instance."<sup>35</sup> The fulfillment of Zech 12:10 stated in John 19:37 illustrates this.

In Zechariah 12:10, even if the sense *pierced through* is established, the reference is still not clear. . . . Only when the sense is compared to Roman crucifixion is the reference clear. Yet the death by crucifixion is an implication of the prophet's meaning (John 19:37).<sup>36</sup>

Johnson illustrates the phenomenon further by using Psalm 16 as an example. Its messianic import is clearly indicated in the NT (Acts 2:22-32; 13:34-47). Johnson proposes that "God and David shared a defining sense in the expression of the Psalm."<sup>37</sup> Whereas God "was conscious of all the implications of reference to David and Christ," "David may have been limited in his conscious reference."<sup>38</sup> Kaiser responds negatively to such a view. According to him, to say that "the human author did not share fully in the divine author's meanings"<sup>39</sup> is a "bifurcation between the human and the divine author in the act of revelation" and "introduces a revelation which is above or below revelation and, hence, an act of confusion."<sup>40</sup> In an earlier

<sup>34</sup>Johnson, "Author's Intention," 416ff.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 10. Frege's concept of sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*) has been illustrated with the example of "the evening star" and "the morning star." They have two distinct "senses" but refer to the same thing—the planet Venus. This "example . . . has been endlessly repeated" (Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* [New York: Harper and Row, 1973] 97). For discussions of "sense" and "reference," see *ibid.*, 89-97, 160; E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity*, 211ff.; John S. Feinberg, "Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, 28-30.

<sup>36</sup>Johnson, "Author's Intention," 417.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. The defining sense of the text is the "type of meaning" (p. 420). For the psalm used as example, the type of meaning which Johnson sees is: "Rejoicing in God, His portion brings His Holy One hope for resurrection" (*ibid.*).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 417.

<sup>39</sup>So argued by Johnson, *ibid.*, 423-28.

<sup>40</sup>Kaiser, in the Abstract that prefaces "A Response to Author's Intention," paper read at Summit II of the ICBI. Abstracts of papers do not appear in the printed edition *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*.

publication Kaiser had adopted a different view concerning the use of Psalm 16 in the NT and its messianic implications.<sup>41</sup>

Johnson points out that implications, since they are part of meaning, are legitimate objects of interpretation.<sup>42</sup> He also has pointed out that the human instrument in the process of revelation of Scripture was not necessarily cognizant of all the implications of the divine word.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, God knew them all.

The relationship of implication to meaning and interpretation can be shown from another example which does not employ messianic associations to demonstrate the point. In response to the Sadducean trick question concerning the resurrection (Matt 22:22-33 and parallel passages), Christ cited Exod 3:6 and argued that *אנכי . . . אלהי אברהם* implied the resurrection. Obviously, there is no plain statement of the resurrection of saints in this declaration. However, it is possible to derive the implication of resurrection from this Scripture in the following manner.<sup>44</sup>

1. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" implies covenant relationship stemming from God's promise to the patriarchs (Gen 15:1; 17:7, 8; 28:13). The promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:7-21; 17:1-16) was confirmed to Isaac (Gen 17:21; 26:3-5) and to Jacob after him (Gen 28:13-15; 35:9-12).
2. The promise granted that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as their "seed" would inherit the land of Canaan.
3. The patriarchs did not really obtain the promise made to them. The land promised to them never really became theirs (Heb 11:13). Jacob died in Egypt.
4. The fact that God is called their God implies his faithfulness to them to make good what he promised.

<sup>41</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and Its Application in Acts 2:25-33 and 13:32-37," *JETS* 23 (1980) 219-29.

<sup>42</sup>Johnson ("Author's Intention," 421) says, "The interpreter exegetes the implications of the author's chosen type of meaning." Cf. Hirsch, *Validity*, 57.

<sup>43</sup>To Johnson's example of Zech 12:10 and John 19:37, can be added (1) Isa 53:12 with Luke 22:37, (2) Zech 13:7 with Matt 26:31, (3) Hos 11:1 with Matt 2:15, (4) Jer 31:15 with Matt 2:18, (5) Ps 41:9 with John 13:18, (6) Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; and Ps 34:20 with John 19:36, (7) Ps 69:25 with Acts 1:20a, (8) Ps 109:8 with Acts 1:20b, etc.

<sup>44</sup>Such a derivation of implication is not identical to the "Consequent Sense" of Roman Catholic hermeneutics which brings in a premise derived from "reason" into the syllogism; cf. Walter Kaiser, "Response," 443ff.; C. F. DeVine, "The Consequent Sense," *CBQ* 2 (1940) 151-52.

5. The patriarchs cannot enter into their promise if they are dead, and therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must rise from the dead (cp. John 8:56).

It cannot be said that Exodus 3:6 *means* that the dead will rise again. But that is part of the implication of the meaning. Even if this implication had not been identified, the sense of the statement would have been complete. When in Exodus God spoke to Moses and when Moses wrote down the event, it is likely that the idea of resurrection from the dead would not have been associated by him with the text. Yet, Christ chastised the Sadducees for not *understanding* the Scriptures. Man is responsible to deduce, in dependence upon God the author (Ps 119:18) and in the light of biblical theology, the implications of biblical statements.

### Intrinsic Genre, the Analogy of Scripture and Authorial Intention

The concept of *intrinsic genre* has not figured prominently in the discussion under review. However, this writer finds it a very useful concept with application to biblical hermeneutics. Johnson has very appropriately given attention to "the conception of the whole" in connection with authorial intention.<sup>45</sup>

The application of genre logic to the Bible as a whole is made possible by the fact that the Scriptures as a whole are a unity. Even though the different human instruments in the process of inscripturation have left the imprint of their individual personalities, styles, vocabularies, and circumstances on the written word, "the doctrine of inspiration . . . tells us that the Scriptures are [the products of a single divine mind]."<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, the Bible is one book with one author for the whole.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Johnson, "Author's Intention," 419.

<sup>46</sup>J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 350.

<sup>47</sup>Cf. 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21; Acts 3:21. See also Ps 119:89. Wayne A. Grudem ("Scripture's Self-Attestation," in *Scripture and Truth*, 33) writes on this: "God's word stands firm forever in the heavens, the place of God's abode. This implies that according to the psalmist God's written words are actually a copy of words that God in heaven has permanently decided on and has subsequently caused to be committed to writing by men." Briggs (*Psalms*, ICC, 2:429) writes of this verse, "The divine Law was everlasting, pre-existent in heaven before it came down to earth as the latter rabbins understood it . . . immutable for all future time in generation after generation of mankind." W. E. Vine (*Divine Inspiration of the Bible* [Brandon, Manitoba: Ritchie's Christian Book Service, 1969] 55-56) makes a similar observation based on Jas 2:23: "In showing that works are the essential counterpart of faith in the matter of justification, he [i.e., James] illustrates his point by relating how Abraham offered up Isaac

If it is granted that the Bible is one book with one author having an underlying unity of purpose and intention, then one may justifiably speak of the intrinsic genre of Scripture as a whole. The interpreter arrives at a perception of this genre heuristically. In other words, the interpreter of Scripture must go through the unidirectional hermeneutical spiral of preunderstanding→hermeneutics→exegesis→theology. Through a process similar to successive approximation in mathematics, the interpreter arrives at a closer approximation of truth, and a better hermeneutic.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the reader of Scripture who might have an uncertain concept of the serpent in Genesis 3, after reading through the entirety of Scripture including the book of Revelation, will have a revised (and more exact) conception of the whole so that his sense of the identity of the serpent is more complete and exact. The providential workings of God in the lives of biblical characters (e.g., Abraham's servant, Ruth, and Esther) assume greater overall importance when re-evaluated in the light of further revelation and a greater awareness of the purpose of God through history. Inasmuch as Isaac's bride, David and his ancestors, and the nation in exile all directly relate to the promised seed, later "chapters" in God's book unfold more fully the implications of the content of the earlier ones. Such implications may not have been perceived by the human authors because of their chronological limitations.<sup>49</sup>

The unity of Scripture which derives from its divine authorship is actual and real and should play a part in exegesis just as the unity of individual books does. While revelation was progressive since God's self-disclosure was piecemeal and spread out over time (Heb 1:1), the supernatural character of Scripture validates the application of the analogy of (not necessarily antecedent) Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

---

upon the altar. In this act he says that the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.' When Abraham offered Isaac, the Scripture in Gen 15, recording the fact of his faith . . . had not been written. . . . The Scripture apparently was regarded by James as an ever-present thing in the mind of God, foreknown and fore-ordained in the Divine design, and therefore certain of being recorded in course of time." These explanations of the "latter rabbins" as well as Vine may be rather tenuous.

<sup>48</sup>See J. I. Packer, "Biblical Authority, Hermeneutics and Inerrancy," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. E. R. Geehan (N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971) 146-47; and J. I. Packer, "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *Themelios* 1 (1975) 3-12.

<sup>49</sup>On the relation between intrinsic genre and implication Hirsch (*Validity*, 89-91) writes: "The correct determination of implication is a crucial element in the task of discriminating a valid from an invalid interpretation. . . . The implications of an utterance are determined by its intrinsic genre. . . . The logic of implication is always . . . a genre logic, as common sense tells every interpreter. Whether an implication is present depends upon the kind of meaning that is being interpreted."

<sup>50</sup>J. I. Packer ("Biblical Authority, Hermeneutics and Inerrancy," 148) says, "Scripture should be interpreted by Scripture, just as one part of a human teacher's

A generic conception of the meaning of Scripture as a whole will affect one's understanding of authorial intention. God alone is the single author of the whole. Even though they were aware of prior revelation, the human authors had an active role only in writing the parts. Bruce Vawter says it well when he states: "The message that God intended to be conveyed by human words at a given point in time, may indeed take on added dimension as it is seen within a larger context than that afforded by the initial utterance."<sup>51</sup>

Thus, divine implications of meaning will exceed that of the human author on matters which are unfolded in greater detail in the progress of revelation. As Kaiser has stated so aptly, "No meaning of a text is complete until the interpreter has heard the *total single* intention of the author."<sup>52</sup> Kaiser had in mind the human author "who stood in the presence of God," but the statement has no less validity when one has in mind God himself, the author of the whole.

---

message may and should be interpreted by appeal to the rest. *Scriptura scripturae* *interpres!* This does not, of course, imply that the meaning of all texts can be ascertained simply by comparing them with other texts, without regard for their own literary, cultural, and historical background, or for our extra-biblical knowledge bearing on the matter with which they deal." D. A. Carson ("Unity and Diversity in the New Testament," in *Scripture and Truth*, 91), citing Packer ("Preaching as Biblical Interpretation," in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980] 198) says, "There is . . . a sense in which every New Testament writer communicates to Christians today more than he knew he was communicating, simply because Christians can now read his work as part of the completed New Testament canon.' This is not an appeal to *sensus plenior*, at least not in any traditional sense. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that with greater numbers of pieces of the jigsaw puzzle provided, the individual pieces and clusters of pieces are seen in new relationships not visible before." Kaiser (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 90, 134ff.) advocates the analogy of *antecedent* Scripture which limits the parts of the canon available for the "analogy" to those which historically preceded the text under study. While such a cautious approach has obvious usefulness for preventing eisegesis, its validity as a strict rule for biblical interpretation has to be denied. The reasons for that are enunciated elsewhere in this paper. The questionableness of this principle can be demonstrated from the author's own practice. In his *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 36, Kaiser discusses the language and grammar of Gen 3:15 with reference to the "seed" and the use of the pronoun הוּא to refer to זרע in the biblical text. The question is asked by interpreters, "Are the 'seed' and 'he' collective, or is it singular?" "The question," contends Kaiser, "is misdirected, especially if the divine intention deliberately wished to designate the collective notion which included a personal unity in a single person who was to obtain victory for the whole group he represented." Despite the disclaimer that follows about any "retrojection from a NT *pesher* or midrash" one must wonder why the author would think along the lines of a "collective notion" which had included in it "a personal unity in a single person" with the added idea of "representation," unless, of course, his understanding of later revelation has unfolded to him implicit meanings of the earlier one. See also Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 136.

<sup>51</sup>Vawter, "The Fuller Sense," 127.

<sup>52</sup>Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 127.

## THE DUAL AUTHORSHIP OF SCRIPTURE AND AUTHORIAL INTENTION(S)

*The Dynamics of Revelation*  
(Or, *The Psychology of Inspiration*)

Whereas conservative evangelicals have staunchly upheld the inerrancy, authority and the divine-human authorship of the Scriptures, inadequate thought and consideration have been directed toward the psychology of inspiration.<sup>53</sup> The dynamics of revelation can at one extreme be viewed in terms of a mechanical dictation. However, it is almost another extreme which balks at the notion that God as the principal author could have meant more by the words of Scripture than the human instrument did.<sup>54</sup>

It is true, as Vawter states, that "the words of Scripture have been chosen by the sacred writer under the influence of the Holy Spirit," that "God himself wrote the text in the first place," and that he did it "through a condescension by which he accommodated himself to human speech of given ages, languages, and personalities."<sup>55</sup> However, it is not (strictly speaking) known for a fact that "the Scripture was produced by human authors *intending to convey their own minds* [italics added]."<sup>56</sup> The nature of intention on the part of the human authors is crucial for the present discussion. It is possible to distinguish kinds of intentions and this has a bearing on the validity of any concept of a single intent of Scripture.

*Genres of Intentions?*

The role and function of the human author is not identical throughout Scripture. The human author's involvement in epistolary writings is not in the same category as the involvement of the writer of historical narrative (albeit the latter may also have a theological purpose). Such involvement can be distinguished from the role of the prophet in prophetic literature. The prophet may record a vision which he has seen or may write down the exact words he is commanded to write (cf. Rev 1:11, 19; 2:1; 14:13; 19:9). This type of involvement can further be contrasted with the function of an author like Moses to whom was revealed words spoken by God before men were created and words spoken by men in private before he was born. While detailed and sophisticated refinements of these various types of

<sup>53</sup>L. Gaussen's classic work *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, rev. ed., trans. David Scott (Chicago: Moody, n.d.) 58-105, can be mentioned. Vawter has given an analysis of historical views from a Roman Catholic scholar's perspective in his *Biblical Inspiration*, 37-75, 95-119.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>55</sup>Vawter, "The Fuller Sense," 94.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

involvement could be attempted, the present analysis will examine whether the intention of the divine author and the human author must be identical.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of total or radical identity (confluence) between the intents of the human author and the divine can be demonstrated, for instance, in the matter of reporting the words of God. Gen 3:15 is a suitable illustration. Following man's sin and the Fall, God spoke to Adam, Eve, and the serpent. The meaning of God's words in Gen 3:15 was determined by God when they were spoken. Even before there could possibly have been any human authorial intention with respect to those words of God, the words had meaning and were communicated. God had his authorial intention before there was any human intermediary or human cognizance or intention involved in the message. Moreover, Moses never spoke those words—he merely reported them. Whereas Adam, Eve and the serpent heard that utterance of God, their understanding must not be confused with the ultimate meaning of the utterance.<sup>58</sup> When Moses reports those words, his "authorial intention" is not what *determines* their truth-intention. It must be assumed that Moses understood the utterance just as Adam and Eve did. But Moses as the human author of Genesis was not seeking to convey exhaustively all the implications which were in the awareness of God when he spoke those words in the garden. Moses' authorial intention in this case largely consisted of reporting the words. What can be said of Gen 3:15 can be said of many, indeed, of all other instances of similar reporting (e.g., Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:18–21). If God retained in his own knowledge implications which were to be clearly unfolded only later, the truth or extent of the implications cannot be known merely by ascertaining the understanding of Moses.

God's authorial intention in the report of his own utterance includes both the truth-intention of the original utterance and the intention to report it in the Scriptures. Only the latter is shared by the human author. Therefore, even though the human and divine author have the same literary and theological intention in reporting the words, the meaning of God's statements is not determined by the human author's understanding.

<sup>57</sup>The present writer's thinking on "kinds of intentions" as depicted in this section was initiated and helped by pertinent observations (though not necessarily in agreement with those I have listed) by Prof. Turner and fellow-student Stephen N. Shields in the class "Advanced Hermeneutics" taught by the former at Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, during Winterim, 1984.

<sup>58</sup>See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with Reader's Understanding," *Trinity Journal* 6 OS (1977) 190–93. See also, for biblical examples, John 2:19–22; 6:51–60.

One might ask, "If the meaning of the words of God reported by Moses is not to be ascertained by what Moses understood from the words, how is it to be understood?" In other words, "What means of determining meaning exist other than seeking the understanding of the Scripture-writer himself?" In answer to this, it should be noted first that the reporting of the words of another does not determine the meaning of those words. Second, the reporter's *understanding* does not determine meaning. Such has to be acknowledged in the case of ordinary life and must also be acknowledged in the case of the writers of Scripture. The writer's understanding need not and should not always limit the reader's understanding. Nevertheless, means to understand exist. The modern reader may be able to understand the words of God better than the prophet who merely reported them because God has shown (through the progress of revelation) more implications of his utterances than were revealed to the prophet. Of course, the modern reader faces linguistic, cultural, and historical handicaps which the reporting prophet did not face.

The writers of Scripture were extraordinary men in the sense that God especially equipped them for their task. God used even ungodly men like Balaam and Caiaphas to give his oracles, but the writers of Scripture were men of God (2 Pet 1:20-21). They were concerned about the meaning of revelation and they had deep insight into it. However, this fact does not remove the limitations of their finiteness and their ignorance of things not revealed to them.

Moses did not determine the meaning of divine utterances made to him or other persons since the truth-intention of such utterances was determined by God alone without simultaneous human involvement. Yet, the meaning of passages recording God's utterances is still the object of interpretation. The entire matter finds a nice summary in the following words of W. E. Vine:

Though the writers of Scripture wrote their statements intelligently, i.e., in language which was their own, yet frequently their conception of the meaning and application of what they wrote was narrower than the scope of their writings. The writers shared in the limitations of the readers in this respect. They themselves were cognizant of their limitations, although they were conscious of the Divine authority given them that made them realize that their writings covered a far wider range of meaning than could be measured by their own apprehension. To this the Scripture itself bears witness. For, firstly, we are told that they searched into their own records to examine the details of what the Spirit of Christ was testifying through them; and secondly, it was revealed to them that they were ministering not merely to the men of their own time but to God's people of the present age. . . . Similarly when Daniel was receiving Divine messages which he records in his prophecies he says, "I heard, but I understood not." The words were

intelligible as such, but their Divine meaning was "shut up and sealed" for the time (Dan 12:8, 9).<sup>59</sup>

### *Relation of Prophetic Instrumentality to Human Will and Judgment*

The contention that "whatever has been produced apart from the will and judgment . . . of the human author . . . has not been brought about precisely through human instrumentality,"<sup>60</sup> needs to be answered. Scriptural evidence seems to militate against an emphasis which inseparably links human will and judgment to prophetic instrumentality or the human authorship of Scripture. 2 Pet 1:21, speaking on the authorial role of the prophets who wrote Scripture, does not emphasize the active function of their will in the production of Scripture. Rather, it emphasizes their passivity in being borne along (φερομένοι) by the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of the Word of God is not upon the necessity of human understanding and the participation of human will in the production of Scripture. Instead, it emphasizes the divine source. Human instrumentality in delivering the word of God is frequently depicted in such a way that it does not demand the full participation of the speaker's will and judgment.

The OT commonly represents prophetic instrumentality as God's mouthpiece (פה רבך נח/ם—Deut 18:18, Num 22:38; 23:5, 12, 16, etc. cf. Exod 4:12, 15, 16). Prophetic instrumentality (διὰ τοῦ προφήτου—Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; Luke 18:31; Acts 2:16; 28:25, etc.) consists of sounding forth or vocalizing the divine message (ἐλάλησεν/προεἶπεν/προκατήγγειλεν [ὁ θεὸς] διὰ στόματος προφητοῦ—Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18, 21). It would be a denial of the teaching of Scripture to say that the prophets had no understanding of the messages they delivered (cf. Matt 22:43; Acts 2:25 with 30–31, Rom 4:6; see 1 Cor 2:12–13; 1 Pet 1:11).<sup>61</sup> It would also be contrary to common sense. How could the prophet not understand what his immediate audience was expected to understand? Yet the question remains whether human instrumentality in the communication/recording of divine revelation required meaning to be completely within the control of the human author's cognitive faculties. A message in human language can have fuller meaning or implication to an audience than it has to the herald who announces it. Likewise, God does not demand

<sup>59</sup>Vine, *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, 21. The understanding of Dan 12:8, 9 should be qualified by Dan 10:1, which refers to chaps. 10–12. Yet it remains that much more is known of the "references" of the prophecies in these and other chapters of Daniel than Daniel himself knew. To argue that the *meaning* of these prophecies is "complete" without knowing their "references" would be similar to insisting that the *meaning* of messianic prophecies are "complete" without regard to the historical identity and fulfilled work of the Messiah.

<sup>60</sup>Vawter, "The Fuller Sense," 93.

<sup>61</sup>See Kaiser, "The Single Intent," 137, 125–26.

exhaustive understanding in order for the prophet to function as a mouthpiece of God. Though it was an exceptional case, God showed that it is possible to communicate in human language through the instrument of an irrational creature (Num 22:28-30). The idea of confluence in authorial intention is not a biblical one, though it may be a Thomistic one. Coppens has stated that some object to *sensus plenior* because it

is contrary to the Thomistic notion of inspiration whereby Scripture and all its meanings are the result of the joint operation of God and His instrument. When the sacred writer ceases to play his part, there is no longer any Sacred Scripture.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, it seems that some evangelicals begin with a construct of scholastic philosophy and then attempt to accommodate the phenomena of biblical revelation to it.

The fact that the Bible has two distinguishable authors has implications for the task of exegesis:

The mystery of the relationship between the human and the divine in Biblical authorship should not be set aside until exegesis is finished. It is just as much an error to emphasize the divine element at the expense of the human as it is to emphasize the human element at the expense of the divine. The Bible's human setting and human authorship makes it imperative that we gather all knowledge possible to interpret a text from its historico-cultural perspective. . . . But throughout this exegetical task, not just after, we must seek out the message, the teaching, the ultimate meaning—that is, how the Holy Spirit has used this passage to reveal the will of God.<sup>63</sup>

#### BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR DISTINCTION OF AUTHORIAL INTENTIONS

It can be exegetically demonstrated that Scripture does distinguish between the authorial intentions of God and those of the human

<sup>62</sup>Joseph Coppens, "The Different Senses of Sacred Scripture," *TD* 1 (1953) 18. Cf. Coppens, "Levels of Meaning in the Bible," *Scripture: How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?* (ed. Pierre Benoit *et al.*, Concilium vol. 30; New York: Paulist, 1968) 134, 135; and Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*, 52-56. See also Aquinas's *Summa*, article 4 of both questions 171 and 173. Following a discussion of Caiaphas's prophecy he concluded: "Because a prophet's mind is a deficient instrument . . . even genuine prophets do not know all that the Holy Spirit intends in visions, words and even deeds" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 45, trans. and ed. Roland Potter [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970] 67).

<sup>63</sup>Elmer B. Smick, "Old Testament Theology: The Historico-Genetic Method," *JETS* 26 (1983) 148.

author. This matter will be taken up under three headings: the nature of Messianic prophecy, the nature of prediction-fulfillment, and the nature of biblical types.

### *The Nature of Messianic Prophecy*

1 Pet 1:10–12 has figured prominently in discussions pertaining to authorial intention and ignorance. It is one of the “alleged proof texts for ‘double meaning.’”<sup>64</sup> Familiar versions render the εἰς τίνα of v 11 as “what person.” But Kaiser, with impressive grammatical support, argues that the whole phrase εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν is a tautology for emphasis.<sup>65</sup> Even if it were granted that the phrase should be understood in this way, this scripture would still raise questions concerning authorial intentions. This passage, even though it does point out that the prophets knew something about the Messiah, at the same time also indicates limitations in their knowledge. The prophets prophesied, yet it was the Spirit of Christ within them who gave an “advance testimony” (προμαρτυρία) of events yet to occur.<sup>66</sup>

This writer proposes a translation for εἰς τίνα which is preferable to the tautological understanding of the phrase. It should be rendered “for whom” or “for whose sake.” The apostle focused on two matters: the *time* of the revealing of God’s salvation and the *people* to whom it was revealed. As for the time, salvation was to be revealed in the last/end time (ἐν καιρῷ ἔσχατῷ, v 5). The prophets made careful search and inquiry as to the time of this revealing (ποῖον καιρὸν, v 11). This salvation has been revealed in the gospel which is *now* preached (ἄ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη, v 12).

Peter also mentioned the people to whom this salvation was revealed by God. The gospel was preached to the recipients of Peter’s letter. Their election was in accordance with God’s foreknowledge. An inheritance is reserved for *them* (εἰς ὑμᾶς, v 4). The grace of God which was prophesied by the prophets came to *them* (εἰς ὑμᾶς, v 10). Concerning this grace the prophets had made careful search and inquiry. They sought to know “for whose sake” (εἰς τίνα) the Spirit was indicating these things (v 11). It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but Peter’s readers (οὐχ· ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δέ, v 12). Thus, if the two-fold mystery of *recipients* and *time of fulfillment* is noted, the phrase εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν makes clear sense.

<sup>64</sup>Kaiser, “The Single Intent,” 125.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 125–26.

<sup>66</sup>The grammar of v 11 does not require that the content of prophetic knowledge is being outlined when Peter says, “and the glories *that would follow*.” It can be understood that the time sequence is being indicated because Peter knew that the glory followed the suffering, and he is speaking from his own perspective.

When the Spirit of Christ in the prophets spoke through them, he was bearing witness or giving testimony to events in Christ's life before they happened. 1 Pet 1:12, along with other scriptures (e.g., Rom 1:2; 16:25, 26), show that details of OT prophecies unavailable to the OT prophet or hearer are now available. Such details were implied in the original prophecies and should not be disregarded in the interpretation of the OT. Certain parts of OT revelation, though intelligible to the immediate audience, had fullest impact upon a later people. Deut 18:15-18 can be cited in this regard. A very evident example, aside from Messianic passages, is the case of Isaiah at the turn of the eighth century. He prophesied of a sixth century Cyrus (Isa 45:1). Josiah was named in a prophetic message three centuries before his time (1 Kgs 13:2). That eschatological prophecies had meaning and significance for the immediate audience is not denied. However, detailed outlining of future events (as in Daniel 11) can only mean that a prophecy was meant mostly for the benefit of a later generation.

It becomes necessary, then, when interpreting such biblical texts, to do exegesis in the light of later revelation which explains fulfillment. Later revelation which provides the fuller implications of earlier messages must be distinguished, however, from application or significance. Into the latter category falls the teaching of Rom 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor 9:9; etc.

The foregoing discussion indicates how authorial intention should be understood. If Messianic prophecies are primarily intended for people living after the coming of Christ (as 1 Pet 1:12 indicates), then the prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the Cross. Thus, 1 Pet 1:10-12 legitimizes *analogia fidei* as a proper principle of interpretation. This would mean also that Christians of the first century and later are better able to discern the full *implications* (i.e., details which were planned, purposed and executed by God) which belong to the *meaning* of the message of the prophets.

### Analogy of How Much Scripture?

The analogy of *antecedent* Scripture as a strict canon of interpretation is not a valid one. This has been discussed above in reference to intrinsic genre. Some specific examples can be discussed. When later revelation clearly identifies the serpent of Genesis 3 as Satan (Rev 12; 20:2), the knowledge of such identity cannot and should not be shut out from the interpreter's mind. When Christ said in John 8:56 that Abraham rejoiced to see his day, this becomes a fact of Abraham's life and history even though the information is provided to the interpreter much later in the canon. If messianic awareness is attributed to Abraham, his life and history will be perceived and interpreted with altered emphasis. Indeed, exegetes often emphasize the

psychology of the biblical authors and characters in order to gain a fuller understanding of the text. When the NT reveals more facts concerning the persons and events of the OT than is available in the OT (cf. Hebrews 11; Jude 14, 15; and 2 Pet 2:6-7 on Cain and Abel, Abraham, Moses' parents, Moses, Enoch, and Lot), it is essential to approach the interpretation of the relevant portions of Genesis and the rest of the canon in the light of these facts. It must be confessed, however, that in the case of John 8:56 the task is not easy.

Another relevant consideration is the question of how people of OT times understood references to the Spirit of God, and how Christians, following the completion of the canon, understand the references.<sup>67</sup> It is doubtful that the OT saints, or the OT writers in particular, had the same notion concerning the Spirit of God which can be found in the NT. Yet the NT makes ample correlation between רוח אלהים (רוח יהיה or) and τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον (θεοῦ). The Spirit who spoke through the OT prophets is the third person of the Godhead. It is not right to confine oneself to Moses' understanding when Gen 1:2; 6:3; Num 11:25, 29 and other passages are read. God did not confine himself to Moses' understanding when he revealed those Scriptures.

### Implications of the Doctrine of Inspiration for Interpretation

The analogy of antecedent Scripture does not take into account some of the implications which Scripture's inspiration holds for its interpretation. On a number of occasions the NT limits the interpretive options available to the modern exegete and scholar. A prominent example is the citation of Ps 8:5 in Heb 2:7, which, following the LXX, interprets אלהים of the MT as ἀγγέλους. In spite of the understanding of many translators and commentators, it is incorrect to understand אלהים in Ps 8:5 as meaning God.<sup>68</sup> However, even if current scholarship and exegetical insight found no precedent for rendering אלהים as "angels," an alternate interpretation could not be affirmed without impugning the authority of the book of Hebrews. Another example would be the restriction of the meaning of העלמה in Isa 7:14 to ἡ παρθένος in the light of Matt 1:23. In both of these instances there is more than the mere citation of the OT passage in the New. The argument of the NT in these cases is dependent upon the particular lexical choice. The bearing of such NT usage upon the exegesis of

<sup>67</sup>Raymond E. Brown (*The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* [Baltimore: St. Mary's University, 1955] 140) cites this as one of the examples given by de Ambroggi as "susceptible of a *sensus plenior*."

<sup>68</sup>Cf. A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 1:103; and Gleason L. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey* (Chicago: Moody, 1983) 59. After citing other OT examples, the latter state: "'A little lower than God' is totally unacceptable in view of the transcendence of God taught in the OT."

the OT passage is not controverted by the fact the NT in these instances follows the text-form of the LXX.<sup>69</sup> The lexical choice of the LXX translators amounts to extra-biblical testimony in harmony with the Scriptures.

### *The Nature of Prediction-Fulfillment*

A study of prediction and fulfillment in the Scriptures serves to identify issues pertaining to authorial intent. A case to consider is Psalm 16 and its use in the book of Acts (2:25–33; 13:32–37). Two recent studies have paid great attention to the hermeneutical issues involved.<sup>70</sup> Kaiser employs “a blend of views between the ancient Antiochian concept of *theoria* and Willis J. Beecher’s concept of promise theology.”<sup>71</sup> His view can be summarized as follows:

In Psalm 16, . . . David is God’s *hasid*, “favored one,” yet not David as a mere person but David as the recipient and conveyor of God’s ancient but ever-renewed promise. Therefore as Beecher concluded: “The man David may die, but the *hhasidh* is eternal. Just as David is the Anointed One, and yet the Anointed One is eternal; just as David is the Servant, and yet the Servant is eternal; so David is the *hhasidh*, and yet the *hhasidh* is eternal. David as an individual went to the grave, and saw corruption there, but the representative of Yahaweh [*sic*] eternal promise did not cease to exist” (Beecher, *Prophets and the Promise*, p. 325).<sup>72</sup>

Kaiser believes that his approach has avoided the pitfalls of *sensus plenior* and similar “evils” as his conclusion states:

Without injecting any contrived artifices of dualism, docetism or spiritual hermeneutics, we believe that David, as the man of promise and as God’s *hasid*, was in his person, office and function one of the distinctive historical fulfillments to that word that he received about his seed, dynasty and throne. Therefore he rested secure in the confident hope that even death itself would not prevent him from enjoying the face-to-face fellowship with his Lord even beyond death, since that ultimate *hasid* would triumph over death. For David, this was all one word: God’s ancient but ever-new promise.<sup>73</sup>

The elevation of the personage addressed in the psalm to a high degree of abstraction does not do away with *sensus plenior*, or the

<sup>69</sup>Καλέσουσιν of Matt 1:23 occurs only in less than half of the LXX minuscules. Others have the third person singular or second person ending.

<sup>70</sup>Kaiser, “The Promise to David”; and Johnson, “Author’s Intention.” Johnson sees “references *plenior*” in the psalm (p. 427).

<sup>71</sup>Kaiser, “The Promise to David,” 222.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 225–26.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 229.

issue of multiple fulfillments. The problem is clarified by what the Spirit of God says about this psalm through the apostles Peter and Paul.

Peter's exegetical logic (Acts 2:29–33) appears to run as follows:

1. The psalm *cannot* apply to David. The reason for this is that the "Holy One" will not see corruption; but David's body is still in the grave—decayed (2:29).
2. The psalm was not meant to apply to David. He was a prophet; he *looked ahead*. He predicted Christ's resurrection (2:30–32).
3. The prophecy was fulfilled in Christ (2:31–33).<sup>74</sup>

If it is possible that David also envisioned himself as subject in the psalm, the fact would still remain that he died and has not yet experienced resurrection. In whatever manner Ps 16:10 could apply to him, it could not apply to Christ in the same way. That is to say, the *verbal meaning* of the scripture has to be construed differently when referring to David and to Christ.

That the postulation of generic entities does not solve the problem of the reality of concrete implications can be demonstrated from another NT citation from the Psalms. Acts 1:16 poses a far greater challenge to the theory of confluence in authorial intentions. Acts 1:16 reads, "It was necessary for the Scripture to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand concerning Judas." The following observations need to be made:

1. The prediction concerning Judas was γραφή (not just a subjective *sensus plenior*).
2. It was spoken περὶ Ἰουδα (not merely a generic "enemy of the Anointed One").<sup>75</sup>
3. It was spoken by the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David. Bruce's comments on this are very appropriate:

<sup>74</sup>It should be noted that the present discussion is totally irrelevant if it is held that the psalm is entirely predictive. Kaiser's interpretation is still significant for the bearing it has on "the single intent." F. F. Bruce (*The Book of Acts* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 71) has observed that "In the psalm here quoted (Peter's argument runs), the words cannot refer to David." If this is correct, exegetes should not interpret it as referring to David.

<sup>75</sup>The present writer does find useful the concept of "generic prophecy" for understanding the psychology of the prophet in such instances as the predictions of Joel and Malachi (which are discussed by Kaiser). See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "The Promise of God and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21," in *The Living and Active Word of God: Essays in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz* (ed. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 109–22; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise of the Arrival of Elijah in Malachi and the Gospels," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 221–33.

For those who believed Jesus was the Messiah, this meant that many of the experiences predicted of the Psalmist (David) were understood as prophetically applicable to Jesus (Cf. Ch. 2:25ff., 34ff.). Then what was said of the Psalmist's enemies would be interpreted of the enemies of Jesus (Cf. Ch. 4:25ff.). . . . There are other places in NT where "testimonies" to the fate of Judas are quoted or alluded to. . . . So Peter here adduces further "testimonies" from the Psalter to the same effect. Their real author, he avers, is the Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophets. David, being a prophet, was but a spokesman or mouthpiece of the inspiring Spirit.<sup>76</sup>

4. The Psalm texts cited in Acts 1:20, therefore, were intended by the Holy Spirit to refer to the historical individual Judas and had to be fulfilled. They are not merely apostolic applications under the sanction of the Spirit of God. At the stage of their being uttered by David, God had Judas in mind.

The question must be asked whether David was really thinking of Judas when he wrote Ps 69:25 and Ps 109:8. There is no evidence in the psalms themselves that he was. Both psalms are fully applicable to David's own experience. In fact, Ps 69:5 cannot be a confession of David's antitype. To posit "generic" entities here cannot do away with the reality of concrete references.

The NT revelation here reveals the additional, fuller meaning of the OT text which could not be understood until a later stage of history. Yet, the meaning belongs with the OT scripture. Smick has stated the matter as follows:

The NT is in the context of the OT and as its historical goal reveals the total meaning of the OT. The NT writers themselves make clear to us the importance of the typological approach to the OT as an indispensable tool and exegetical method. They did not consider it as an arbitrary importation or as a way of ferreting out hidden meanings.<sup>77</sup>

### *The Nature of Biblical Types*

The predictiveness of types is a highly debated matter. But if the activity of God in inspiration is acknowledged, a predictive intention of biblical types may be acknowledged.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, there are exegetical evidences which show that God intended OT types to prefigure their antitypes. Such an intention may not have been shared by the human author. Two examples can be given.

<sup>76</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 48.

<sup>77</sup>Smick, "Old Testament Theology," 152.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. the view of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 56, 76.

## Hebrews 8:5

The writer of Hebrews repeatedly emphasized that the institutions of the Old Covenant were symbolic and typical (8:2, 5; 9:9, 23, 24), and did not accomplish any service of lasting value (i.e., to expiate sins). The Old Covenantal institutions served to *illustrate* "better" things. The tabernacle itself was a copy of the "true" tabernacle, which is heaven itself (8:2; 9:23–24). In 8:5 there is a "Scriptural" proof for the symbolic (typical) significance of the tabernacle. The argument runs as follows.

The levitical priesthood served *in the context of* that which was a copy and shadow of heavenly things (οἵτινες ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ λατρεύουσιν τῶν ἐπουρανίων—οἵτινες refers back to προσφερόντων). The dative can be considered instrumental (as BAGD indicates: "Hebrews also adds to λατρεύειν in the dative the holy object by means of which the priest renders service 8:5; 13:10.")<sup>79</sup> It may be preferable, however, to take it as an associative dative<sup>80</sup> or even as locative of place (A. T. Robertson argues that these are not rare in the NT<sup>81</sup>). The writer of Hebrews goes on to prove that the tabernacle was a copy and shadow of heaven. He finds such an implication or evidence in God's words to Moses.

When God gave Moses detailed instruction concerning how to build the tabernacle, he adjured him three times to follow the plans exactly (Exod 25:9, 40; 26:30). According to the author of Hebrews, the *reason* for such adjuration was the fact that the tabernacle was intended to reflect heaven.

The author introduces his argument with καθώς. Καθώς introduces the quotation, but it also thereby establishes connection between what follows and that which precedes it. That the tabernacle was a copy of heaven is demonstrated by God's words to Moses,<sup>82</sup> for (explanatory γάρ) "see," he says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

The relevance of this matter for any discussion of authorial intentions is this: when God said the above words to Moses, part of the reason for his doing so was the fact that the tabernacle was to be

<sup>79</sup>See λατρεύω.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. BDF, § 198 (5).

<sup>81</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 521.

<sup>82</sup>Note the comments of F. F. Bruce in *Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 165: "For the earthly sanctuary from the outset was designed to be nothing more than a 'copy and shadow' of the heavenly reality. This is how our author understands the divine injunction to Moses, regarding the details of the tabernacle in the wilderness."

a copy of heaven. Moses had to be careful to follow the "blueprint" exactly in order to preserve the pattern. The divine admonition had such a purpose in view, namely, the intention to provide a type. But was Moses aware of such intention?<sup>83</sup>

The conclusion of the matter is that there was an implication or intention present in God's words to Moses which Moses was not aware of. It must at least be conceded that Moses did not leave a clear indication of his awareness of the typical intention that God had for the institution of the tabernacle. However, if Hebrews is interpreted grammatically and contextually, God's words to Moses definitely had such an implication. Such a meaning was "interpreted" from those words by the writer of Hebrews who is not reporting a new revelation but exegeting the OT to prove his point.<sup>84</sup> In the light of this fact, divine authorial intention cannot be identified with the understanding and intention of the human author to such an extent that the former is not in any manner or degree distinct from the latter.

The quotation from Exod 25:40 given in Heb 8:5 is another statement which involves the direct statement of God. This is similar to the case of Gen 3:15 dealt with previously. In the cases of "reporting" God's words by a human author, the student of Scripture may not be justified in restricting meaning to the human author's understanding. Divine authorial intention included whatever intention Moses had in writing the book of Exodus stemming from his understanding of these words. But the divine authorial intention involved, additionally, God's meaning and purpose for that statement itself. Over this matter Moses had no control. Neither did his understanding determine or limit the extent of implications which believers of a later time period might discern in the light of more facts progressively revealed.

### Hebrews 9:8, 9

Heb 9:8, 9 presents additional thoughts concerning the meaning of the tabernacle. In 9:1-5 the OT tabernacle is described. In vv 6 and 7 the fact is pointed out that the outer court was constantly accessible but the Holy of Holies could be entered only once a year by the high

<sup>83</sup>If Moses knew the intention on the part of God to provide a type, such awareness is not reflected in the text. However, if Moses was aware of a typical intention for the tabernacle, then, clearly, the type is "predictive." What shall be said, then, concerning the predictiveness of other Scriptural types?

<sup>84</sup>There is room to consider that part of the teaching ministry of the Paraclete to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13-15) was "illumination." Note, for instance, John's use of the word ἐμνήσθησαν in John 12:16.

priest who would take with him the blood of the sacrifice which he offered for himself and for the people. This inaccessibility of the inner tabernacle had symbolic implications. From the nature of the service in the tabernacle the Holy Spirit showed that "the way into the holiest is not manifest while the first (i.e., the outer) tabernacle still has a standing/existence." This is a *παράβολή* for the time that has come. It is very unlikely that Moses meant that the inaccessibility of the inner tabernacle signified the *temporary* nature of that ministry. Neither is it likely that Moses meant that the way into the Holiest was *not yet* (μήπω) revealed or that the tabernacle had a "parabolic" lesson to teach. But the Holy Spirit, the divine author, was "revealing" (δηλοῦντος, 'making clear') such things.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, seeing the authorial intentions of the divine author and the human author to be thoroughly identical cannot be justified.

#### CONCLUSION

The present writer has attempted to show that a principle like, "The Bible is to be interpreted by the same rules as other books,"<sup>86</sup> is not an absolutely valid dictum for biblical interpretation when it comes to authorial intention. Divine accommodation in the use of human language is not tantamount to divine self-reduction of authorial intent to the understanding of the biblical writer.

By way of conclusion, the following statements could be repeated, though penned in an earlier generation. They reflect for the most part thoughts that summarize what has been stated in this paper.

What, then are we to understand by divine inspiration?

Divine inspiration is the mysterious power put forth by the Spirit of God on the authors of holy writ, to make them write it, to guide them even in the employment of the words they use, and thus to preserve them from all error.

What are we told of the spiritual power put forth on the men of God while they were writing their sacred books?

We are told that they were *led or moved* "not by the will of man, but by the Holy Ghost; so that they set forth the things of God, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." "God," says the apostle, "spake BY THE PROPHETS at sundry times, and in divers manners;" sometimes enabling them to understand what he made them say; sometimes without doing so. . . .

But what passed in their hearts and minds while they were writing?

<sup>85</sup>This would be an appropriate place to discuss the role of divine illumination in exegesis. However, it is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>86</sup>Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 119.

This we cannot tell. . . .

What then must we think of those definitions of divine inspiration, in which Scripture seems to be represented as the altogether human expression of a revelation altogether divine? . . .

These definitions are not exact, and may give rise to false notions of inspiration. . . . They contradict facts. . . . In fact, they assume its being nothing more than the natural expression of a supernatural revelation; and that the men of God had merely of themselves, and in a human way, to put down in their books what the Holy Ghost made them see in a divine way, in their understandings. But inspiration is more than this. Scripture is not the mind of God elaborated by the understanding of man, to be promulgated in the words of man; it is at once the mind of God and the word of God . . . .

Finally, it is always the inspiration of the book that is presented to us as an object of faith, never the inward state of him that writes it. His knowledge or ignorance nowise affects the confidence I owe to his words; and my soul ought ever to look not so much to the lights of his understanding as to the God of all holiness, who speaks to me by his mouth.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup>Gaussen, *Theopneustia*, 106-12.