

## Listening to the Community in the Cave of Resonance: Literary Readings of Scripture and the Gathered Church

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We knew for long the mansion's look  
And what we said of it became

A part of what it is...Children,  
Still weaving budded aureoles,  
Will speak our speech and never know,

Will say of the mansion that it seems  
As if he that lived there left behind  
A spirit storming in blank walls,

A dirty house in a gutted world,  
A tatter of shadows peaked to white,  
Smeared with the gold of the opulent sun.<sup>1</sup>

How might a renewed understanding of the literary aspects of scripture inform Baptist thought and practice? One place to begin developing an answer is through an analysis of scripture's use of scripture, allowing canonical models of intertextuality to suggest methods and forms of scriptural interpretation. In particular, New Testament scholarship on Paul's use of scripture may serve as a point of departure for additional theological reflection.

In *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard Hays suggests literary criticism's analysis of intertextuality might open a fresh perspective on Paul as a reader of scripture. His work has opened up a new conversation about the use of scripture in the

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, "A Postcard from the Volcano" in *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play* (ed. Holly Stevens; New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 127.

New Testament. This paper sketches that conversation and seeks to extend it in light of the work of Umberto Eco and C. S. Peirce. A final brief section then explores some implications for a Baptist understanding of the church's use of scripture in light of Miroslav Volf's treatment of ecclesiology.

### **Lessons from Pauline Interpreters**

Two decades ago, the state of discussion of Paul's use of Scripture generally focused on technical issues—the details of textual criticism, the identification of explicit citations, or the calculation of weight of citations from various writings. While such studies were not without merit, they contributed little to an understanding of hermeneutics. Summarizing the field, Richard B. Hays lamented that twentieth-century investigations of Paul's use of scripture focused on five categories: (1) questions of textual criticism, (2) questions of incidence of citation, (3) questions of sources and historical background, (4) questions of theological legitimacy, and (5) questions of biblical inspiration and authority.<sup>2</sup> For Hays, the extant scholarship had either answered the questions fully or arrived at a dead end. These studies did make a contribution; as Hays puts it, they laid out the pieces of the puzzle. But they failed to answer the larger question of how to assemble the pieces of the puzzle. What was needed, Hays argued, was “a fresh examination of Paul as reader of Scripture.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 10.

Richard Hays's *Echoes of Scripture*

In response to this impasse, Hays proposes “for heuristic purposes” a set of tools that differ from those native to historical-critical scholarship. He turns to literary criticism, and, in particular, to the phenomena of intertextual echo in hopes that the “literary critic’s ‘hearing aid’ can disclose important elements of Paul’s thought that have been left unexplored by other critical methods.”<sup>4</sup>

As Hays develops the outline of his own approach, he first criticizes those who approach Pauline exegesis as midrash and then locates his own understanding of intertextuality within the history of twentieth-century approaches. As he explores the work of those who view Pauline exegesis as midrash, he notes that scholars use the term in different ways. He nonetheless finds fault with each of them. Some writers understand midrash as a form-critical map to explain the structure of Paul’s argumentation, but those studies yield little. Other scholars view midrash as a hermeneutical method, appealing to the rabbinic rules or principles of Hillel and Rabbi Ishmael. The difficulty here for Hays is two-fold. First, these principles, or *middot*, are not strictly rules or guidelines, but rather a list of tropes, “a repertoire of possible imaginative operations that can be performed on the text in the act of interpretation.”<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the *middot* do not provide a hermeneutic, but only a formal analysis. They do not explain why an author chose this particular trope or group of tropes. The taxonomy yields little more than an attractive grid and fails to illuminate the underlying principles that drive a particular writer’s interpretation of Scripture.

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<sup>4</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, xii.

<sup>5</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 12.

Still other scholars view midrash as license, as a “free and playful interpretation” that can explain strange or apparently arbitrary exegeses. Midrash is imprecise and mysterious and covers a multitude of interpretative sins. But to label an interpretation as midrash then clarifies nothing—it closes the investigation rather than clarifying it.<sup>6</sup>

Hays next locates his project in the history of literary theory in the twentieth-century. Although cognizant of the work of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, Hays proposes a more narrow approach to intertextuality in Paul’s letters, “focusing on his actual citations and allusions to specific texts.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, while Hays recognizes the significance of Hellenistic discourse for Paul, he purposefully limits his attention to Paul’s use of the LXX, noting that Paul “repeatedly situates his discourse within the symbolic field created by a single great textual precursor: Israel’s Scripture.”<sup>8</sup>

Hays then argues that much of twentieth-century literary criticism has centered on intertextuality, a focus that began as early as T. S. Eliot’s 1919 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent.”<sup>9</sup> That focus found renewed impetus with the 1973 publication of Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence*.<sup>10</sup> For Bloom, the central task of interpretation is to understand a poetic text as the product of a poet’s own struggle with the literary tradition, an anxious revision and willful misreading of ancestral texts. Every author thus displays Nietzschean will to power over the tradition and enacts a symbolic Oedipal violence against forebears to overcome it. Despite Bloom’s prideful extremes and eccentricities, he attends the use and reuse of traditions. He does not simply develop a

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<sup>6</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1950).

<sup>10</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

process of taxonomy (locating sources, counting allusions) but rather investigates how the echo of predecessor texts produces meaning.<sup>11</sup>

Hays then reflects more generally on the role of allusion within the study of literature and draws the forceful conclusion that such analysis pulls literary critics toward historical study: attempts to understand what effects and meanings allusion and echo produce

could straightway drive the interpreter into a historical mode of research; to hear and understand the poet's allusions we need to know not only the tradition to which the allusion points but also the way in which that tradition was understood in the poet's time and the contemporary historical experience or situation with which the poet links the tradition. It is for this reason that some of the best recent investigations of intertextual phenomena have taken a strong historical turn (indeed, this approach might be described as the most important contemporary alternative to deconstructionist criticism).<sup>12</sup>

Hays then praises the work of several literary scholars who move precisely in this direction, including Barbara Lewalski and J. A. Wittreich.<sup>13</sup> As these scholars locate the literature they study within a wider tradition, they can better understand the force and function of the allusions and echoes they study.

Given his strong praise for such an approach, the next turn in Hays's argument is surprising. Rather than adopting such a model for his own work, which would entail an examination of the tradition of interpretation that has mediated Scripture to Paul, Hays instead questions whether such an approach is available to biblical scholars at all:

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<sup>11</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 17-18.

<sup>12</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Hays lists Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); George Deforest Lord, *Classical Presences in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1979); Francis Blessington, *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), and E. Talbot Davidson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

What then? Must New Testament critics merely stand apart and envy the wealth of sources accessible to scholars who have chosen to work on the seventeenth century rather than the first? Or is there another model for approaching intertextual allusions that will be more suitable to the character of the New Testament evidence, a method that will implicate us neither in Bloom's hermeneutical *hybris* nor in the dense texture of intellectual history offered by Lewalski and Wittreich?<sup>14</sup>

In response to these questions, Hays elects to approach his intertextual analysis of Paul's letters using a third alternative, a model that John Hollander provides in *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*.<sup>15</sup> The advantage of such an approach, Hays argues, is that it focuses on the "rhetorical and semantic effects" of poetic allusions rather than on "the poet's psyche" or the allusions' "historical presuppositions."<sup>16</sup> In particular, Hays finds significant Hollander's exploration of the trope to which he applies the name of *transumption* or *metalepsis*. "Allusive echo functions," Hays summarizes, "to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed."<sup>17</sup>

The difficulty with Hays's adoption of Hollander's model, however, is that his logic is flawed: he poses a false trichotomy, as if the student of allusion must choose either Bloom or Lewalski or Hollander as mutually exclusive models. What is even more damning is that Hays provides no clear rationale for his choice of Hollander's model over the others. He simply assumes that it proves "more suitable to the character of the New

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<sup>14</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20.

Testament evidence.”<sup>18</sup> Of the rejected options, the exclusion of Bloom is perhaps easier to understand. Hays asserts that Bloom’s influence is generative for the study of intertextuality, but due to its spirit of struggle, unique rather than repeatable. Bloom’s major influences are Nietzsche and Freud, and Hays assumes that neither the will to power over tradition nor symbolic Oedipal violence overcoming the tradition provide helpful ways of conceptualizing Paul’s relationship to the Scriptures of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Hays’s rejection of the second model, that of Lewalski and Wittreich, is more difficult to understand. He provides no careful rationale supporting his decision. Rhetorically, he shifts from statement to a series of questions, and these questions imply that the comparative dearth of sources for the first-century context renders this particular approach problematic for the biblical scholar. While it is true that materials from the first-century are not as extensive as those from the seventeenth, there is no *prima facie* reason that having fewer sources necessarily excludes such an approach. Nor is there any reason that a decision to follow Hollander’s model (or Bloom’s, for that matter) necessarily excludes the historical study of tradition that Lewalski and Wittreich exemplify. What rather appear to be at work here are two theological assumptions to which Hays fails to give voice: (1) a Protestant conception of authority that valorizes Scripture (LXX) over tradition (the Jewish tradition that mediates Scripture to Paul) when in fact the relationship of Scripture and tradition is one of coinherence, to borrow the language of

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<sup>18</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 17. But Hays too hastily dismisses this trajectory. Given the generative power of Nietzsche’s own interpretation of Paul and the framing of old and new in a writing like Hebrews, analyses utilizing the perspectives of either Freud or Nietzsche or both might provide significant insights into the role of Israel’s scripture in the New Testament. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Macmillan, 1909-11), 9: 66-71; 16: 178-87, and Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

Vatican II, and (2) an unreflective reinscription of the bias of earlier New Testament interpreters in viewing Paul as a phenomenon *sui generis*.

### Initial Responses to *Echoes of Scripture*

The impact of Hays's monograph within New Testament studies was immediate. The year following its publication, the Society of Biblical Literature program unit on Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity held a panel discussion. Subsequently, two participants later edited these papers as well as a response from Hays and added a number of additional papers on Paul's use of scripture. Here we examine in particular the contributions of James A. Sanders, Craig A. Evans, William Scott Green, and Christopher D. Stanley. The first three were participants in the panel presentation, while Stanley contributed an additional paper when that volume was published.<sup>20</sup>

#### ***James A. Sanders***

As a scholar whose own work focuses on canonical development, James A. Sanders finds much to praise in Hays's monograph. He describes it as "a welcome surprise," "a beacon of light and a breath of fresh air," and a departure from scholarship that reads the New Testament "only in terms of its Hellenistic content."<sup>21</sup> Because Hays affirms that texts can "generate readings that transcend...the conscious intention of the author,"<sup>22</sup> Sanders concludes that he appreciates Scripture as canon: the experiences of later communities of readers, not the original intent of the author, matter for shaping

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<sup>20</sup> Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> James A. Sanders, "Paul and Theological History," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 33.

canon. But for Sanders, the intertextual depths of Scripture reveal more than Hays recognizes; they bear witness to the process of canonization, the way in which later readers re-read old texts and find in them new meaning.<sup>23</sup> The core of Sanders's criticism is that Hays stops short of a complete examination of the canonical process. Interpreters, Sanders argues, should explore the function of echoes and allusions in Jewish literature before Paul. They should begin with the Tanak, as Michael Fishbane does, but they should go beyond the Tanak "through the Septuagint and its descendants, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, Tannaic literature, and the Vulgate."<sup>24</sup> The goal of the study of these texts and their *Nachleben* is a fuller grasp of the dynamics and constraints of the canonical process.

Clearly, Sanders's own preoccupations drive his assessment of Hays's work. He appreciates a particular trajectory in Hays's analyses that illuminates the workings of the canonical process while faulting Hays for not broadening his approach to match his own concerns more closely. Hays's subsequent response to Sanders stresses his own distinctive approach: "I aim at a deep reading of a single text (or a handful of Pauline texts) rather than at a comparative or developmental treatment of motifs.... Sanders's question about the history of the canonical process is both important and interesting, but it is not quite mine."<sup>25</sup>

Still, it is worth noting that Sanders faults Hays for inattention to the history of interpretation. Even though Hays rightly insists that his task is the reading of Pauline texts rather than exploration of motifs developing through time, might not a diachronic

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<sup>23</sup> Sanders, "Paul and Theological History," 56.

<sup>24</sup> Sanders, "Paul and Theological History," 57. See the discussion of Fishbane below.

<sup>25</sup> Richard B. Hays, "On the Rebound: A Response to Critiques of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 76.

analysis illumine a reading of Pauline texts? That observation is precisely the argument of Craig A. Evans.

***Craig A. Evans***

Like Sanders, Evans finds much to praise in Hays's monograph, concluding that it "significantly advances the discussion" of Paul's interpretation of Israel's Scriptures.<sup>26</sup> Evans finds Hays's analysis of intertextual echoes in Romans "stimulating and insightful." Evans brings three primary criticisms against Hays. Although he agrees with Hays that using the term "midrash" of itself does not necessarily clarify interpretation, he nonetheless insists that there are helpful studies that point to the presence of midrash in Paul. He also agrees with Hays that Paul's treatment of Israel in Rom 9—11 reflects a "scandalous inversion" of the scriptural story of Israel's favored status, but he insists that Israel's prophets practiced a similar rhetorical strategy, a point Hays ignores. Evans's most significant and detailed criticism is that Hays fails to consider the interpretative context in which Paul experienced and read Scripture. Commenting on Hays's exegesis of Rom 10:5-10 and its allusions to Deut 30:12-14, Evans observes that "Paul has heard more than Scripture itself; he has heard Scripture as it had been interpreted in late antiquity."<sup>27</sup> To demonstrate this point, Evans focuses his attention on Paul's phrase "descending into the abyss." Although neither the Greek or Hebrew versions of Deut 30 nor Bar 3:29-30 (a passage both Hays and Evans find significant) refers to this idea, *Targ. Neof.* Deut 30:12-13 contains the phrase "descend into the depths" and links it to

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<sup>26</sup> Craig A. Evans, "Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, "Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture," 48. Kenneth D. Litwak incorrectly suggests that this third criticism is the least significant of Evan's criticisms. See Kenneth D. Litwak, "Echoes of Scripture? A Critical Survey of Recent Works on Paul's Use of the Old Testament," *Currents in Research* 6 (1998): 260-88.

the figure of Jonah. Thus, Evans argues, the echo in Rom 10:5-10 “is made up of Scripture *and its exegesis* in late antiquity.”<sup>28</sup> For that reason, he prefers to speak of—and to examine—echoes of interpreted Scripture. For Evans, interpreters must be aware that Paul’s encounter with Scripture is not simply an unmediated reading of words on a page (indeed, no such reading of any text can exist), but rather the complex reading process of one whose communal traditions and past experiences shape interpretation.

### ***William Scott Green***

Like both Sanders and Evans, William Scott Green appreciates Hays’s ability to amplify and analyze the echoes of Israel’s Scriptures in the letters of Paul.<sup>29</sup> He admires the way Hays’s learning and interpretative skill provide depth and richness to his readings of Paul. This praise notwithstanding, Green puts forward a number of incisive criticisms of Hays’s work. Two of his observations regarding Hays’s literary methodology are particularly significant.

First, Green underscores that Hays’s analysis of Paul’s echoes of Scripture are “relentlessly—indeed, exclusively—textual. The book’s argument neither presents them as historical nor requires that they be understood as historical.”<sup>30</sup> Though Green does not explicitly use the terminology, he asserts that Hays essentially practices a form of New Criticism, despite Hays’s historical sensitivity and his nuanced treatment of the locus of intertextual meaning.<sup>31</sup> This attention to the ahistorical nature of Hays’s readings recalls

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<sup>28</sup> Evans, “Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture,” 50.

<sup>29</sup> William Scott Green, “Doing the Text’s Work for It: Richard Hays on Paul’s Use of Scripture,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Green, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Green, 61, citing Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 26-27. See further discussion of this issue below. For one reviewer who explicitly labels Hays a New Critic, see Dale Martin, review of Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, *Modern Theology* 7 (1991): 291-92.

the observations of both Sanders and Evans that Hays fails sufficiently to attend to the role of the history of interpretation. Such inattention, Green further alleges, leads Hays to impose his own reading of Israel's Scripture on Paul. Rather than attending to the experiences of specific readers of Scripture in time and space, Hays constructs a theoretically generic reader, as his use of language like "no reader unfamiliar with the psalter" or "anyone who had ever prayed Psalm 143 from the heart would instantly recognize..." demonstrates.<sup>32</sup> He then attributes the practices of this generic reader of Paul, but the readings are in fact those of the modern interpreter, Hays himself.

Green's attention to the ahistorical nature of Hays's readings is one he shares with the other panelists. His second critique of Hays's methodology moves beyond that common insight while building upon it. If historical context shapes the reading of texts, tradition mediates interpretation. The meaning a reader constructs depends on her context, her location in time and space. But Hays is not willing to grant such fluidity to meaning. As Green notes, Hays employs "a minimalist notion of intertextuality, using it to mean simply the presence of an older text in a newer one."<sup>33</sup> As a result, Hays avoids detailed discussion of philosophical concerns that often accompany intertextual study, particularly the issue of the inherent instability of texts.

### ***Christopher D. Stanley***

Like other readers of *Echoes of Scripture*, Christopher D. Stanley expresses his appreciation for Hays's honesty about his own reading stance and for opening interpreters' attention to the way in which Paul's allusions function "for those who have

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<sup>32</sup> Green, 61, citing Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 49, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Green, 59.

ears to hear.”<sup>34</sup> But Stanley points to the work of Barnabas Lindars and D.-A. Koch, whose analyses demonstrate that Paul’s scriptural citations at times reflect an earlier history of interpretation.<sup>35</sup> It may be, Stanley argues, that Paul sometimes reconfigures, not the language of Scripture itself, but language that derives from the tradition of interpretation.<sup>36</sup> In particular, he examines the conflation and adaptation of Isa 59:20-21 and Isa 27:9 that Paul cites in Rom 11:26-27. He concludes that the changes are not original with Paul but reflect a previous Jewish oral tradition; Paul appeals to a traditional formulation in place of the wording of Scripture itself.<sup>37</sup> Although Stanley’s sharply posed dichotomy between Scripture and tradition lacks the subtlety of Evans’s analysis, the general criticism remains the same: failure to attend to the way in which other Second Temple Jews interpret Scripture limits Hays’s approach.

#### Subsequent Modifications of *Echoes of Scripture*

Sanders, Evans, Green, and Stanley have not been alone in their critique. Dale Martin and Vernon K. Robbins have raised similar concerns.<sup>38</sup> In addition, a number of scholars who have subsequently explored Paul’s use of Scripture have modified Hays’s approach to examine, in Evans’s words, “echoes of interpreted Scripture.” Here we consider four of them in particular: Frank Thielman, James M. Scott, Sylvia Keesmaat, and Andrew Wakefield. Examining the work of these scholars does not provide an

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<sup>34</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> See Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), and Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums : Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986). In particular, see the discussion of Lindars’s work in chapter 1 above.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher D. Stanley, “The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιων: Romans 11:26-27 Revisited,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Stanley, “The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιων: Romans 11:26-27 Revisited,” 124, 136.

<sup>38</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 101-08; Martin, 291-92.

exhaustive study of modifications to Hays's methodology, but each of these three is illustrative of a different scope in interpretation, moving from a specific passage to a letter to the Pauline corpus as a whole. Furthermore, each scholar in the sequence proves increasingly more self-reflective about his or her modifications of Hays's approach.

***Frank Thielman***

In his examination of the seeming contradiction between Rom 9:6-13 and 11:25-31, Frank Thielman expresses his debt to Hays's method, concluding that Paul's method of scriptural exegesis "has recently reached a measure of clarity in Richard B. Hay's [sic] eloquent study."<sup>39</sup> In his examination of Rom 9:6-13, Thielman finds that the wider narrative context of scriptures quoted from both Malachi and Genesis are significant.<sup>40</sup> The Genesis quotations in particular evoke the repeated reversal of the law of primogeniture: in the context of Genesis as a whole, God chooses Abel over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, Perez over Zerah, and Ephraim over Manasseh. But Thielman then proceeds to question the significance of this pattern for the apostle and his first readers:

Is it likely, however, that Paul noticed this motif and expected his readers to notice it as well? If other literature of this period provides an accurate picture of how ancient readers generally understood Genesis, the answer to this question is clear. The author of Jubilees not only understood the emphasis which Genesis places on the violation of the custom of primogeniture, but worried about it.<sup>41</sup>

Thielman traces three episodes in which the author of Jubilees discusses the violation of the principle (28.6; 24.7; 35.13) and adduces examples of other writings that reflect

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<sup>39</sup> Frank Thielman, "Unexpected Mercy: Echoes of a Biblical Motif in Romans 9-11," *SJT* 47 (1994): 172.

<sup>40</sup> Thielman, "Unexpected Mercy," 174-76.

<sup>41</sup> Thielman, "Unexpected Mercy," 177.

knowledge of the custom as well, including the works of Philo, the Epistle of Barnabas, and patristic and rabbinic literature.<sup>42</sup> Thus, despite his avowed debt to Hays, Thielman moves beyond Hays's methodology to consider a wider intertextual nexus. In assessing the plausibility of a pattern to which Paul may allude, he expands his attention to examine ways in which other interpreters of the scriptures of Israel understood and utilized that pattern.

***James M. Scott***

In contrast to Thielman's unconscious shift away from Hays's methodology, James M. Scott directly challenges Hays's discussion of the role of Deuteronomy in Paul's letters. He agrees with Hays that Deuteronomy is significant for Paul, but he notes that Hays does not show how Second Temple Jewish tradition mediates Paul's use of Deuteronomy.<sup>43</sup> In response, Scott builds on the work of Odil H. Steck to show that attention to other Jewish literature of the period reveals the pervasive influence of Deuteronomy in shaping a particular view of the history of Israel, a perspective Paul shares.<sup>44</sup> Thus, contrary to Hays's assessment that Deuteronomy is "the most surprising member of Paul's functional canon within the canon,"<sup>45</sup> Scott's analysis reveals that from his earliest correspondence, Paul drew regularly on Deuteronomy's salvation-historical perspective as mediated by a particular tradition of scriptural interpretation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thielman, "Unexpected Mercy," 178.

<sup>43</sup> James M. Scott, "Paul's Use of Deuteronomistic Tradition," *JBL* 112 (1993): 647.

<sup>44</sup> Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten. Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (WMANT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

<sup>45</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 163.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, "Paul's Use of Deuteronomistic Tradition," 665.

***Sylvia C. Keesmaat***

Like Scott, Sylvia C. Keesmaat argues that a proper understanding of Paul's use of scripture requires attention to the traditions of Second Temple Judaism that mediate scripture to him. Unlike Scott's article, Keesmaat's *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* does not simply attend to the interpretation of one writing within the canon. Informed by wide reading in cultural anthropology and sociology, she instead crafts a careful rationale for a pervasive and fundamental reorientation of Hays's approach. While she acknowledges her debt to Hays, her understanding of intertextuality differs from his, and she proposes that her work will examine "the intertestamental tradition of...themes in addition to their scriptural contexts."<sup>47</sup>

What accounts for her departure from Hays's methodology? Keesmaat recasts the fundamental categories of the investigation: she begins, not with "scripture," but with "tradition," or, at least with the awareness that "scripture" is a subset of the larger category "tradition." Drawing on the work of Clifford Geertz, she posits that a culture's traditions shape its members' identities and their ability to make sense of the world.<sup>48</sup> Defining the term, she asserts that "*tradition is comprised of those events, stories, rituals and symbols that shape the collective identity of a community, that are passed down in a community from generation to generation and that are rooted in the foundational past of that community.*"<sup>49</sup>

Keesmaat's ability to draw on Michael Fishbane's work on the symbiotic relationship between tradition and interpretation makes possible her methodological

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<sup>47</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (JSNTSup 181; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 17. Italics in original.

advance over Hays. Fundamental to her understanding of tradition is the need for interpretation that insures the tradition's continuing vitality. If the function of tradition is to allow the past to provide a framework that makes sense of the present and shapes the future, then tradition cannot remain static. Rather, tradents must reactivate it for their contemporary context, bringing it to new life and power so that the tradition can prove adequate for shaping understanding and providing meaning in the midst of a new, changed context. Thus tradition requires interpretation so that it may speak to new historical situations. The need for interpretation proves particularly acute in moments of crisis that develop in the face of radically altered circumstances.<sup>50</sup> This process of transformation means that the tradition a community receives is not equivalent to the tradition it passes down. As Keesmaat concludes, "The community, in effect, shapes a new tradition out of the old."<sup>51</sup>

The scriptures and other writings of the people of Israel preserve thus their tradition and provide them with both language and a conceptual framework that enables them to reflect on reality.<sup>52</sup> Yet the heirs of this tradition in the period of the Second Temple freely adapted this framework to respond to contemporary challenges and changes in their environment, including the challenge of Hellenism, the danger of apostasy, and the practical issues of life in a changing empire. Although various Jewish groups interpreted the tradition differently, the role of interpretation was central for all of them, and each group further sought justification for its distinctiveness on the basis of its

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<sup>50</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 18-22. In particular, Keesmaat cites Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 435 and Michael Fishbane, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies of Interpretation in Ancient Israel," in Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 16. See the discussion of Fishbane below.

<sup>51</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 24.

interpretation of the authoritative texts. Thus, Keesmaat concludes, “there was dual emphasis on the text and the interpretative tradition.”<sup>53</sup> That dual emphasis holds true for a wide spectrum of texts and authors: the targums arising from interpretation in the synagogue, the Qumran documents, as well as a range of Hellenistic Jewish authors, including Philo and Josephus. All these writers stress the significance of the scriptural tradition, but they all also reinterpret that tradition in response to their own contexts. They do not repeat the biblical tradition literally but rather transform and recontextualize it.<sup>54</sup>

The significance of the tradition for these writers underscores its possible significance for Paul as well. As a result, Keesmaat argues, Pauline scholars

are realizing that it is impossible to comprehend Paul’s interpretation of his scriptures without attending to the context in which his understanding of those scriptures was shaped. Such a context includes not only the traditions which were emphasized within those scriptural books but the ways in which those traditions had been reappropriated and reinterpreted throughout Israel’s history.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in her own work, she turns to study Paul’s use and reuse of those traditions. Rather than ignoring or bracketing tradition’s mediation of scripture, she intentionally focuses on the nature of tradition and its function in interpretation. She is convinced that interpretation proceeds—not on the basis of bare textual analysis—but on the premise that interpretation is a traditioned and traditioning practice.

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<sup>53</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 28-31.

<sup>55</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 32.

***Andrew H. Wakefield***

Like the other scholars who modify Hays's intertextual method, Andrew H. Wakefield extends and refines the approach of *Echoes of Scripture*. Unlike Thielman, Scott, and Keesmatt, Wakefield does not focus primarily on the role of the history of interpretation of Scripture. Instead, he devotes attention to the process of intertextual analysis itself, albeit in ways that complement the modifications of the other scholars surveyed above. Wakefield provides four significant contributions to the discussion. First, he develops and employs a capacious and inclusive definition of intertextuality that allows him to consider a wide variety of approaches and strategies for intertextual analysis. Secondly, unlike Hays, Wakefield affirms that all intertextual studies have boundaries, an insight that builds upon his definition and provides a more robust understanding of intertextuality. Third, with the breadth of his study, he develops a useful taxonomy for classifying those approaches and strategies. Fourth, he refines Hays's criteria for the possible presence of intertextual references, utilizing the work of the literary critic Michael Riffaterre. We examine each of these contributions in turn.

Wakefield first notes the diversity present in the practice of intertextuality, but he insists that in theory its definition is simple: "Intertextuality is semiotics applied to texts."<sup>56</sup> Such a definition implies texts have meaning only in dialogue with other texts and, further, that texts are less self-contained objects than networks of traces.<sup>57</sup> Thus texts

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew Hollis Wakefield, *Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul's Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1–14* (Academia Biblica 14; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 99.

<sup>57</sup> Wakefield, 99.

are not limited to written artifacts but encompass all “encoding signs” that convey societal or cultural meaning.<sup>58</sup>

But for Wakefield, it is this simple and singular theoretical definition that gives rise to the diverse practice of intertextuality. In theory, its scope is boundless, Wakefield claims, because it entails examination of a text’s relationship with the whole of its culture.<sup>59</sup> Yet, in practice, no intertextual study can encompass so wide an investigative domain. Limits are necessary, even unavoidable. Thus criticisms of intertextual approaches that define boundaries are unwarranted. Investigators are not merely free to choose boundaries; they must do so from “pragmatic necessity.”<sup>60</sup>

It is attention to these limits that leads Wakefield to his third contribution. The diversity of intertextual analysis arises, Wakefield argues, from the variety of ways in which interpreters choose to limit the scope of comparative texts. Wakefield plots the space of choices along two axes: first, the choice between text production and text reception, and second, the choice between diachronic and synchronic textual relationships.<sup>61</sup> Intertextual investigation may focus on the relationships between the author and the texts of her world or on the relationships between a reader and the texts of his world. It need not focus solely on the reader’s response to a text. To illustrate the

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<sup>58</sup> Wakefield, 101. Wakefield borrows the terminology of “encoding signs” from Thaïs Morgan, “Is There an Intertext in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 3 no. 4 (1985): 1-40.

<sup>59</sup> Wakefield, 102. See especially n19. In drawing this conclusion about the inevitability of boundaries, Wakefield draws upon the work of the literary critic Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 100-118. In emphasizing the limits on any intertextual investigation, Wakefield strongly critiques those who question intertextual studies that establish boundaries for their investigations, including Benjamin D. Sommer, “Exegesis, Allusion, and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger,” *VT* 46 (1996): 487n22; and George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips, “Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis,” *Semeia* 69/70 (1995): 7. Wakefield’s claim that intertextuality is theoretically boundless in its scope, however, is debatable; see Robbins, 96-97, who provides a similar discussion to that of Wakefield and Culler but is less sanguine about the boundlessness of intertextuality’s scope.

<sup>60</sup> Wakefield, 102-03.

<sup>61</sup> Wakefield, 103.

range of these choices, Wakefield points to the variation in the work of two key intertextual theorists: Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. While Barthes focuses on text reception, Kristeva's work concentrates on the author's production of a text.<sup>62</sup>

Secondly, intertextual investigators must also choose between diachronic and synchronic studies. Diachronic studies focus on texts that are chronologically prior to the text under investigation and explore their influence upon it; synchronic studies ignore chronological considerations in order to examine relationships between texts regardless of temporal sequence.<sup>63</sup> An understandable link exists between text production and diachronic analysis and between text reception and synchronic analysis. But these connections are not the only options: a study may focus, for example, on diachronic text relationships and text reception. Wakefield notes that this option is, in part, Hays's approach in *Echoes of Scripture*.<sup>64</sup> Conversely, a study may investigate synchronic text relationships and text production, not to examine the express influence of those texts on some text under consideration but to explore a nexus of texts that indirectly shapes that text. Examining the history of exegesis of biblical texts to explore its role in mediating the texts of scripture to Paul, for example, would constitute such a synchronic study focused on text production. Here Wakefield cites the work of Craig A. Evans as paradigmatic.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Wakefield, 105. In particular, see Julia Kristeva, *Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Du Seuil, 1969), 219, as well as the discussions of Kristeva in Morgan, 23-24 and Culler, 106; see also Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, "Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 21. For Barthes, see Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 160 and the discussion of Culler, 102.

<sup>63</sup> Wakefield, 106.

<sup>64</sup> Wakefield, 107.

<sup>65</sup> Wakefield, 108-09; see the discussion of Evans above.

Wakefield's final contribution to the discussion of intertextuality in Pauline studies is a significant addition to the criteria for possible intertextual reference that Hays develops in *Echoes of Scripture*.<sup>66</sup> Here Wakefield draws in particular on the work of Michael Riffaterre, a literary critic whose work Daniel Boyarin found helpful in his analysis of rabbinic midrash.<sup>67</sup> In an initial reading of a text, Riffaterre notes, a reader discovers anomalies, or "bumps in the text," that disrupt her expectations and force her to search outside the linear constraints of an initial reading of the text to develop a deeper level of reading that can provide an explanation of the text's significance.<sup>68</sup> A deeper level of encounter, which Riffaterre terms a hermeneutical reading, thus follows the initial, or heuristic, reading. In the process of this hermeneutical reading, the reader begins to relate the text's ungrammaticalities to a larger structural matrix and to discover the text's significance in relationship to that matrix.<sup>69</sup> The matrix is thus the crucial intertext for understanding the text. It may be a specific, written text, but it may equally be a common cliché or even a single word.<sup>70</sup> The process of cultural change and lack of

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<sup>66</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29-32.

<sup>67</sup> Wakefield, 116-17, discusses Boyarin's use of Riffaterre; see Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); idem, "The Song of Songs: Lock or Key? Intertextuality, Allegory and Midrash," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina M. Schwartz (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 214-30; idem, "Inner Biblical Ambiguity, Intertextuality, and the Dialectic of Midrash: The Waters of Marah," *Prooftexts* 19 (1990): 29-48.

<sup>68</sup> Wakefield, 124; see Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 2-6.

<sup>69</sup> Wakefield, 124-25; see Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, 6. Riffaterre prefers to speak of a text's significance rather than its meaning, restricting "meaning" to ordinary communication rather than literary communication. See Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Wakefield, 125-26, cites two examples from Riffaterre's work. In the first, Riffaterre examines Baudelaire's "Hymne à la Beaute," finding the key to the matrix in Virgil's description of the Cyclops (Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production*, trans. Terese Lyons [New York: Columbia University Press, 1983], 25). In the second, he analyzes a poem by Cocteau, locating the matrix in the commonplace of "life as a journey" (*Text Production*, 77-78).

awareness of a literary tradition may impair or even prevent the reader's ability to grasp the matrix, but her awareness of the ungrammaticalities of the text remains acute.<sup>71</sup>

Wakefield stresses two points about Riffaterre's approach to textual significance. First, interpreters cannot reduce the significance of a text to its matrix; although the text under consideration derives from the matrix, it is of necessity a transformation of the matrix. Significance emerges from a process of performing the text, "the score" as it were—first encountering its anomalies, then tracing the transformation.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, for Riffaterre, this process of resolving ungrammaticalities does not invite the reader to free play; the "text dictates the score," guiding the reader and narrowing interpretive options.<sup>73</sup>

#### Observations

The recent history of Pauline interpretation has revealed a number of significant lessons. Richard Hays's turn from a strict focus on historical-critical scholarship to literary criticism provides a clear and significant advance over previous studies of Paul's use of scripture that simply located sources and counted allusions. Despite the advances of *Echoes of Scripture*, the subsequent scholarship we have surveyed modifies or extends Hays's approach in at least three significant ways: by adding to the criteria for recognizing the presence of echoes, by insisting on additional focus on historical context, and by challenging Hays's minimalist understanding of intertextuality. First, Wakefield's examination of the work of Michael Riffaterre contributes a significant additional criterion for discerning the presence of intertextuality in text production—the existence

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<sup>71</sup> Wakefield, 125; see Riffaterre, *Text Production*, 87.

<sup>72</sup> Wakefield, 126; see Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Wakefield, 127; see Riffaterre, *Text Production*, 4, 6, 75, 98; idem, *Semiotics of Poetry*, 12, 165.

of ungrammaticalities in the text that push readers past an initial heuristic reading to grapple with the text's significance at the level of a more hermeneutical reading. Secondly, as each of the critics of Hays surveyed above notes, texts are mediated: the reader's historical context shapes their reception. Thus Paul hears, not simply echoes of scripture, but echoes of interpreted scripture, as Craig Evans insists. Therefore the study of Paul's use of scripture requires careful attention to the history of exegesis in late antiquity. In literary critical terms, New Historicist approaches must supplant New Critical ones.<sup>74</sup>

This second area of modification necessitates a third, as the analyses of William Scott Green and Andrew Wakefield suggest. The mediation of texts within a tradition of interpretation requires a more robust conception of intertextuality than Hays employs. The need for such robustness spawns two related criticisms of Hays's work: one pragmatic, the other more theoretical. Pragmatically, Hays's timidity regarding intertextuality leads him to embrace too narrow a focus in his study of echo. In particular, he attends to more obvious echoes and is reluctant to explore the full complexity of multiple iterations of textual interaction. On the one hand, Hays's study of echoes—his preference for allusion over citation—indicates that an author's use of texts is not rigid. A precursor text can be present even if not fully present, removed but still governing the structure of a new text. On the other hand, Hays desires to preserve textual stability, rejecting the fluidity of textual meaning.<sup>75</sup> But if the sound of the echoes that spelunkers hear depends on where and when they stand in the cave, such stability is imaginary. As

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<sup>74</sup> For an examination of the influence of New Historicist perspectives on biblical studies, see especially, among the numerous studies, Gina Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) and John R. Donahue, "The Literary Turn and New Testament Theology: Detour or New Direction?" *JR* 76 (1996): 250-75, as well as the additional bibliographic information they provide.

<sup>75</sup> Hays, "On the Rebound," 79-81.

time passes, echoes rebound, cross, and combine. While less distinct, these secondary echoes still reflect the original utterance to some degree. Thus underneath some texts, there are other texts that are less visible than citations, allusions, or primary echoes. But these hidden precursor texts nonetheless help readers construct the meaning of the texts they are reading. Other students of intertextuality are more willing to probe the role of these less obvious echoes than Hays. For Riffaterre, for example, these less visible texts are the matrix—or an early stage in the transformation of the matrix—that guides a reader to a text’s significance. They are thus an integral facet of intertextual analysis.

The second concern related to Hays’s minimalist understanding of intertextuality is a more theoretical one—his position regarding the stability of texts. After Green first attributes a minimalist position to Hays, he further notes that Hays barely mentions philosophical and ideological arguments “concerning the inherent stability of all texts.”<sup>76</sup> While Green’s observation is arguably true, the more damning criticism is that when Hays engages these theoretical questions, his positions are not coherent. On the one hand, in his discussion of the location of textual meaning, Hays adjures that his working method will hold together five theories: meaning is found (1) in authorial intention, (2) in the perception of the original readers, (3) in the text itself, (4) in the perception of the individual reader, and (5) in the conventions of a community of interpretation.<sup>77</sup> The difficulty in such an apparently tolerant and benign approach to meaning, however, is that these positions are not complementary but mutually exclusive. In particular, as Dale Martin notes, locating meaning in the individual reader or the community implies there is

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<sup>76</sup> Green, 59.

<sup>77</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 26.

no such thing as a “text itself.”<sup>78</sup> Martin then observes that, his statement regarding his working method notwithstanding, Hays functions as a New Critic.<sup>79</sup>

It is this desire to locate meaning in the “text itself” that shapes Hays’ narrow approach to intertextuality, for what Hays fears and rejects is the possibility of the fluidity of textual meaning that results when literary critics locate meaning in the perceptions of readers or in the reading conventions of communities. He fears that Paul’s readings of scripture would then become “only one chance moment in an endless flux of texts generated out of other texts.”<sup>80</sup>

Logically, the difficulty with Hays’s response is that he commits the fallacy of the excluded middle. Fearing the extremes of the fluidity of textual meaning, he retreats to an essentialism at the opposite end of the spectrum. But such an approach is a solution to a misplaced and empty fear. With respect to textual meaning, both complete stability and complete fluidity are fictions. While meaning is not univocal, there are limits to interpretation.

Umberto Eco, for example, utilizes his study of the pragmatism of C. S. Peirce to develop a case for precisely such a middle ground, contending that the two extremes with respect to textual meaning represent “instances of epistemological fanaticism.”<sup>81</sup> Eco labels the position that textual meaning is infinitely fluid “drift.” He delineates two varieties: Hermetic drift and deconstruction. Recalling the penchant of Renaissance Hermeticism for chaining everything to everything else so that each part of the furniture of the world connects to every other part, Eco characterizes Hermetic drift as the ability

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<sup>78</sup> Martin, 292.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, 292, notes Hays’ statement that “texts are not inert” (*Echoes of Scripture*, 33) as well as his belief in “the spontaneous power of particular intertextual conjunctions” (32-33); see also 19, 26, 28, 40.

<sup>80</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 227n60.

<sup>81</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 24.

to shift from one meaning to another to another. In contrast to deconstruction, this position, grounded in Neoplatonism, does not argue for an absence of transcendental meaning, but for its fullness.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, deconstructive drift, while still chaining signifier to signifier, holds that nothing exists outside the chain; there is no transcendental signifier.<sup>83</sup>

Yet neither of these positions of drift is a form of unlimited semiosis in the sense that Peirce uses the term. For Peirce, semiosis, while limitless, is not self-contained. The interpreter confronts the extralinguistic or extrasemiotic world in at least two ways: through the act of indication (“when one says *this* and points his fingers toward a given object of the world”<sup>84</sup>) and through a disposition to act upon the world that engages the interpreter in a community.<sup>85</sup> The community transcends the individual interpreter’s intention and provides an intersubjective meaning for an interpretation. This intersubjective meaning takes precedent over any private meaning. Taken together, the sum of these intersubjective interpretations builds the reality that the community of knowers constitutes.<sup>86</sup> While Peirce’s phenomenology gains us no purchase on the thing itself, interpretation does produce “a socially shared notion of the thing the community is engaged to take as if it were true,”<sup>87</sup> a communally constructed meaning. The historical context, that is, the shared reality of the community of knowers in time and space, mediates the reception of texts. Thus, while engaging Hays’s concern about the fluidity of textual meaning, we once again discover the need for attention to community’s role in

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<sup>82</sup> Eco, 26-27.

<sup>83</sup> Eco, 33.

<sup>84</sup> Eco, 38.

<sup>85</sup> Eco, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Eco, 40.

<sup>87</sup> Eco, 41.

mediating texts, or, in other words, to the history of exegesis. Ironically, that which guards interpretation against the interpretive flux or drift which Hays fears is precisely the mediatorial role of the community of readers his interpretations so frequently ignore.

### **Implications for a Baptist Approach to Scripture**

This focus on the communally constructed meaning of texts, and specifically the communally constructed meaning of scripture, raises significant questions for Baptist ecclesiology. How does locating interpretation within the community correspond to Baptist understandings of the church? If interpretation is of necessity communal, are there distinctive elements of an ecclesial hermeneutic, and, in particular, of an ecclesial hermeneutic consonant with the Baptist vision?

Many Baptists have claimed the believer's right of private interpretation of the Bible as a significant Baptist distinctive. In his discussion of "Bible Freedom," Walter B. Shurden provides two examples. W. B. Johnson, the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, listed "the right of each individual to judge for himself in his views of faith as taught in the scriptures" among his five fundamental convictions held by Baptists.<sup>88</sup> A generation later, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland would similarly affirm "the Divine Inspiration and Authority of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme and sufficient rule of our faith and practice: and the right and duty of individual judgment in the interpretation of it."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> William Bullein Johnson, *The Gospel Developed Through the Government and Order of the Churches of Jesus Christ* (Richmond: H. K. Ellyson, 1846), as cited in Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys, 1993), 18.

<sup>89</sup> As cited by G. Keith Parker, *Baptists in Europe: History and Confessions of Faith* (Nashville: Broadman, 1982), as cited in Shurden, 18.

Not all Baptists have embraced this conviction, however. The authors of the “Baptist Manifesto,” for example, insist that “Scripture wisely forbids and we reject every form of private interpretation that makes Bible reading a practice that can be carried out according to the dictates of individual conscience.... We therefore cannot commend Bible study that is insulated from the community of believers or guarantees individual readers an unchecked privilege of interpretation.”<sup>90</sup>

The tension between these two positions appears clear, and some Baptists have argued the position of the “Baptist Manifesto” is a challenge to individual freedom of conscience.<sup>91</sup> But is there a way of engaging this tension constructively? Miroslav Volf’s work on ecclesiology, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, suggests one possible avenue for exploration. Volf’s focus is on broader questions of ecclesiology, but his discussions prove significant for understanding how believers read scripture as part of the gathered church.

Volf notes that Friedrich Schleiermacher located the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism in their different understandings of the relationship between the individual believer, Christ, and the Church: Protestantism “makes the individual’s relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ,” while Catholicism “makes the individual’s relation to Christ dependent on his relationship to the Church.”<sup>92</sup> Free Church ecclesiology thus reflects a radically Protestant understanding of this relationship and is open to the charge of “naked ecclesial individualism.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> “Reenvisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in North America,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24 (1997): 303-10.

<sup>91</sup> William D. Underwood, “The Future of Baptist Higher Education at Mercer University,” in *The Baptist Summit at Mercer University January 19-20, 2006: Three Addresses* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2006), 48-51.

<sup>92</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, as quoted in Volf, 159.

<sup>93</sup> Volf, 160.

But Volf demonstrates that such a charge need not hold. He develops his reading of Matt 18:20 to argue that Christ's presence is promised, not to the individual, but to the community: "no one can come to faith alone and no one can live in faith alone."<sup>94</sup> The community mediates the forms in which an individual expresses the faith with which she believes: "there is no pure, ecclesially unmediated faith consisting of pure feeling."<sup>95</sup>

But while the individual learns the content of faith and the practice of faith from the community, the church cannot mediate the individual's own trust or *fiducia* which is a gift of the Spirit of God. The individual's own believing "yes" to God, a "direct personal acceptance of divine grace" is required.<sup>96</sup> Yet while that response is direct, it is nonetheless a mediated response, as the individual's own "socially mediated self-experience flows into every experience of God."<sup>97</sup>

A recognition of the church's mediatorial role need not mean that those who "interpret the Bible and the Christian tradition for themselves" are fashioning their own religion, however.<sup>98</sup> There is the peril of false forms of Christian teaching and practice, but there is also the threat, if individual responsibility for faith is muted, that the "custodians of faith" may "degenerate into lords of faith" (165). The needed response is thus to trust the Spirit's role in creating and preserving the *sensus fidelium*.<sup>99</sup>

Articulating this balanced position that individuals receive faith *through* the church but not *from* the church avoids two dangers: on the one hand, the danger of imposing an intermediary between the soul and God, and, on the other, the danger of

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<sup>94</sup> Volf, 162.

<sup>95</sup> Volf, 163.

<sup>96</sup> Volf, 164.

<sup>97</sup> Volf, 164.

<sup>98</sup> Volf, 165.

<sup>99</sup> Volf, 166.

defaulting to what Carlyle Marney termed “a bastard individualism”<sup>100</sup> that ignores the clear role of ecclesial socialization in shaping faith.

Volf’s larger discussion of ecclesiology suggests the fruitfulness of a parallel move in sketching a Baptist approach to scripture that recognizes the mediatorial role of the community of readers in interpretation. One might consider New Criticism a particularly Protestant form of reading that focuses on a relationship between with reader and the text without attending to the role of the community. The difficulty with that position is that all interpretation is mediated interpretation. Models of reading more indebted to New Historicism, however, recognize the significance of the community of readers for shaping interpretation.

Yet the individual reader does not forfeit a direct engagement with the text as a result of that mediation. If the text is scripture and the community of readers is the church, then we may reformulate Volf’s maxim: we do not come to the text alone, and we do not read alone. Thus discerning the meaning of scripture is a communal task. On one level, that statement is descriptive, because there is no interpretation apart from a community of readers.

On another level, however, the statement is normative. If Baptists are, in the words of Penrose St. Amant, the people of an open Bible and an open mind,<sup>101</sup> then affirming the authority of scripture means affirming not simply its content but also its method. If Paul (and the other New Testament writers) read scripture as a part of a community of readers, we ought to confess that we do so as well with honesty and joy. For as we read scripture, we are learning to speak the speech of our mothers and fathers

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<sup>100</sup> Carlyle Marney, *Priests to Each Other* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1974), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Walter B. Shurden, “C. Penrose St. Amant: Interpreter of the Baptist Vision,” in *Not an Easy Journey: Some Transitions in Baptist Life* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 118.

in faith who have left us, not “a spirit storming in blank walls,” but gifts of the Spirit housed in interpretative traditions that shape our reading. They are for us that cloud of witnesses through which and with whom we believe and read.