`

HEARING THE LIVING WORD OF GOD TODAY?

A SYSTEMATIC-THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE AUTHORITY AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE FOR CONTEMPORARY KOREAN PRESBYTERIANISM

HYUNG-CHUL YOON

Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology

at the University of Stellenbosch

Promoter: Prof D J Smit

December

2011

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my original work and has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

Date:_____

ABSTRACT

In the face of the crisis of scriptural authority, an urgent systematic-theological task is to chart the way beyond that crisis by providing a more convincing, comprehensible, and promising way to reaffirm the significance, truthfulness, relevance, and authority of Scripture in our beliefs and lives. The overarching aim of this dissertation is thus to search for a more appropriate systematic-theological framework for talk of the authority and interpretation of Scripture. To this end, this dissertation engages with three key dimensions — epistemological, doctrinal, and hermeneutical — in a dynamically integrated, mutually dependent, and holistic way.

To affirm the epistemological status of Scripture as God's truth, we need a more nuanced epistemological model by which to avoid the extremity of the modern dogmatic foundationalism and the postmodern relativist nonfoundationalism. A postfoundationalist approach as an alternative model would provide the way to overcome the false dichotomy between objective and subjective, ontological and functional, and epistemology and hermeneutics. Without losing the awareness of the provisionality, contextuality, and fallibility of all human knowledge, thus we can affirm the objective unity of truth and the authority of Scripture as the ultimate way to the reality of God.

A dogmatic-ontological account of Scripture brings our talk of scriptural authority within the context of the triune God's economy of salvation. From a trinitarian-pneumatological viewpoint, the authority of Scripture is derived above all from the triune God's self-communicative speech-act and hence it can be described as *the divine communicative-performative authority* in the triune God's drama of redemption. Scripture can be thought of as the *theo-dramatic script*, which brings us into the covenantal life with God and calls us to participate in the grand drama of God's salvation, by the dynamic, ministerial, and formative work of God the Spirit.

The hermeneutical concerns and reflections must be brought, as a constitutive and critical part, into our whole talk of scriptural authority. Hermeneutics helps us to expose the hermeneutical idols and to discern the real presence of God in our reading of Scripture. It also facilitates our embodiment of biblical texts in the particular, temporal context of life. Most of all, it enables us to recognise the realities of otherness and to listen to other voice(s). In light of this threefold hermeneutical task, we can retrieve, reclaim, and reaffirm the authority of Scripture as the *viva vox Dei* speaking to us in our here-and-now life. We thus recognise anew the authority of Scripture as *divine communicative-performative, covenantal, dynamic-transformative, life-engaged, and multifaceted*. By reading, mediating, enjoying, and living Scripture, we experience the triune God's intimate presence, and worship and glorify God with reverence and enjoyment.

OPSOMMING

Die krisis rakende Skrifgesag vra 'n dringende sistematies-teologiese ondersoek om 'n weg vanuit dié krisis aan te dui deur 'n oortuigender, meer verstaanbare en belowende benadering te bied om opnuut die sinvolheid, waaragtigheid, toepaslikheid en gesag van die Skrif vir ons geloof en lewe te bevestig. Die oorkoepelende oogmerk van hierdie verhandeling is dus om 'n meer toepaslike sistematies-teologiese raamwerk te vind om oor die gesag en interpretasie van die Skrif te kan praat. Ten einde hierdie doel te bereik, maak die verhandeling gebruik van drie hoof benaderings – epistemologies, dogmaties en hermeneuties – in 'n dinamies geïntegreerde, onderling afhanklike, en holistiese wyse.

Om die epistemologiese status van die Skrif as God se waarheid te bevestig, het ons 'n meer genuanseerde epistemologiese model nodig waardeur die uiterstes van sowel moderne dogmatiese funderingsdenke asook van postmoderne nie-funderingsdenke vermy kan word. As alternatiewe model sal 'n vorm van post-funderingsdenke as benadering hier ontwikkel word, te einde die valse verdelings tussen objektief en subjektief, ontologies en funksioneel, en epistomologies en hermeneuties te oorkom. Ons kan dus die objektiewe eenheid van die waarheid en gesag van die Skrif as beslissende weg na die realiteit van God bevestig, sonder om ons bewussyn van die voorlopige, kontekstuele en feilbare aard van menslike kennis te ontken.

'n Dogmaties-ontologiese verantwoording van die Skrif plaas ons spreke oor Skrifgesag binne die konteks van die drie-enige God se ekonomie van verlossing. Vanuit 'n trinitaries-pneumatologiese oogpunt word die gesag van die Skrif afgelei vanuit die drie-enige God se self-kommunikatiewe spraak-akte, sodat dit beskryf kan word as *goddelike kommunikatief-performatiewe gesag* binne die drie-enige God se verlossingsdrama. Die Skrifte kan gesien word as die *teo-dramatiese teks* wat ons binne die verbondslewe met God bring en ons deur die dinamiese, dienende en vormende werk van God se Gees oproep om aan die grootse drama van God se verlossing deel te neem.

Hermeneutiese oorwegings en nadenke moet as 'n wesenlike en kritiese deel van ons totale gesprek oor Skrifgesag ter sprake kom. Hermeneutiek help ons om hermeneutiese afgode bloot te lê en om die werklike teenwoordigheid van God in ons lees van die Skrifte te onderskei. Dit fasiliteer voorts ons beliggaming van bybelse tekste in die spesifieke en tydelike kontekste van die lewe. Dit stel ons bowenal in staat om realiteite van andersheid te herken en om na ('n) ander stem(me) te luister. In die lig van hierdie drievoudige hermeneutiese taak, kan ons die gesag van die Skrif as die *viva vox Dei*, wat tot ons spreek in ons hier-en-nou lewe, herwin, terugeis en bekragtig. Ons herken dus opnuut die gesag van die Skrif as *goddelik kommunikatief-performatief, verbondsmatig, dinamies-transformerend, lewens-deelnemend en veelvormig*. Deur die Skrif te lees, daaroor te mediteer, dit te geniet en uit te leef, ervaar ons die drie-enige God se intieme teenwoordigheid, en aanbid en verheerlik ons God met eerbied en vreugde.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On the journey to complete this dissertation, I have encountered so many unforgettable moments and God's people, and accumulated considerable debt of gratitude.

My special thanks are due first of all to Professor Smit, who as my supervisor has always been the most reliable supporter and teacher with all valuable inspirations, insights, direction and encouragements throughout my journey. His unfailing guidance enables me to improve my dissertation beyond what I was able to make.

Personal thanks are also owed to Prof Jun-In Song of Chong-Sin University, who not merely incited me to set out on this journey but also joined in the final moment as an examiner. My journey is stemmed, in part, from many stories about this beautiful country, which he used to tell in theological seminary classes.

I especially wish to thank my parents, Jun-ho Yoon and Baek-Hap Kim Yoon, and my parents-in-law, Ho-Jin Kim and Yun-Sook Um Kim. Without their sacrifice and love, I would never have finished this journey. I also wish to acknowledge the spiritual and financial support of Jugahang Church (Rev. Ki-Bum Lee), Kimpo, and Saesoon Church (Rev. Dr. Jong-Yul Cha), Seoul. I especially appreciate the faithful love and support of Jung-Won Kim, from which my family has gained comfort and joy in many times. I also owe the laborious Afrikaans translation and much more cordial friendship to Elize Julius.

Finally, and not least, I would like to give my innermost words of gratitude to my beloved wife, So-Eun, and my beautiful children, Jinha and Jinseo. They fill my journey with so many brilliant colours, delicious tastes, and delightful sounds.

Above all else, my infinite gratitude and glorification must be offered to the triune God, the Planner and Companion of my journey. This dissertation is *a* testimony of God's love and grace to us.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STATUS OF SCRIPTURE AS THE TRUTH: AN ANALYSIS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES ON SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

CHAPTER 3 JOHN CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER 4 A DOCTRINAL ACCOUNT OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY BASED ON A TRINITARIAN-PNEUMATOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

CHAPTER 5 RECLAIMING THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN THE LIGHT OF HERMENEUTICS

CHAPTER 6 HEARING THE LIVING VOICE OF GOD IN AND THROUGH SCRIPTURE HERE AND NOW

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	The Anchor Bible Dictionary
CD	Church Dogmatics
CT	Christianity Today
CTJ	Calvin Theological Journal
DLGTT	Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Term
DTIB	Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible
Heb	Hebrews
Inst	Institutes of the Christian Religions
Is	Isaiah
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
Jdg	Judges
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JR	The Journal of Religion
Jr	Jeremiah
JTSA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
Lk	Luke
MT	Modern Theology
Neot	Neotestamentica
NIDNTT	The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NGTT	Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif (Dutch Reformed Theological Journal)
NIV	New International Version
PCTS	Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society
RJ	The Reformed Journal
SBET	Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SMT	Swedish Missiological Themes
TJ	Trinity Journal
TT	Theology Today
VE	Vox Evangelica
WTJ	The Westminster Theological Journal

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVE AND BACKGROUND

It seems beyond doubt that we are living in a time of *the crisis of biblical authority,* in which many people inside and outside the church often bracket the idea of biblical authority into 'coercion rather than liberty, with terror rather than joy' (Migliore 2004:44). Bearing in mind not only a general crisis of authority itself but also the undeniable history of abuse, oppression, and exploitation committed under the aegis of Scripture, some may claim that the rubric of authority comes to be no longer adequate for appreciating the significance of Scripture.[1] The crisis of biblical authority turns out to be more serious when the formative power of God's Word is called into question. The authority of Scripture as the Word of God is replaced by the authority of the self, the culture, and others. Against this, *the authority of Scripture* has been a central issue drawing our serious, special attention in the life of the church as well as theology. Throughout the last century, this issue has provoked vigorous discussions and heated controversies to such an extent that one might call it the "battle for the Bible."[2] In this regard, N T Wright (2005:ix) rightly observes: 'in the last generation we have seen the Bible used and abused, debated, dumped, vilified, vindicated, torn up by scholars, stuck back together again by other scholars, preached from, preached against, placed on a pedestal, trampled underfoot, and generally treated the way professional tennis players treat the ball.' Unfortunately, the Korean Protestant churches could not avoid engaging the battle for the Bible. From the early years of the Korean church to the present,

---

[1] For example, James Barr and Edward Farley call into question the appropriateness of using the notion of authority as an applicable category for a doctrine of Scripture. See Barr's *The Bible in the Modern World* (1973); and Farley's *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* (1982).
[2] This "battle" has been phenomenal particularly among American evangelicals not least because of their adamant commitment to the supreme authority of Scripture. It is hinted by the title of Harold Lindsell's book *The Battle of the Bible*, which was published in the middle of 1970s — at the acme of controversies concerning biblical authority in America. Whereas Lindsell used this phrase to address the issue of biblical inerrancy, however, here I intend to apply the implication of this term in a broader way.

1

biblical authority has been and still is not only the most essential element of the total sum of Christianity but also a key issue of intense debates, particularly in the context of the Korean Presbyterianism.

At this point, it would be helpful to review briefly the historical trajectory of the Korean Presbyterian church with reference to the authority of Scripture for clarifying the aim and direction of this dissertation.

1.1.1 Scriptural Authority in the Early Protestant Church in Korea

The history of the Korean Protestant church in its early formative years can be marked as "conservative," "evangelical," and "Reformed" Christianity. The shape of the early church in Korea might be ascribed, first of all, to the legacy of missionaries carrying on their work in an early stage of Korean Christianity (Y-K Park 1992:22). The early missionaries, particularly American Presbyterian missionaries, were exclusively in the line of the extreme conservative or fundamentalist theology. They shared a common Protestant orthodox tradition that has laid great emphasis upon a conservative faith that the Bible as the inspired Word of God has the pre-eminent authority in the Christian faith and theology (K Kim 2007:108). For this reason, the early missionaries adopted, as an overall strategy for the evangelisation of Korea, the so-called *Nevius method*, which emphasised strategically the Bible as the basis of all Christian work (Conn 1966:28-29; Park 1992:110-120).[3] At the core of this method was establishing the Bible study system, which could encourage every Christian to study the Bible and to propagate to others what he/she[4] found there. The *Nevius* system was an effective method to cultivate

---

[3] The *Nevius* plan as a missional method was developed by John Livingston Nevius who worked as a missionary in China. Since Nevius visited Seoul and introduced his method in the June of 1890, the *Nevius* method had been adopted and executed as a dominant missional strategy. The goal of this method can be elucidated in its precepts such as *self-support, self-government,* and *self-propagation* of individual church. However, at the heart of the Nevius system was *the elaborate system of the Bible classes* as the key means to attain that goal. For the basic outline and further information about the Nevius method, see Nevius, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (1958).

[4] Referring to human in a singular personal pronoun, I will use "he/she," "him/her," and "his/her" rather than such a neologism as "s/he," to avoid the sexism of the traditional language. However, speaking of the divine persons, the fact that God is beyond gender itself renders any effort to balance the feminine and masculine references unsatisfactory. Thus, when referring to the divine persons in the Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Spirit — in a singular personal pronoun, I will use for my own solution the

the strong character of the early Korean church, that is, *biblical fundamentalism*. In other words, the quickening-period Korean church, which had been influenced by missionaries' conservative-evangelical theology and by the *Nevius* method, accepted unquestioningly the Bible as the very Word of God and its absolute authority, rejecting the encroachment of modernism such as the higher criticism and liberal theology. In addition to this conservative-evangelical trajectory, the early Korean church is marked by 'a sharp knowledge of the distinctive of the Reformed faith or Calvinism' with which the early missionaries intended to imbue the Korean church (Conn 1966:47-48). At least at this early stage of the Korean church, it may be said, biblical authority was inexorably firm and the issue concerning the nature and authority of Scripture did not yet come to the front of theological debate.

1.1.2 Theological Conflict Centred on the Issue of the Bible in the 1930s

It was in the 1930s that the emerging theological controversy concerning the issue of the Bible came to the centre stage of the Korean church. Harvie Conn (1967:136), who was professor of missions and apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary and missionary in Korea, argues that contrary to the early years of the Korean church, liberalism as a theological stream of the church had attained sufficient strength in both church and seminary by the late 1930s. Concerning the growth of liberalism in Korea, Conn (:137-145) refers to two factors: Firstly, in spite of the apparent prevalence of the American Presbyterian Mission adhering to conservative theology, there were liberal influences such as the liberal minority within the Mission of the American Presbyterian Church and a more liberal mission of the United Church of Canada's Mission. Their existence played a certain role in stimulating the progress of liberalism in Korea. Secondly, the liberalism in Korea was to some degree affected by Japanese liberalism, which was largely enthusiastic about Karl Barth at that time.[5] From 1929 to 1939, as

---

capitalised masculine — He, His, Him, Himself. Albeit it is merely a viable alternative, my intention is clear: to avoid any implied sexism in the use of language.

[5] Throughout his first major work, a commentary of *The Epistle to the Romans* (first written in 1919, and thoroughly modified in 1922) and particularly in his magnum opus, *Church Dogmatics* (the first part-volume was published in 1932), Karl Barth presented his theology, which was known at the time as

Japan's control of Korea grew in strength, a great number of Koreans were attending colleges and universities in Japan. The return of those educated in Japan brought about the change of theological climate towards more liberal, and, as a result, their surpassing influence led inevitably to an open conflict between the two opposing forces, namely conservatives and liberals.

Right in the centre of the conservative-liberal controversy in the Korean church were two leading theologians, Park Hyung-Ryung (1897-1978) and Kim Jae-Joon (1901-1987). Dr Park Hyung-Ryung, an eminent scholar and representative of conservative theology in Korea, was educated at Princeton Seminary in the United States from 1923 to 1926, under the tutelage of Gresham Machen who is called "the father of fundamentalism." Park was deeply attracted to the theology of Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof as well as Gresham Machen. Kim Jae-Joon also studied under Machen, but his theological tendency leaned towards liberalism, which seemed to be absorbed and to be set in his theology while he attended the radically liberal college in Japan. After returning to the homeland, Kim passionately introduced new theological thought to the Korean theology and quickly became the leading representative of Korean liberals. Not surprisingly, the conflict between the two streams of theology eventually came to the surface.

The conflict, reaching its height in the 1930s, arose over several issues, for instance, the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, the rights of women, and so on. The theological debate at that time, however, was mainly concentrated on *how to understand biblical authority* and *how to interpret the Bible*. At the heart of the theological debate was the doctrine of Scripture, specifically, the notion of the plenary verbal inspiration, the notion of inerrancy, and the infallibility of Scripture. It is noteworthy at this point that the brand of the Korean conservative Presbyterianism at that time can be characterised by

---

"theology of crisis" and "dialectical theology," as a reaction against late-nineteenth-century liberalism. In spite of this fact, however, Barth's theology did not find favour with some conservatives or fundamentalists in Korea at that time — even until the present. To put it simply, in the Korean context of a confrontation between fundamentalist-conservative and modernist-liberalist positions, Barth's theology seemed to be misunderstood or misclassified by the former in terms of "liberalism." Such an antagonistic attitude of conservative-fundamentalists towards Barth was not least due to his view of the Bible, particularly concerning the issue of inerrancy.

"conservative-evangelical" or "fundamental," "apologetic," "militant Calvinistic," and "anti-modernism" or "anti-liberalism," which came from missionaries and theologians who depended theologically on the so-called Old Princeton tradition, more particularly the Hodge-Warfield-Machen tradition.

1.1.3 The Great Division after the Liberation in the 1950s

In 1945, Korea achieved the liberation from Japanese occupation and the Korean church tried to reform itself. Contrary to its desire, however, the Korean church suffered from the tension between the two forces — conservatives and liberals —, which kept growing and eventually came to the tragic division. The great division of the Korean church was a tripartite split. Firstly, as a sequel of a rupture in the 36th General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church in 1951, the *Koryu* group, who had vigorously demanded the thorough reform after the Liberation through repentance for worshipping at the Shinto shrine, broke away from the main body and founded the General Assembly of the *Koryu* denomination in the following year.[6] Secondly, in the 37th General Assembly of 1952, conservative forces decided for the expulsion of Dr Kim Jae-Joon for the main reason of his rejection of the infallibility of Scripture (Conn 1968:178). The reaction of Kim and his supporters against the Assembly's decision culminated in the creation of a new denomination popularly called the *Kijang* group in 1954. Through the early 1950s, *one* organised Presbyterian Church in Korea until then came to be divided into *three* major ones: *Yejang*, *Kosin (Koryu)*, and *Kijang* groups.[7]

---

[6] During the annexation of Korea by Japan (1910-1945), the Koreans had been compelled to bow to the emperor's picture, to attend special ceremonies at shrines, and to bow towards the Imperial palace in Japan. The Shinto controversy was not merely a matter of idolatry; a theological issue of conservative-liberal debate was at the bottom of it. Shintoism was a crude form of religio-nationalism. Liberalism provided justification for the assimilation of Christian thought to the standard of secular culture — Japanese Shinto nationalism in that context. In the thought of the Korean conservatives, this conformity meant nothing other than a betrayal of authentic Christianity and the rejection of the uniqueness or exclusiveness of the gospel. In this sense, the Shinto controversy had a direct bearing on the conservative movement against liberalism. For a more detailed account of Shintoism, see K-S Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism 1868-1945* (1966).

[7] The history of the schism of the Korean Presbyterian churches, unfortunately, did not come to an end. After the great division, several minor splits involving burning issues at each stage followed. For example, the split of *Tonghap* and *Hapdong* group within *Yejang* camp resulted from the issue of the affiliation with ecumenical movement (WCC); the separation of *Gaehyeok* and *Handong-bosu* within *Hapdong* group was allegedly due to a result of political strife over hegemony, which is closely connected with regionalism.

Considering the fact that the first two adhered to conservative or fundamental theology whereas the last one advocated liberal theology, it may be said that the tragic schism of the Korean Presbyterian church originated mainly in differences in theology, that is to say, the friction between conservative and liberal. More particularly, the doctrine of Scripture was at the centre of the fragmentation of the Korean church (Lee 2007; Yang 2008).

Seen from the above-mentioned — though too brief or even cursory — chartering of the historical course of the Korean Presbyterianism, it might not be too much to say that the authority and nature of Scripture has been the most fundamental concern. The basic issue dividing conservatives and liberals in the Korean church was and still is one's attitude towards the Bible. The polarisation of the different views of the Bible between the Korean conservatives and liberals has been so sharp that they seem to look on each other as an "archenemy." For the Korean conservatives, the crisis of biblical authority is ineluctably connected with the crisis of Christian identity and further with the crisis of Christianity itself. Based on this conviction, they assume that the defence of the Christian faith is nothing less than the defence of the authority of Scripture, which cannot be thought of apart from the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration, infallibility, or inerrancy. It is also worthy of note that theological debates and conflicts concerning the authority of Scripture within the Korean churches have, to the very considerable extent, close parallels with those of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century in North America.

1.2 PROBLEM AND QUESTION

Arguably, one of the most dominant influences upon the formation of not only the Korean Presbyterian church's view of the Bible but also its theology as a whole is the Old Princeton theology. Dr Park Hyung-Ryung defined the theology of the Korean Presbyterian church as "the Puritanical Reformed theology," more precisely 'the Calvinistic Reformed theology of the European continent combined with the Puritanism of the United States' (Song 1999:26). Under the profound influence of the Old

Princeton theologians such as Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield, and Gresham Machen, Park (1983:21) believed that the Princeton orthodoxy might be the most excellent biblical theology system at the core of which the authority of Scripture should be located. This belief led Park to play a pivotal role in configuring the rubric of the Korean conservative theology by introducing and implanting the legacy of the Old Princeton theology into the Korean church. On this account, in order to understand the Korean conservative Presbyterian theology's view of the nature and authority of Scripture, it would be legitimate and helpful to look into the Old Princeton's view as *the received view*.

The Korean conservative Presbyterian understanding of the nature and authority of Scripture, which has followed faithfully in the wake of the Old Princeton theology, has several notable strengths. The merits of the Korean Presbyterian theology's received view concerning scriptural authority can be described in terms of what the Jesuit priest and theologian Avery Dulles calls "the propositional model." In his illuminating book *Models of Revelation,* Dulles (1983:46-48) enumerates briefly the strengths of "the propositional model." Firstly, this model may be said to have a certain foundation in the Bible, which is considered as God's word. Secondly, it can appeal as some basis to tradition from the Reformation to the nineteenth century. Thirdly, it has internal coherence in its own way and thereby provides firm doctrinal standards. Fourthly, it provides the basis for a rather simple theological method. Fifthly and above all, it has remarkably produced the practical fruitfulness for the unity and growth of the Church by encouraging loyalty to the foundational documents and traditions of the Church. Furthermore, it strengthens the conviction about the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Christianity and by so doing stimulates a lively sense of mission.

To a significant extent, the well-known astonishing growth of the Korean churches might be ascribed to the above-mentioned merits. In spite of all those strengths, however, the Korean Presbyterian theology's received view brings to the fore some grave problems, which can be addressed from the various perspectives of epistemology, dogmatics, and hermeneutics. Those problems will be dealt with at some length in the

following chapters. Here, by way of introduction and anticipation, some brief points may be made.

The first problem, which has significant bearing on the others, can be raised from an epistemological perspective. Out of their prior commitment to the modern agenda, namely the quest for epistemological certainty, the Old Princeton theologians sought to find the proper, universal, and undeniable foundation for belief and theology in "an inerrant Bible." As a result, they formulated the objective-ontological and propositional view of biblical authority, which was deeply embedded in the modern dichotomy between objective and subjective, ontological and functional. Put in terms of theological methodology, the Old Princeton theology laid much emphasis upon epistemological concerns to the detriment of more holistic concerns embracing the comprehensive Christian doctrines and hermeneutics. In addition, by speaking of biblical narrative in a foundational way of a-cultural and universally compelling beliefs and by restricting the task of theology to the compilation of the propositional truths in the Bible, this view fails to associate the authority of Scripture closely with the lives and acts of Christians in the concrete context.

The second and perhaps more central problem is raised from a doctrinal perspective. Owing to their attempt to formalise the authority of Scripture, the Old Princeton theologians located the discussion of scriptural authority in prolegomena and derived Scripture's authority from its formal property rather than its instrumentality in God's economy of salvation. In so doing, they unwittingly set the doctrine of Scripture apart from other Christian doctrines such as Trinity, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. More seriously, it brings about the dissociation of talk of scriptural authority from the triune God's being and acting in the economy of salvation.

The third problem is broached from the perspective of hermeneutics. The Old Princeton view constructs the doctrine of Scripture in a way isolated from the hermeneutical task. In this view, the hermeneutical dimension is not integrated as a constitutive, critical, necessary ingredient into talk of scriptural authority; rather it remains merely the subsidiary or peripheral level. In so doing, this view fails to forge a dynamic link

between text and reader, between authority and hermeneutics, between the truth and an interpretation, and between *how to construe scriptural authority* and *how to live Scripture*.

From the recognition of these problems, the leading question of this dissertation can be condensed as the following: *What is an appropriate systematic-theological framework for an articulation of scriptural authority in which not only the significance of Scripture but also its vitality and life-formative power can be appreciated more fully in the concrete context in which we live?*

To answer this question, a host of relevant knotty questions need to be addressed:

– Given the problems of modern epistemological foundationalism, what then could be suggested as an alternative for the epistemological ground for a proper account of biblical authority? Is it possible to accommodate the nonfoundational critique of modern epistemology without collapsing into relativism? Or, is it possible to accommodate the modernist search for epistemological justification without returning to foundationalist absolutism?

– Is the rubric of authority no longer adequate for the discussion of the significance and function of Scripture in the life of the church? Otherwise, how can we elucidate the nature of biblical authority? Is it propositional-ontological authority to be justified externally? Alternatively, is it functional-formative authority within the community of faith? Or again, is there any alternative?

– What was the Reformers' view of biblical authority? What is a proper understanding of the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura?* In the light of *sola Scriptura*, how can we set forth the relationship between Spirit and Scripture, between Scripture and tradition?

– Where is the appropriate place of the doctrine of Scripture in Christian doctrines? On which ground should talk of biblical authority root itself; on philosophical prolegomena *or* on the very doctrines that Scripture helps establish?

– How can we relate fruitful hermeneutical implications to our discussion of biblical authority? How and to what extent does a discipline of hermeneutics shed light on the doctrine of Scripture and the notion of biblical authority?

9

By grappling with these questions and trying to offer prospective answers to what is at stake, this dissertation aims to encourage the Korean Presbyterian church to retrieve and reclaim the authority of Scripture in the contemporary context. To this end, this study will attempt to provide a more critically reflective and dynamically holistic approach to the issue of scriptural authority from a Reformed perspective.

1.3 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In the face of the crisis of biblical authority, an indispensable task of Reformed theology must be to articulate clearly and intelligibly the authority of Scripture as the living Word of God, which is still addressing and speaking to us for the concrete life of the church within God's economy of salvation. How then can we take up this task in a systematic-theological way? Any "systematic-theological" investigation must work to articulate the relationship between various contexts that shape, and at the same time are shaped by, the issue at stake. On the subject of scriptural authority, a systematic-theological account needs to engage at least with three dimensions: epistemology, dogmatics, and hermeneutics. In other words, a systematic-theological articulation of scriptural authority needs to undertake a threefold task, namely searching for a proper epistemological ground for a more adequate systematic doctrine of Scripture; drawing on the full resources of Christian dogmatics; and deploying positively yet critically hermeneutical implications. Although the more detailed arguments will be unfolded in subsequent chapters, a preliminary statement of conclusions may be presented here.

Firstly, a proper systematic doctrine of Scripture needs a more adequate epistemological model, which could overcome a false dichotomy between cognitive-propositional and personal-existential language, between biblical form and biblical function, between objective unity of truth and subjective diversity of knowledge, and between explanation (epistemology) and understanding (hermeneutics). An epistemological task is to find a *middle way* between the Scylla of dogmatic foundationalism and the Charybdis of relativist nonfoundationalism, avoiding the extremity of both positions. It means that while maintaining a commitment to cognitive contents of core beliefs that are

transcultural and translinguistic, we should recognise the provisionality of our historically embedded understandings and culturally conditioned explanations of them. In this way, we can reaffirm the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth.

Secondly, an adequate Christian account of scriptural authority must be made in a way "theological and practical" rather than "epistemological and theoretical," and hence a trinitarian-pneumatological hermeneutics of scriptural authority. No philosophical foundation is more fundamental for the articulation of scriptural authority than God Himself who is revealed in Jesus Christ. A doctrine of Scripture needs to be examined in the light of a whole network of other doctrines rather than in terms of prolegomenal foundation. It must be enunciated in the setting of its location among other doctrines — especially the doctrine of God. The creativity of God's Word cannot be divorced from the activity of God's Spirit and from the presence of the risen Christ; thus, the most fundamental hermeneutics for a doctrine of Scripture may prove to be a *trinitarian-pneumatological hermeneutics*, which appreciates the reciprocal unity of Word and Spirit. A renewed trinitarian theology of Scripture enables us to understand scriptural authority as the divine *communicative-performative authority*. It may open up the promising avenue to reintegrate hermeneutical reflection to our talk of scriptural authority.

Thirdly, the promising resources and insights of hermeneutics may serve as interpretive tools of God's Spirit to retrieve and reclaim the formative authority of Scripture in the life of the faith community by helping us hear the living Word of God in our practice of reading Scripture. The authority of Scripture cannot be discussed without its life-engaging interpretation because, for Christians, *the understanding of Scripture* is above all a matter of *living biblically*. It is important to note that proper interpretation is governed not by the reader but by the sovereign God's Spirit, who, as the divine Author and the authentic Interpreter, inspires and illuminates the Bible to us. As the tools of *the Spirit of understanding*, hermeneutics would facilitate our discernment of the hermeneutical sin of distorting the text and our ability to hear the living Word of God speaking in and through Scripture.

Methodologically, this dissertation is based mainly on the survey of literature. To achieve the goal of this dissertation, namely to search for a more adequate framework for a systematic-theological account of the authority and interpretation of Scripture, I develop the arguments of this dissertation in a triadic structure, within which epistemological, doctrinal, and hermeneutical perspectives are mutually interrelated and explored in terms of the others. Besides, I attempt to appropriate, critically and creatively, the arguments and the ramifications of intersubjective, interdisciplinary dialogue, especially philosophical epistemology and hermeneutics. Nevertheless, I approach the subject of this dissertation first and foremost from a *theological* perspective, and only secondly either an epistemological or a hermeneutical.

Chapter by chapter overview would be helpful in previewing the aims to be pursued and the underlying structure within which the whole arguments are tied together.

Chapter 1 introduces the motive, questions, and aim of this dissertation. I offer a brief sketch of the history of the Korean Presbyterian churches concerning the Bible for an understanding of the historical-theological contexts, within which their view of scriptural authority is rooted. By pointing out some problems of the received view of the Korean Presbyterian churches, I broach the questions addressed in this dissertation and state the aim and preliminary conclusions.

Chapter 2 constitutes a comparative analysis of the philosophical bearings — epistemological stance, realism, truth theory, the view of language, and so on — upon the different views of scriptural authority held by the Old Princeton theology as a foundational theology and postliberal theology as a nonfoundational theology, respectively.[8] By examining hidden philosophical presuppositions undergirding these two different theological viewpoints of scriptural authority, this chapter aims to search

---

[8] In comparing these two views in terms of the category of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, I sympathise with Thiselton (2007:105,126) in his critique of some — especially North American — scholarly practices, namely that which Thiselton calls 'excessive *polarisation* between foundationalism and nonfoundationalism' and 'an oversimplified *categorisations* of individual thinkers into schools.' Nevertheless, in my judgement, such categorisation as "foundationalism" and "nonfoundationalism," with some modifications, may still play a useful role in not only identifying problems inherent in the debate of biblical authority, particularly in the Korean Presbyterianism, but also in clarifying the discussion of them.

for an alternative epistemological ground, on which not only the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth can be reaffirmed but also doctrinal and hermeneutical dimensions can be reintegrated into talk of scriptural authority in a dynamic way.

Chapter 3 examines the pre-Enlightenment Reformation hermeneutics of the doctrine of Scripture by looking into John Calvin's view of scriptural authority. In particular, I explore some aspects of Calvin's idea of Scripture such as his epistemological concern for the *duplex cognitio*, the self-authenticating character of Scripture, the relationship between *testimonium Spiritus sancti* and *indicia*, and his hermeneutics of Scripture. Furthermore, I attempt to rehabilitate the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura*, in the light of which one can affirm not only the final authority of Scripture but also the necessity of the interpretive community. This chapter offers for our overall argument *both* a focal point of viewing Scripture as the living Word of God *and* a broader framework, which includes the epistemological starting point, the soteriological context, and the hermeneutical concern, from a Reformed perspective.

Chapter 4 sets forth a dogmatic-ontological account of scriptural authority from a trinitarian-pneumatological perspective. I relocate the place of the doctrine of Scripture into Christian doctrines, especially the doctrine of the triune God. On this base, I attempt to articulate the authority and function of Scripture in terms of the being and acting of the triune God in the economy of salvation, namely *the divine communicative-performative speech-act*. In addition, I consider valuable implications of metaphors of Scripture such as "the grand story" and "theo-drama," which are much more adequate and fruitful than the foundationalist metaphor of an edifice. The discussion of this chapter paves a way forwards bringing the hermeneutical dimension into talk of scriptural dimension.

Chapter 5 brings the hermeneutical discussion into our talk of scriptural authority. Based on the suggestion that the critical and central role of hermeneutics should be reconsidered in, and reintegrated into, the whole discussion of scriptural authority, I reshape and reassess the issue of scriptural authority from a hermeneutical perspective. Some illuminating insights and valuable implications drawn from contemporary

hermeneutics are appropriated in the threefold hermeneutical task: a hermeneutical art of removing interpretative idols, of facilitating ongoing life-engagement with Scripture, and of listening to other voice(s). By so doing, I attempt to reclaim the authority of Scripture in the light of hermeneutics.

Chapter 6 gives a general summary of the previous chapters and then restates the main argument by bringing the various threads of arguments, suggestions, and implications together.

CHAPTER 2

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STATUS OF SCRIPTURE AS THE TRUTH: AN ANALYSIS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES ON SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

For Christians, Scripture is nothing other than the Word of God and thus exerts the normative authority according to which not only Christian identity, life, and practice, but also theology and its assertions about God and God's relation to our world, are shaped and determined. The issue of scriptural authority relates to the reliability of Christians' knowledge of God they might gain from Scripture and the credibility of Christian faith *per se*. It thus inevitably involves epistemological reflection. Against this, the question of the authority of Scripture can be rephrased in this manner (Van Huyssteen 1997:125): "What is the epistemological status of Scripture in theological reflection?"

The issue of scriptural authority has been, for the last century, addressed mainly as the epistemological agenda, particularly 'within the context of claims of the crisis of scriptural authority' (Fiorenza 1990:353). Those claims of the crisis of scriptural authority arose from modern thought which intrinsically 'took shape in flight from authority' (Stout 1981:2-3) by radically breaking with the influence of that which had been considered authoritative and by giving priority to the self-consciousness and the autonomy of the individual. Against the modern crisis of authority, modern theologians have made a major effort, on the one hand, to defend the authority of scripture as an epistemological foundation for faith and truth, and, on the other hand, 'to divest

15

theology of authoritarian ways of thinking about God, the church — and Scripture'
(Migliore 2004:46). In an attempt to make particular responses to the crisis of scriptural
authority framed by the modernist milieu, theologians have drawn, explicitly or
implicitly, available concepts, forms of arguments, and worldviews from the field of
philosophy.[9]

The advent of postmodernism provides a different direction and changed trajectory for
talk of scriptural authority. To the extent that in the modern intellectual environment the
issue of scriptural authority is necessarily involved with modern epistemological
thought, so does the theological discourse about scriptural authority within the
contemporary postmodern cultural milieu. For this reason, as the Roman Catholic
theologian Francis Fiorenza (1990:353-355) rightly points out, the current theological
discussion of scriptural authority must analyse not only the crisis of Scripture, but also a
crisis of modernity or of modern Christianity. One cannot understand deeply the crisis
of scriptural authority without discerning its link with the broader philosophical crisis of
modernity which postmodernism signifies concerning realism, rationality, and so on.
Any attempt to address the crisis of scriptural authority is in inescapable need of taking
serious account of epistemology as the subtext of all academic disciplines. From this, it
seems reasonable that our discussion of scriptural authority begins 'on the agenda of the
epistemologist' — in terms of Wolterstorff (1995:15).

In this chapter, I intend to trace the philosophical assumptions behind the two different
views of scriptural authority: the Old Princeton theology and postliberal theology.[10]
While the former, which might be regarded as *the received view* of the Korean

---

[9] According to McGrath (1990:5), in the history of the Christian theology, there has been a tendency to
interpret the data of Scripture and the Christian tradition in the light of presuppositions within a
philosophical framework alien to their sources. Pointing out a 'temptation for every generation of
theologians to bring a cluster of inherited metaphysical commitments as self-evident' to theological
reflection, McGrath maintains that the engagement of the Christian tradition with an already existing view
of reality requires *critical refinement, remastering*, and *reappropriation.*

[10] This chapter is, in no sense, intended to give a comprehensive account of the Old Princeton theology
and postliberal theology. Comprehensive and detailed analysis and evaluation of both the Old Princeton
theology and postliberal theology have been made by numbers of scholars. Thus, to justify the reason of
inclusion in this relatively brief extent, this analysis needs to narrow the focus of its attention to certain
philosophical ideas concerning reality, language, truth, etc, which seem to make considerable impact
upon their views of the nature and authority of Scripture.

conservative Presbyterianism, represents a response to the agenda of modernity, the latter can be viewed as a response to the agenda of postmodernity. These two different accounts of scriptural authority have their own philosophical underpinnings that need to be carefully analysed and evaluated. For the sake of epistemological analysis, the two different views of scriptural authority are to be identified as a "scriptural foundationalist approach of the Old Princeton theology" and a "non-foundationalist approach of postliberal theology," respectively. The focus of analysis will be on philosophical-epistemological matters that impinge on each account of scriptural authority.

Through this analysis, I will attempt to reveal the basic epistemological models of thought that legitimise those two different ways of formulating their notions of scriptural authority. As a whole, the issue at stake of this chapter has to do with the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth. To speculate on this, I will look into several philosophically-antithetical categories: concerning the view of knowledge, epistemological foundationalism versus nonfoundationalism; concerning the view of truth, metaphysical realism versus antirealism; and concerning the view of language, propositionalism versus narrativism. Although none of these topics will receive an exhaustive treatment in this chapter, they will make an auxiliary contribution to our main argument by showing how those philosophical bases would play some parts in shaping different views of scriptural authority.

The central aim of this chapter is to chart the way out of the epistemological impasse and the way towards the reaffirmation of the truthfulness of Scripture as the living Word of God. Thus, what is at stake in this chapter is to seek a more adequate epistemological ground, on which a proper framework of systematic-theological articulation of scriptural authority can be set in a more adequate and constructive way. Furthermore, this chapter will offer a methodological proposal by which an epistemological reflection on scriptural authority must be made in a broader, holistic framework.

2.2 A FOUNDATIONALIST APPROACH OF THE OLD PRINCETON THEOLOGY

2.2.1 Modern Epistemological Foundationalism

Foundationalism is a theory about knowledge, about how human knowledge can be justified. From ancient to modern, one of the most important philosophical goals was to find absolutely firm foundations for human knowledge. In the field of epistemology, this classical model of rationality is known as "foundationalism." Foundationalism, in a broader sense, is a result of the philosophical acknowledgement of the obvious observation that not all beliefs are equal; some depend on others that are more "basic," "foundational."[11]

Rather than in this broad sense of foundationalism that can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, however, the so-called "classical" or "strong" foundationalism refers to a more peculiar epistemological stance, that is, the modern epistemological foundationalism or the Enlightenment foundationalism. Influenced deeply by the thought forms of the Enlightenment, the modern epistemology was in the vigorous pursuit of 'the discovery of an approach to knowledge that will provide rational human beings with absolute, incontestable certainty regarding the truthfulness of their beliefs' (Grenz & Franke 2001:23). At the heart of the Enlightenment was this specific understanding of the nature of human knowledge.

One can picture a well-demonstrative imagery from the metaphor of a building, which was used by René Descartes, the father of modern classical foundationalism, and afterward has frequently been used in conceiving the process of acquiring human knowledge throughout the modern era.[12] According to this metaphor, establishing a

---

[11] In philosophy, the definition of "foundationalism" is the subject of much debate. Scholars often differentiate between types of foundationalism, such as "classical", "soft," or "modest." For the purpose of our discussion, foundationalism means "classical" or "strong" foundationalism that is an attempt to seek self-justifying, self-evident propositions, claiming that 'the foundations of human knowledge must be unshakably certain' (Brown 1988:54; Wood 1998:85). For a variant of "soft" or "modest" foundationalism, see Wood (1998:98-104) and Brown (1988:54-70).

[12] For Descartes' use of this metaphor, see Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings* (1988).

system of knowledge is comparable to building an edifice. There being many components to construct a building such as beams, buttresses, wires, upper stories, and roof, the most essential and pivotal is its foundation for a sturdy edifice. Here is the hallmark of classical foundationalism, namely that a sure structure or system of knowledge can be built only on the unshakable solid foundations. What counts as basic, foundational beliefs must be strictly restricted to *indubitable, incorrigible,* or *incontestable* propositions and accordingly those propositions could be characterised as *universal, completely objective, a-historical, context-free*, and *available to any rational person*.

Modern philosophers strenuously set out to find those self-justifying, self-evident foundations that would guarantee epistemological certainty. For example, Descartes sought for the foundation of all knowledge in the indubitable existence of the self, as is shown in his famous phrase *cogito ergo sum*. John Locke, differing from Descartes' concept of innate ideas in the mind, claimed that certainty could be obtained only by sense experience caused by the material world. However different the ideas of modern foundationalist may be in the contents of their theories of knowledge, one convergent point is the claim that 'knowledge is grounded in a set of non-inferential, self-evident beliefs which, because their intelligibility is not constituted by a relationship with other beliefs, can serve as the source of intelligibility for all beliefs in a conceptual framework' (Thiemann 1985:159). Alvin Plantinga (1983:72) summarises the classical foundational ideas in three theses: '(1) In every rational noetic structure there is a set of beliefs taken as basic — that is, not accepted on the basis of any other beliefs, (2) In a rational noetic structure nonbasic belief is proportional to support from the foundations, and (3) In a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses.' This noticeable feature of modern classical foundationalism demands that 'the foundations of human knowledge must be unshakably certain and that the only way this certainty is transferred to non-basic beliefs is by the ordinary logical relations of deduction or induction' (Wood 1998:85). In other words, for any belief to be taken as knowledge, it must be either "foundational" propositions that are self-evident, or one which is derived from, or supported, by those foundational propositions (Van Hook

1981:12). The "basic" and "immediate" beliefs function as the epistemic givens or foundations of all other mediately justified beliefs.

As we shall see below, this modern foundationalist idea of knowledge had a profound impact, by its challenge to the rationality of Christian belief in God, on the development of modern theology. In response, modern theologians, who most commonly employed a foundationalist method as an epistemological model, struggled to reformulate the theological structure in accordance with the modern epistemological foundationalism.

2.2.2 The Old Princeton Theology as a Foundationalist Theology

Against above-mentioned modern epistemological background emerged nineteenth-century foundationalist theology, which sought for responding to Enlightenment foundationalism and for providing the proper foundation for theology. Committed to the foundationalist agenda, namely the quest for epistemological certainty, nineteenth-century foundational theologies attempted to lay 'a new bedrock on which to construct the theological house' (Grenz & Franke 2001:33). These attempts developed into two different directions. On the one hand, Friedrich Schleiermacher and classical Protestant liberalism tried to find a firm foundation on *human awareness of absolute dependence* or *the experience of God consciousness* as a universal feature of human life. On the other hand, conservatives such as Charles Hodge developed a foundationalist theological method that appealed to an inerrant Bible as the universal, incontrovertible foundation for their theology (Grenz & Franke 2001:23).

In her book *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism,* Nancey Murphy (1996:11-35), professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, provides an explicit explanation of the bifurcation of modern theology from an epistemological viewpoint. According to Murphy, foundationalism cast a challenging epistemological question to theologians: "What might provide the unshakable foundation for theology?" or "What ought to be an indubitable starting point for theology?" The intense debate about how to answer that question provided only two basic options: *Scripture* or *experience*. Theologians who employed the foundationalist approach were forced to formulate their

theology on the firm foundation that must be universal and immune from any challenge. Driven by this logic, liberals, on the one hand, attempted to show that all legitimate doctrines are derivable from the universal human religious experience, and conservatives, on the other hand, struggled to lay the invulnerable foundation through an inerrantist account of biblical truth. This 'forced option,' argues Murphy (1996:12), has been one cause of the split between liberals and conservatives.

Since our present purpose is merely to note how foundationalism considerably influenced the Old Princeton theology in its articulation of scriptural authority, it seems not really necessary to mention further modern liberal foundationalist theology. Instead, we are to keep up with one path of bifurcation, that is, conservative foundationalist theology.

Committed to a form of foundationalist approach, the Old Princeton theologians such as Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield bestowed the indubitable foundationalist status to the Bible. This point is clearly presented in the introduction of Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1871:11):

> [T]he duty of the Christian theologian is to ascertain, collect, and combine all the facts which God has revealed concerning himself and our relation to Him. These facts are all in the Bible. It may be admitted that the truths which the theologian has to reduce to a science, or, to speak more humbly, which he has to arrange and harmonize, are revealed partly in the external works of God, partly in the constitution of our nature, and partly in the religious experience of believers; yet lest we should err in our inferences from the works of God, we have a clearer revelation of all that nature reveals, in his word…everything that can be legitimately learned from that source will be found recognized and authenticated in the Scriptures…we find in the Bible the norm and standard of all genuine religious experience.

Any construction of theology as eternal, timeless truths must be proved, recognised, or legitimated in the Bible as *the* foundation. Straight out of the Bible, Hodge argues convincingly, could theologians deduce foundational propositions. His foundationalist

idea is revealed explicitly in his saying that '[k]nowledge is the persuasion of what is true on adequate evidence' and that 'self-evidence is included in universality and necessity, in so far, that nothing which is not self-evident can be universally believed' (Hodge 1871:1,11). For Hodge the one and only foundation for theology that guarantees universal truths can be sought in nothing other than Scripture. In this manner, he affirms *the foundationalist status of the Bible*.[13]

At this point, one needs to pay particular attention to a theological method that Hodge employs in constructing the theological edifice systematically. Hodge draws an analogy between theology and natural science as follows (1871:10): 'The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his store-house of fact; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches, is the same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches.' By viewing the theological discipline as a science, Hodge (1871:18) asserts that the task of theology is 'to systematize the facts of the Bible, and ascertain the principles or general truths which those facts involve.' Accordingly, by adopting the inductive methods of Baconian science, [14] in which the proper function of science was described typically as "taxonomical," the Old Princeton theologians were engaged in the attempt to build the integrated system of theological construction in such a way as to collect, arrange, and organise the factual, propositional statements in the Bible (Rogers & McKim 1979:292; Marsden 2006:112).[15]

To conclude: the foundationalism of Hodge and other nineteenth-century conservatives set the paradigm of fundamentalist and conservative evangelical theology through most of the twentieth century in America, and also in other countries under their theological

---

[13] The Old Princetonian theologians made every effort to buttress firmly the special foundationalist status of the Bible by the notion of the plenary, verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture.

[14] During the first half of the nineteenth century in America, Baconianism was a dominant philosophy in almost all areas of the intellectual disciplines including literature, science, philosophy, religion, law, and so on. Under this overriding influence of Baconianism, Hodge upheld the validity of sense perception and wholeheartedly endorsed the naive inductive method of Baconianism for a proper theological method (Rogers & McKim 1979:243-244,289-295). For a detailed account of the role of Baconianism in nineteenth-century American ethos of culture and religion, see Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (1977).

[15] This rationalist approach to theological method has decidedly typified conservative-evangelical theology. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

influence — including Korea. Within this dominant paradigm for conservative or fundamental theology, the task and method of theology comes to be characterised by *a commitment to the Bible as the only source of information for systematic theology,* or, in epistemological terms, *as the foundation of theology*. From this scriptural foundationalist perspective, the legitimate direction of reasoning is, whether induction or deduction, 'from the scriptural foundation to the higher levels of doctrine and theology' and not *vice versa* (Murphy 1996:17).

2.2.3 The Old Princeton Theology's View of Truth in its Alliance with Scottish Common Sense Realism

One remarkable characteristic of modern epistemological foundationalism is its staunch commitment to a certain form of metaphysical realism. The Princeton theology was also committed to the traditional Western view of truth, the so-called "metaphysical realism," which claims that there is a world of objective reality "out there," independent of our representation or conception of the phenomena of that world, and that there is a determinate nature or essence that we can know (Hensley 1996:70). This point would be made explicit with an account of the Princetonian alliance with the so-called Common Sense Realism.

2.2.3.1 Common Sense Realism

The Scottish philosophy of Common Sense was formed as an attempt to respond to and overcome the metaphysical scepticism of the Enlightenment, which in particular was developed by the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776).[16] Hume's scepticism provoked Thomas Reid (1710-1796), the principal formulator and progenitor of Common Sense Realism,[17] to strive to formulate a theory with which a basis of our

---

[16] Hume's scepticism arose from a doubt about whether the ideas imprinted on the mind by the senses corresponded to objects. He denied any epistemic power of mind, by arguing that reason can never show us the connexion of one object with another. According to Hume's approach, knowledge of matters of fact comes to be impossible, and the certainty of scientific inquiry seems to be degraded into mere probability and ultimately into scepticism.

[17] In addition to this term, there are a variety of designations such as "Scottish Realism," "Natural Realism," "Common Sense Philosophy," "Scottish Empiricism," and "Inconsistent Empiricism."

certainty about our knowledge could be re-established. Reid criticised Hume's rejection of the objective reality of external objects in his *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. According to Reid, the real existence of external objects is perceived by the human mind through "common sense." The view of Reid embodied a typical foundational assumption that all true knowledge must rely on "first principles," — or "basic beliefs," in terms of foundationalism. From this he asserted the validity of the first principles as follows: 'all mankind have a fixed belief of an external material world, a belief which is neither got by reasoning nor education, and a belief which we cannot shake off, even when we seem to have strong arguments against it, and no shadow of argument for it, is likewise a fact, for which we have all the evidence that the nature of the thing admits' (Reid 1997:76). In other words, first principles are not established by argument, but immediately by "common sense." These first principles of common sense reaffirmed the ability of the human mind to perceive the external reality immediately and truly, which was once denied by Hume. In this sense, Reid's genius, says Jay Wood (1998:99), 'lay in claiming that we are epistemically entitled to these first principles without having to supply inferential justification of their behalf.'

As some theologians (e g Ahlstrom 1955) illustrate judiciously, Common Sense Realism had a dominant influence over the whole field of American theology including the Princeton theology, like other area of disciplines in the mid-nineteenth-century America.[18] It is not a direct concern of this chapter to answer the question about "to what extent the Princeton theology adopted this Scottish philosophy," which is still controversial amongst theologians.[19] Our present aim is, as we shall see below, to

---

[18] Since Yale university historian Sydney Ahlstrom wrote on this topic in his seminal, yet astute, essay *The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology* in 1955, the correlation of the Princeton theology with Common Sense Realism has been proposed more concretely. For more detailed accounts of this, see Sandeen (1970:114-131); Bozemann (1977); Vander Stelt (1978); Rogers & McKim (1979:235-247,289-298); Marsden (2006:14-16,109-118).

[19] For example, according to Ahlstrom (1955:266-269), the Princeton theology was deeply engaged in the optimistic anthropology of Scottish Philosophy at the cost of 'the Reformation bearings' such as 'the fervent theocentricity of Calvin,' according to which the human mind was blinded to know God's truth clearly, due to their total depravity. Ahlstrom concluded that the reliance on Scottish Realism led to the separation of the Princeton theology from the Calvinist tradition and from the most dynamic element of the Reformed tradition. In accordance with and taking a step further from Ahlstrom's thesis, Sandeen contended that the Princetonians' innovation of the inerrancy of the Bible was ascribable to Common Sense Realism. However, in spite of the obvious fact that the Common Sense tradition had a wide impact on the Princeton mind, it must not be exaggerated in such a way as to make all explanation of the

examine how the Princeton theology's view of truth and of reality, which can be understood more fully in the light of Common Sense Realism, came to shape its notion of scriptural authority.

The real issue at stake in the claims of Common Sense Realism was, as Hart (1984:6) points out cogently, not empiricism itself, but rather to defend implicitly 'the idea of objective truth' and to affirm explicitly human's ability to know and understand those objective truths. For the Princetonian theologians, Common Sense epistemology shared much common ground with their view of truth — the corresponding theory of truth — and with their model of rationality — metaphysical realism.

2.2.3.2 The Correspondence Theory of Truth

In accordance with Common Sense Realism, the Old Princeton theologians viewed truth as "closed." To be specific, for the Old Princetonians, theological truth had been discovered by the sixteenth-century Reformers and been given its fullest expression by the seventeenth-century Reformed scholastics. They unyieldingly resisted any sort of theological innovation that might veil the truths of the Reformation tradition. To be sure, the Princetonians and their successors have a *resistant*, rather than an *accommodative*, tendency towards any effort for theological renewal (Oden 1998:45). As is shown in its commitment to the seventeenth-century scholasticism of Francis Turretin and its loyalty to the Westminster standards, the Old Princeton theology assumed that one theological perspective was to be absolutized and accepted as the only truth and biblical perspective (Van Huyssteen 1987:19). The Princetonians' view of truth can be linked particularly with *the correspondence theory of truth*, which has been the most prevalent theory of

---

Princeton theology 'in monocausational terms' and as a result to conclude that the Princeton theology was 'paradigmatically determined by any single undergirding philosophy' (Carson 1986:15-17). The church historian of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, John Woodbridge, also points out that it may be a 'reductionistic hypothesis' to attempt for analysing the Old Princeton theology merely in terms of the impact of Common Sense Realism without considering the broader evangelical context. The extent to which the Old Princeton theology and its descendent, American conservative-evangelicalism have been determined by Common Sense Realism remains to be explored further. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the Princeton theology, at certain points and to a certain degree, has accommodated its systematic theological prolegomena to Common Sense Realism.

truth throughout the history of Western culture — from Aristotle to the earlier Wittgenstein.[20]

According to the correspondence theory of truth, whether a statement is true or not depends on its correspondence with the state of affairs that it describes. The truth is neither an entity nor a property of statements, but a relationship between *word* and *world*. By accepting the implication of the correspondence theory, the Old Princeton theology held that the propositional statements of the Bible, in order to be the universal truth, must be in congruity with outward reality in its *factuality* and *accuracy*.

From this standpoint, the Old Princeton theology underlined the importance of "the factual and scientific character of the Bible." Hodge (1871:1) makes the point explicit: 'The Bible is no more a system of theology, than nature is a system of chemistry or of mechanics.' The Bible as "the store-house of fact" contains factual information about God and history; the Bible as a reality is a "closed" reality, in which just as scientists systematise the "empirical data" with the scientific inductive method, so must theologians. To find the truth in the Bible is 'essentially an objective process of discovering the "facts"' (Marsden 1983:243). Moreover, from the viewpoint of the correspondence theory, the Old Princeton theology viewed the biblical text as a "closed reality" and thus moved directly from the biblical texts as such to doctrine. In this view, the reader of the Bible is assumed capable of direct contact with the biblical realities through the interpretation of it. In so doing, the Old Princeton theology's view is prone to disregard the critical value of hermeneutics.

Based on this view of truth, the Old Princeton theologians developed their account of the authority and interpretation of Scripture, in particular by means of the notion of the inerrancy of the Bible. The correspondence view of truth was employed, at least indirectly or implicitly, for solving the epistemological issue — the confirmation of the Bible's inerrancy. In a strictly logical sense, there is a distinction between the ontological question of theories of truth — "what it means to say of any statement that it

---

[20] For a helpful summary of various theory of truth in modern philosophy with reference to the theological discussion, see Thiselton (1982:121).

is true" — and an epistemological question — "whether any specific statement is true or false" (Feinberg 1984b:4-5). However, in the modern tendency to correlate strongly epistemological foundationalism with metaphysical realism, the latter came to be used as undergirding the former. This seems to be the case with the Old Princeton theology.

2.2.3.3 Evidentialist Apologetics

As a corollary of the acceptance of Common Sense epistemology allied with the presumed validity of metaphysical realism and the correspondence theory of truth, the Old Princeton theologians assume that theology is a scientific discipline. Considering theology as a science indicates a certain theological method. Just as the natural scientist brings to light the facts and the laws of nature, so the theologian discovers the facts and the principles of the Bible (Hodge 1871:18). Identifying theological epistemology with Reid's scientific epistemology, the Old Princeton theologians hold fast to 'the scientific inductive method as applied to the natural sciences' (Hart 1984:6). In a more distinctive sense which Warfield (1970:II/210,219) says in his article *Theology a Science*, 'theology is the science of God,' the end of which is the knowledge of God; especially, the scientific character of theology culminates in systematic theology, which is by eminence the scientific theological discipline.

This confidence of theology as a true science inevitably demands "apologetics," the task of which is to establish the basis of theology. This point can be made explicit when understood in the context of 'the evidentialist challenge to religious belief' aroused out of the Enlightenment, according to which '[n]o religion is acceptable unless rational, and no religion is rational unless supported by evidence' (Wolterstorff 1983b:6). In response to this challenge, the Princetonians entrust apologetics with the most important task of all the theological disciplines, that is, defending the Christian faith by providing the evidence for Christianity that the challenge requires. Hodge (1871:53) writes: 'That as faith involves assent, and assent is conviction produced by evidence, it follows that *faith without evidence is either irrational or impossible*' [italics mine]. Particular attention to apologetic theology in the Princeton theology is given by Warfield. For him, 'apologetics stood "at the head of the departments of theological science"' (Rogers &

27

McKim 1979:328). As the most fundamental activity for theologians, the task of apologetics is not the defence of Christianity, but rather the establishment of the knowledge of God. Thus, Christianity is, says Warfield (1970:213), an *apologetic* religion or reasoning religion, the task of which is 'to *reason* the world into acceptance of the "truth."'

The Reformed epistemologist Nicholas Wolterstorff assiduously maintains that evidentialist apologetics are peculiar to modernity. Until the modern era, says Wolterstorff (1983a:137), 'Christian apologetics consisted mainly, not in giving or defending arguments *for* Christianity, but rather in answering objections *to* Christianity' [Wolterstorff's italics]. When seeking to respond to and cope with the evidentialist challenge by meeting it, or to show that it has already been met, however, practicing evidentialist apologetics became necessary and relevant to the apologist's endeavour. As we have noted, the Old Princeton theology embraced foundationalist epistemology influenced by Common Sense Realism and scientific inductive method, and in so doing it attempted to carry out evidentialist apologetics, in which the results of modern science might be seen as additional evidence for the theistic argument.

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the full confidence in science that objective scientific inquiry could confirm the authenticity of biblical truth was confronted with significant change.[21] With the rise of so-called higher biblical criticism and theological accommodation of liberals to culture, the thought of modernity that had a tendency to reject supernatural claims of Christianity and the historical accuracy of the Bible, appeared to permeate into Protestant denominations. Facing this threat of modernism provoking the crisis of biblical authority and thereby of Christianity itself, the response of Christianity divided into several positions ranged in a

---

[21] For an excellent account of the accommodation of American Protestantism to science, see James Ward Smith (1978:894-902). According to Smith, during the period of the first scientific revolution caused by Newton, there was no conflict between religion and science, and the American Protestantism reconciled science with Christianity by the method of addition. With the rise of the second scientific revolution associated with Darwinism, however, the prestige of the positive scientific methodology that had been lending support to Christianity before was suddenly changed into the notoriety of formidable foe assaulting against Christianity with the supposedly neutral scientific methodology. To put it simply, Smith's thesis is that the "superficial" accommodation to science disabled the American Protestantism to effectively defence when the previous ally proved to be a heavily armed foe.

whole spectrum. Put the matter at its simplest way, pure liberals, at the one extreme stance, might try to accommodate Christianity to modern thought through revisioning or reinterpreting it; pure fundamentals, at the opposite extreme stance, might immunize an old tradition from any modern influence. In reality, most standpoints were taken up between two extremes and attempted to reconcile Christian faith with modern intellectual trends in their own way. A peculiar strategy of middle position was 'to grant the authority of the new science and history, but to emphasize that this authority was limited to certain secular domains' (Marsden 1983:222). In this position, much weight of apologetic was laid on the point that Christianity went far beyond that which scientific reason could reach; Christianity thus could still be true and legitimate even though the Bible might be, scientifically or historically, inaccurate.

The Old Princetonians, however, rejected this subjectivism of an alternative approach since in their thought this form of anti-intellectualism or subjectivism would eventually undermine *the objectivity of biblical truth*. This point is made clear by understanding Princeton's rationalist approach to faith and reason. For the Old Princeton theology, reason must play a pivotal role in the task of apologetics to support the Christian faith because 'reason is necessarily presupposed in every revelation' and 'reason must judge of the evidence by which a revelation is supported' (Hodge 1871:49,53). It is not to say that Christian faith must be based on reason; rather, reason is essential to faith only in the sense that understanding is necessary to apprehend the truth before one believes it and hence *intelligo ut credam* — "I understand in order to believe."[22] Just as Scriptural truth cannot contradict philosophical, scientific truth, so faith cannot contradict reason. Truth supported by reason will reinforce, rather than undercut, the commitment of faith. At least in this sense, the Old Princeton's rationalist approach has to do with its intention to defend the authenticity of the Bible, specifically, the objectivity of its truth-claims.

---

[22] For this reason, Donald Bloesch (1961), in his presentation of a typology of theological method, classifies the Old Princeton theologians into the rationalist group, which claims *intelligo ut credam* ("I understand in order to believe") or *credo quia intelligo* ("I believe because I understand"). For a full description of five types of theological method, see Bloesch (1994:80).

2.2.4 A Propositionalist View of Language

Given the intimate association between theories of knowledge and theories of language,[23] two kinds of modern language theories are to be matched up with two different foundationalisms. While experiential foundationalism of liberal theology is strongly correlated with an expressivist theory of religious language, scriptural foundationalism of conservative theology is associated with a propositional theory of language. George Lindbeck, in his influential book *The Nature of Doctrine*, provides a significant insight for the discussion of theological theories of religious language.

According to Lindbeck's taxonomy, theological theories about doctrine and the nature of religions can be divided into three types: "cognitive-propositional," "experiential-expressive," and his alternative "cultural-linguistic" approach. The first category is of our concern here. Lindbeck (1984:16) describes a cognitive-propositional approach as follows:

> One of these emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities. Religions are thus thought of as similar to philosophy or science as these were classically conceived. This was the approach of traditional orthodoxies…but it also has certain affinities to the outlook on religion adopted by much modern Anglo-American analytic philosophy with its preoccupation with the cognitive or informational meaningfulness of religious utterances.

---

[23] In the early twentieth century, "the turn to epistemology," which marked the previous modern ear, gave way to "the turn to language." Philosophers came to acknowledge that epistemological question about "how we can *know* what it is" could be best addressed by answering a linguistic-philosophical question: "What do we *mean* when we say that we know something?" or "How does language get its meaning?" The modern linguistic philosophical response to this question entails the two options. The first predominant one is the so-called "referential/representative" theory, according to which languages obtain their meaning from the fact or states of affairs they designate. The second one is the so-called "expressivist/emotivist" theory, according to which the meaning of language has anything to do with its function to express the emotions, attitudes, or intentions of the speaker. On this theme, see Rorty (ed), *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (1967).

To the contrast with the "experiential-expressive" perspective from which doctrines are to be seen as 'noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations' (Lindbeck 1984:16), propositionalism claims that doctrines are first of all truth claims about objective realities. In this view, 'the primary function of religious language is to describe God and God's relation to the world and to humankind' (Murphy 1996:43). According to Lindbeck's observation, a propositional approach tends to conform to religion adopted by most Anglo-American analytic philosophers, who typically assume that religious language is meaningful only if it makes universally valid utterances about matters of fact in the propositional form.

Without doubt, the Old Princeton theology belongs to this cognitive-propositional tradition. In this regard, we need to remember that Common Sense Realist confidence in language infiltrates into the Princeton theology's view of religious language. Common Sense Realism considers language as a truthful tool to communicate the real world. The word corresponds to the object it signifies as much as the mind perceives directly the world; language is as reliable a description of the actual world as the human mind is a perception of a fact. From the viewpoint of propositionalism, language is essentially a matter of describing states of affairs. The emphasis is not on the *adequacy*, but on the *accuracy* or *factuality* — the power of language to communicate objective truth.

In accordance with this "cognitive-propositional" view of religious language, the Old Princeton theologians — most remarkably Benjamin B Warfield — and their successors, conservative-evangelicals, set forth the notion of propositional revelation, maintaining that revelation makes truth claims with cognitive content 'in propositional-verbal form' (Henry 1976:87).[24] For them, the essence of revelation must be seen in terms of a set of universal-timeless propositions and information conveyed through the Bible. The primary purpose of biblical language as a descriptive language is basically to disclose reality in general, and to refer to God — His will, actions, and intentions — in particular.

---

[24] For example, this propositional view of revelation was vigorously promulgated by organisation such as ICBI (The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy). Article VI in *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1967) put forward by ICBI as a major statement of evangelicals on this issue, read as follows: 'WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.'

For that purpose, the mode of textual reference must be 'univocal', not 'equivocal' (Hunsinger 2003:46).

Seen from our concern with the authority of Scripture, different views of the nature of language would have significantly different bearings on the question of inerrancy and propositional revelation. The Princeton position is based on an appeal to the adequacy of human language to speak of God. This positive view is obviously supported by Common Sense Realism's view of language. However, there is a more important *theological* claim that, with the sovereign dispensation of God, 'language offers no resistance to his purpose and cannot frustrate his desire to communicate' (Poythress 1984:352). In contrast, Neo-orthodoxy argues that human language is in some sense inadequate to talk about God. There is a complete antithesis between divinity and humanity, between the infinite God and the finite human language. Karl Barth considers 'human language as unfit to bear God's revelation because of God's radical transcendence and the finitude of human language' (Feinberg 1984a:385). Based on a more radical discontinuity between God and humanity, Barth thus maintains that the Bible is no more than a witness to God's revelation. It is no wonder that the Old Princeton theologians deemed Neo-orthodoxy's claim about the inadequacy of language to be undermining biblical authority.

A propositionalist view has a tendency to read every biblical text as if it were a proposition that corresponds to a certain metaphysical or historical state of affairs. The so-called grammatico-historical method of exegesis, which assumes that the language of biblical authors exactly corresponds to what the writers saw or experienced, is based largely on the cognitive-propositional view of biblical language. For that reason, to the extent that theological reflection turns to be nothing other than summaries of exegetical data or statements about propositions, a propositional reading of the Bible might appear to be a 'proof-texting method' (Vanhoozer 2005:271). To put it differently, Hodge's definition of theologian's task as arranging scientifically the various biblical facts for any given topic plays a crucial role in shaping a theological method in conservative-evangelical theology, namely 'to move rather straightforwardly from the Bible as "propositional revelation" to doctrine in conceptual form' (Treier 2005).

2.2.5 The Old Princeton Theology's View of Scriptural Authority

2.2.5.1 Warfield's Account of Scriptural Authority[25]

As we have seen above, the Princeton theology begins with the modern epistemological concept of authority and then attempts to articulate whether the Bible has that kind of authority, that is, "objective authority as a foundation." The Princetonians' attempt to secure biblical authority as the epistemological foundation is made particularly in association with their notion of plenary-verbal inspiration and inerrancy. According to the logic of the notion of inerrancy, if the Bible were not inerrant, believers would either not know whether anything in the Bible were true or else they would have to have some way of discerning what is true and what is not true. In other words, Christian faith needs the Scriptures as an infallible external authority. Without such an "external authority" as a thoroughly trustworthy Bible, says Warfield, 'the soul is left without sure ground for a proper knowledge of itself, its condition, and its need, or for a proper knowledge of God's provisions of mercy for it and his promises of grace to it, — without sure ground, in a word, for its faith and hope' (quoted by Van den Belt 2008:188).

A classic account of the conservative-evangelical doctrine of Scripture was given by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, often-called "the great Princetonian defender of the inerrancy of Scripture against liberal attacks." In our discussion, Warfield is a representative figure who obstinately maintains the objective approach to the authority of Scripture, underscoring the epistemological status of the Bible and evidentialist apologetics. In his article entitled *Inspiration* that was co-authored with A A Hodge, Warfield ([1881] 1979:26-27) endorsed the doctrine of inspiration in this manner: '[T]he Scriptures not only contain, but *are, the word of God*, and hence that all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless and binding the faith and obedience of men' [Warfield's italics]. Although the terms "inerrant" and "inerrancy" are reserved for the original autographs of Scripture and instead the terms "errorless" and "without error" are repeatedly used, the purport of this article is clear: 'to make it clear that the superintendence of God in Scripture guarantees the errorless infallibility of

---

[25] For a helpful analysis of Warfield's view of scriptural authority, see Van den Belt (2008:179-228).

all scriptural affirmation,' to cite Roger Nicole's phrase (Hodge & Warfield [1881] 1979:xiv). In other words, Scripture as "oracles of God" is to be permanently identical with the Word of God. If Scripture is the Word of God, then Scripture is errorless because God, the ultimate Author of Scripture, cannot lie. Scripture's identification with the Word of God makes it impossible that inspiration and error coexist.[26]

Warfield also advocates the notion of "plenary" and "verbal" inspiration, which claims that the whole of Scripture, nothing excluded, is inspired and that inspiration 'extended to the verbal expression of the thought of the sacred writers, as well as to the thoughts themselves' (Hodge & Warfield [1881] 1979:19). The doctrine of plenary-verbal inspiration and the notion of inerrancy serve as the grounds for Warfield's attempt to defend the objective authority of Scripture and to secure the objective basis of the Christian faith. Warfield's main concern is to safeguard the supernatural — thereby absolutely objective — of Scripture against any alternative weakening that feature. For Warfield, any looser or lower view must be rejected in that it eventually would tilt towards a subjective approach to the authority of Scripture.

This point comes to light more clearly when taking note of Warfield's apologetic reading of Calvin. According to the Dutch Reformed theologian Henk van den Belt (2008:211-214), Warfield interprets Calvin in his own context, that is, 'along the lines of the subject-object dichotomy.' Whilst Calvin, in the doctrine of the *testimonium*, was not dealing with the rational evidence of the divine origin of Scripture, for Warfield, the *testimonium* of the Spirit cannot be spoken of apart from evidences; the *testimonium* is not sufficient apart from the *indicia*. With this, argues Van den Belt (:214), Warfield 'unites what Calvin separated: the evidences for the unbelievers and the *testimonium* for believers.' From Warfield's standpoint of evidentialist apologetics, for Scripture to be proved self-authenticating, the evidences are fundamental and the *testimonium* is additional (:217). It may be said that Warfield's approach is a reverse of Calvin, for whom *testimonium* has a priority over evidences. In this connection, Van den Belt (:219)

---

[26] As the Wheaton college church historian Mark Noll (1982) points out, Warfield's view has continually influenced the shaping of evangelical conviction about the Bible — that the Bible is the very Word of God in a cognitive, propositional, factual sense.

rightly points out that this modified reading of Calvin is due to Warfield's apologetic context, in which, under the growing influence of Schleiermacher in America, the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit was misinterpreted 'in the interests of a merely subjective grounding of the authority of the Scriptures.' Against this background, Warfield articulated his notion of scriptural authority in such a way as to avoid the slippery slope of subjectivism.

In addition, Warfield's priority of the objective authority of Scripture over the subjective certainty drives him to place the doctrine of Scripture in the apologetic introduction to theology. For him, the prolegomena is foundational for theology as a science and thus lays the cornerstone on which theology can be built. Accordingly, for Warfield, the locus of scriptural authority must be in apologetics.

In a word, one can say justifiably that Warfield struggled to defend the objectivity of the Christian faith against the subjectivistic tendency of modernism. However, in the process of and for the purpose of the rejection of subjectivism, Warfield drew a sharp distinction between external and internal authority and then gave one-sided privilege to the external, objective authority of Scripture at the expense of the other.

2.2.5.2 An Objective-Ontological Approach to Scriptural Authority

As noted above, Warfield's view of scriptural authority is rightly to be described as an objective approach. This objective authority is closely connected with the "ontological" authority on account that for the Princeton theology the objectivity of Scripture stems from the divine inspiration and, as a corollary of that, biblical truth conforms completely with historical, factual truth. That Scripture has the ontological authority means that the authority of Scripture can be affirmed *objectively* without our acknowledgement or perception.

A noteworthy philosophical idea underlying this ontological approach is, as Vander Stelt (1978:271) rightly observes, "ontological dualism."[27] From the perspective of ontological dualism, the Creator-creature relationship is explained in terms of "First Cause and secondary cause." While the realm of the Creator is supernatural, the realm of creature is natural. These two worlds are distinct, yet related. The Old Princeton's view of truth and Scripture is permeated by this dualist ontology — the two-realm theory of the natural and supernatural world. Vander Stelt speaks of this dualistic ontology's influence on Princeton's view of scriptural authority as follows (:284):

> To avoid the danger of naturalism and implied subjectivism, Princeton theologians had recourse to the supernatural. In opposition to the appeal of liberals to man's subjective experience, Princeton accentuated the noetically objective dimension of revelation. In reaction to those who tended to lean on internal authority, it placed more and more emphasis on the need for an external authority. That is, Princeton ascribed priority to whatever is noetically objective and rationally real.

Warfield's emphasis on the objective authority can be understood to some extent in relation to ontological dualism. By projecting the epistemological distinction between the subjective and the objective onto the ontological difference between the natural and the supernatural, Warfield gives his full theological weight to the objective aspect of scriptural authority as the real source of certainty. Only in the supernatural and objective Bible can the infallible basis for all subjective, finite, and naturally limited knowledge be found. In such a way as to ascribe to the biblical texts properties that are proper to

---

[27] The legacy of dualism in Western Christian theology is too complex to trace its effect comprehensively. To put it at its simplest way, dualism grants inherent ontological status to the spiritually-antithetical aspects, activities, or realms of life: the sensible and intelligible realms, history and eternity, faith and reason, grace and nature, and so on. From the viewpoint of dualism, some parts of life (the so-called secular realm) is conceived of as innately evil and some parts of life (the so-called sacred realm) inherently good, and thus those realms cannot be united in a holistic way, but rather stand in opposition to each other. Consequently, ontological dualism comes to deny any capacity of creaturely forms of the secular realm — such as human language, activity, and institution — to point to the divine presence and activity of the transcendent God. The American Reformed theologian Gordon Spykman (1992:68) pinpoints the detriment of dualism to Christian mind as follows: 'All such dualisms make it impossible to do justice to the biblical message of creation/fall/redemption as holist realities. For they disrupt the unity of the creation order. They legitimatize the reality of sin in one or another realm of life. They limit the cosmic impact of the biblical message of redemption. They confine Christian witness to only certain limited sectors of life.'

God, the Princetonians' view of Scripture removes the biblical texts from the realm of natural and contingent history.

The Old Princeton theology attaches the ontological status to Scripture to the extent that Scripture is identified with God. In his well-known article entitled *"It Says;" "Scripture Says:" "God Says,"* Warfield (1948:348) asserts that 'under the force of their conception of the Scriptures as an oracular book,' the New Testament writers assumed a 'double identification of Scripture with God and God with Scripture.' For Warfield, the question of authority is primarily an issue of being and truth, that is, of ontology; only secondarily, of function and effect (Thiselton 1994:110). From what we have seen so far, an outstanding characteristic of the Princetonians' view of scriptural authority comes to be clear: *an intimate relation between ontological objectivity and epistemological objectivity*.[28]

The Princetonians' stance is in marked contrast to Barth's. For Barth (*CD* I/2, 527), 'To say "the Word of God" is to say the Word of *God*.' It is fundamentally 'about a being and event which are not under human control or foresight,' and hence *ontological*. Ontological objectivity, which exists independently of human recognition or acceptance, should be accredited only to God in a manner to do justice to the sovereign freedom of God. Barth believes that any view of revelation that identifies it with the Bible compromises the sovereign freedom of God, and thus rules out any possibility of the Bible being God's revelation. While the Princetonians endow the status of ontological objectivity to the Bible, Barth grants the Bible merely the status of a *witness* to the Word of God. As normally defined as Barth's position, the Bible *becomes* the Word of God in our existential encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. In his view, the Bible is not in any ontological-objective sense the Word of God; its uniqueness lies in the fact that it alone has the capacity to become the Word of God. In this regard, Paul Helm (1982:40) correctly points out that Barth is *'ontologically objective but epistemically*

---

[28] Paul Helm (1991:6) provides a helpful explanation of the difference between *ontological* objectivity and *epistemic* objectivity. He says: 'We shall say that something is *ontologically objective* [italics mine] if its existence depends in no way upon the state of mind of a human observer or knower….We shall say a particular object is *epistemically objective* [italics mine] if what is known by one person about that object can be remembered and communicated to others for them to know.'

subjective with respect to special revelation' [italics mine]. On the one hand, what is revealed exists objectively, that is, independent of any observer's state; on the other hand, '[s]pecially revealed knowledge of God is not something that is static, given once and for all and therefore capable of being remembered and communicated to others' (Helm 1982:40). It is not surprising at all that the Princetonians and their successors are vehemently in opposition to Barth's claim because, they believe, it would open the door wide to the danger of subjectivism. Inasmuch as Barth's view may deny the epistemologically-objective status of the Bible, there seems little room for any consonance between the Princetonians' and Barth's view.

2.2.5.3 The Dichotomy between the Objective-Ontological and the Subjective-Functional Authority

From what we have noted above, one can identify a key element that has a significant influence upon the shaping of Princeton's approach to scriptural authority: *the dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism*, a misleading legacy of modern epistemology.

Postmodern philosopher Richard Bernstein provides a helpful insight for this matter by drawing attention to a dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism — in his terms, relativism. By Bernstein's definition (1983:8), objectivism is 'the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.' Objectivism is usually tied to classical foundationalism, which, as we have already noted, seeks for certain self-evident, incorrigible, and universal foundation upon which a system of knowledge can be safely erected. In contrast, relativism denies that there is any access to an objective truth, maintaining that all concepts used in access to objective truths are relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture. From the perspective of relativism, there is no conceptual scheme that can have a determinate and univocal significance, but only the plurality of such conceptual schemes. According to Bernstein, this false dichotomy between objectivism and relativism, as the intellectual and cultural

matrix, has shaped much of modern life, and Western views of rationality have swung between these two extremes. Although the conflict between two positions has continued since the time of Plato, says Bernstein (1983:8), 'it is only in recent times that the complex issues that this debate raises have become almost obsessive and have spread to every area of human inquiry and life.' To be sure, this is the case with intense debate over the authority of the Bible among modern theologians.

In the context of the modern dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism, the authority of Scripture became problematic. Scripture is objectively true, and yet it must be subjectively applied to the heart by the Spirit's work. The concept of authority *per se* includes these two aspects. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Reformation tradition associated the *truth-side* of authority closely with the *trust-side* of authority[29] in such a way as to underscore the testimony of the Spirit in reference to the authority of Scripture. However, the object-subject dichotomy, which impinged on modern theology, radically altered the relationship between *truth* and *certainty* that was once thought to be the double connotation of *one* concept. In the case of the Princeton theology, the objectivity of scriptural authority became more and more independent of the subjectivity, and hence *the priority of objective authority over subjective authority*.

To put it another way, the Old Princeton theology shares a modern tendency to equate authority with only external or formal authority. On this matter, Nicolas Lash (1976:12) reminds us that any application of one-sided criteria of authority — whether "external/objective" or "internal/subjective" — would not do justice to the full implication of authority. On the one hand, too exclusive appeal to internal, material criteria of authority is susceptible to the perilous replacement of the authority of God with human standards and experience, and by so doing it can transmute Christianity into 'another variant of liberal humanism.' On the other hand, too exclusive appeal to external, formal criteria of authority is bound up, at least implicitly, with appealing to the authority of God, who is merely transcendent over human, stands over against human experience. However, this fails to do justice to the triune God — 'the Father of

---

[29] The terms "truth-side" and "trust-side" are borrowed from Van den Belt (1982:40).

our Lord Jesus Christ who has breathed his Spirit into our heart' —, who is both transcendent and immanent in relation to us. To put it in the light of Lash's insight, the Old Princeton's over-estimation of objective authority needs to be counterbalanced by the appreciation of the subjective aspect supported by the divine Spirit. Otherwise, the Princeton position would fall into intellectualism and the concept of authority might be made superfluous (Van den Belt 2008:322).

The Old Princetonians' extravagant emphasis on objective-ontological authority faces the accusation of 'the formalisation of Scripture's authority' lodged by the Anglican Reformed theologian John Webster. Webster (2003:20) imputes 'the disorder of Christian theological language about the Bible in modernity' not least to the competitive, dichotomous understanding of the transcendent and the historical. Webster (:20-21) points out that the modern dualistic framework permeates into not only naturalism but also supernaturalism. The Old Princeton theologians followed the latter. They decidedly sought for 'the defence of Scripture by espousing a strident supernaturalism, defending the relation of the Bible to divine revelation by almost entirely removing it from the sphere of historical contingency, through the elaboration of an increasingly formalised and doctrinally isolated theory of inspiration' (:20). According to Webster (:55), this formalisation of scriptural authority occurs in such a way that the authority of Scripture is detached from its revelatory-redemptive function in the setting of the church. Authority, says Webster (:55), 'becomes something derived from a formal property of Scripture — its perfection as divine product — rather than of its employment in the divine service.' As Webster (:55) astutely points out, Princeton's objective-ontological approach 'reduces authority to a "formal supernaturalism" insufficiently integrated into Scripture's role as the bearer of the gospel of salvation to the church.'

2.2.6 Assessment

As we have seen thus far, the Old Princeton theology's view of scriptural authority has been immensely influenced by a number of prior philosophical ideas such as epistemological foundationalism, Common Sense Realism, the correspondence theory of truth, a propositionalist understanding of religious language, the indispensable role of

evidentialist apologetics, and the ontological dualism. In cooperation with philosophical allies, the Princetonians placed much emphasis and effort on the urgent task of protecting the objectivity of scriptural authority, and this has been undertaken within the modern framework of warfare between objectivism and subjectivism.

In spite of its stalwart effort to establish a normative authority of Scripture as a foundation within the modern context, the Princeton theology's stance about scriptural authority, along with some philosophical assumptions buttressing it, is not without problem. One may broach some challenging questions as below.

Firstly, an accusation of rationalism may be levelled against the Princeton theology. As Sandeen (1970:116-117) points out, the Princeton theology, in spite of its desire to provide a middle path between rationalistic deism and enthusiastic mysticism, was thoroughly sustained by rationalistic approaches. Rationalism has carried distorting influence on Princeton's formulation of the doctrine of Scripture because it reduces Scripture to a set of propositions under the theological control and thereby, in actuality, undermines the authority of Scripture. The Scottish Reformed theologian Andrew McGowan (2007:118) criticises poignantly Princeton's rationalistic approach concerning inerrancy in this manner: 'It assumes that God can only act in a way that conforms to our expectations, based on our human assessment of his character. It assumes that whatever God does must conform to the canons of human reason. It also assumes that *our desire for epistemological certainty* [italics mine] must be satisfied and that it can be satisfied only through the receiving from God of inerrant autographic texts.' It may be said that the Princetonians' lofty attempt to secure the ontological-objective authority of the Bible brings about a different effect from their intention by reducing the Bible to 'a textbook of timeless truths and inerrant propositions which could be "mastered" by students of divinity' (Vanhoozer 1994:175). Furthermore, although the certainty of faith, which essentially flows from a *relational* belief in the reality of God's revelation, must be differentiated from scientific certainty that derives from a *rational* perception of the reality of empirical facts, the Princeton theology readily ignored such difference by attempting to ensure the certainty of faith by means of epistemological, noetic certainty.

Secondly, there has been a criticism that the Old Princeton theology's concept of inerrancy in terms of accuracy and factuality is alienated, to some extent, from the biblical view of the truth. This critique relates to the fact that the correspondence theory of truth, which the Princeton theology adopted in formulating the doctrine of the Bible, has been called into question by postmodern thinkers. Whether Princeton notion of inerrancy relied on a modern secular theory of truth or it followed the teaching of biblical authors is still under debate. However, even if there is a common aspect between correspondence theory and biblical view concerning the concept of truth, it seems salient that the Princetonians employed the correspondence theory as a philosophical ally against any subjective alternative with their apologetic purpose. If this is the case, then there arises a pressing need to establish the biblical view of truth for the discussion of scriptural authority, since, if we talk about the truthfulness and authority of Scripture including its inerrancy, it must be done so on the basis of the biblical concept of truth. A fully biblical concept of truth might involve all the aspects of factuality, faithfulness, and completeness for in the biblical sense the truth must be 'ultimately associated with the triune God Himself as a perfection of His being' (Nicole 1992:296).[30] However, Princeton's reliance upon the correspondence theory seems problematic in that it shows a marked tendency to reduce the aspect of faithfulness to the aspect of factuality, or conformity to fact.

Thirdly, the *reductionistic* tendency of the Princeton theology concerning biblical language has been criticised. By according excessive privilege to a single form — the assertive or propositional — of the Bible, the Princeton theology fails to do full justice to the diversity of biblical language including narrative, genealogy, legend, law cord, prayer, song, proverb, prophecy, letter, Gospel, sermon, confession, hymn, and apocalyptic. According to James Barr (1973:125), the real problem of propositionalism,

---

[30] For an account of biblical usage of "truth," see Thiselton's careful, and excellent, analysis (2008). Thiselton notes: On the one hand, at least in the Old Testament, 'in the vast majority of contexts truth is not a merely abstract and theoretical concept....men express their respect for truth not in abstract theory, but in their daily witness to their neighbour and their verbal and commercial transactions.' Hebrew terms of truth ('*emet*) means both truth and faithfulness; on the other hand, though, New Testament usage of terms for truth shows that some form of correspondence theory seems to be foundational to biblical writers. However, it does not imply necessarily that biblical authors assert particular theory of truth or intend to teach that.

which tends to read every biblical text as if it were a proposition, is 'a literary *category-mistake* [italics mine], not a question whether the material is propositional or not.' Concerning this propositionalist approach and its implications, the postconservative theologian Stanley Grenz says in a trenchant way (2004:40-41):

> The approach to the Bible that treats it as a compendium of theological (and ethical) truths launches the theologian on the quest to unearth the one true set of doctrines (together with the corresponding set of ethical principles or rules) that supposedly lies within (or behind) the texts of Scripture. The resultant purpose of studying the Scriptures becomes that of attempting to read *through* the texts to the underlying doctrinal system and eventually to the publication of the skilled theologian's *magnum opus*. If the goal of theological inquiry is to extrapolate the system of propositions the divine Communicator supposedly inscripturated in the pages of the text, the ultimate result of systematic theology is to render the Bible superfluous!

Lastly, the most detrimental ramification of Princeton attempt to affirm the objective-ontological authority of Scripture by asserting the objective truth in terms of foundationalism, is that this approach 'severs the knowledge of God from the grace of God,' to borrow Lesslie Newbigin's expression (1996:78). The attempt to wipe out all personal and subject elements in the knowledge of God, which derives obviously from aversion to subjectivism, might lead to a kind of hard rationalism in which God could fall into 'an object for our investigation by scientific methods' (:78).

43

2.3 A NONFOUNDATIONALIST APPROACH OF POSTLIBERAL THEOLOGY

2.3.1 Postmodern Epistemological Challenge

Since the middle twentieth century, a revolutionary change in the way of understanding knowledge, truth, justification, and language has taken place. This philosophical movement is often summed up by the term "postmodernism." Despite the fact that postmodernism has not formed a specific school and that even the definition of it cannot be made unanimously, there is 'a shared discourse of the postmodern, common perspectives, and defining features that coalesce into an emergent postmodern paradigm' (Best & Kellner 1997:xi).[31]

A Wheaton College professor and leading evangelical Presbyterian theologian, Kevin Vanhoozer, encapsulates "the postmodern conditions" as follows (2003b:10-12): (1) In reference to epistemology, postmodernism is marked by its rejection of the epistemological foundationalism. Postmoderns 'deny the notion of universal rationality; reason is rather a contextual and relative affair.' (2) Concerning language, postmoderns reject the referential view of language and resist the atomism and reductionism, which assume that the reality of the world can be explained by a single system, an all-encompassing explanatory framework. (3) About truth, postmoderns refuse modernity's metaphysical view and universal truth claims, which they see as masks for ideology or the will to power. (4) On history, postmoderns are suspicious about 'narratives that purport to recount universal history.' A consciousness of history and an attempt for historical reconstruction in modernity are rejected as an illusion. One true story of the past is supplanted by the many stories in various contexts and multiple meanings. (5) In

---

[31] A number of philosophers have contributed to the dissolution of modern foundational problem and the promotion of postmodern thoughts. To name only some of the most significant: Richard Rorty has provided the most influential attack on the Enlightenment commitment to Reason and the resultant foundationalist epistemology; W V O Quine has provided an insight of knowledge as a web or net to replace Descartes' building image; Wittgenstein's idea of language-game has significant influences on the postmodern thinkers and theologians; Speech-Act philosopher J L Austin emphasises the social and practical aspects of language preceding reference; Thomas Kuhn, in philosophy of science, has provided the far-reaching insights of the hermeneutical dimension of scientific knowledge and by so doing paves the way to various attempts at nonfoundationalist models of rationality.

the matter of self, postmoderns insist that the person is no more 'an autonomous individual with a rational consciousness that transcends one's particular place in culture, language, history, and a gendered body.' This is not to say that postmodernity retrieves the notion of outer authority; rather, the postmodern self still remains an autonomous individual who is free to choose his/her own perspective.

To be sure, these aspects of postmodernism pose special challenges for the discussion of scriptural authority. The widespread perception of the crisis of scriptural authority is to some degree associated with this broader philosophical sea change concerning realism, rationality, language, and so on. With such a postmodern moving "beyond foundationalism," modern foundationalist features — such as the search for certitude, universality, rationality, and scientific method — have been called into question. For this reason, postmodernism is often designated as "nonfoundationalism" or "antifoundationalism," the term of which indicates a shared recognition that modern foundationalism is no more adequate to describe our culture's understanding of knowledge. Put simply, nonfoundationalism emerges out of the demise of foundationalism and thus it is characterised by its negative phenomenon to criticise or reject the foundationalist epistemological assumption.

Nonfoundationalist John Thiel illustrates foundationalism and nonfoundationalism in such a way as to be mutually constitutive, yet diametrically opposite approaches. Nonfoundationalism is, by Thiel (1994:2), 'always critical of the epistemological assumption that there are "foundations" for knowledge, noninferential principles whose certainty and stability ground other epistemic claims.' With a refusal of modern epistemological idea of foundational belief, nonfoundationalists contend that we are situated in a web of belief in which only maintaining coherence in a particular context does matter. From the perspective of nonfoundationalism, the search for 'a universal reasoning to justify belief' is nothing else than 'the foundationalist illusion' (Thiel 1994:102). Claims for an epistemological ground to justify the universal truth must be negated because the meaningfulness of any belief does not need universal justification.

45

In this postmodern milieu, some theologians feel sympathetic with such a non-foundationalist move largely because they are discontent with any foundational attempt to provide the theoretical justification for Christian belief on the basis of excessive commitment to the criteria and method of modernity. There are several types of postmodern theology including postliberal theology, postmetaphysical theology, deconstructive theology, reconstructive theology, feminist theology, radical theology, and so on.[32] In a plethora of postmodern theologies, our particular attention is given to postliberal theology for at least two reasons: firstly, it might be regarded in general as an important contribution to postmodern nonfoundational theological thought; secondly and more importantly for our discussion, postliberal theology provides a new paradigm for articulating scriptural authority in the changed situation of the demise of modern foundationalist epistemology.

2.3.2 Postliberal Theology[33] as a Nonfoundationalist Theology

Yale theologian George Lindbeck, in his book *The Nature of Doctrine*, seeks to move beyond the modernist foundationalism of both conservatism and liberalism by exploring theological theories of religious language. Lindbeck (1984:16-18) categorises the three types of theological theories of doctrine: the two dominant approaches in modernity, the "cognitive-propositional" and "experiential-expressivist," and his alternative model, "linguistic-cultural" approach. Firstly, a propositionalist approach asserts that 'church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities'

---

[32] For an account of various types of postmodern theology, see Vanhoozer (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (2003).

[33] Concerning postliberal theology, James Fodor (2005:220-230) offers a quite clear outline: Postliberal theology is 'an internally highly differentiated movement in contemporary English-speaking theology.' Along with its originators George Lindbeck and Hans Frei, other exponents — representative, yet not an exhaustive — include Paul Holmer, David Kelsey, Stanley Hauerwas, Ronald Thiemann, James Buckley, Garrett Green, George Hunsinger, William Werpehowski, Bruce Marshall, William Placher, Eugene Rogers, and Kathryn Tanner. Postliberal theology is occasionally referred to "narrative theology" because of its emphasis on biblical narrative. It also is sometimes called "the Yale school" because historically signalling figures and their followers are affiliated with Yale University Divinity School. In spite of the legacy of Yale, however, postliberal theology has been developing beyond the boundary of the Yale school, and continuing to be transformed internally. Fodor (:230) thus says: 'Whatever unity and cohesiveness postliberal theology possesses is achieved more by way of family resemblances than by a single feature or agenda. Postliberal theology is more accurately construed as a movement rather than a school, since much of its work proceeds by means of collaborative engagements in interrelated projects of doctrinal construction rather than through individual, "autonomous" scholarship.'

(:16). The truthfulness of doctrine can be measured by its abiding correspondence to states of affairs, independently of the subjective dispositions of those uttering it. Secondly, the experiential-expressivist approach understands doctrines entirely in subjectivist terms as 'noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations' (:16). In Lindbeck's estimation, these two approaches are problematic. The cognitivist approach is able to account for doctrinal constancy, but has difficulty in accounting for doctrinal development recognised since the rise of historical consciousness. To the contrary, the experiential-expressivist approach can readily account for doctrinal change 'by portraying ecclesial teaching as a function of the historicity of experience, and largely for this reason it has won the favor of modernity as the preferred conceptualization of Christian truth-claims' (Thiel 1994:54). This approach, however, seems to debilitate the abiding normativeness of Christian tradition affirmed in a propositionalist view of doctrine for the sake of a coherent explanation of doctrine's historicity.

Over and against these two types, Lindbeck (1984:18) proposes as an alternative a "linguistic-cultural" approach, wherein the function of church doctrines is understood 'as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.' James Fodor (2005:233) points out the three aspects of the superiority of a cultural-linguistic approach over the other two as follows: (1) 'It does greater justice to the permanency and normativity intrinsic to authoritative church teaching by differentiating between what changes and what remains the same in doctrinal matters'; (2) 'It encourages a certain pragmatic tentativeness in the use of philosophical concepts of explicate faith, since rule-following does not compel allegiance to any particular metaphysical outlook or allegiance to particular ontological beliefs, thereby honouring and upholding God's mystery'; and (3) 'It better accounts for the phenomena of doctrinal development (how new doctrines can arise over time), devolution (how old doctrines can become marginalized or forgotten altogether), and ecumenical reconciliation (how doctrines that once contradicted each other can be reconciled and yet retain their identity).'

The distinguishing feature of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic proposal is in its rejection of the foundational epistemological premise, and hence *nonfoundational*. [34] The two approaches criticised by Lindbeck are in the end the results of the application of foundationalism to theological method — 'a product of modernity,' to cite Lindbeck's description (1984:51). Just as the cognitive-propositional view of doctrine relates to scriptural *foundationalism* of conservatives, so does the experiential-expressivist to experiential *foundationalism* of liberals. Lindbeck's commitment to nonfoundationalism becomes more explicit — though permeating throughout his *The Nature of Doctrine* — when he wants to dispel a foundationalist illusion that assumes the possibility for universal norms of reasonableness to be formulated 'in some neutral, framework-independent language' (:130). For him, the justification or credibility of religious belief depends rather on 'good performance' or, 'a function of its assimilative power, of its ability to provide an intelligible interpretation in its own terms of the varied situations and realities adherents encounter' *than* 'adherent to independently formulated criteria' (:131). Put otherwise, unlike the two other foundationalist approaches, a cultural-linguistic approach attempts to provide no common framework within which to judge the truthfulness of religious claims. The truthfulness of religious beliefs and statements can be judged indirectly and holistically only according to a pragmatic criterion.

Lindbeck addresses the issue of scriptural authority implicitly and indirectly in *The Nature of Doctrine*.[35] In a broader sense, Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic proposal offers a set of framework for postliberal theology's articulation of scriptural authority in the postmodern context. We shall address these aspects in subsequent sections.

---

[34] Various contemporary intellectual influences contribute towards shaping and forming the postmodern or nonfoundational character of postliberal theology. Such philosophical impetuses include the work of the philosophy of science, especially of Thomas Kuhn and Michael Polanyi; new directions in philosophy of language initiated by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle; recent sociological analyses of Peter Berger and Robert Bellah; the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz; and narrative-literary analysis by Eric Auerbach.

[35] A more direct and explicit thought of Lindbeck concerning Scripture's authority can be found elsewhere. For example, in his intriguing article *The Church's Mission to a Postmodern Culture*, Lindbeck (1989a) speaks of the function of Scripture in terms of cultural authority. Pointing out the far-reaching influence of the Bible upon western culture and literature and recent decline of biblical literature and biblical imagination, Lindbeck re-appreciates the significance of the Bible with reference to the culture's communal imagination, public discourse, and common language for the discussion of the common welfare. See also Lindbeck's paper *Scripture, Consensus, and Community* in the volume of *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis* (1989b). This article is also included in his essay collection *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (2002:201-222).

2.3.3 Postliberal Theology's View of Truth

2.3.3.1 Intrasystematic Truth

Unlike pre-moderns and moderns, postmodern thinkers call into question the correspondence theory of truth, according to which language corresponds to the world in a one-to-one way and thus a statement is true if it corresponds adequately to a real state of affairs. Instead, postmodern thinkers contend that 'humans do not view the world from an objective vantage point but structure their world through the concepts they bring to it, such as language' (Grenz & Franke 2001:23). Abandoning the possibility of a single, objective linguistic description of the world, a number of philosophers seem to advocate alternative theories to the correspondence theory, such as "the coherence theory" and "the pragmatic theory."

Lindbeck (1984:64) makes a distinction between "intrasystematic" and "ontological" truth of statements. While the former is the truth of coherence, the latter is the truth of correspondence to reality, which is attributable to first-order propositions. Whereas a statement cannot be ontologically true unless it is intrasystematically true, intrasystematic truth is possible without ontological truth. In this sense, 'intrasystematic truth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ontological truth' (:65).[36] Given this distinction, Lindbeck appears to put more emphasis on intrasystematic truth than ontological truth.

This point is made explicit in his account of theology as the grammar of the Christian language. In a cultural-linguistic approach, religion is *idiom* that 'makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitude, feelings, and sentiments' (Lindbeck 1984:33). From this, Christian doctrine is thought to function as the internal regulation of the Christian idiom; doctrine as language does not necessarily refer to external reality because its concern is the *consistency* within a cultural and linguistic world. Theology as the grammar of the Christian language is a

---

[36] To illustrate, Lindbeck (1984:65) takes an example: '[T]he statement "Denmark is the land where Hamlet lived" is intrasystematically true within the context of Shakespeare's play, but this implies nothing regarding ontological truth or falsity unless the play is taken as history.'

"second-order" activity that does not make truth claims. Lindbeck thus says (:65): 'Just as grammar by itself affirms nothing either true or false regarding the world in which language is used, but only about language, so theology and doctrine, to the extent that they are second-order activities, assert nothing either true or false about God and his relation to creatures, but only speak about such assertions.' In other word, doctrines as second-order language affirm nothing about extra-linguistic reality; such function must be reserved for "first-order" language of the Christian community — the language of worship, prayer, preaching, and exhortation.

Lindbeck shows, as McGrath (1996:38) observes legitimately, a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards whether to affirm epistemological realism and the correspondence theory of truth. Lindbeck (1984:68-69) says:

> There is nothing in the cultural-linguistic approach that requires the rejection (or the acceptance) of the epistemological realism and correspondence theory of truth….Nevertheless, the conditions under which propositions can be uttered are very different in cognitivist and cultural-linguistic approaches: they are located on quite different linguistic strata….It is only on this level that human beings linguistically exhibit their truth or falsity, their correspondence or lack of correspondence to the Ultimate Mystery.

For Lindbeck, doctrine is to theology what grammar is to language. The function of doctrine is not to correspond to objective reality or to express universal experience. He goes on:

> Technical theology and official doctrine, in contrast, are second-order discourse about the first-intentional uses of religious language….Just as grammar by itself affirms nothing either true or false regarding the world in which language is used, but only about language, so theology and doctrine, to the extent that they are second order activities, assert nothing either true or false about God and his relation to creatures, but only speak about such assertions.

50

Here, Lindbeck is not asserting a purely epistemic or antirealist account of truth. Rather, by putting more emphasis upon internal consistency than correspondence to external reality, Lindbeck seems to offer neither a pure coherence nor a pure correspondence theory of truth, but a *qualified* correspondence notion of truth, 'whereby truth is thought of as an internal coherence of propositions which as a whole relate to particular states of affairs' (Hensley 1996:79). A sticky question still remains to be answered, however: "Does postliberalism, which is antifoundationalist, necessarily lead to antirealism?" It seems that the question of realism and truth looms large in postliberal theology.

2.3.3.2 The Truth as Forms of Life

One remarkable feature of a postliberal view of truth is its emphasis on the epistemic significance of performance and hence *a pragmatic definition of truth*. With his provocative example, Lindbeck (1984:64) argues that if a battle cry "*Christus est Dominus*" is used by the crusader to authorise cleaving the skull of the infidel, the utterance "*Christus est Dominus*," which would be true in other contexts, is false. Such usage of the utterance is not in accordance with Christian forms of life shaped by the understanding of Lordship as suffering servanthood, and thus cannot be true. From this view, the cognitive truth of a religious utterance is dependent on how the utterance is used. Only insofar as the use of the utterance corresponds with the correlative forms of life can such an utterance be 'not only intrasystematically but also ontologically true' (:65). No utterance can be true unless it is rightly embodied in forms of life.[37] In other words, proper performance is a condition for the possibility of cognitive truth, which is not considered as an attribute that religious utterances possess in and of themselves (Hunsinger 2000:306). In this light, it can be said reasonably that, in postliberal thought, the truth is not so much *a property* that pertains to utterance as *forms of life* in which utterances are used. Religious statements would be true only insofar as they are used in accordance with the truth of forms of life. For postliberalism, the task of theology must be to describe not *forms of the text,* but *forms of life*, in which biblical language games

---

[37] Here one can see the cultural-linguistic turn to practice, which is postmodern in its rejection of the modern premise of an autonomous knowing subject. Drawing on Wittgenstein's insight that meaning is a function of use in practice as indicated in the concept of "language game," Lindbeck argues that a religious tradition is tied in the correlative forms of life it generates.

function as Scripture. Specifically, for postliberal theologians, forms of life that give the biblical language games their sense are nothing other than the church.

In a sense, a postliberal view of truth is in accordance with a so-called coherentist view of knowledge/truth, which asserts that 'knowledge is not a collection of isolated factual statements arising directly from first principles but a system in which each is supported by its neighbors and, ultimately, by its presence within the whole' (Grenz 2000:123). Instead of the foundationalist metaphor of constructing an edifice, a coherentist view has a marked preference for the metaphor of the "belief-mosaic" or "web of belief" of the Christian community, which is made up of 'the set of interconnected Christian way of viewing the world' (:124).

The Presbyterian systematic theologian George Hunsinger (2000:307-308), drawing on a distinction of four types of validity claims pertaining to the respective four reality domains, interprets Lindbeck's proposal as 'a kind of social coherentism.' Four validity claims can be distinguished as follows: (1) claims of *intelligibility* pertain to formal matters of logic, internal consistency, and sense; (2) claims of *truth* pertain to matters of cognitive content, predication, and reference; (3) claims of *rightness* pertain to performative content, patterns of behaviour, and communal norms and values; and (4) claims of *truthfulness* pertain to matters of intention, sincerity, and aptness of emotive expression. These four distinct validity claims would apply to the domains of *linguistic, external, social,* and *internal* reality, respectively. In the case of Lindbeck's proposal, claims of *rightness,* and perhaps of *truthfulness,* are logically prior to claims of *truth,* and perhaps of *intelligibility,* because the domain of *social reality,* and perhaps of *internal reality,* necessarily mediates all relations of correspondence to the domain of *external reality*, and perhaps of language. Given this priority of the performative aspect over the cognitive aspect of truth, Lindbeck makes the cognitive truth of a theological assertion dependent on the rightness of the community's performance in the correlative forms of life.

2.3.3.3 *Ad Hoc* Apologetics

Postliberal theologians including Lindbeck hold that the primary task of theology is to describe and redescribe the character, structures, and logic of Christian beliefs for the purpose of sustaining and cultivating Christian identity (Lindbeck 1984:113-114; Thiemann 1985:75; Werpehowski 1986:285).

Foundationalist theologians are so concerned at all to defend the distinctiveness of the theological subject matter that apologetics inevitably emerges as the primary theological task. They seek to ground theological language on a universal foundation, that is, universal religious experience or inerrant Scripture. However, albeit that justification of Christian beliefs is essential to Christian faith, community, and tradition, the foundationalist pursuit of that aim tends to subordinate the distinctive patterns of Christian speech to the patterns of the epistemological or apologetic argument because it is inevitably in need of meeting the criteria external to the Christian faith.

Postliberal theology may acknowledge the apologetic need for the justification of Christian beliefs and the common ground to share with for the conversation with non-Christian. However, such apologetic engagements are pursued in a non-systematic fashion. The rationality and justification for Christian faith are to be found not in any universal rules or assumptions shared by all humans, but within the Christian's own internal integrity, 'as the occasion arises, in connection with a particular issue, relative to a specific context, with respect to particular interlocutors' (Fodor 2005:231).

On this matter, Ronald Thiemann (1985:72-75) gives a helpful explication in terms of "first-order" and "second-order" activity. While foundational theology tends to doubt the reliability of the direct "first-order" expressions of the church's faith, postliberal theology seeks its criteria of judgement within the first-order language of Christian communal practice. Theology, as the reflective "second-order" activity, has no rationale to be independent of the first-language of faith; rather, it serves the first-order practical language of the church by being both its theoretical defender and its critic. Theology 'is not intended to provide the universal argument which silences all voices but one;

theology is rather the vehicle by which the arguments are voiced' (:73). In this sense, argues Thiemann (:75), nonfoundational or descriptive theology is "faith seeking understanding."

In Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic proposal, the task of descriptive theology is articulated with the notion of *intratextuality*. "Intratextual" method is an alternative to an "extratextual' method of a propositional or an experiential-expressive approach. With this concept, Lindbeck maintains that, rather than interpreting Scripture into an external and alien frame of reference that devalues its normative position and eventually yields an accommodation to culture, theology must find the meanings of the Christian language within the *text,* that is, biblical story. A scriptural world, by creating its own domain of meaning and then providing the interpretive framework within which Christians seek to inhabit their lives and understand reality, is able to absorb the universe. Therefore, 'Intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories. *It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text'* [italics mine] (Lindbeck 1984:118).

More specifically, William Werpehowski (1986:284) designates Lindbeck's method as "*ad hoc* apologetics," which 'would make a case for the reasonableness of Christian belief not by referring to some putatively neutral datum of experience to which the Christian religion conforms but, rather, through the skilful demonstration of how our common and everyday world in its variety really conforms to the biblical world.' In convergence with the notion of "*ad hoc* apologetics," William Placher (1989:167-168) also contends that Christians should seek common ground with particular non-Christians on particular issues and draw themselves into genuine conversation with non-Christians in a variety of contexts, yet preserving a distinctive Christian voice in the conversation.[38] In a word, with respect to the justification of Christianity, postliberal theologians are not to be seen as non-apologetic because they recognise the necessity of apologetics. More likely, postliberals carry on the apologetic task in an *ad hoc* manner

---

[38] One of the definite advantages of *ad hoc* apologetics is that one can appropriate the insights of other disciplines and perspectives without being wedded to them or making them foundational.

that does not try to appeal to universal standards of rationality, and in so doing they underscore the task of theology to protect and articulate the distinctive voice of the Christian faith by appealing to an intratextual approach (Bryant 1993:31-33).

2.3.4 Narrative as a Central Biblical Language

Concerning biblical language and its interpretation, postliberals underline narrative as an interpretative category for the Bible, and unqualifiedly endorse the hermeneutical primacy of the world created by the biblical narratives over the secular world.

Postliberals' narrativist understanding of biblical interpretation owes much to Hans Frei's provocative proposal about the synoptic gospels narratives in his epochal work *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. According to Frei, throughout most of the church history prior to the developments in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theology, Christians had understood and shaped their self-identity within the overarching story of the Bible that might provide themselves with the basic frame of reference as well as the indispensable resources. In this pre-critical, literal-realistic reading of the Bible, argues Frei (1974:2), the biblical stories meant what they said, and thus they were read literally as depicting the real world. 'The Bible was,' Frei (:90) states, 'a coherent world of discourse in its own right, whose depictions and teachings had a reality of their own, though to be sure, it was the reality into which all men had to fit, and in one way or another did fit.'

However, as the modern era went on, 'the cohesion between the literal meaning of the biblical narratives and their reference to actual events' broke down rapidly (Frei 1974:4). The depicted biblical world and the real historical world began to be severed and distanced from each other. The biblical stories were no longer assumed as referring to actual historical events. Increasing detachment of the biblical stories from history brought about 'the reversal in the direction of interpretation' (:6). Readers no longer would fit themselves into the depicted biblical world; instead they attempted to fit the biblical stories into 'a more general framework of meaning' (:5). To be specific, modern theology, by encompassing Scripture within 'a larger framework or category of explana-

tion' (:220), made interpretation 'a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story' (:130). For example, on the one hand, liberals looked for the real meaning of the Bible in transcendent truths about God and humanity, and otherwise deconstructed the canonical text into historical-critical fragments. On the other hand, conservatives sought the Bible's real meaning in its factual referents and turned the text into source material for propositions. As a consequence, such an accommodation of the Bible to a more determinative framework, as Fodor (2005:235) points out clearly, 'effectively robs scripture of its own reality-constituting powers, either by transforming it into a *source* for historical reconstruction of past events or reducing it to simply one more *instantiation* of timeless, universal symbols or general qualities of human experience.' In large parts of *Eclipse*, Frei, by careful historical survey, explores how and why this pre-critical, literal-realistic way of reading the Bible has dwindled away.

The thrust of *Eclipse* is to *undo* the eclipse of biblical narrative and to *retrieve* a literal-realistic reading of the Bible. Drawing on Karl Barth's distinctive sensitivity to the biblical narrative and Erich Auerbach's notion of realistic narrative, Frei develops the category of "realistic narrative"[39] that is most faithful to the character of the texts themselves and is the way the Christian community has read biblical texts for most of its history. With the concept of realistic narrative, Frei (1974:280) maintains that biblical meaning and its narrative form are inseparable, and furthermore that the story itself is not ancillary to, but *constitutive* of, meaning. Put another way, 'the subject of the narrative cannot be divorced from the narrative because it is the narrative that renders the subject, and precisely because biblical narrative is realistic, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of reading it' (Stroup 1981:139). Realist reading, as an appropriate reading strategy, allows 'the reader to be incorporated and thus located in the world made accessible by the narration' (Frei 1974:199).[40]

---

[39] According to Frei (1974:13-14), "realistic narrative" is 'that kind in which subject and social setting belong together, and characters and external circumstances fitly render each other. Neither character nor circumstance separately, nor yet their interaction, is a shadow of something else more real or more significant.'

[40] What is especially noteworthy is the later shift in Frei's thinking. In *Eclipse*, Frei's grave concern about the *text* leads him to argue that the "literal" meaning is exclusively derived from the linguistic patterns in the text itself, namely *realistic narrative*. From the early 1980s onward, however, Frei's attention seems

Following in the wake of Frei's effective work to undo the modernist eclipse of biblical narrative, postliberal theology attempts to restore the primacy of scriptural narrative. Lindbeck also places the continuity of Christian identity in the biblical narrative when he says (1984:80): 'The novelty of rule…is that it does not locate the abiding and doctrinally significant aspect of religion in propositionally formulated truths, much less in inner experience, but *in the story it tells and in the grammar that informs the way the story is told and used'* [italics mine]. From Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic view, "meaning" is not located 'outside the text or semiotic system,' as is the case with propositionalists and expressivists, but rather immanent inside the world and idiom of the biblical text (:114). 'Scripture creates its own domain of meaning' and claims that this meaning 'extends over the whole of reality' (:117). A scriptural world absorbing the universe provides the interpretive framework within which to indwell. Indwelling the scriptural world implies assimilating extra-biblical realities into the scriptural world. The Bible serves as an interpretive medium for the extratextual world. Thus, to read intratextually — or faithfully — means 'to derive the interpretive framework that designates the theologically controlling sense from the literary structure of the text itself,' that is, from a realistic narrative form of the Bible (:120). In this way, for postliberal theology, Scripture plays a pivotal role in the process of Christian formation and transformation of life and culture, through redescribing reality and contextualising the modern world within the scriptural framework.

One of the most remarkable values of postliberals' recovery of the significance of narrative within the discussion of biblical authority is, as Charles Wood (1987:13) notes, 'its potential for a reconception of the nature of biblical authority.' If the biblical text

---

to shift to the account of the role of the community in the emergence of the meaning. This shift of his concern — *from* an issue of the role of the text *to* an issue of the role of the community — is presented more clearly in his widely-known paper entitled *The "Literal Reading" of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does it Stretch or Will it Break?* In this paper, Frei (1986:64-65) criticises his early commitment to the distinction between truth and meaning; and between text and reader. Concerning this shift or development of Frei's argument, I would like to part company with those who read the later argument of Frei as granting meaning-determinative status to the present community (e g Wolterstorff 1995:218-220,230-236). A shift of Frei's argument should be thought of neither as "an abandonment of his earlier thought," nor as "the ratification of the determinative role of the reader" (Craigo-Snell 2000:487-489; Bowald 2007:102). Rather, it may be said that in *Literal* Frei seeks to incorporate the life of the community into the realistic narrative of the Bible rather than flatly states that meaning is located firmly in the text. For a helpful comparative explanation of the early and the later Hans Frei, see Bowald (2007:48-58,95-107).

functions "narratively," that is, in such a way as to disclose a world for readers to be invited to dwell, then the authorisation of the biblical text would proceed not from simply reading meanings off the text and accepting them, but from creating meanings *through the engagement of the readers with the text*. For postliberalism, truth cannot be adequately expressed in either propositional or experiential-expressive language; rather, truth is best grasped analogically, as a "lived" reality. Thus, Lindbeck (1984:51) states: 'It is a true proposition to the extent that its objectivities are interiorized and exercised by groups and individuals in such a way as to conform them in some measure in the various dimensions of their existence to the ultimate reality and goodness that lies at the heart of things. It is a false proposition to the extent that this does not happen.' At this point, the notion of proposition is not negated, but qualified by embodying it in forms of life. Whether a doctrine is propositionally true or false depends on the success or failure of a community internalising, embodying, or living it.

According to George Hunsinger (2003:46-47), while propositionalism — literalism, in his revised terms — regards the mode of textual reference as strongly *univocal* and experiential-expressivism as *equivocal*, postliberalism sees it as *analogical*. The Bible's analogical force 'allows for significant elements of both similarity and dissimilarity between word and object, text and referent, whether the textual referent is God or historical events or some combination of the two' (:47). In a postliberal analogical view of language, the text addresses readers in not merely "cognitive" or "emotive" but also "self-involving" fashion. Hunsinger contends that the false polarisation of modernity can be overcome by the postliberal analogical understanding of language. That is to say, 'instead of divine availability at the expense of irreducible transcendence (literalism), or divine transcendence at the expense of real availability (expressivism),' the postliberal emphasis on narrative as analogical language about God and reality 'recovers the historic ecumenical conviction of divine availability to true predication in the midst of transcendent ineffability' (:47).

2.3.5 Postliberal Theology's View of Scriptural Authority

2.3.5.1 David Kelsey's Account of Scriptural Authority in Its Using

David Kelsey's book *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*[41] is a seminal and typical work of postliberal setting to view biblical meaning and authority in terms of the church's use of Scripture. Kelsey identifies seven types of approaches to the notion of biblical authority and then divides them into two groups. Kelsey designates the one group as ascribing authority to the *content* of Scripture. This group construes Scripture's content as "doctrine" (B B Warfield), as "concept" (Hans-Werner Bartsch), as "the narrative of salvation history" (G Ernest Wright), or "an agent-rendering narratives" (Karl Barth). In this group there are at least two agreements (Kelsey 1975:38):

> First, it is agreed that scripture has a body of content that is "authoritative" for all Christian theology *in the sense that* it is the content which modern theology must simply restate….Second, there is agreement…that scripture is authoritative in virtue of the fact that its authoritative content is identical with the content of divine revelation….Scripture faithfully preserves that content, whether understood as a set of doctrines, concepts, or a historical account [Kelsey's italics].

The other group seeks the authoritative elements of Scripture in the *expressions* of Scripture, that is, in its "images" (L S Thornton), its "religious symbols" (Paul Tillich), or the "myths" of "Christ event" (Rudolf Bultmann). In spite of some differences, they concur on one point: 'They all stress the radically "event" character of revelation and share a common decision to construe the Bible as a collection of expressions of the occurrence of that event. Hence what is authoritative about scripture is not its surface content of doctrine, concept, or narrative, but its non-informative force as expression' (Kelsey 1975:85).

---

[41] This book is republished in 1999 under the title *Proving Doctrines: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* by Trinity Press International. The newer version is identical in contents with the original edition, except for a supplementary six-page preface.

In spite of some point of differences, there is the common point of all seven cases, namely that they all attempt to explicate scriptural authority in terms of some aspects of the *text* of Scripture, and, as a consequence of that, differences and disagreements among them on the issue of how to construe the nature of the biblical text appear irreconcilable. At this point, Kelsey suggests that the nature of problem should be shifted from *what Scripture is* to *how to use it*, that is, from *the text itself* to *the reading of it*. Any one theologian's position or of his/her ways of using Scripture must not be seen as one "standard" or "normative" construal of scriptural authority; it must be viewed as an option (Kelsey 1975:2). To make the point explicit, Kelsey (1975:89) draws some critical implications of 'what it means to call a text or a set of texts "scripture."' That is, the statement that a text is "scripture" (1) means that 'its use in certain ways in the common life of the Christian community is essential to establishing and preserving the community's identity'; (2) necessarily follows that it has the authority for the common life of the Christian community; (3) attributes the unity or wholeness as canon to it; and (4) also means that Scripture's authority for a theologian has to do with his/her commitment to a certain way of the *uses* of texts, rather than to the claim about the *properties* of texts.

A theologian appeals to Scripture in the course of doing theology by making several decisions regarding how to construe Scripture, which are decisively shaped by a theologian's prior judgement about how best to construe the mode of God's presence (Kelsey 1975:166-167). For example, as Kelsey notes in the case of Warfield (:139-155), when a theologian insists on the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture, that position is actually derived not from Scripture itself but from the theologian's interpretation of Christian faith as a result of his/her engagement in the life of a Christian community that reads Scripture in a particular fashion.

In Kelsey's argument, the authority of scriptures lies squarely in the way a community uses them, not in some property or feature of the texts themselves. Kelsey (1975:150) writes: 'To call a set of texts "scripture" is, in part, to say that they ought so to be used in the common life of the church as to nurture and preserve her self-identity.' Kelsey (:93) contends that the most essential purpose and function of Scripture for the Christian

community is 'shaping and preserving identity — both corporate identity as an integral community, and the personal identities of the individuals that make up the community.' Thus, how the text fulfils its essential purpose must be described in terms of its functions in the church's life. In this sense, Scripture cannot be the starting-point for theology because a theological position cannot consist in a single overarching argument resting on any starting-point, whether scriptural contents or expressions. Rather, a theological position must be seen as 'a set of several different families of arguments' which 'might be looked at in a quasi-aesthetic way as a solicitation of mind and imagination to look at Christianity in a certain way' (:136-137). Seen from this, it becomes obvious that for Kelsey the locus of authority is shifted from "the property of Scripture" to "the use of Scripture by the community," or, from "the agency in the text" to "the agency of the reader."

Employing Kelsey's insights, George Stroup (1981:249) elucidates a postliberal notion of scriptural authority as follows: 'the authority of Scripture must be interpreted in terms of its function in the life of the Christian community and not in terms of some property intrinsic to it as Scripture.' On the one hand, scriptural authority is its authority as a *witness* to events which are at the centre of Christian faith and the basis of the church's proclamation, that is, a history of salvation and revelation in which God revealed and acted as Creator and Redeemer. On the other hand, the scriptural authority is not only its witness to historical events but also its *function* in the ongoing life of the Christian community. Scriptural authority is dependent on its role in the life of the community. If a community no longer considers biblical narratives and their description of reality as the interpretive framework of personal and communal identity and action, then Scripture can no longer be described as "authoritative" for that community. Scripture can perform its function as a witness only when the Christian community allows it to do so by acknowledging its authority. This point can be stated in terms of the relation of Word and Spirit. That is, a postliberal view seems to appeal to *the Spirit's use of the biblical text* in shaping and preserving the identity of the Christian community rather than to *the text's verbal meaning*. More focus is to fall upon the Spirit's *present* work of illumination in the community than the Spirit's *past* work of inspiration.

In brief, Kelsey, as a typical cultural-linguistic theologian, makes a distinction between a text's *properties* and its *uses,* and then gives priority the latter over the former. His key claim is that the authority of Scripture consists in its ability to function in the church to shape Christian identity and to transform both communal and individual lives.

2.3.5.2 A Functional-Ecclesial Approach to Scriptural Authority

As Nancy Murphy (1994:30-31) appreciates, postliberal theology, as a form of nonfoundationalist theology, claims a recovery of the centrality of Scripture in Christian life from 'the modern attempt to reduce Scripture's content to propositions or history or religious meanings,' and from 'the Enlightenment project of attempting to know all things "objectively" and "from the standpoint of eternity."' As we have already noted, from the viewpoint of postliberalism, Scripture has a creating power of the community's world. The biblical narrative is the most normative story shaping the primary world of believers. This is not to say that 'believers find their stories in the Bible,' but rather that 'they make the story of the Bible their story' (Lindbeck 1984:118). Scripture forms the cultural-linguistic world for the church and is 'the only real world' — to borrow Auerbach's memorable phrase (1953:15) — for the community of faith. For the task of intratextual theology, Scripture plays the key role in the process of Christian culture formation and the contextualisation of the modern world, by means of its own stories, symbols, and categories. In this sense, one can say with some justification that postliberal theology's proposal is to restore and preserve the authority of Scripture as sacred text for the life of the church.

Postliberal effort to recover the authority of Scripture is inevitably accompanied by its claim for "the recovery of the importance of the community," which is marked by the so-called "cultural-linguistic turn to practice." Certain functions of the community in relation to scriptural authority are recognised to be essential and irreducible. From this, the relation between Scripture and community/tradition comes to be recast in terms of a cultural-linguistic approach. Scripture must be seen as 'the paradigmatic interpretative framework that the community uses to understand the world and its own identity'

(Vanhoozer 2003a:161). Scripture, in turn, can be correctly understood only from within the faith community.

According to Darrel Jodock (1989:105-114), it is natural and necessary for a functional view of scriptural authority to take seriously into account the communal and contextual aspects of authority. That is, authority depends on the existence of an organised group of human beings and is always exercised within the concrete practice of the community (:105-106). A Christian community provides the context for biblical authority, that is, the community of faith, within which Scripture makes its claim on Christians to be taken seriously in their making decisions and to form their identity. Thus, scriptural authority is 'the product of the text's usefulness in mediating the presence of God' (:107); scriptural authority is the by-product of a person's existential transformation which takes place within the community of faith.

The authority of the ecclesial community is emphatically affirmed by an influencing theological ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas (1993:18) imputes the chasm and conflict between literalistic fundamentalism and critical approach to the Bible *to* the separation of the text of the Bible from particular practices of the Church. 'By privileging the individual interpreter, who is thought capable of discerning the meaning of the text apart from the consideration of the good ends of a community, fundamentalists and biblical critics make the Church incidental' (:26). Considering the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* as an ecclesial and ecclesiological claim, Hauerwas argues that if *sola Scriptura* is used to the extent that the text of Scripture makes sense separate from the Church and its interpretation, then *sola Scriptura* is 'a heresy rather than a help in the Church' (:27). Thus, he contends that '*The Bible is not and should not be accessible to merely anyone, but rather it should only be made available to those who have undergone the hard discipline of existing as part of God's people'* [Hauerwas' italics] (:9). In other words, if we are to understand the Bible and to acknowledge biblical authority, it is necessary that we stand ourselves under the authority of a faith community with a willingness to accept the disciplined practice of the church's preaching — the gospel.

63

The New Testament scholar Stephen Fowl, professor at Loyola University, also take seriously the centrality of Scripture in close relation to a community. According to Fowl (1998:6-7), to call Scripture authoritative assumes that a particular relationship between that text and those communities who treat it as authoritative. Without a community or communities of people who are struggling to form and transform their lives in accord with Scripture, 'claims about the authority of scripture begin to look rather abstract and vague' (:6). Christian's relationship with Scripture must be multifaceted and ongoing because the Christian life *per se* is 'an ongoing process of formation and transformation, a journey into ever deeper communion with the triune god and with others' (:7). Such engagement with Scripture of Christians is part of the prior and ongoing life of a particular tradition. The point made by Fowl is explicit: '[T]he authority of scripture is not a property of the biblical texts…not something that has been inserted into the Bible which can then later be found, abstracted, analyzed, and either followed or ignored. Rather, *scriptural authority must be spoken of in connection with the ecclesial communities who struggle to interpret scripture and embody their interpretations in the specific contexts in which they find themselves*' [italics mine] (:203).

Seemingly, postliberalism is a movement that seeks to recover the biblical authority and its relevance for our contemporary situation. In spite of its initial appearance 'to swing the pendulum of authority back to the biblical text,' as Vanhoozer (2005:10) incisively points out, the postliberal proposal actually relocates authority in the faith community, which is the singular culture within which — and only within which — the Bible can be used in forming and transforming Christian identity. From a nonfoundationalist perspective, postliberalism has sought 'an alternative to the modern extremes of the absolute objectivity of universal reason and the absolute subjectivity of personal preference' in 'a *relatively absolute intersubjectivity*, in a word, *the authority of communal tradition'* [Vanhoozer's italics] (Vanhoozer 2005:10). The biblical texts are authoritative not because of any intrinsic quality but only to the extent that they function in the church to form believers' identities and to transform their individual and communal life. All things considered, the postliberal stance of scriptural authority can be marked by its emphasis on "functional-ecclesial authority."

2.3.6. Assessment

As we have seen so far, there are several philosophical bearings on a postliberal view of scriptural authority, such as an antifoundationalist epistemology, a Wittgensteinian-descriptivist view of truth and *ad hoc* apologetics, and the literary turn to narrative as a privileged mode of biblical language. Coupled with these impetuses, postliberal theology carries a number of significant implications on the discussion of scriptural authority. Above all, the strength of a postliberal position is in its claim that *self-engagement, practice, and community must be entailed in the talk of scriptural authority*. With a recovery of the significance of narrative, postliberal theology draws 'our attention to the practical effects of scriptural narrative, to its demand on our lives, and to the degree of self-criticism demanded of anyone wishing to assess its truth' (Comstock 1987:709). In addition, such a postliberal communitarian turn reminds us that a proper location of theological reflection on scriptural authority must be primarily within the believing community. In spite of its strengths and fresh insights, a number of criticisms are levelled at the postliberal approach.

Firstly, many criticise postliberals' antifoundationalist epistemology as *relativist*. With their commitment to antifoundationalism, postliberals deny the existence of any universally accessible criteria for defending Christianity's truthfulness and accordingly are subject to charges of obscurantism, subjectivism, and relativism. Rather than a foundationalist metaphor of "building built upon the foundation," the cultural-linguistic approach prefers the metaphor of human knowledge as "a web of beliefs," in which no one belief is superior to any other and instead our beliefs can be supported by other beliefs. In this nonfoundationalist account of knowledge, the authority of any belief inevitably comes to be *internal* to our own beliefs. Although it is not to say that postliberal theology shares without reservation Rorty's radical form of pragmatism, nevertheless, it seems that a form of moderate pragmatism is embraced in postliberal theology, even not entirely.

Employing somehow the pragmatic viewpoint of truth, postliberals give priority to the *truthfulness* of Christians' lives over the *truth* of their beliefs. The case for the truth of

Christianity must depend on pragmatic grounds. Thus, the question of telling the truth of God in ontological sense has little to do with the concern of cultural-linguistic theology. The question of truth claims appears to be equated with, or more precisely reduced to, simply "intrasystemic or intratextual consistency" (McGrath 1996:36). In the similar vein, Hunsinger (2000:313) points out that Lindbeck's postliberalism misleadingly makes the cognitive truth dependent on the practice, performance, or self-involvement of the community in its forms of life.

Concerning the relation between text and external reality, postliberalism is criticised as antirealism, especially by most evangelical theologians. The renowned American evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch (1992:17,30) holds that postliberalism tends to obscure the metaphysical implications of the Christian faith 'by focusing on the analysis of the text as narrative rather than on the text as the bearer of intrinsic, quasi-metaphysical meaning.' By jettisoning metaphysical realism with which theology needs to probe how the faith community is grounded in reality, postliberals' descriptive-intratextual theology comes to be deprived of all grounds for a normative-prescriptive critique of both Christianity itself and the reality to which it refers (Bloesch 1992:133). Likewise, Francis Watson (1994:152) spots the danger of the intratextual theology to slip into "narcissistic self-referential" theology, insofar as, in the lack of acknowledgement of any reality outside the text, the epistemological situation — that reality is textually mediated and there is no independent to it — might be reducible to the ontological claim that there is nothing outside the text. Some may defend against a charge of antirealism and argue that Lindbeck and postliberalism do not assert a purely epistemic or antirealist account of truth.[42] Nonetheless, in postliberalism, the connection between intratextuality and metaphysical realism appears still loose or obscure.

---

[42] Stephen Fowl and Jeffrey Hensley are in opposition to such antirealist interpretation of Lindbeck. Fowl (1978:877-894) argues that Lindbeck neither denies the existence of extra-textual reality, nor gives up claims to truth. Rather, the gist of Lindbeck's claim of intratextuality is 'to contrast a theology which accounts for things theologically, using language and concepts that derive from scripture interpreted under the Rule of faith and the creeds, with a theology whose account is determined by general, non-theological accounts of "human experience."' Hensley (1998:24) also argues that Lindbeck's point is 'a denial of the possibility of a concept-free, God's-eye point of view on reality' on account of the necessary theory-laden character of human perception. Hensley thus concludes that Lindbeck is not asserting conceptual antirealism and not denying metaphysical realism, but rather 'in principle open to metaphysical realism' (:80).

Secondly, one of the major challenges to postliberal theology concerns its view of religious language. By drawing a devastating distinction between a performative and a propositional utterance, Lindbeck fails to acknowledge the extent to which '*all performative utterances have propositional content*' (Vanhoozer 2005:279). Postliberal non-cognitive description of religious language would possibly make relative any conceivable propositional content in theological reflection. With respect to the emphasis on narrative as a central form of biblical literary, postliberal preoccupation with "story" might be disposed to obscure the normative dimension of Scripture.

Moreover, it is pointed out that postliberal theology privileges one literary genre, narrative, as the dominant interpretative framework at the expense of the significance of the diversity of biblical literary. Obviously, no other literary form of the Bible is better relevant to describe Christian's identity than narrative and, in this sense, biblical narrative has a uniqueness to represent things that can be efficiently done in no other way. However, it is not to say that narrative is all-inclusive or all-sufficient. The category of narrative is insufficient to account for 'the whole range of temporal structures underlying biblical writings' (Ricoeur 1995:246).[43] In this regard, narrative theology succumbs to the temptation of reductionism in which the contents of Scripture are narrowed into the "Christian story." The subject matter of Scripture is, as Bloesch (1992:188) says, more than 'the story of the struggle of the soul of the aspirations of a people' because it involves 'the Word of God addressed to the soul.'

Thirdly, with respect to ethics, postliberal theology has been criticised for its "tribalistic," "fideistic," and "sectarian" tendency to retreat from public debate into a Christian ghetto (Gustafson 1985). Postliberals' endeavour to preserve the church's identity and particularity in the radically secular world is often reproached by critics for 'endorsing a

---

[43] Ricoeur (1996:72-80) draws our attention to the complexity and difficulty of biblical narrative in its relation to narratives in general: (1) Biblical narratives are '*"sacred" stories as opposed to "mundane" stories*' in their function of theological discourse and hence *traditional, authoritative,* and *liturgical* (:243); (2) such discrepancy between biblical narratives and ordinary stories pertains to '*the complex relation between story and history* in biblical narratives' (:244); and (3) no biblical narrative functions merely as story; rather it receives its theological meaning 'from its *composition with other modes of discourse*' (:245). Nonnarrative modes such as laws, prophecies, wisdom sayings, and hymns, contribute to the full *meaningfulness* of biblical narratives, and in so doing they bring about the *transition from narrative to explicit theological discourse* (:246).

kind of cultural isolationism and political quietism whereby the church effectively abdicates its social responsibility' (Fodor 2005:241). This critique raises a question about how ecclesial identity can be preserved without the loss of social relevance and political influence in postliberal theology. Furthermore, one may cast the question as to whether postliberalism does justice to the Christian claims about the experience of God's activity and presence in our world. Postliberal 'polarity of intratextuality versus extratextuality' inevitably tends to restrict the experience of the Spirit's work within the cultural-linguistic boundaries (Stell 1993:691-693). By so doing, it fails to do justice to the cosmic activity of the Spirit beyond the boundary of the community.

Lastly and more critically, while admitting that postliberalism provides, in a broader sense, a vantage point from which to affirm the comprehensive authority of Scripture, however, our consideration of several aspects of postliberalism — such as its turn to community, its suspension of the question of ontological truth, and its lack of recognition of cognitive propositional significance of Scripture — might raise the question as to *whether it serves fully to restore scriptural authority*. Eminent evangelical theologian Carl Henry doubts it. He (1987:13,19) argues that postliberal narrative hermeneutics, by removing any text-transcendent referent from the interpretative process, obscures the relation of the biblical narrative to a 'divine reality not exhausted by literary presence,' and thereby 'eclipses transcendent divine authority and revelatory truth.' It seems that there is little room in a postliberal view for a way of guaranteeing the otherness of Scripture as the Word of God. Furthermore, Kelsey's emphasis on the life-transforming function of Scripture does not seem to do full justice to Scripture's objective cognitive authority. Observing Kelsey's distinction between *de jure* and *de factor* authority, [44] Fiorenza (1990:359) criticises Kelsey's functional account of scriptural authority for the deficiency of an adequate explication of the *de jure* authority of Scripture. In other words, a postliberal view of Scripture lacks a

---

[44] According to Kelsey (1995:236-248), while *de jure* authority of Scripture is grounded in its relationship to God, *de facto* authority is an acknowledgment by the community that Scripture has authority *de jure*. Kelsey seems to ground *de jure* authority of Scripture in God as 'sanctifier and transformer of human identity' — the Third Person of the triune God — rather than in God as 'self-revealer, traditionally appropriated to the Second Person.'

dogmatic ontology of Scripture, which would prevent the biblical text from disappearing into the activity of the interpreting community.

2.4 A POSTFOUNDATIONALIST APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE EPISTEMOLOGICAL MODEL[45]

2.4.1 Postfoundationalism[46] as an Alternative Epistemology

One noteworthy aspect of postmodern ethos is, as we have seen so far, its fundamental critique of the paradigm of modernity in general and its rejection of modern epistemological foundationalism in particular. If such is the case, then should only nonfoundationalism be a viable epistemological option for theology? To reject foundationalism in theology, says Van Huyssteen (1997:228), does not mean directly 'to embrace nonfoundationalism or antifoundationalism per se — in any case not a type of antifoundationalism that claims that one can engage in theological reflection without attention to the explanatory nature and epistemic status of theological truth-claims.' One pernicious implication of the extreme form of nonfoundationalism to theology, by Van Huyssteen (:3), is *a total relativism of rationalities*, in which 'every community and context has its own rationality and all social activities may in fact function as a test case for human rationality,' and which 'will prove to be fatal for the interdisciplinary status of theology.' Moreover, in an uncritical commitment to a basic set of beliefs of nonfoundationalism lurks the hidden *fideism,* which is in common with foundationalism. In the fideistic move, any account of religious faith, practices, or experiences is restricted to the perspective, worldview, beliefs, and judgments of the subject alone, and

---

[45] For the conceptual framework and argument of this section, I will draw heavily on the work of J Wentzel Van Huyssteen, who is a South African Reformed theologian and professor of theology and science at Princeton Theological Seminary.

[46] The term *postfoundationalism* is often equated with the term *nonfoundationalism* or *antifoundationalism*, especially by those who tend to put them all to the category of postmodernism and to deprecate their implications. In our discussion, however, postfoundationalism will be differentiated from non-foundationalism. The *post* in postfoundationalism indicates "beyond-movement" rather than "against-negation." In other word, I will intend, with the suggestion of "beyond, but not without" of postfoundationalism, to find a middle way beyond the false dichotomy, without falling into extremity.

thus neither the subjects' own experience and explanation is contested, nor the need for transcommunal or intersubjective evaluation is taken seriously (:24).

Van Huyssteen (1997:1-8) suggests a *postfoundationalist* and *holist* epistemology as an alternative epistemology in theology, which avoids and moves beyond the extremes of both dogmatic foundationalism and relativist nonfoundationalism. The epistemological foundationalism searches for certain, object knowledge of the truth and, in that view, the contextuality of rationality and the multiplicity of truth-claims have been disregarded. Nonfoundationalism, on the other hand, stresses the obvious plurality of truth claims and asserts that all knowledge is subjectively bound to the knower. Over and against these two extremes, postfoundationalism makes two beyond-movements. Firstly, postfoundationalism moves beyond the alleged objectivism of foundationalism by means of its full acknowledgement of 'contextuality, the epistemologically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and nonepistemic values that inform our reflection about God' (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). Secondly, postfoundationalism moves beyond the extreme relativism of nonfoundationalism by claiming to 'point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation.' In a word, a postfoundationalist model of rationality recognises thoroughly its contextuality, more precisely, its historically-situatedness, hermeneutically-awareness, and tradition-rootedness, but, at the same time, wants to reach beyond the limits of one's own boundaries of community and culture through interdisciplinary interaction.

Drawing heavily on Van Huyssteen's work, LeRon Shults (1999:50), professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Agder in Norway, suggests an epistemological task of postfoundationalism, which could transcend a dichotomy of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, as follows: '*the objective unity of truth is a necessary condition for the intelligible search for knowledge, and the subjective multiplicity of knowledge indicates the fallibility of truth claims*' [italics mine]. Conceptual distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity, between unity and multiplicity, and between truth and truth claims, are reconnected by the terms "intelligibility" and "fallibility" in the postfoundationalist model (:50-51). On the one

hand, the postfoundationalist emphasis on "intelligibility" intends to accommodate the foundationalist-realist intuitions of the Christian faith about truth as an ideal. On the other hand, a postfoundationalist insistence on "fallibility" implies its accommodation of the nonfoundationalist anxiety about absolutism, dogmatism, and hegemonic totalisation. Thus 'postfoundationalist does not claim to "have" truth, but argues that the truth as an ideal is what "pulls" our search for optimal intelligibility' (:56).

Put differently, postfoundationalists hold onto the ideals of truth, objectivity, and rationality, but at the same time recognise the inevitably provisional, contextual, and fallible nature of all human knowledge (Van Huyssteen 1997:259; Shults 1999:58). Viewed from this postfoundationalist perspective, knowledge is 'neither immediate nor indubitable; it is rather mediated via interpretative frameworks' (Vanhoozer 2005:293). Although no set of data is ever foundational on account that the data is always framework-filtered or theory-laden, nevertheless postfoundationalists affirm that some frameworks or filters can allow true knowledge. While nonfoundationalism has a strong tendency to jettison epistemology itself under the all-embracing term "foundationalism," postfoundationalist model of rationality asserts that the reasonable critique of modern foundationalism must lead directly neither to the demise of epistemology *per se*, nor to the denial of the significance of the epistemological dimension (Gunton 1995:18; Thiselton 2007:127). From this postfoundationalist view, the commitment to the quest for truth and objectivity can be rehabilitated, insofar as we open up the way to *epistemic humility* that 'accepts that the theorizing through which we come to understand our world is always going to be tentative and imperfect' (Van Huyssteen 1999:131).

2.4.2 A Postfoundationalist View of Truth: Critical Realism

Over against both naive realism and instrumentalism, Van Huyssteen draws on, and proposes, a "critical realism" as a proper model of rationality for theology. In philosophy of science, critical realists consider their theories to be representations of the world as a reality and thus to be provisionally true as well as useful. The most fundamental claim of scientific realism is that, although all theories and models are partial and inadequate, nevertheless they actually refer to reality. At this point, Van

71

Huyssteen is in the full assurance that a qualified form of critical realism has tremendous resources for supporting the reliability and validity of theological assertions. [47] Van Huyssteen (1989:142) holds that a critical realism has crucial implications for theology and theological method:

> For this approach, in which the scientist and therefore also the theologian attempts to say something about a reality beyond our language by means of provisional, tentative models in terms of human constructs, the term *critical realism* might be fruitful. A critical-realist approach to theology now becomes feasible because metaphors and models play such a decisive role in all cognitive development — also in theology. A critical-realist stand is realistic because in the process of theological theorizing this concept enables us to recognize the cognitive and referential nature of analogical language as a form of indirect speech. It is also critical, however, because the role of metaphoric language in theology would teach us that models should never be absolutized or ideologized, but should retain their openness and provisionality throughout the process of theorizing.

From the perspective of critical realism, theological concepts and models are to be seen as provisional, inadequate, and partial, but also necessary as the only way of referring to the reality of God and of His relation to humanity (Van Huyssteen 1987:24). On this view, theological assertions are conceived as valid representations of the "way things are" and thus could be verified. However, unlike "naive realism," theological assertions are in no sense exact depictions of revealed truth; rather those are to be seen as *analogical* models that re-present or approximate truth. The critical realist emphasis is at the insight that 'there is no uninterrupted access to reality and that in the process of interpretation the role of metaphor is central' (Van Huyssteen 1997:134). In other words, critical realists never assume that they have arrived at the final statement of theological

---

[47] Van Huyssteen (1980:395-398) warns against an uncritical, superficial transferring of the realism of science to the domain of religious belief and to theology. Indeed, critical realism *per se* is not yet quite an established theory of explanation, but rather a very promising and suggestive hypothesis. Thus, Van Huyssteen appreciates the value of critical realism to the extent that it helps to convince us that what we are provisionally theorising and conceptualising in theology really exists.

truth; to the contrary, the process of validation and improvement must be going on (Osborne 2006:398).

The leading New Testament scholar N T Wright (1992:64) also approves of critical realism as 'the only sort of theory which will do justice to the complex nature of texts in general, of history in general, and of the gospels in particular.' According to Wright (:35), critical realism describes the process of "knowing" in such a way as to assume two acknowledgements: acknowledging '*the reality of the thing known as something other than the knower* (hence "realism")' and acknowledging that 'the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence "critical")' [Wright's italics]. For Wright, only from the viewpoint of a Christian critical realism can the right of theological reflection and language be affirmed and regarded as an appropriate dimension of discourse about God and reality (:130).

Vanhoozer (2005:286-290) seeks to apply the implications of critical realism to his canonical realism. By him, canonical realism is articulated in terms of "the adequacy of truth." That is, our knowledge is not *absolute* but *adequate*; in spite of the fact that full and comprehensive knowledge of the reality of God is beyond our language and us, we are capable of knowing adequately about God via the cognitive strategies available to us in Scripture. The truth should not be measured in terms of the philosophical ideal of complete equivalence or the scientific concept of factuality, but in rather less formal terms, namely "good enough" or "sufficient."

More precisely, Vanhoozer unfolds the implications of the adequacy/sufficiency of truth into two aspects: *pluriform testimony* and *polyphonic truth.*

Firstly, by Vanhoozer (2005:286), 'Scripture is sufficient because *just these texts* adequately render the reality of Jesus Christ' [Vanhoozer's italics]. No single canonical voice gives full expression to the reality of God in the Bible; rather, the canon is a pluriform testimony with a multitude of voices, which 'nevertheless all testify to the same multifaceted reality: God's word-act in Jesus Christ' (:287). The testimony of

73

Scripture, says Vanhoozer (:288), 'is sufficient for faith, *adequately* true in the sense that *just these texts* are enough to know God, not exhaustively as he is in himself but as he gives himself to be known (and loved, and obeyed) via his own communicative action' [Vanhoozer's italics]. At this point, the pluriform testimony of Scripture carries significant implication about the nature of truth, namely that truth — especially theological truth — is something to be *felt, done, and loved* as well as *believed* (:288).

Secondly, while the so-called naive metaphysical realism typically recognises merely one aspect of reality, a well-versed canonical realism recognises different aspects of reality, and thus launches a new emphasis on a *'plurality of normative points of view in Scripture'* (Vanhoozer 2005:289). This kind of *aspectival realism* needs to be distinguished from a perspectivism that claims that what we see is only our own theoretical construct. Instead, canonical realism affirms that some forms are more adequate for rendering a certain reality than others. Thus, certain aspects of reality in Scripture can be disclosed — though not completely, but truthfully — in particular ways. Furthermore, the truth is fundamentally a *dialogic* truth. 'The unity of biblical truth is not that of the single system but the Pentecostal conversation' (:290). Through the canonical dialogue between the Old and the New Testaments, 'each voice retains its integrity, yet each is also mutually enriched' (:291).

To sum up: Scripture is sufficient because it is adequate for rendering the Word of God. In other words, the truth mediated in Scripture is so adequate in communicating what God is doing and acting for us that 'we can know enough to respond — to trust the promises, obey the commands, heed the warnings, sing the songs, believe the assertions, and hope for the ending' (Vanhoozer 2005:291).

2.4.3 A Postfoundationalist View of Language

Recognising that inadequate and oversimplified understanding of the nature and function of biblical language may impoverish discussions of scriptural authority, a postfoundationalist approach attempts to avoid attaching too much exclusive importance to any one form — whether propositional or narrative — at the expense of the others in

a reductionalist way, which takes place in both the conservative-foundationalist and the postliberal-nonfoundationalist approaches. That is, postfoundationalists acknowledge the problem of the notion of propositional revelation to the extent that it is understood as "timeless," "ahistorical," or "abstract" facts. At the same time, they are also worried about falling into an opposite extreme which reduces the language of the Bible and theology to feeling-expressive symbolic language. It should be noted that propositions in theological discourse play a significant role in the interpretation of Scripture, even though scriptural truth should not be reduced to a set of proposition. Throughout the Christian history, theological assertions, along with their function as expressions of attitudes or commitments, have made cognitive-propositional claims about the reality of God, explicitly or implicitly. In this regard, Avery Dulles (1983:205) notes that, in biblical times, Israelites and Christians articulated their faith 'in confessional formulas, historical claims, and finally in doctrinal assertions of a more reflective character.' Obviously, the truth of Scripture is much richer than its propositional teaching. Without confidence in the propositional teaching of Scripture, however, we could hardly put our trust in God to whom the Bible bears witness. For this reason, a postfoundationalist view affirms 'an ineradicable cognitive element to Christian doctrine' (McGrath 1990:76). Although it is impossible to represent God exhaustively at the cognitive level, doctrines have capacity to represent God adequately for the purposes of Christian proclamation and existence.

In heated debate about religious language, the term "propositional" and "personal," or "cognitive" and "existential" have often been used antithetically. Objection to propositionalism is often summed up in the notion of "personal" truth, with which the neo-orthodox theologians would argue that God does not reveal propositions through Scripture; rather He reveals Himself. In opposition to the neo-orthodox view that describes revelation in non-propositional or personal terms, conservative-evangelicals hold fast to the propositional character of revelation. However, the sharp antithesis between propositional and personal is a false dichotomy to be overcome. The claim that propositional language is essentially impersonal seems to rest on a misleading distinction between proposition and person. To the contrary, *propositions could be personal* because they convey not merely information, but rather call for a response of

faith. There should be no antithesis between believing a proposition and believing a person insofar as the proposition is understood as the assertion of the person (Helm 1982:27). As Daniel Treier (2007:37) correctly puts it, '[t]he propositional aspect of revelation conveys its central message personally, and these are not mutually exclusive.' Therefore, all our encounters with persons can be thought of as "propositional" in the sense that propositions always involve communicative action (Vanhoozer 1994:179).

Alister McGrath consents to this mutual understanding of "propositional" and "personal" in terms of the nature of Christian doctrine. McGrath (1990:78-79) says: 'To speak of doctrine as "truth" is rightly to draw attention to the fundamental Christian conviction that doctrine has to do with veridicality, rationality and comprehensive elucidation; nevertheless, it is also concerned with maintaining the possibility of *encountering* the truth, which the Christian tradition firmly locates in Jesus Christ as the source of her identity.' Christian doctrine is concerned with faith and demands personal involvement. Truth is something that must be personally appropriated. There are both cognitive-propositional and personal-existential component to the truth-claims of Christian doctrine. Thus, it may be said that Christian doctrine as "truth" does not merely represent or describe reality, but also calls for the renewal and transformation of the human situation.

From a canonical-linguistic approach that has close parallels with a postfoundationalist approach, Vanhoozer attempts to revise the notion of proposition. Vanhoozer (1986:85) rightly notes that truth must be comprehensive and unified — at least for God, if not always for us — and also that reality is so multifaceted to be conveyed by an equally rich and diverse literary forms. The various literary forms of Scripture are not impediment to the truth at all; instead, it must be seen as the very possibility of truth's full expression. Thus, from a postfoundationalist view of biblical language, it is imperative and important both to preserve the substance of revelation and to appreciate the diversity of its literal forms. Vanhoozer (:92) thus says:

> In its revised sense, "propositional revelation" has reference to the things that
> God has propounded for our consideration in Scripture. As Christian readers,

we ought to be interested not only in the propositions themselves but in the manifold ways these propositions are presented for our consideration. In the context of Scripture's various genres, these propositions count as warnings, commands, prayers, questions, etc. as well as assertions.

In this postfoundationalist view, Scripture does more than just contain facts or convey information but acts with a diversity of voices that are diffused by way of a plurality of interpretive traditions, and by so doing leads to a plurality of theological systems which interact (Osborne 2006:405).

LeRon Shults provides a helpful insight for a postfoundationalist view of language. Given a distinction between explanation and understanding, [48] Shults draws a comparison of the two opposite positions. On the one hand, the aim of the foundationalist emphasis on propositions is to *explain* things according to universal truth and to offer absolute *explanations*, which are obviously similar to natural science. This inevitably leads to an insistence on universal, acontextual, ahistorical, atraditional, certain, and absolute explanations. The nonfoundationalists, on the other hand, embrace "the turn to understanding" and set their aim in *understanding* that is conditioned by the historical context. Discerning this distinction as an outdated and false dichotomy influenced by German idealism, a postfoundationalist model gives full weight to the mutual conditioning of two movements in human rationality, with which 'explanation aims for universal, transcontextual understanding, and understanding derives from particular contextualized explanations' (Shults 1999:70). Within this understanding, the postfoundationalist task of theology can be described as (Shults 1999:77-78):

to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue within our postmodern culture while both maintaining a commitment to intersubjective, transcommunal theological argumentation for the truth of Christian faith, and recognizing the

---

[48] Shults draws on German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)'s distinction between *Erklärung* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding). According to Dilthey, *Erklärung* relates to the inclusion of a particular phenomenon under a general rule and *Verstehen* pertains to the consideration of a particular in the light of the whole of its context. With this distinction, Dilthey stresses "subjective science of the humanities," which must be differentiated from "objective natural sciences," and argues for the necessity to pay attention to human-social-historical reality.

provisionality of our historically embedded understandings and culturally conditioned explanations of the Christian tradition and religious experience.

To sum up: a postfoundationalist view of language is marked by its seeking to overcome a false dichotomy between propositional and personal, between cognitive and existential language, and between explanation and understanding. Moreover, a postfoundationalist view attempts to understand them in a mutually interrelated way, and by so doing affirms both *the truthfulness of the Christian truth-claims* and *the provisionality of our understanding and explanation of them*.

2.4.4 A Postfoundationalist View of Scriptural Authority

From a postfoundationalist point of view, the epistemological status of the Bible can be affirmed in such a way that it is consonant with both holistic epistemology and critical realism. The Bible is, as the ultimate "way" to the reality of God, Christianity's indispensable book of faith; thus it is 'a reality that functions epistemologically as a very exclusive access to the Reality that is God' (Van Huyssteen 1987:32). Given this, the Bible can play a decisive role in the evoking of religious experiences as well as in the structuring of the language of faith, and further in the theoretical language of theological reflection (Van Huyssteen 1997:139). To spell out the epistemological status of the Bible as a very exclusive access and reference to God, Van Huyssteen (1997:140) develops the notion of "the realism of the biblical text." He draws out a significant implication of "the realism of the biblical text" from three aspects.

Firstly, our articulation of the authority of the Bible is always related to certain process of theorising or forming of opinions, 'which not only reflects our most basic and direct faith-experiences, but also our implicit intellectual decisions taken even before we approach the text' (Van Huyssteen 1997:141). A particular view of the Bible can never be accepted uncritically to be the "true," "best," or "biblical" view merely for the reason that it was presented to us by a reliable or authoritative tradition. In no sense, the Bible itself can be the objective, foundationalist, and pure basis for theological argument; rather, instead of being the presumed foundation of all our theological arguments, the

Bible becomes 'a crucial *part* of our theological arguments' [Van Huyssteen's italics] (:141). This implies that our quest for the authority of the Bible must be seen as part of an argument based on the preceding epistemological theories and thus that it calls for a more comprehensive, broader framework of criteria. In this respect, Kelsey's argument that that theologians actually *construe* and *use* the Bible in the course of their practice of theology in order to help authorise their theological proposals is unquestionably valid (Kelsey 1975:2). This underdetermination of theories in theology, however, does not necessarily lead to a pluralism of interpretation and the slippery slope of relativism owing to the fact that in theology all models are interpretatively used in close relation to the basic biblical text and that the biblical text, though interpreted in various ways, has its own inner hermeneutical limits. At this point, a postfoundationalist approach recognises and grapples with the significance of the hermeneutical reflection.

Secondly, the realism of the biblical text takes seriously the important role of the reader in such a way as to avoid the disturbing implication of an infinite relativism on the part of the text or its authors (Van Huyssteen 1997:148). One must not ignore an insight of recent literary theory which claims that 'the text, in written communication, not only mediates the "conversation" between writer and reader, but becomes *a reality in its own right'* (:148). The text itself is more than a mediator; it lives in relation to a reader. 'Calling the biblical text a reality could therefore never mean a "closed" reality with a meaning that historical writer has put there *once and for all'* (:148). The communication of the biblical text is not accomplished until it has reached its final destination, namely the reception of the text by a reader. Like writing, reading is also directly related to the reality of the biblical text. In this sense, the reader is inscribed or encoded in the text, forming part of the meaning of the text (:152). Therefore, the epistemological status of the Bible in critical realism corresponds with the basic assumptions of so-called reader-response theories. On this view, reading and interpreting the biblical text is a creative, dynamic, and imaginative experience rather than a static and reproductive activity confined to a fixed meaning. Put differently, critical realist theology reaffirms the significance of reference as well as the continuity of that to which is being referred. Reference must be analysed in terms of both the world of the text and the world of the reader as presupposed by the text (:152). An essential point made by the realism of the

text is that these two dimensions are converging on a Reality that the biblical text is preceded by, referring to, and ultimately committed to, namely *God*. The biblical text fundamentally keeps on referring to the Reality that is God and thus the reality which the text itself forms in its own right is not self-constituted, but ultimately committed to that Reality. Within this ultimate Reality, the world of the text and the world of the reader as presupposed by the text can be encountered.

Thirdly, the realism of the biblical text searches for both 'metatheological criteria that can be epistemologically valid' and 'hermeneutical criteria that are appropriate to the text itself' (Van Huyssteen 1997:153). Van Huyssteen remarks (:154):

> [T]he realism of the biblical text, which epistemologically as well as hermeneutically implies a faith commitment while referring to a Reality we have come in biblical terms to call God, ultimately and metaphorically refers to the reality of redemption in Christ. And only in relation to this root-model of our faith, can the problem of biblical authority for faith, and the status of the Bible in theological reflection, eventually — although provisionally — be solved.

For Christians, the reality that the biblical text refers to is none other than *redemption in Christ*. Only Christ authorises the Bible, which is used in evoking religious responses and faith commitments. The biblical authority is fundamentally religious and basically embedded in an encounter with Jesus Christ. The authority of the essentially religious text derives from the redemption in Jesus Christ. In this sense, the authority of the Bible is an "*authorized authority*" and also "*redemptive authority*" (Van Huyssteen 1989:178-179; 1997:154). However, on the level of theological reflection, the problem of the epistemological status of the Bible remains a "crucial part of theological argumentation."

The most constructive contribution of postfoundationalism to our discussion of scriptural authority can be made with its emphasis on *the integrated relation between epistemology and hermeneutics*. To search for the certain knowledge of the truth, scriptural foundationalists, on the one hand, tend to privilege the epistemological

agenda over the hermeneutical agenda. This propensity often leads to postponing hermeneutical obedience and application until they secure the epistemological certainty of the truth of Scripture. As a reaction against this tendency, nonfoundationalists, on the other hand, are inclined to disparage epistemology itself and instead to elevate hermeneutics to the so-called "first philosophy." In contrast to these extremes, a postfoundationalist approach insists that epistemology and hermeneutics are inherently linked, mutually conditioning, and reciprocally related, rather than mutually exclusive (Shults 1999:78). Therefore, postfoundationalism refuses to replace the valid search for epistemologically adequate explanations with mere hermeneutical understandings. To put it in our concern for authority, scriptural authority should be spoken of in terms of neither only objective-external criteria from the epistemological concern, nor exclusively functional-internal criteria from the hermeneutical concern, but rather in terms of both of them. Epistemological and hermeneutical concerns — knowing and doing, respectively — are dynamically integrated, mutually intercalated, and moving back and forth without giving priority to either movement. The authority of the Bible is about the truth that transcends our knowledge and about reality beyond us, and thus is imposed from outside. However, at the same time, scriptural authority must be recognised to be authoritative *for us* because our knowledge of truth and reality is always mediated by our interpretation of experience.

2.4.5 Assessment

The most promising contribution of a postfoundationalist approach can be discerned in its effort to chart a middle course between the Scylla of foundationalism and the Charybdis of nonfoundationalism. A well-versed postfoundationalism may be seen as an unremitting struggle to move beyond the false dichotomies between foundationalism and nonfoundationalism; between absolutism and relativism; between the objective unity of truth and subjective diversity of knowledge; between cognitive-propositional and non-propositional language of the Bible; between individual and community; between explanation and understanding; and between epistemology and hermeneutics. With the strong conviction that 'the quest for ultimate meaning in life cannot take place within a dichotomy between faith and knowledge, but only within their creative

interaction' (Van Huyssteen 1997:130), a postfoundationalist approach attempts to view those dichotomies, which are surely a misleading legacy of modernism, in terms of a *mutual relationship* rather than antithetical to each other.

The fallibilism implied in a postfoundationalist epistemology seems legitimate when recognising the influence of sin, which distorts everything we think, know, and do. A postfoundationalist fallibilism recognises the contextuality of our rational decision-making and the experiential and interpretative dimension of all our knowledge. More precisely, it recognises the *provisionality* of historically embedded understanding and culturally conditioned explanation of our beliefs. This epistemic fallibilism reveals the provisional, contextual character of our knowledge and thus demands *epistemic humility*. Here, one can draw out another significant contribution of a postfoundationalist approach to our discussion of scriptural authority, namely that it makes a room for, and opens up the promising avenue to, hermeneutical reflection.

However, a postfoundationalist emphasis on the fallibility of our truth claims does not exclude or bypass the objective unity of truth as a necessary condition for the intelligible search for knowledge. To the contrary, drawing on the insight of critical realism, a postfoundationalist approach relates the question of authority closely to the question of reality. Unlike nonfoundationalist propensity towards the demise of epistemology *per se*, postfoundationalism appreciates the fact that Christian truth involves cognitive-referential aspect and approves of *the epistemological status of the Bible* as the ultimate way to God. Put differently, the most fruitful vantage point provided by a postfoundationalist approach is that it allows for 'the creative fusion of hermeneutics and epistemology' (Van Huyssteen 1997:4), which will 'enable a focused (though fallibilist) quest for intelligibility through the epistemic skills of responsible, critical judgement and discernment' (Van Huyssteen 1999:33).

Speaking in terms of theological metaphor for scriptural authority, while scriptural foundationalism adopts a metaphor of "foundation for constructing an edifice" and nonfoundationalism uses a metaphor of "window," postfoundationalism enables us to restore a central metaphor for the Bible, *the Word of God* — whatever the different and

divergent interpretations of this metaphor might be. As seen in the notion of "the realism of the text," postfoundationalism makes the biblical text deeply entangled with the Reality to which it keeps referring. It implies that, without taking serious God Himself and His activities in redemption, full justice could not be done to our speaking of biblical authority.

2.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A departure point of this chapter is a presumption that, apart from looking into the intellectual influence, we are not able to comprehend fully a particular viewpoint on scriptural authority. Throughout this chapter, I thus have attempted to analyse and assess not only the philosophical presuppositions concerning various aspects of knowledge, reality, and language, but also corresponding accounts of scriptural authority made by two different views: the Old Princeton theology as a scriptural foundationalist approach and postliberal theology as a nonfoundationalist approach.

The Old Princeton theology's view of scriptural authority has been deeply influenced by several modern intellectual influences: epistemological foundationalism (a view of knowledge), Common Sense Realism and the correspondence theory (a view of truth), propositionalism (a view of language). Employing, implicitly or explicitly, those philosophical impetuses, the Old Princetonians have developed their ontological-objective notion of scriptural authority. Especially, it is important to note that the Old Princeton's view is deeply bound up with a devastating legacy of modernism, namely *the dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism,* which provides the framework of the dichotomous polarity between objective (external) and subjective (internal) authority; between ontological and functional authority for Princeton's articulation of scriptural authority.

Postliberal theology attempts to respond to the challenge of postmodernism and, at the same time, to suggest a renewed account of scriptural authority against the demise of modern epistemological foundationalism. For this task, postliberalism cooperates itself

with some philosophical influences different from the Old Princeton theology, such as nonfoundationalism (a view of knowledge), coherentism or instrumentalism (a view of truth), and narrativism (a view of language). Upon these reflections, we can draw a conclusion that a postliberal view of scriptural authority can be described as "functional-ecclesial."

Through this analysis, I have argued that neither the Old Princeton's scriptural foundationalism nor postliberal's nonfoundationalism might provide an appropriate epistemological framework for our discussion of scriptural authority. What is at stake in this chapter becomes to search for a more adequate epistemological model for a proper systematic account of scriptural authority. However, our arguments against both scriptural foundationalism and nonfoundationalism do not intend to deny the values of what they claim: rather, an alternative epistemological model should be that which could appreciate their strengths without collapsing into either extreme.

In this light, I have suggested that a postfoundationalist approach would carry valuable implications for our aim to seek a middle way between the Scylla of foundationalism and the Charybdis of nonfoundationalism. As an alternative epistemological model, postfoundationalism not only affirms the objective unity of truth, but also recognises the provisional, contextual, and fallible nature of our truth-claims. A postfoundationalist view of truth, in accordance with critical realism, offers a significant implication that, in spite of provisionality and partiality of our knowledge, we can still affirm the adequacy of truth mediated in Scripture primarily because Scripture is the ultimate way to the reality of God. In addition, according to a postfoundationalist view of language, any form of reductionist approach is rejected and both propositional and personal aspects of language must be seen as not mutually exclusive but mutually integrated. Considering all these, it may be said that the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth can be reaffirmed in the light of postfoundationalism. The uniqueness of the Bible lies in the very exclusive and ultimate way to the Reality that Christians believe is God. Moreover, the authority of Scripture can be, more plausibly yet still provisionally, understood as not only *authorized* authority, which derives from the redemption in Christ, but also

redemptive authority, which is ultimately intended to make us encounter in faith with Jesus Christ.

A crucial argument of this chapter is that our discussion of scriptural authority must take place and be validated by a broader framework of criteria encompassing epistemology, hermeneutics, and the doctrine of God. If we try to ground the authority of Scripture merely on the epistemological dimension — as is the case in a scriptural foundationalist approach — or merely on the hermeneutical dimension — as is the case in a nonfoundationalist approach —, then we cannot but find ourselves in the predicament. A way out of that impasse is charted by a postfoundationalist approach, which insists on a reciprocal relation between epistemology and hermeneutics. This postfoundationalist suggestion is not to say that the crisis of scriptural authority can be treated in such a way that epistemology comes first and then hermeneutics follows. Rather, the epistemological concern should be integrated, as a constitutive part, into the hermeneutical concern; by so doing, epistemology possibly interacts with hermeneutics in a dynamic way. In a word, one of the most constructive contributions made by a postfoundationalist approach is to pave the way that 'enables the epistemological lion to lie down with the hermeneutical lamb' — to cite Vanhoozer's insightful expression (2005:293).

To conclude: the affirmation of the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth must be understood in such a way as to be a *crucial part* of the whole theological argument about scriptural authority, which is constitutive of not only epistemological, but also doctrinal and hermeneutical reflections. This conclusion prompts us to put forward the rest of the whole argument, which will proceed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3

JOHN CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will explore the Reformers' thought on the authority of Scripture — in particular, the great Reformation theologian John Calvin's idea of scriptural authority. The Bible is God's gift for the whole people of God, not for any individual or group isolated from the whole community of God. Our story of life and faith ought to be seen as a part of the continuous story of the people of God in the Bible. When reading, interpreting, and obeying the Bible, we participate in the hermeneutical trajectory of the grand story of the Bible[49] and its continuing development in the history.[50] Especially, conservative-evangelicals including the Korean Presbyterian church have deemed the Reformation to be the turning point of their story as well as of theological history, and thus are characterised by their commitment to the Reformation tradition. In this sense, the Reformation tradition has been a central and indispensable root of the whole conservative-evangelical theology as well as its view of the authority of Scripture.

The overarching aim of this chapter is thus to listen carefully to the Reformation principles and insights about scriptural authority, and to apply them to our present talk of scriptural authority. For the Reformers, the question of the final authority was the pivotal issue on which, it can be said without exaggeration, the Reformation itself hinged. The Reformers attempted to provide a substitute for what the Roman Church provided as the assurance of an unquestionable authority. Against this, the most

---

[49] The issue of the biblical grand story will be dealt with in more depth in Chapter 4.

[50] For a popular, yet insightful, account of the history of Christian theology from the perspective of narrative, see Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (1999). In this work, Olson presents the development of Christian thought as a grand story containing many stories.

important issue at stake was "the hearing of God's own Word" through the Bible with certainty (Berkouwer 1975:59). In this light, it would be reasonable to expect from the Reformation period some helpful insights for our discussion of scriptural authority because just as 'the question of authority came to the front more prominently in that age than at any other point of history, before or since' (Davis 1946:11), so does in our contemporary context. By considering the Reformation tradition, therefore, our talk of scriptural authority would be not only challenged but also enriched with its valuable insights and implications

The outstanding legacy of the Reformation bequeathed to the conservative-evangelical view of Scripture can be best summed up in Martin Luther's great dictum, *sola Scriptura,* and John Calvin's notion of *the Word of God.* In spite of continuities and similarities between Calvin and Luther on their thought about the authority of Scripture, there are at least two reasons why remarkable attention and particular interest must be given to Calvin's idea: 'First, Calvin developed a more rounded account of knowledge of God, within which he located his account of the authority of Scripture. Second, he provided an intriguing account of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit as absolutely essential to his account of the normative status of Scripture' (Abraham 1998:130-131). Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be on John Calvin's idea of scriptural authority since Calvin was undoubtedly a prominent figure who formulated the leading principle of Protestantism as well as the Reformed tradition, that is, *the supreme authority and perfect sufficiency of Scripture.*

However, it is worthy of note that Calvin and the Reformers set forth their articulation of scriptural authority under quite a different context from ours and thus they did not have to confront all the problems concerning the authority of Scripture that we face. To cite James Packer's description (1974a:97-98):

> [Calvin] was not under pressure from epistemological problems about how God can be known and teach truths, nor from historical problems about the contents of biblical narratives, nor from problems raised by the account of this world which the natural sciences give, nor from theological problems about

whether inspiration could extend to the very words used; nor was he up against the post-Kantian dualism which affirms God's presence in man's psyche but effectively denies his Lordship over the cosmos as such — the dualism which is the basic presupposition, more or less explicit, of all the different classes of problems noted in our list.

Primarily because of this different context and accordingly different focus on the issues at stake, the purpose of examining the Reformation's hermeneutical tradition is neither to repeat or reproduce, nor to return to past glorious tradition. Nor does this chapter aim to determine a central Christian tradition of biblical authority by establishing 'genealogies of biblical authority' (Buchan 2004:43).[51] Rather, this chapter's overriding concern is to reappropriate the Reformation tradition so creatively that it is allowed to speak again in light of current research and in our particular setting. I thus will seek to reconsider the relevance of the essential insights of the Reformers in our context and research question about "the authority of Scripture."

In dealing with John Calvin's idea of scriptural authority, I will explore, by drawing on some scholars' insights, several aspects of his idea: epistemological idea of the knowledge of God, articulation of the authority of Scripture, and hermeneutics of Scripture. Through this brief exploration, I will attempt to answer a critical question as to how and to what extent we can rehabilitate the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* in our present discussion of the authority of Scripture. In addition, the implication of this chapter may cast light on the question as to whether or to what extent the legacy of the Reformers has been manifested concretely and embodied faithfully in scriptural foundationalists' view in the modern context where they find themselves.

---

[51] Arguably, in competing views of biblical authority in evangelicalism, an appeal to the history of Christian doctrine has been a common method to buttress their claims and to establish the historical priority of their views. To this end, evangelical authors would take sources from the Christian history including the Reformation and then try to identify an authentic Christian tradition. However, albeit remarkably accordant concerning the sources gathered and used, their interpretations of those sources seem to be radically diverse.

3.2 Calvin's Idea of Epistemology

3.2.1 The Starting Point of Calvin's Account of Scripture: *Duplex Cognitio Dei*

A distinctive characteristic of Calvin's theological method is often regarded as *complexio oppositorium*, that is, the intertwining together of things which seem to have exclusive, paradoxical quality to each other. For this reason, the possibility to grasp only one all-encompassing theme in Calvin's theology seems to be ruled out by most modern scholars. Nevertheless, for an examination of Calvin's theology, the *duplex cognitio,* the twofold knowledge of God and of human, is still regarded as *a* — or, *the* — controlling principle/structure of Calvin's theology by a number of scholars (Gamble 1988:179-180).[52] For our examination of Calvin's view of scriptural authority, the *duplex cognitio Dei* would be a legitimate starting point.

William Bouwsma (1982:190), in his article *Calvin and the Renaissance Crisis of Knowing*, argues that at the time of the sixteenth-century the Renaissance humanist revival of ancient rhetoric and philological investigation challenged the traditional, authoritarian, and optimistic view of knowing, and as a result brought about what he calls 'Renaissance crisis of knowing' with the revival of scepticism against a certainty of knowing. Against this trend of epistemological scepticism, a growing influence of experiential knowledge and instrumental knowledge as valid epistemological options can be discerned in the Renaissance thought (:198-199). These changing attitudes to ways of knowing had a huge impact on theological knowing — knowing about God and God's will — and resulted in a 'humanization of theology based on a recognition of the limits of the human understanding and an awareness therefore that theology is a human enterprise' (:200). Bouwsma's point is that John Calvin, standing in continuity with Renaissance Humanism, was deeply aware of this trend of thought, namely the

---

[52] Richard Gamble lists some of scholars who hold on to this view as such: Ford Lewis Battles, Tom Parker, Edward Dowey, J Köstlin, John Leith, Joseph McClelland, and Fritz Büsser. For more information, see Gamble (1988:180).

"Renaissance crisis of knowing" and was strenuously engaged with the problem of knowing that was shaping the intellectual world of his time (:201).

Calvin's preoccupation of the epistemological issue of knowing is discernible everywhere in his work, yet particularly prominent in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* of which the titles of the first two books are "The Knowledge of God the Creator" and "The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ." Through the first nine chapters of Book I that might function as a kind of epistemological introduction to the whole work, Calvin addresses the epistemological issue by providing fundamental discussions of what we can know, how we know it, and what it means to claim that we know something (Bouwsma 1988:153). The most fundamental question of Calvin's *Institutes* is an epistemological question: "How can a human know God?" The answer to this question, by Calvin, is sought through the theme of "the knowledge of God," which functions as the methodological guideline that sets the boundaries and conditions of his entire work. In a sense, the rest of the *Institutes* may be seen as Calvin's account of knowledge of God on the basis of Scripture. In this light, as James Packer (1974a:98) correctly points out, the best way to approach Calvin's account of Scripture is *through his reflection of the knowledge of God*.

Calvin introduces the topic of knowledge from the opening section of the *Institutes* (1.1.1): 'Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.' These two parts of knowledge are not two separate domains of knowledge which might be pursued independently; rather they must be understood in such a way as to be indivisibly related and interdependent. Self-recognition of 'our own ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, and…depravity and corruption' drives us to seek God and leads us to find the knowledge of God *(Institutes of the Christian Religion = Inst* 1.1.1). Without the knowledge of God, we never achieve a clear knowledge of ourselves because the knowledge of God is the only standard by which our judgement of ourselves must be measured. At the same time, we never contemplate God prior to ourselves because 'we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves' (*Inst* 1.15.1). The knowledge of ourselves is the

90

"correlative knowledge" derived from the knowledge of God the Creator and Redeemer. Put otherwise, we come to know God through the biblical depiction of God, whose face is turned towards us and correspondingly in which we are always described in terms of our relation to this known God, that is, as created by God, separated from God, and redeemed by God (Dowey 1952:20).

This mutual connection of knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves indicates Calvin's way of using the term "knowledge." The term "knowledge" is not purely noetic in Calvin's theology (Dowey 1952:3). It seems that Calvin is not interested in the technically epistemological use of the term "knowledge." The knowledge of God is, for Calvin (*Inst* 1.2.1), 'that by which we not only conceive that there is a God but also grasp what befits us and is proper to his glory, in fine, what is to our advantage to know of him.' The knowledge of God breaks in on our heart and mind. '[W]e are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart' (*Inst* 1.5.9). The knowledge of God is not to be thought of as "information about God," which can be mastered or possessed. 'The knowledge of God does not rest in cold speculation, but carries with it the honouring of him' (*Inst* 1.12.1). It is intended to mean 'a sustained personal awareness or existential apprehension of God, which profoundly determines one's existence' (Wood 1981:32). The knowledge of God and self-knowledge grow together. One comes to know God by virtue of disposing oneself towards God in a proper manner, which involves disposing oneself towards others and the world in correspondingly proper ways; in turn, only in the knowledge of God can one learn appropriately to dispose oneself towards God, others, and the world (Wood 1981:32).

At this juncture, it is important to point out that, in Calvin's theological epistemology that was in the line of pre-Enlightenment standard of epistemology,[53] the way of

---

[53] For a helpful presentation of Calvin's pre-modern epistemology, see Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God. A Diptych* (2005). In this comparative study, Van der Kooi points out that views of the two Reformed theologians — Calvin and Barth — on the knowledge of God are bifurcated into "pre-modern" and "modern," respectively, by the hinge of the 'diptych' provided by Kantian anthropocentric turn to the subject.

knowing God and worshiping Him was not separated. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves are interwoven so profoundly that what is to be known through the Bible entails not merely something about the claims but also something about ourselves (Helm 1992:310-311). With this twofold knowledge, 'language about God has *both* an objective *and* self-involving quality or logic' (Thiselton 1992:192). T F Torrance reiterates the point in a poignant way (1988:162-163):

> Knowledge of God is thus intensely personal and objective in which man becomes empirically aware of the presence of God and is directly affected in his own being and consciousness by the impact of the divine majesty and truth upon him. Knowledge of God does not take place without an anthropological coefficient, yet within the bipolarity between man and God that it entails the priority belongs to the divine side, for God alone is the sole standard *(unica regula)* in the formation of our judgments and the straightedge to which *(ad cuius amussim)* our understanding must be shaped.

Hennie Rossouw, a well-known South African philosopher, provides a helpful insight into how in Calvin's theology the knowledge of God and of ourselves can bring home to us in and through Scripture. Rossouw (1982:158) states the point lucidly:

> As the means of the *doctrina Dei*, Scripture is not a kind of textbook in the sense of an impersonal deposit of propositional information, to be articulated in and proclaimed as "doctrinal decrees" by a divinely ordained "teaching office." The paradigm for Calvin's use of the word *doctrina* is the pedagogical situation of a teacher having a personal relationship with his pupils, and continuously adapting himself to the level of comprehension of his pupils.

Scripture as *the doctrina Dei* relates to Calvin's metaphor of Scripture as "the school of the Holy Spirit," or "the school of God," which underlines 'an ongoing activity of teaching and learning within the context of a living encounter and fellowship.'

At the heart of Calvin's notion of *duplex cognitio Dei* is the emphasis on the integrity of the *objective* and the *personal* aspects of the knowledge of God under the aegis of the

activity of God upon us as the knowing subject. Put otherwise, the epistemological question of *how we can know God* could reach the hermeneutical question for the life of worship and obedience, that is, *how we can respond to the calling of God known to us through Scripture.*

3.2.2 Calvin's Epistemology in the Trinitarian Economy of Salvation

As we have noted above, Calvin, by engaging with the issue of epistemology, attempted to establish a true Christian, biblical epistemology. Calvin's epistemology in the *Institutes* is distinctively along the trinitarian line,[54] which is obviously differentiated from philosophical presuppositions of mediaeval scholastic theology. To be sure, Calvin begins with the epistemological question of the knowledge of God in the *Institutes*. However, as Stephen Williams (1995:173) delineates clearly, 'engagement with epistemology reveals the tragedy of the human condition, so that we await in the *Institutes* the announcement of a gospel that will do something about humanity which has, by disobedience, forfeited a part of the knowledge of God and made what remains salvifically impotent.' With Calvin's recognition of human's epistemological impotency by the suppression and corruption of sin, epistemology is in no sense separable from soteriology. Only within the economy of redemption, can the actual possibility of genuine knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, which is woven inseparably into the fabric of the former, emerge fully.

Therefore, in the *Institutes,* Calvin unfolds his epistemology in the first Book dealing with the knowledge of God the Creator, and then turns to soteriology in the second Book on the knowledge of God the Redeemer. Reminding us that the epistemology of the Book I cannot stand without the soteriology of the Book II, this logical structure

---

[54] For an account of the trinitarian structure, concern, and framework in Calvin's theology, see Butin (1995). Butin emphasises the prominence of the comprehensively trinitarian paradigm in Calvin's whole theology, in general, and his thought on the divine-human relationship, in particular. Also see Breukelman's thorough analysis of the trinitarian structure reflected in the composition and development of Calvin's *Institutes* (Breukelman 2010). According to Breukelman (2010:7,195-196), Calvin gave the trinitarian framework of an *Explicatio symboli* — a commentary on the Apostles Creed — not only to his *Institutes* of 1559 but also to his entire summary of sacred doctrine.

reveals that 'our knowledge of God as Trinity is an epistemological spin-off of being saved by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit' (Goldsworthy 1986:26).

To put the matter at its simplest, Calvin's epistemology can be fully understood from a vantage point of the trinitarian economy of salvation, from which to involve the Father, the witness of the Spirit, and the person and work of the Son.[55] In this light, Calvin's account of scriptural authority in the first Book of the *Institutes* must be understood as 'part of a broader and soteriologically oriented presentation of the knowledge of God through which alone we are restored to truthful self-knowledge' (Webster 2003:75-76). In what follows, I will examine how Calvin sets forth his theological thought of scriptural authority. To this end, I will give particular attention to Calvin's emphasis on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and to the priority of soteriological context of his account of scriptural authority.

3.3 CALVIN'S THOUGHT ON THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN THE *INSTITUTES*

3.3.1 The Place of the Discussion of Scriptural Authority in the *Institutes*

In the *Institutes*, Calvin's discussion of the issues about Scripture is developed mainly, though not exclusively, in chapters 6–9 of the first book, which follow on after his treatment of God's disclosure of Himself in human's innate awareness of God (*Inst* 1.3) and in the works of creation and providence (*Inst* 1.5). The *sensus divinitatis* cannot 'go farther than to render them (humans) inexcusable' because they deliberately smother light shines manifested by God in nature (*Inst* 1.5.14). Albeit the light of nature is bright enough to render human dullness and ignorance culpable, nevertheless it is not so bright to render the light of the Word unnecessary.

---

[55] For a helpful account of Calvin's trinitarian epistemology as a key paradigm for understanding Calvin's work as a whole, see James B Krohn's Stellenbosch doctoral dissertation, *Knowing the Triune God: Trinity and Certitude in the Theology of John Calvin* (2002).

It is noteworthy that one remarkable feature of Calvin's thought of the knowledge of God is *the clarity and comprehensibility of God's self-disclosure*. God's revelation is objectively clear, whether in creation or in Scripture. For Calvin the universe is a kind of "mirror" (*Inst* 1.6.1) or "theatre" (*Inst* 1.14.20) in which God and His glory are manifest and thus can be contemplated by us. However, human beings, due to the noetic effect of sin, have weak vision and cannot see clearly the revelation of God's creation. It is not because of the inadequacy of God's revelation but because of sin that the aid of spectacles is needed. Therefore, Scripture as spectacles, 'gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God' (*Inst* 1.6.1). Scripture is a special gift of grace to make sinners know God at all.

Therefore, though seemingly we have two sources of knowing God, namely nature and Scripture, however, more normative emphasis is to fall upon Scripture than nature mainly because without the better help or the aid of spectacles of Scripture, nature cannot 'direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe' (*Inst* 1.6.1). 'Now, in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture' (*Inst* 1.6.2). From this conclusion of chapter 6, which is also implied in its heading, *"Scripture Is Needed As Guide And Teacher For Anyone Who Would Come To God The Creator,"* Calvin proceeds to a deeper discussion of the authority of Scripture in chapters 7–9. These chapters on the authority of Scripture are inserted parenthetically before Calvin completes in chapter 10 the argument by a comparison between the content of the revelation in God's works and the content of the revelation in Scripture.

On the main points of chapters 7–9, we can review them briefly via the headings of each chapter. The heading of chapter 7 is, *'Scripture Must Be Confirmed By The Witness Of the Spirit. Thus May Its Authority Be Established As Certain; And It Is a Wicked Falsehood That Its Credibility Depends On The Judgment Of The Church.'* In this chapter, "the judgement (*indicia*) of the church" and "the witness (*testimonium*) of the Spirit" are distinguished, and main focus is on the latter from the viewpoint of believers.

The *testimonium* of the Spirit established the authority of Scripture to faith. In the heading of chapter 8, Calvin remarks, 'So far as human reason goes, sufficiently firm proofs are at hand to establish the credibility of Scripture.' Unlike chapter 7, this chapter is formulated for unbelievers. Here, the proofs seem to have a place independent of the witness of the Spirit. The proofs confirm the trustworthiness of Scripture and show that Scripture is indubitable to human reason. In chapter 9, Calvin refutes fanatic revelations: 'Fanatics, abandoning Scripture and flying over to revelation, cast down all the principles of godliness.' To oppose the fanatics, Calvin underscores the intrinsic majesty of the Word and argues that the Spirit must be examined by the Word.

What can be said from this review of structure is that Calvin deploys both *internal* proof and *external* proof in his argument concerning the authority of Scripture. That is, Calvin deals with the self-authenticating character of Scripture as the internal proof in chapter 7, on the one hand, and then offers a much lengthier treatment of the external proofs of credibility of Scripture, on the other hand. In what follows, I will consider the relationship of these two arguments and by so doing attempt to find out the key implication of Calvin's view of scriptural authority.

More particularly in the following sections, I will deal with three arguments that Calvin develops and the relationship between them: (1) the majesty of Scripture as the Word of God, (2) the testimony of the Spirit, and (3) the evidences of the truth of Scripture.

3.3.2 The Self-Authenticating Authority of Scripture as the Word of God[56]

For Calvin, the ultimate authority of Scripture comes from its being the Word of God. Calvin argues that 'the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men

---

[56] In Calvin's theological thought, the term "the Word of God" (*Verbum Dei)* has a range of referents: (1) the living Word of God by which God created and sustains the world; (2) the hypostatic Word of God (the Second Person of the Trinity) or the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ; (3) the inspired Word of God or the written Word of Scriptures; (4) the proclaimed Word of God, the public preaching of Christ by ministers, which, as the internal Word of the Spirit, testifies to the human mind and heart about the truth of God. These four meanings of the term "the Word of God" are distinguished, yet not separated. Thus, they can be understood fully in a way to be interrelated with each other.

regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard' (*Inst* 1.7.1). God is the real Author of Scripture and from this fact we can be convinced of the credibility of doctrine taught by Scripture. 'Thus, the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it' (*Inst* 1.7.4). Scripture is the Word of God which 'has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men' (*Inst* 1.7.5). Calvin, with other Reformers, underlines that only God can witness to Himself and that God's witness in that direct manner would thoroughly trustworthy. For Calvin, it is Scripture that God's fuller knowledge of Himself is mediated. Calvin believes that 'God himself directly or immediately authenticated and endorses his Word in the minds and consciences of men and women as they read or reflect on some part of it' (Helm 2004:248). Only God's own Word alone, not human authority, can provide the necessary certainty of faith and assurance of salvation Calvin and the other Reformers were looking for.

Scripture does not derive its authority as the Word of God from the church, but from itself. Calvin calls those who make the authority of Scripture dependent upon the consent or the determination of the church as 'sacrilegious men' that are looking for tyranny (*Inst* 1.7.1). Quite the opposite, the church is built upon "the foundation of the prophets and apostles," which has preceded the existence of the church. Therefore, the pious duty of the church is to recognise Scripture to be the truth of its own God, rather than to establish its authority (*Inst* 1.7.2).[57]

At the core of Calvin's view of the authority of Scripture lies the *self-authenticating* or *self-witnessing* character of Scripture (*Inst* 1.7.5). Here, careful attention needs to be paid to the term "self-authenticating," or "self-authenticated," which is a translation of the Greek adjective *autopistos* (αὐτόπιστος).[58] Calvin introduced the term *autopistos* in

---

[57] It is worthy of note that Calvin has the double attitude concerning the authority of the church. Calvin rejects the authority of the church as a foundation for the authority of Scripture. For this purpose, Calvin uses strong language to undermine the authority of the church. However, in the fourth book of the *Institutes*, Calvin appreciates the authority of the church as "mother" of believers in preparing them for faith. Calvin returns to the topic of the authority of Scripture in the context of the church as the external means by which God invites us to the society of Christ.

[58] On this matter, I owe much to the historical study of Henk van den Belt's *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology*, in which he examines the meaning and background of theological concept of *autopistos* in Calvin's theology. Especially, in chapter 2 and 3 of his book, Van den Belt traces the use

the final edition of the *Institutes* (1559). By deliberately using the Greek term in Latin texts, Calvin suggested that *autopistos* had a particular nuance that was too difficult to translate with the Latin alternatives (Van den Belt 2008:71). What implication then did Calvin intend to carry by using the term *autopistos*? According to Van den Belt, Calvin with his remarkable linguistic sensitivity chose the Greek term *autopistos* instead of a Latin equivalent. Because of the element of trust (πιστός), the term αὐτόπιστος can convey the double connotation of "truth" or "truthfulness" and of "trust" or "faith." Van den Belt (2008:308) explains Calvin's use of *autopistos* in a theological context as follows:

> Calvin was aware of the philosophical meaning of αὐτόπιστος when he adopted the term for and adapted it to Scripture; he used it metaphorically, but his theological application had much in common with the original philosophical meaning of the term. In philosophy self-convincing *principia* need no demonstration and in Calvin's theology Scripture needs no proof. In philosophy the term expresses the self-convincing character of axioms in a context of education, and in Calvin's theology it expresses how those taught by the Spirit are convinced that Scripture is trustworthy. In philosophy the meaning of αὐτόπιστος is illustrated with sensory perception and in Calvin's theology, too, Scripture gives as clear a *sensus* of its own truth as colors or flavors.

Through the "baptism" of the philosophical term, Calvin transposed the term *autopistos* from the realm of *reason* to the realm of *grace*. Thus, when using the term *autopistos*, Calvin did not intend to suggest that Scripture must be regarded as the axiomatic *principium* of theology in a philosophical sense. Rather, Scripture itself convinces its truthfulness because of its contents. 'Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste' (*Inst* 1.7.2). Recognising the authority of Scripture is similar to recognising a colour or a taste for oneself with his/her own senses. The self-authenticating Scripture with its own majesty creates its own faith and trust. In other words, to say that Scripture

and occurrences of the term *autopistos* in not only Calvin's various editions of the *Institutes* but also his other works.

98

is *autopistos* implies that it not only contains the truth, but also deserves our faith and trust. Self-authenticating Scripture not only is the *truth*, but also requests *trust*.

To sum up: for Calvin, Scripture does not claim its authority as the Word of God in a way dependent on any external authority such as the church, but rather by Scripture itself, and hence *self-authenticating*. The self-authentication of Scripture implies that believers, recognising the majesty of Scripture as the Word of God, find rest in it with the certainty of faith and the assurance of salvation. Through Scripture God manifests the true knowledge of God and discloses Himself to be the Lord and the Redeemer.

3.3.3 The Legitimation of the Divine Authority of Scripture by the Holy Spirit: *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*

In the chapter 7 of the Book I, Calvin deals particularly with the extent to which the internal witness of the Spirit relates to the authority of Scripture. For Calvin, authentic proof of the divine authority of Scripture as the Word of God ought to be sought 'in a higher place than human reasons, judgement, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit' (*Inst* 1.7.4). The highest proof for Scripture comes from the fact that God Himself speaks in it. God alone knows Himself and can witness to Himself. Therefore, the authority of Scripture as the Word of God must be confirmed by God Himself, more precisely, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Calvin made a clear point (*Inst* 1.7.4):

> [T]he testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.

In this way, the self-authenticating Scripture, which claims that Scripture bears its own witness to its validity, has to do with the point that the truth of Scripture, which is

related directly or indirectly to God the Creator and Redeemer, is sealed in believers' hearts by the internal witness of the Spirit. This point is summed up in a more explicit way by Calvin (*Inst* 1.7.5):

> Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men.

Here, one can find a key element of Calvin's account of the self-authentication of Scripture, that is, *the intimate connection of the self-authenticating character of Scripture with the internal witness of the Spirit*. Strictly speaking, the authority of Scripture does not rest upon believers' faith; "self-authenticating" is a characteristic of Scripture regardless of faith. Scripture is self-authenticating *before* it is believed. However, in Calvin's thought, the self-authentication of Scripture is never isolated from the internal testimony of the Spirit. Whenever speaking of the witness of Scripture, Calvin couples it immediately with the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit." On the one hand, Calvin holds tenaciously to "the ultimateness and objectivity of scriptural revelation," which implies that everything essential for our salvation has been done; on the other hand, he holds that scriptural revelation cannot have meaning for the life of faith and become a present fact in the life of believers without the internal testimony of the Spirit. In this sense, we may say that Calvin's insistence upon the intuitive grasp of the authority and truthfulness of Scripture (*Inst* 1.7.2) is qualified by his doctrine of *testimonium Spiritus sancti*.

Was it due to Calvin's feeling unsatisfactory to the objectivity of Scripture — its truthfulness and self-authentication — that he gave full weight to a *testimonium internum*? Is it justifiable to accuse Calvin's prominence to the testimony of the Spirit for paving the way towards subjectivism? To answer this question, we need to take into account the context of the controversial situation at the time of the Reformation, against which Calvin put his emphasis on the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*. Simply stated, facing the quest for the certainty of faith, the Roman Catholic position laid very strong emphasis upon the authority of the church, 'in which the *testimonium ecclesiae* played an important part in the attainment of certainty' (Berkouwer 1975:40). Quite to the contrary, for Calvin and the Reformers, the certainty of faith and assurance of salvation could not rely on the arbitrary human judgment of the church. Rather, it is not *testimonium ecclesiae*, but *testimonium Spiritus sancti* that can guarantee the assurance of salvation. The testimony of the Spirit was emphasised as a safeguard against spiritual tyranny and bondage, which the Reformers regarded as the Roman Catholic Church at that time.

Therefore, it is a misunderstanding of Calvin's intention to see the relationship between the objective authority of Scripture and the internal witness of the Spirit in terms of *externum* and *internum*. Calvin did not speak of the internal witness of the Spirit as the subjective counterpart of the objective and external authority of Scripture. Rather, the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* was intended to counterbalance the *testimonium ecclesiae*, that is, the Roman Catholic emphasis on the magisterium of the church in the matter of certainty of faith.

In the logic of Calvin's thought, it seems obvious, the objectivity of Scripture is logically and chronologically precedes the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*. However, from a concern for faith and spirituality, Calvin did not restrict any talk of scriptural authority only to an intellectual acceptance of the trustworthiness of Scripture because it is possible to acknowledge the authority of Scripture as the truth without trusting it. More significantly, Calvin's articulation of the authority of Scripture in the *Institutes* was closely related with his conviction that '*the living Triune God is still speaking through the Scriptures in the present*' and his fervent concern about hearing the 'voice of the

101

living, speaking God today' (Smit 2007:388). Put differently, Calvin stressed the testimony of the Spirit in spite of running the risk of being associated with the so-called spiritualism in order to remind us that belief in Scripture should not be something impersonal or merely objective. A true Christian faith including belief in Scripture must entail a trust in a personal God. Just as the knowledge of God is relational, so Scripture not only provides the knowledge of God but also brings believers in the context of relationship with God. The authority of Scripture ought to be seen as 'the authority of the Lord who has entered into covenant with his people, and rules them by his given word' (Jensen 2002:212). For the Reformers, speaking of the authority of Scripture always entails our covenantal relationship with God, which depends upon trust in His promises and according to which the acknowledgment of scriptural authority must involve the reverence and humility. With the concept of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, Calvin emphasised this covenantal, personal character of Scripture in relation to believers whom God has redeemed. In other words, the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* is not necessary for Scripture itself, but it is *for us*. As we shall see later, Calvin's emphasis on the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* has deeply to do with his practical, spiritual concern rather than the formalisation of scriptural authority.

3.3.4 The Secondary Role of External Proofs: *Indicia*

Calvin made a clear distinction between internal and external proofs for the authority of Scripture. Given this, priority was given to the former over the latter. Without the internal proofs by the Spirit, any attempt to fortify the authority of Scripture by arguments and evidences would be ineffective. Calvin wrote (*Inst* 1.8.1):

> Unless this certainty, higher and stronger than any human judgment, be present, it will be vain to fortify the authority of Scripture by arguments, to establish it by common agreement of the church, or to confirm it with other helps. For unless this foundation is laid, its authority will always remain in doubt. Conversely, once we have embraced it devoutly as its dignity deserves, and have recognized it to be above the common sort of things, those arguments —

102

not strong enough before to engraft and fix the certainty of Scripture in our minds — become very useful aids.

Calvin is clear at this point: the external proofs can play merely a *subsidiary* role in attesting the credibility of Scripture. Throughout the chapter 8 of Book I of the *Institutes*, Calvin outlines a set of considerations to various external proofs, which would provide good grounds for believing that Scripture is the Word of God, such as the captivation of Scripture surpassing human writings like Cicero, Plato, and others; the great antiquity of Scripture; the vindication of prophecies fulfilled, the law and the prophets preserved; the style of the evangelists; the Paul's remarkable conversion; the consent of the church; the universal impact of the Scriptures; and the fidelity of the martyrs. All these proofs, though only a few instances out of many, provide cumulative proofs vindicating the credibility of Scripture.

When using these external evidences, Calvin was inevitably "a child of his own time." To some extent, it is doubtful whether external evidences Calvin employed to buttress the authority of Scripture are useful or relevant any more for today. For very that reason, external proofs are not sufficient to establish the faith with certainty; they serve only to contradict objections to the truthfulness of Scripture. This argument is made more explicit in Calvin's final words of chapter 8 (*Inst* 1.8.13):

> There are other reasons, neither few nor weak, for which the dignity and majesty of Scripture are not only affirmed in godly hearts, but brilliantly vindicated against the wiles of its disparagers; yet of themselves these are not strong enough to provide a firm faith, until our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty there, lifts reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy. Therefore Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, these human testimonies which exist to confirm it will not be vain if, as secondary aids to our feebleness, they follow that chief and highest testimony. But those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly, for only by faith can this be known.

Here Calvin does not rule out the role of external arguments in establishing the authority of Scripture, but rather Calvin's interest in external proofs is manifestly *secondary* and *inferior to* the internal testimony of the Spirit. They can 'at best offer confirmation of a faith already, and provide arguments that may disarm the critic' (Helm 2004:251). In spite of their usefulness, external evidences are not sufficient to establish with full certainty the authority of Scripture as the Word of God since only God can establish the divine authority of Scripture for Himself. Calvin therefore emphatically stated (*Inst* 1.7.4): 'If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences — that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation, and that they may not also boggle at the smallest quibbles — we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit.'

What is especially noteworthy at this point is that the asymmetry in Calvin's treatment of the external proofs for the authority of Scripture is modified and interpreted in a different way within a different context. One can find its typical example in Warfield.[59] In his article *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Warfield interprets Calvin in terms of the object-subject dichotomy (1931:82-83):

> Calvin's formula here is, The Word and Spirit. Only in the conjunction of the two can an effective revelation be made to the sin-darkened mind of man. The Word supplies the objective factor; the Spirit the subjective factor; and only in the union of the objective and subjective factors is the result accomplished. The whole objective revelation of God lies, thus, in the Word. But the whole subjective capacitating for the reception of this revelation lies in the will of the Spirit.

On this reading, Warfield understands what he calls *indicia* — the external evidences — as the objective side of the authority of Scripture, and the *testimonium* as the subjective side. By Warfield's definition (1931:87,89), the *testimonium* is a subjective operation of

---

[59] On Warfield's perception of Calvin, see Van den Belt (2008), especially chapter 5. My argument of this section is indebted to Van den Belt's insight.

the Spirit on the soul and mind of believers, by which it is opened for the objective revelation that is provided by Scripture because 'the work of the Spirit is not of the nature of a revelation, but of a confirmation of the revelation deposited in the Scriptures.' Thus, only when these two factors *unite* can knowledge be rendered both possible and certain. According to Warfield (:85-87), the fact that the *indicia* are insufficient to assure us of the divinity of Scripture apart from the *testimonium* does not mean that the *testimonium* is sufficient apart from the *indicia*. Put differently, there is no antithesis between *indicia* and *testimonium*. The *indicia* work together with the testimony of the Spirit. '[W]hen the soul is renewed by the Holy Spirit to a sense for the divinity of Scripture, it is through the *indicia* of that divinity that it is brought into its proper confidence in the divinity of Scripture' (:87). For this reason, Warfield maintains that the *indicia* must be recognised as 'co-factors' in the production of sound faith. In Warfield's estimation, however, Calvin does not seem explicitly to speak of this cooperative role of the *indicia* (:88).

It seems clear that Warfield attempts to systemise Calvin's thought and, for that purpose, places the testimony of the Spirit in the broader context of the general and special knowledge of God. With developing Calvin's concept in a more systematic way, Warfield, though corresponding to Calvin's idea, goes beyond Calvin. Warfield's reinterpretation of and emphasis upon Calvin's concept of the *indicia* is due to his resolved rejection of the Schleiermacherian revival of the *testimonium* as a subjective and personal experience, which leads to 'bitter fruit in a widespread subjectivism,' and accordingly relinquishes 'the authority of those very Scriptures to which the testimony of the Spirit is borne' (Warfield 1931:125). From Warfield's view, Schleiermacher's revival of the *testimonium* is 'rather the revival of subjectivity in religion than of the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit as the basis of all faith' (:124-125). To assure the objective authority of Scripture against subjectivism, Warfield insists on the importance of the *indicia* for the *testimonium* and by so doing he unites what Calvin separates, namely the external evidences for the unbelievers and the internal witness of the Spirit for believers. For Warfield, the self-authentication of Scripture is not a confessional affirmation of the authority of Scripture as was in Calvin's thought, but an objective and demonstrable attribute of Scripture. Scripture is self-authenticating because of the

indicia, and the *testimonium* is necessary because of the subjective blindness of the soul (:113). From Warfield's view, the authority of Scripture is not affirmed by the *testimonium* because it is already proved by objective evidences.

Within the framework of the subject-object dichotomy that tends to view "a final appeal to the testimony of the Spirit for the authority of Scripture" as subjectivistic, Warfield's objective approach to the authority of Scripture puts more weight on the necessity of apologetics and the importance of the external evidences than Calvin did. It seems obvious that Calvin and Warfield share a common concern, that is, to defend the authority of Scripture against human arbitrariness. However, the different contexts they find themselves brought about the difference of focal points in articulating the authority of Scripture. For Calvin the *testimonium* is fundamental and the *indicia* are secondary; however, for Warfield the *indicia* are fundamental and the *testimonium* is auxiliary. Calvin's emphasis on the *testimonium* was from his concern to ground the authority of Scripture on God Himself rather than on the uncertain bedrock of the magisterium of the church. Warfield's emphasis on the *indicia* can be understood more fully against the background of his polemic stance against the growing influence of Schleiermacher.

3.3.5 The Integral Relationship between External Authority of Scripture and Internal Testimony of the Spirit: *The Mutual Bond of the Word and the Spirit*

How then can we understand the relationship of between the Word and the Spirit, more precisely, between the self-authenticating authority of Scripture and the testimony of the Spirit?

Calvin's notion of the self-authenticating Scripture reflects a dominant principle which governs not only the *Institutes* but also all Calvin's thought in both content and method, namely *'the supreme principle of objectivity,'* to cite Torrance's phrase (1988:64). The self-authentication of Scripture means that Scripture retains its own majesty. The *objectivity* of Scriptural authority means that Scripture as the ultimate truth of God can

106

be testified not by ecclesial authority but by God Himself — the divine Spirit — and hence that the truth of Scripture is to be acknowledged only in accordance with what it is independently in itself. In other words, the authority of Scripture is not an attribute of believers, but of Scripture *per se*. Scripture as the Word of God stands over against believers, challenges them, and transforms their hearts. Calvin's emphasis on the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* does not mean that the authority is not vested in Scripture itself but rather in the Spirit speaking through it (Gerrish 1982:64). Rather, as we have already noted, Calvin's real intention is to rebuff the Roman Catholic claim that the authority of Scripture is dependent on the testimony of the church. Therefore, for Calvin, the locus of authority rests not with the *subject* who interprets it — whether individual Christian or the Church —, but with the *object* — Scripture itself. This transference of the centre of authority from the magisterium of the church to Scripture as the truth of God had a decisive significance in Calvin's idea of scriptural authority.

At this point, we need to pay careful attention to a subtlety of Calvin's thought. On the one hand, the point of Calvin's notion of the self-authenticating Scripture is unambiguous: the authority intrinsic to Scripture is firmly claimed without the accreditation of that authority by us and hence in this sense "objective"; the authority as such and the authority with us must be distinguished. On the other hand, however, through the prominence of *the testimonium Spiritus sancti,* Calvin sought to provide the issue of authority with a significant ground for going beyond the notion of a purely external or purely objective authority. What matters for Calvin is the religious aspect of epistemological question, namely *how we can know that Scripture is the Word of God* and thereby *how we can listen to the Word of God with reverence and obedience*. Therefore, it may be said that Calvin's much greater concern is given to "the authority with believers", that is, 'the authority as registered in the hearts of believers' (Murray 1960:46). The acceptance of Scripture as the Word of God is possible only through the work of the Spirit because the authority of Scripture does not rely upon any human element — even upon faith. It should be noted that the acceptance of Scripture via the testimony of the Spirit is the result of the objective authority that Scripture already obtains in and of itself. For Calvin, the authority of Scripture is inseparably interwoven with the testimony of the Spirit, just as the stem is organically conjoined with the fruit.

The authority and the *testimonium* are to be distinguished, yet inseparable, and hence *mutually interrelated*. The *extra nos* of the authority is distinguishable from the *in nobis* of the testimony, but both are indissolubly connected.[60]

In chapter 9 of Book I of the *Institutes*, Calvin approaches the reciprocal relationship between Word and Spirit in another way of thinking. That is, Calvin affirms the significance of *the mutual bond of the Spirit and the Word* particularly against the background of standing against the "enthusiasts" or "fanatics" who consider Scripture as the dead letter and appeal to only the Spirit, abandoning Scripture. For Calvin, an appeal to the Spirit is in no sense to deny the authority of the Word. The Holy Spirit must be recognised by His harmony with Scripture, because 'He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself. Hence he must ever remain just as he once revealed himself there' (*Inst* 1.9.2). The work of the Spirit is neither inventing new revelations, nor forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the doctrine taught by Scripture; rather it is 'sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the gospel' (*Inst* 1.9.1). Therefore, if we are to acquire any benefit from the Spirit of God, we must engage ourselves in reading and hearing Scripture (*Inst* 1.9.2). Thus Calvin says that 'the Holy Spirit so inheres in His truth, which He expresses in Scripture, that only when its proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does the Holy Spirit show forth His power' (*Inst* 1.9.3).

At this point, it would be helpful to consider the different contexts within which Calvin accentuated both the intrinsic majesty of Scripture and the testimony of the Spirit. Calvin's arguments were contoured amidst his battle on two different fronts. On the one hand, to oppose the captivity of scriptural authority to the magisterium of the church, Calvin underlined the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* and by so doing sought to put Scripture back where it truly belonged, that is, in the hands of the Spirit. On the other hand, to oppose the Radical Reformation's abandonment of Scripture that resulted from a radical reaction against the slavery of Scripture to the church, Calvin put stress on the

---

[60] For this reason, Murray's observation of Calvin's seemingly ambiguous attitude towards a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity may be to some degree right (Murray 1960:44): 'It may have to be conceded that this distinction is not as clearly formulated in Calvin as we might desire. At least, as far as the term "authority" is concerned, there appears to be some ambiguity.'

intrinsic majesty of Scripture. Responding to these two positions that set the Spirit apart from the Word, Calvin insisted that the Word and the Spirit must be understood to belong together. The Spirit does not substitute for, or supplement, the Word; but rather the Spirit authenticates the Word.

The strong attachment of the Spirit to the Word, however, does not necessarily mean that the Spirit is subordinate to the Word. Rather, it is the matter of inner consistency of the Spirit, who both inspired the Scriptures in the past and convinces believers of their truth in the present (Heron 1983:105). Because of the depth of our depravity, the Word is unavailable without the Spirit. The work of the Spirit ought not to be seen as restricted to the Word written or preached. Albeit the Spirit works through the instruments of the Word, the sovereign freedom of the Spirit of God over those ordained means must be affirmed (Milner Jr 1970:191; Lopes 1997:44-46). The Holy Spirit as the sovereign God cannot be subordinate to the Word; rather, 'the Spirit wills to be conjoined with God's Word by an indissoluble bond' (*Inst* 4.8.13). Calvin makes explicit the notion of the Word as a means or instrument 'by which the Lord dispenses the illumination of his Spirit to believers' (*Inst* 1.9.3).

We can find a significant motivation of Calvin's pneumatological prominence to the issue of the authority of Scripture in his genuine concern for spirituality. Calvin's theological intention, which is manifestly spiritual and pietistic rather than dogmatic or speculative, was made clear in the opening remarks of his prefatory address to King Francis I, which accompanied the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536 (*Inst* :9): 'My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness.' With this practical concern, Calvin wrote (*Inst* 1.5.9): '[W]e are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart.' The knowledge of God cannot be obtained 'where there is no religion or piety' (*Inst* 1.2.2). For this reason, Dowey (1952:26) argues that Calvin was primarily interested in the religious or existential aspects of knowledge of God, in which knowledge 'determines the existence of the knower.'

In her insightful book *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, Ellen Charry (1997:217), professor of historical and systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, maintains that Calvin's whole theology needs to be read from the perspective of what she calls the 'aretegenic agendum.'[61] In her estimation (:212), the deeper issue, for Calvin, is 'who you are, who God calls and enables you to be(come),' that is, a matter of *character-transformation* with God's help. For Calvin, argues Charry (:205-219), theology is to invite believers to be transformed by knowing and loving God into piety, which engenders Christian virtues such as reverence, obedience, humility, and gratitude. Through this transformation, divine pedagogy leads Christians to the aim of Christian life, namely the renewal of the *imago Dei*. Within Calvin's pastoral concern, the knowledge of God is on every occasion related to 'forming excellent character and promoting genuine happiness' (:18).

Serene Jones, president of Union Theological Seminary, seems to be in convergence with Carry on this point. Through exploring Calvin's rhetorical strategies in the 1559 *Institutes*, Jones (1995) portraits Calvin as a practical theologian (or even an artist) rather than a speculative one in general, and emphasises the eminently practical and pastoral character of the *Institutes* in particular. According to Jones (:35), Calvin's primary concern was the shaping of the disposition of *pietas* in his readers/audiences. Out of this concern, Calvin's use of rhetorical language was intended and designed 'to engage and shape his audiences' habits of thinking, attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions' (:48). Judged from this rhetorical criteria, it becomes evident that the purpose of Calvin was not 'to present a set of propositional truth claims about where one should begin the theological enterprise,' but rather 'to convert and redispose him or her' by convincing, confronting, and empowering his audiences with the truth of Scripture as the Word of God (:122). In other words, for Calvin, knowledge cannot be held apart from piety; piety is requisite for the knowledge of God. The knowledge of God always involves 'the dispositional reorientation of the one who holds it' towards God (:124).

---

[61] Charry (1997:19) coins new words, "aretegenic" and "aretology," to express the connotation that she intends to carry. In her neologism, the adjective "aretegenic," which derives from the ancient Greek *areté* ("virtue") and *gennao* ("to beget"), means "conductive to virtue." With the term "aretegenic," Charry intends to elucidate 'the virtue-shaping function of the divine pedagogy of theological treatises' (:19).

Drawing on Charry's and Jones's insights, we can legitimately say that Calvin's genuine concern for the self-transformation into the *imago Dei* or the dispositional reorientation towards God through knowing God led him to linking deliberately the testimony of the Spirit closely to the objective authority of Scripture. In such a way as to eschew falling into either the extreme of objectivism or subjectivism, Calvin united the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* with the self-authentication of Scripture. In a somewhat similar vein, William Abraham (1998:137) maintains that the Reformers' appeal to Scripture was located 'in the context of piety or spirituality, for they were profoundly concerned about coming to know God, receiving the gift of eternal life, living a godly life, and entering final glory.' For the Reformers, the knowledge of God was inextricably related to salvation rather than religious experience, natural reason, the tradition of the church, or its current teaching. In other words, Calvin and the Reformers looked on Scripture as providing the norm of all claims about the identity, character, and action of God towards His people, and thereby as forming and transforming the identity, dispositions, and praxis of the church.

3.3.6 Calvin's Theological Foundationalism

From Calvin's idea of the self-authenticating authority of Scripture firmly attached by the testimony of the Spirit, what implication can we draw out to discern his epistemological stance? When Calvin (*Inst* 1.8.1) says that 'unless this foundation is laid, its authority will always remain in doubt,' did he intend to imply that his position was "foundationalistic"? If we admit that Calvin is foundationalist, is there any difference between Calvin's foundationalism and modern classical foundationalism?

In the book on religious epistemology *Warranted Christian Belief*, the Reformed epistemologist Alvin Plantinga looks into Calvin's thought on the authority of Scripture from the viewpoint of the rational justification of belief in God and in the Christian message — in Plantinga's terms, "warrant," which indicates the property to make the difference between knowledge and mere true belief (2000:xi). According to Plantinga (1983:72; 2000:175), Christian belief in God is "properly basic" in a sense that 'it is rational to accept it without accepting it on the basis of any other propositions or beliefs

111

at all.' Warrant for this theistic belief is given in a much more immediate way, that is, the *sensus divinitatis* in Calvin's thought. God has created us in such a way that we have a strong tendency towards belief in Him. 'Were it not for the existence of sin in the world, human beings would believe in God to the same degree and with the same natural spontaneity that we believe in the existence of other persons, an external, or the past' (Plantinga 1983:66). In the same breath, Plantinga (2000:259) asserts that belief in the authority of Scripture as the Word of God is formed in the basic way: it does not proceed by way of rational arguments. The difference is that whereas the basic belief in the existence of God obtains its warrant by way of the *sensus divinitatis* as a *universal* bestowal upon the human beings, the basic belief in Scripture as the Word of God is a *particular* bestowal upon believers by the intrusion of the Spirit into their mind. Plantinga continues to spell out what Calvin means by the concept of "self-authenticating." In Plantinga's estimation (2000:260), Calvin does not mean to say that 'the Holy Spirit induces belief in the proposition *the Bible…comes to us from the very mouth of God*.' Rather, the Holy Spirit teaches us the internal cognitive content of Scripture and convinces us to believe that the teaching of Scripture is both true and from God. In this sense, what Calvin claims with the idea of the self-authentication of Scripture is in no sense that the truths of the gospel are *self-evident* in terms of modern classical foundationalism. Calvin does not intend to say that 'Scripture is self-authenticating in the sense that it offers evidence for *itself* or somehow *proves* itself to be accurate or reliable' (Plantinga 2000:261). Rather, what Calvin actually means is that 'Scripture is self-authenticating in the sense that for belief in the great things of the gospel to be justified, rational, and warranted, no historical evidence and argument for the teaching in question, or for the veracity or reliability or divine character of Scripture …are necessary' (Plantinga 2000:262). To put it another way, Calvin's idea of self-authentication should not be interpreted as "incorrigible," "indubitable," or "self-validating" in terms of classical foundationalism not least because the Reformed thinkers might be at odds with the idea of classical foundationalism, according to which in every rational noetic structure emerges a set of beliefs taken as basic and those basic beliefs must be self-evident or incorrigible to senses (Plantinga 1983:72; 2000:175). In this regard, Calvinist theologian Paul Helm (2004:255) also points out that 'it would be

anachronistic to suppose that Calvin was using "foundation" in a way that coincides with modern epistemological usage.'

It seems that Plantinga, as an epistemologist, interprets Calvin's idea of self-authentication from the concern with the rational justification or warrant of Christian belief. In other words, Plantinga appeals to Calvin's account of the testimony of the Spirit for an externalist epistemology. However, Plantinga's focus on rationality is to some degree different from what Calvin has in mind. As noted before, Calvin's main concern was piety and spirituality of God's people rather than rationality or warrant. It may be that Calvin endorses the reasonableness of accepting the teachings of Scripture as the Word of God on the testimony of the Spirit, since God is the source of all truths and all rationality. Nevertheless, it seems more plausible to me that the centre of gravity in Calvin's thinking about the self-authentication of Scripture lies in a religious and pietistic question rather than an epistemological question about rational justification. In this sense, Helm rightly says (2004:269):

> Rather than have a characteristically modern interest in reason and rationality, Calvin has a pre-modern concern with religious authority, and with different and competing sources of such authority….Perhaps it is more rational to have the Bible grounded in itself rather than in something external to it, but that (for Calvin) is not the main point, and may not be the point at all.

Keeping in mind the fact that the main emphasis of epistemology is on exploring methods of analysing rational justification, approaching Calvin's thought merely from an epistemological perspective fails to do justice to his concern for religious piety. Calvin's main concern is not to find a correct epistemological method for providing us with reliable knowledge. Calvin does not express so much interest in knowledge in the classical sense of *scientia,* which is gained by discursive proofs, as the certainty or credibility of *notitia*. Thus, for Calvin, 'credibility of doctrine is not established until we are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its Author' (*Inst* 1.7.4).

Given our discussion so far, Calvin's idea of knowledge is to be described as a kind of what William Abraham calls "theological foundationalism" (1998:137). This description needs some qualification. As is pointed out repeatedly, Calvin's theological foundationalism should be distinguished from modern epistemological foundationalism. In the modern epistemological sense, Calvin's position is certainly not a species of evidentialism since no reasoning from external evidence is involved. However, it is not saying that Calvin's position is purely internalistic. The self-authentication of Scripture is evidence-relevant. At this point, it is worth quoting Helm at length on Calvin's middle way (2004:275):

> When assessed in terms of the externalism-internalism contrast Calvin can at best be only *a half-way house externalist*; externalist with respect to the mechanism of the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, but internalist with respect to the immediacy of the evidence on which the belief is grounded. When he refers to the divine side of self-authentication, to the faith-producing activity of the Holy Spirit, to his illumination of the mind, this has a distinctly externalist ring to it. The Spirit must 'penetrate into our hearts to persuade us', he seals the truth in our hearts, we must be 'illumined by his power'. But where he refers to the human side of things, this penetrating and sealing activity of the Spirit is manifested in discerning the majesty of God upon reading or hearing Scripture. It is on account of the perception he has of this majesty and other connected matters that the believer forms the immediate conviction that this is the Word of God, but this conviction is formed and imbued in the mind by the illuminating work of the Spirit. So this looks not to be purely externalist…but *an externalist-internalist hybrid* [italics mine].

To conclude: Calvin's thought on epistemology may be seen as a kind of foundationalism, not in a sense of modern epistemological foundationalism which seeks for self-evident and incorrigible foundation for knowledge, but in a theological sense which concerns for soteriology and spirituality. Hence, Calvin's theological foundationalism must be identified with neither classical epistemological foundationalism nor scriptural foundationalism. Unlike a modern tendency to collapse into the object-subject dichotomy, Calvin's thought on the knowledge of God and ourselves, due to its great

114

interest in spirituality and piety, kept chartering a middle way between objectivity and subjectivity, between externalist and internalist.

3.4 CALVIN'S HERMENEUTICS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

3.4.1 The Interrelation of Authority and Interpretation

Admittedly, the Reformers' understanding of scriptural authority was formulated against its medieval background. As Brian Gerrish (1982:51) puts it, the Reformers' view of the authority of Scripture was brought about, in part, directly out of medieval Scholasticism 'not by conscious opposition, but by unquestioning acceptance.' Medieval theology regarded Scripture as the most important source of Christian doctrine and thus adopted a high view of Scripture including a rigorous doctrine of biblical inspiration. To the extent that both the medieval Schoolmen and the Reformers resorted to Scripture for the validation of their theological convictions, it may be said that the Reformers were in continuity with medieval theology at least at that point. Where then can we find the Reformers' departure from medieval theology on the matter of scriptural authority? The answer to this question can be offered by referring to the essential difference between them concerning 'how Scripture is *defined* and *interpreted*, rather than the *status* which it is given' (McGrath 1999:151).

As noted before, Calvin insists upon the immediate, intuitive apprehension of the self-authenticating authority of Scripture, which is possible only by way of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, and hence upon the ultimateness of the truth of Scripture. Nevertheless, Scripture comes to be authoritative or normative when it is rightly interpreted. 'It is not the bare word of Scripture that reveals God but it is Scripture so interpreted that it brings before the mind a universe wherein God is seen to preside as Sovereign Lord' (Vander Kolk 1951:247). It is not Scripture as literal word but the scriptural revelation or doctrine that authenticates itself as the ultimate truth of God. Put another way, it is when genuine interpretation occurs 'that the Word of the Lord actually gets across to us,

115

that we can let ourselves be told something which we cannot tell ourselves, and really learn something new which we cannot think up for ourselves' (Torrance 1988:158).

Therefore, one remarkably innovative point made by the Reformers, which is also manifestly shown in Calvin's idea of the self-authenticating character of Scripture, is that *the authority and the content of Scripture are so interrelated as to derive the authority of Scripture from its content and as to confirm the content of Scripture by its authority* (Lehmann 1946:330). Whatever authority Scripture may exert, it has as a source the content of Scripture; inversely, the content of Scripture is confirmed by the authority of Scripture. In this sense, a matter of Scripture as a sole and ultimate norm and guide for the Christian faith and praxis inevitably leads us to engage in a question of interpretation. On this matter, medieval theology gave a significant emphasis on the role of the church as the only authoritative interpreter of Scripture; the authority of Scripture can be guaranteed by the authority of the church as its interpreter (McGrath 1999:157). On the contrary, for the Reformers it is the Holy Spirit who can guarantee the authority of Scripture through the content of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is involved in the close interrelation of the authority and the content of Scripture. God the Spirit is at work not only in preparing witnesses to God's revelation in Christ, but also in preparing for the mind of believers the faith by which that revelation is accepted as the truth. The Holy Spirit, who is at work in both inspiration and illumination, is the One who links the truth with the life.

David Steinmetz, professor of church history at Duke University, provides a helpful insight about Calvin's hermeneutical circle for our discussion of the relation between authority and interpretation. According to Steinmetz (2006:290-291), due to his ideal of "clarity, simplicity, or brevity,"[62] which would avoid the prolixity and help readers understand the plain sense of the text itself, Calvin shifted extended topical discussions to the pages of the *Institutes*. For that reason, the *Institutes* was designed to provide 'the architectonic structure of the Bible' or 'the underlying plan of Scripture' (Steinmetz 2006:291). The *Institutes* functions as not only "a sum of Christian doctrine" but also "a

---

[62] For Calvin's emphasis on 'lucid brevity' as the chief virtuosity of an expounder, see the preface to Calvin's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1998a:16).

guide to Scripture" for beginners to read the Bible without being confused or lost in complicated religious discussions. More precisely, the *Institutes* was intended by Calvin to serve as a 'basic instruction in issues related to the study of Scripture, initially governed by a catechetical arrangement of doctrine, and specifically as a repository for the various disputations and doctrinal loci that he chose not to include in his commentaries' (Muller 1996:136). It is important to note how the *Institutes* and commentaries influenced and shaped each other. Just as the commentaries enriched the succeeding editions of the *Institutes,* so the *Institutes* enhanced the exegetical work by providing a broad frame of reference. Within this hermeneutical circle, argues Steinmetz (2006:291), 'Calvin moved from his commentaries and sermons on particular texts to the *Institutes* and from the *Institutes* back again to the interpretation of particular texts.'

This mutual movement between the *Institutes* and commentaries in Calvin's theology sheds light on our understanding of Calvin's thought on the reciprocal relation between the authority and the content of Scripture. Werner Krusche pinpoints the significance of this insight in terms of the *testimonium*. That is, the testimony of the Spirit leads us to convincing the divine authority of Scripture, as is manifestly suggested in the *Institutes,* on the one hand; at the same time, the testimony of the Spirit guarantees to us the content of Scripture as the truth of God, as is shown throughout Calvin's commentaries, on the other hand. Therefore, Krusche concludes: 'The *testimonium spiritus sancti* is related both to the authority of Scripture and its content….The *testimonium* does not convince us first of the divine origin of the Scriptures, apart from its content of promise, and then finally also of this content. In the end, both are inseparably one' (quoted by Breukelman 2010:194).

In a similar vein, the leading South African systematic theologian from Stellenbosch University, Dirkie Smit (2007:416), contends that, in Calvin's theological hermeneutics, the reading of Scripture was not at all replaced by 'a system of dogmatic truths, a summa, a corpus of timeless and authoritative teaching.' The *Institutes* is, Smit (:416) goes on to say, 'precisely *not* intended as anything of that kind, leading readers away

from reading the Bible, but, on the contrary, as a framework, map or guide, directing them *back* to reading Scripture, in all its complexity and difference.'

From this consideration, we can conclude that for Calvin the notion of scriptural authority is about guiding readers to the proper interpretation of Scripture. In other words, a theological account of scriptural authority is the starting point of the practice of reading Scripture, and, in turn, a theological account of reading is the extended discussion of scriptural authority. An account of the authority of Scripture must be necessarily accompanied and completed by an account of reading Scripture.

3.4.2 The Self-Interpreting Clarity of Scripture[63]

The self-interpretation of Scripture is the quintessential element of the Scripture principle of the Reformation, *sola Scriptura*, which points to the absolute authority of Scripture *alone* for faith and life. Berkouwer (1975:127) aptly says: 'Nowhere was the relationship between authority and interpretation so clearly expressed as in the Reformation confession of Scripture, which, based on *sola Scriptura*, offered a perspective on the real relationship between authority and interpretation, and expressed it in its well-known hermeneutical rule: *Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres* (Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter).' It is Scripture itself that interprets Scripture as the necessary, sufficient, and clear authority in communicating God's Word successfully to its hearers. The self-interpretation of Scripture is interwoven with the notion of the clarity of Scripture,[64] which claims that 'Scripture is clear about what it is about' (Callahan 2001:9). The Reformers' declaration that Scripture is clear is the confession that Scripture is comprehensible enough for anyone, with the aid of the Spirit and by proper interpretation, to understand God's message in Scripture.

---

[63] Strictly speaking, "self-interpreting" and "clear" are two different attributes of Scripture. However, in the thought of the Reformer, these two features are intimately related. The new hermeneutics of Scripture espoused by the Reformers consisted not merely of a proclamation of the clarity of Scripture, but also of the hermeneutical self-interpretation of Scripture, which provided an account of 'what the hermeneutical relevance of Scripture's exclusive authority entailed for the actual interpretation and understanding of the Biblical message' (Rossouw 1982:153).

[64] For an excellent dogmatic account of the clarity of Scripture, see Berkouwer (1975:267-298). See also James Callahan's recent study on this subject, *The Clarity of Scripture* (2001).

The doctrine of the self-interpreting clarity of Scripture championed by the Reformers entails two aspects. On the one hand, the Reformation doctrine of the self-interpreting clarity of Scripture means that 'the scriptural text contains in itself the source of illumination which guarantees the intelligibility of the message it communicates' (Rossouw 1982:153). At the time of the Reformation, this notion was a claim that the interpretation of Scripture cannot belong exclusively to the magisterium of the church. As Webster (2003:93) puts it, talk of Scripture as "self-interpreting" is 'to reject the *a priori* authority of traditions of interpretation' and 'to defend the priority of "original" reading over reading which is merely customary or derivative, and in one sense therefore to remove reading from under what Vatican II calls "the watchful eye of the sacred Magisterium."'[65] In opposition to the Roman Catholic claim to the obscurity of Scripture and to the necessity of an infallible ecclesiastical magisterium as the interpreter or the interpretative framework, the Reformers insisted that there is no need to interpose a papal representative between the biblical text and the laity (Lints 1993:159). Without the intervention of the church and clergy, the core content of the biblical text — the message of salvation — is clear enough to fulfil its function to lead believers to the knowledge of God and to the unity with Christ. Therefore, Scripture must be able to speak in its own words because the clarity of Scripture is not made by magisterial authorities, scholar-prince, or the pious reader, but by Scripture itself.

On the other hand and more importantly, Scripture is self-interpreting and clear by means of its relation to God and God's communicative activity (Webster 2003:93). The self-interpretation of Scripture is a Reformed way of understanding the priority of God's Word in that Scripture stands over the reader. 'The clarity of Scripture is,' says

---

[65] As Berkouwer (1975:271) points out, the Roman Catholic Church's desire was 'to protect Scripture against all arbitrary and individualistic exegesis.' From the Roman Catholic viewpoint, the notion of the clarity was problematic in theory for it seemed to allow every individual for the right to interpret Scripture privately and as a result to lead to the rampant individualism. The Reformers also recognised this danger of arbitrariness, yet they strived to overcome that, rather than chose a legalistic approach in reaction. However, as McGrath (1999:165) notes, the magisterial Reformers, in spite of their efforts, could not help becoming anxious regarding the social and political consequences of the notion of the clarity of Scripture. McGrath says, 'To put it crudely, it became a question of whether you looked to the pope, to Luther or to Calvin as an interpreter of Scripture. The principle of the "clarity of Scripture" appears to have been quietly marginalized, in the light of the use made of the Bible by the more radical elements within the Reformation. Similarly, the idea that everyone had the right and the ability to interpret Scripture faithfully became the sole possession of the radicals.'

Webster (:93), 'a function of its place in the divine self-demonstration, and of the Spirit's work of ordering the mind, will and affections of the reader towards what Calvin called "heavenly doctrine."' Clarity, Webster (:93) continues, 'only makes sense when seen in a soteriological context, that is, in relation to God's act as Word and Spirit and the creature's act of faith.' The clarity of Scripture must not be understood merely as a formal or natural property of the text in isolation from the work of the Spirit. Rather, Scripture can be clear due to the Spirit, through whom the text can serve God's self-communication. In this sense, Webster (:94) maintains that 'it is not Scripture which is self-interpreting but *God* who as Word interprets himself through the Spirit's work.' In other words, for Calvin "self-interpretation" is none other than "interpretation of the Holy Spirit." Authentic interpretation must be authorised by, and is possible only by, the 'secret testimony of the Spirit' — *Arcanum et internum testimonium Spiritus sancti* (*Inst* 1.7.4). It is from this standpoint that the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* constitutes 'a promise that, in the interpretation of Scripture carried on by co-members of the body of Christ — even amid the cacophony of their voices, the Word of God will, in fact and by the faithfulness of God, be heard' (McKelway 2007:199).

Viewed from this perspective, the notion of the self-interpreting clarity of Scripture is not at all a claim that the Word of God can read off from the text, directly and unproblematically, as if the text were entirely unambiguous and thus would render superfluous the tasks of making sense through exegesis and interpretation (Webster 1998:333). One must not appeal to the self-interpreting clarity of Scripture as an excuse to avoid the hard task required for faithful biblical interpretation. In the context of the Reformation, this notion provided a ground to place the responsibility of interpreting and understanding Scripture not upon a special priesthood or hierarchy, but upon every believer — the priesthood of all believers (Klooster 1984:465; Treier 2007:35). In this respect, Werner Jeanrond (1991:30,32), professor of systematic theology at the University of Glasgow, describes the Reformation as 'a hermeneutical event,' in which a new praxis of reading Scripture emerged, namely that the reader 'became now

individually called to study the texts and also individually responsible for responding to the claims of these texts in his or her Christian existence.'[66]

Webster (2003:94-95) argues that a proper account of Scripture's clarity must be given in relation to acts of reading. According to him, the clarity of Scripture must not be thought of as a property of Scripture apart from the Spirit-led acts of reading. The clarity of Scripture is not given as 'a *qualitas* of the text *ante usum.*' It implies neither the superfluity of the act of reading nor the spontaneity of faithful reading. Rather, the clarity of Scripture is 'that which the text *becomes* as it functions in the Spirit-governed encounter between the self-presenting saviour and the faithful reader' (:95). In this manner, Webster (:94) associates the clarity of Scripture with a faithful reading governed by the Spirit, who 'rules, accompanies and sanctifies the work of the reader in engaging the sanctified and inspired text,' rather than with an inherent attribute of the text. The clarity of Scripture is ultimately embraced by faithful readers through the help of the Spirit's illuminating and transforming work. Webster (:94) concludes: 'There is thus a direct correlation between the clarity of Scripture and the *pius lector:* clarity and holiness belong together.'

It is the Holy Spirit, the Author of Scripture and the only reliable and authentic Interpreter of Scripture, who convinces us that God speaks through the biblical texts in a manner that is clear, coherent, and sufficient for God's purpose of revelation and redemption. The inconsistencies and ambiguities found in the biblical texts do not undermine this belief in the clarity of the Scriptures; they merely pose a lasting challenge to the finite interpreter (Jeanrond 1991:31-32).

---

[66] In the same vein, Bernard Lategan, a renowned South African theologian, views the Reformation as the watershed in hermeneutical thinking. He (1992:150) states: 'If tradition and ecclesiastical authority no longer serve as controlling forces in the interpretation process, heavy responsibility is placed on exegesis itself. The Reformation, therefore, also marks the beginning of intense hermeneutical and exegetical activity which has shaped subsequent hermeneutical developments.'

3.4.3 Hearing the Word of God with Faith

As Charles Wood (1981:39-41) correctly puts it, the declaration that Scripture is the Word of God has functioned not merely as a claim about the supreme authority of Scripture, but also as a basic hermeneutical principle. To acknowledge the biblical text as the Word of God has hermeneutical consequences. To read Scripture, at least if one is properly prepared towards the task, is to be addressed by God. The central aim of reading Scripture is to listen to God's Word in the text. The biblical text functions as an instrument through which God enters into a personal relationship with the reader. In this sense, the authority of Scripture 'consists in the fact that by divine appointment the place where He is witnessed to is the place where His presence is pledged and granted' (Reid [1957] 1981:277-278). Torrance makes a very similar point when he writes (1988:164): 'In biblical interpretation and theological knowledge alike, then, we start from the actual situation where God stands before man and where he stands man before himself, where knowledge of God is not just a conception that there is a God but one that comprises some understanding of what it behoves us to know of God and of what is serviceable in this knowledge for the glory of God.' For Calvin, to read the biblical texts is about hearing the living voice of God and, by so doing, standing in front of God's presence. 'To lose the sense of God's presence, and of his voice speaking when the text was being read' is, for Calvin, 'to lose the text itself,' which claims the authority as the Word of God (Bray 1996:201-202).

From the standpoint of Scripture as the *living* Word of God, our main concern of understanding is not so much to know "who God is in Himself" as "what He wills to be toward us" (*Inst* 3.2.6). In other words, the goal of Scripture is not to inform us about the *Deus apud se*, who, in his *nuda majestas*, remains hidden from us, but rather to bring us in the actual presence of the *Deus erga nos,* God as He has turned and directed Himself towards us (Rossouw 1982:155). Given this reflection, a proper understanding of Scripture is an understanding of its *sensus spiritualis*, that is, of the meaning intended and communicated by its divine Author.

122

Rossouw (1982:163-166) provides a well-focused explanation about the extent to which for Calvin the nature of the understanding is in relation to the concept of faith. For Calvin, understanding the subject matter of Scripture coincides with our having faith. Understanding and faith are so closely related that one cannot have faith without understanding that which is communicated to us in and through Scripture. In other words, for Calvin, understanding the meaning of Scripture is a matter of faith (:163). Furthermore, Calvin insists on the correlation between faith and the Word of God (*Inst* 3.2.6). There can be no faith without hearing because faith rests upon God's Word. 'Faith is a matter of hearing, and this hearing is equivalent to the understanding of the Word of God' (Rossouw 1982:165). Within their permanent relationship, the Word and faith belong together. On the one hand, the living Word of God is the basis and foundation whereby faith is supported and sustained. If faith turns away from the Word, it will fall. On the other hand, if the Word is separated from faith, it will not in itself convey anything (*Inst* 3.2.6). In this correlation between faith and the Word, faith can be seen as 'both the experience of hearing God speaking to us, and the act of appropriately responding to Him who speaks' (Rossouw 1982:165). By virtue of His living Word, God reveals Himself to us; in faith, we properly respond to God in reverence, worship, trust, and obedience. To put it differently, hearing the Word of God — more precisely, making sense of the scriptural message as the Word of God — is nothing other than 'entering into a personal relationship and communion with God' (Rossouw 1982:166).

Wesley Kort, in his book *Take, Read*, draws attention to the theory of reading in Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. Kort (1996:15) argues that Calvin's doctrine of Scripture is primarily a doctrine of *reading* rather than a doctrine of the text, and thus 'Calvin's whole theology arises from and protects the theory of reading that underlies his doctrine of Scripture.' According to Kort (:21), when referring to the hearing of the Word, Calvin has reading Scripture in mind, and this close identification of reading and hearing is supported by the relation between reading Scripture and hearing preaching. Unlike Luther, Kort argues, for Calvin reading Scripture is more primary than hearing preaching. Even in relation to preaching, "hearing" means reading, 'because the preaching that Calvin has in mind and practiced is determined by and remains very close to the reading of Scripture' (:21). Furthermore, Calvin extends the act of reading

in such ways as an act of eating and ingesting the words and nourishment, which allows the text to become a part of oneself. In this way, Calvin replaces the central role of receiving the Sacrament in the medieval church with the centrality of reading Scripture (:22). Kort concludes: 'When Calvin situates reading Scripture in relation to the internalizing acts of hearing and eating and to the externalizing act of reading nature and history, he deals simply with priorities — reading Scripture is primary, on the one side, to preaching and sacraments and, on the other, to reading nature and history' (:22).

Admitting that the point made by Kort is to some extent worthy of note, we can say more legitimately that Calvin's doctrine of Scripture sets the departure point in *Deus loquens*, the speaking God, rather than reading. In and through the words of Scripture, God opens 'his own most hallowed lips' (*Inst* 1.6.1), so that these words may be heard 'as if there the living words of God were heard' (*Inst* 1.7.1). In other words, God's Word is not discerned via our attentive reading. Scripture *is* the living Word of God because God Himself is actively speaking to us in and through it. Because of 'the blindness of human mind' (*Inst* 1.5.12), a proper theology must begin with not us, but *God*; not our reading Scripture, but God's addressing and speaking to us in and through Scripture. In this light, it is worth noting Webster's criticism against Kort's claim by pointing out that Kort overlooks 'the primacy of the theological, specifically the soteriological and revelatory, context of Calvin's understanding of reading Scripture' (2003:76). According to Webster (:76), Kort separates 'what Calvin has to say about the reader' *from* 'Calvin's understanding of the nature of the biblical texts and of their function in God's communication of himself to sinners.' In opposition to Kort's reading on Calvin, which privileges reading over the text itself, Webster (:76) argues that for Calvin 'the practice of reading is determined by the nature of the texts as instruments of divine speech.' It thus may be said that for Calvin 'the initiative and givenness of judgement' is in no sense moved *from* 'the givenness of the public meaning of the word and text' *to* 'the creative imagination of the hearer or reader' (Thiselton 1992:193).

For Calvin, a proper practice of reading Scripture cannot be thought of apart from a proper acknowledgement of the authority of Scripture as the Word of God. By recognising and confessing the authority of Scripture as the Word of God, faithful

readers come to conceive their practice of reading not as being *masters* over the biblical texts, but rather as being *disciples* under the Word of God. Calvin thus writes (*Inst* 1.6.2): '[I]n order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture.' True religion takes its departure point in the truth of God revealed in Scripture. It is in the school of sure and clear truth that we, as neither masters nor critics of Scripture, but its pupils, are enabled to understand the mysteries which God has designed to reveal by His Word (*Inst* 1.17.2). Thus, reading Scripture in faith requires 'submission, obedience and affection as primary in human reception of the Word; and…a sense that encountering Scripture is encountering "truth come down from heaven"' (Webster 2003:78).

In sum, Calvin's concern for the interpretation or reading of Scripture in relation to talk of the authority of Scripture has nothing to do with a claim that Scripture derives its authority from our reading or interpretation. Rather, what is in Calvin's mind is the fact that the authority of Scripture is appreciated and honoured in a proper interpretation, which is not alien to the purpose of God and to the nature of Scripture.

3.4.4 The Self-Accommodating Word of God

The notion of accommodation is one of the most important and frequently used hermeneutical principles in Calvin's thought. Calvin was no innovator of the idea of accommodation. The concept of accommodation as a hermeneutical principle has been central to the common foundation of biblical interpretation from the earliest centuries of the church onwards (Rogers & McKim 1979:9-11). It received considerable attention during the Reformation and particularly Calvin did deepen and widen the implication of the doctrine of accommodation. By F L Battles (1977:20-21), Calvin's understanding of God's accommodation to human capacity was a central feature of the entire range of his theological work as well as the interpretation of Scripture. Unlike the fathers of the early church, Calvin extended the principle of accommodation to a consistent basis for his consideration of every avenue of relations between God and human beings. Calvin appealed to accommodation not only in his treatment of Scripture, but also as a function

125

of God's gracious self-revelation to us in a number of forms — in the use of language, in the use of anthropomorphism, in the doctrine of Scripture, in the church and sacraments, and in the Incarnation itself.[67]

In the first place, accommodation is important and required owing to the fact that the utter transcendence of God can only be expressed to the finitude of humanity through condescension to our perspective. Calvin's use of the idea of accommodation is rooted in his profound sense of 'the even greater gulf between divinity and fallen human nature' (Battles 1977:32). For Calvin, God's infinite and spiritual essence is incomprehensible and 'hence his divineness far escapes all human perception' (*Inst* 1.5.1). This huge, unbridgeable gulf can be bridged not by human beings, but by God. We cannot ascend to heaven; instead, God condescends. To accommodate the knowledge of Himself to human being's slight capacity, God must descend far beneath His loftiness (*Inst* 1.13.1). Therefore, 'the mode of accommodation is for [God] to represent himself to us not as he is in himself, but as he seems to us' (*Inst* 1.17.13). With revelation, God has accommodated Himself to human being's capacity in a way that God has chosen to speak baby-talk — to lisp, prattle, stammer, and stutter — so that we may know of Him. Calvin elsewhere refers to this in a lucid way (1950:18):

> For although the Spirit of God has spoken by his mouth, yet he has not yet declared things in their grandeur and majesty. It is not a derogatory remark about the Spirit of God when we say that He did not manifest entirely and in perfection the things here indicated. For the Holy Spirit accommodates Himself to our weakness. In fact, if we heard God speaking to us in His Majesty, it would be useless to us, since we would understand nothing. So, since we are carnal, He must stutter. Otherwise we would not understand Him. By that, then, we see that we must understand that God made Himself little to

---

[67] According to Battles, "Incarnation" is the foremost form of accommodation. Battle (1977:21) says: 'At the center of God's accommodation himself to human capacity, however, is his supreme act of condescension, the giving of his only Son to reconcile a fallen world to himself. If accommodation is the speech-bridge between the known and the unknown, between the infinitesimal and the infinite, between the apparent and the real, between the human and the divine, the Logos who tented among us is the point from which we must view creation, fall, and all history, before and since the incarnation. For Calvin, then, in every act of divine accommodation, the whole Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is at work.'

> declare Himself to us. And if it were not so, how would it be possible to express anything of the Majesty of God by speaking the language of men?

At another level, accommodation is a necessary product of revelation because this revelation comes to humanity through the factual situation of the finiteness and sinfulness of human authors (Sparks 2004:126). Revelation comes to us 'through the prism of humanity travelling the Spirit's paths' (Berkouwer 1975:135). Referring to Scripture as God's Word, we must consider an element of accommodation to human capacity. For Calvin, Scripture is God's *own* Word in a sense that does not exclude it from being at the same time human words (Reid [1957] 1981:38). As Calvin (*Inst* 1.7.5) says that '[Scripture] has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men,' the way of the Word does not rule out the ministry of human beings. Scripture is both the Word of God *and* the words of human beings. Throughout Scripture, human beings come to the fore in their ministry and witness. God's authority becomes present in and through the ministry of human beings, so that no one can ignore God's speaking via the humanness (Berkouwer 1975:145-146). The Word of God accommodated to humanity addresses us with authority and on this basis, those who hear this human word recognise the living voice of God.

However, the idea of God's self-accommodating Word does not imply that the human words are transubstantiated into something divine. "Accommodating" does not indicate an identification or mixture of the divine and the human (Berkouwer 1975:146). The human writers, in spite of the fact that they were 'sure and genuine scribes of the Holy Spirit' (*Inst* 4.8.9), were nevertheless subject to their own humanity — in terms of recent developed hermeneutics, "their own fallen and finite horizon of human understanding."

As Richard Muller (1985:19) correctly points out, the doctrine of accommodation 'refers to the manner or mode of revelation, the gift of wisdom of infinite God in finite form, not to the quality of the revelation or to the matter revealed.' Calvin (1998b:101) understands the most profound implication of accommodation in terms of God's love when he says: 'when God prattles to us in Scripture in a rough and popular style, let us

127

know that this is done *on account of the love which he bears to us'* [italics mine]. God's purpose in accommodation is 'not simply to keep us humble, though that is part of it; his first aim is to help us to understand, and his simple method of speech is thus a gesture of love first and foremost' (Packer 1974a:104). Just as we show the sign of love to a child in a way to confine our language and ourselves to the child's level, as God in His love accommodates to our childishness and weakness.[68]

The concept of accommodation is indispensable to our understanding of not only the mode of God's communication with us but also corresponding hermeneutical task. The doctrine of accommodation serves as a constant reminder of the two hermeneutical stances we need to maintain in the interpretation of Scripture, which are suggested by Wolterstorff (1995:204) as such:

> [W]e do our interpreting for divine discourse with convictions in two hands: in one hand, our convictions as to the stance and content of the appropriated discourse and the meaning of the sentences used; In the other, our convictions concerning the probabilities and improbabilities of what God would have been intending to say by appropriating this particular discourse-by-inscription.

Drawing on Wolterstorff's insight, we can say that the aim of interpretation is to discern what God *ultimately* says through God's accommodating Word to our human context and perspectives. In the light of the doctrine of accommodation, we understand what it

---

[68] Some evangelicals seem to have an uncomfortable or critical attitude towards the concept of accommodation, not least because they tend to view the notion of accommodation as incompatible with the notion of inerrancy (e g Grudem 1992:53-57). Seen from the above-mentioned perspective, however, the concept of accommodation has nothing to do with the loss of truth or the lessening of scriptural authority. On this matter, John Feinberg, systematic theologian from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, offers a helpful categorisation. By Feinberg (1984a:387-389), the use of the term "accommodation" can be distinguished in three ways: (1) to explain how infinite God could communicate His revelation to finite human capacity; (2) to explicate the possibility that the human authors of Scripture and even Christ taught errors that were commonly believed in their time; and (3) to refer to the adaption of church order, liturgy, and so on to the cultural situation, namely the so-called contextualisation. What is at stake in the debate over the relation between the concept of accommodation and the authority of Scripture is the first and second sense. While the first sense, though expressed in a number of different ways in the history of Christian thought, has been accepted widely from the time of the church fathers to the present, the second sense emerged with the rise of liberal theology in the eighteenth century. Feinberg maintains that, from the standpoint of evangelicalism, not the second sense ("accommodation to error") but the first sense of accommodation ("condescension to ignorance") needs to be taken as an appropriate theological tool in the proper interpretation of Scripture.

means to confess Scripture's authority as being aware of 'the command to understand and interpret it' (Berkouwer 1975:137). The command to understand and interpret God's accommodating Word is also that which calls for the embodiment of it in the concrete life of the people of God by attending to, obeying, and believing it.

In brief, there is no conflict, in Calvin's thought, between the authority of Scripture and the doctrine of accommodation. Through the concept of accommodation, Calvin refers to both the dignity and majesty of God's Word *and* the divine stammering. For Calvin, the doctrine of accommodation serves as an important reminder of the fact that, behind the necessary and wonderful accommodation of God to human limitations, 'there remains an inexhaustible and impenetrable mystery' (Steinmetz 2006:290).

3.4.5 The Covenant of Grace[69]

As noted above, Calvin's commitment to the accommodation principle was his way of explicating the relationship between knowledge of God and knowledge of self, or his way of answering the question as to how the gracious God communicates and deals with sinful human beings by law and gospel. Thus, it is important to note Calvin's view of the reality of sin as 'the more comprehensive situation of human beings before God as Creator and Savior' (Smit 2007:399).

According to Opitz, *the covenant of grace* is the key category underlying Calvin's theological hermeneutics in that Calvin 'finds the hermeneutical continuum in *the living God of the covenant*, the same God and the same covenant of David and the Christian congregation' (Smit 2007:399). Just as God's accommodation to human capacity has much to do with the reality of sinful humanity, so Calvin's view of the covenant 'involves the real situation of human being before God as sinners and sinful' (:394).[70]

---

[69] I owe this section to Dirkie Smit's essay *Rhetoric and Ethic?: A Reformed Perspective on the Politics of Reading the Bible* (2007). In this essay, Smit appreciates the analysis and argument in Peter Opitz's *Calvins theologische Hermeneutik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994), and draws on Opitz's valuable insights as well as references.

[70] Calvin unfolds the doctrine of covenant within the framework of the duality of knowledge of sin and grace, through law and gospel. He discusses the doctrine of covenant in the chapter 10 of Book II in the

Put differently, along with the accommodation principle, Calvin's understanding of the covenant of grace is '*his* own way of constructing the relation between knowledge of God and self and of benefiting from the usefulness of Scripture' (:399).

For Calvin, the sameness or unity of the covenant in the Old Testament with that in the New Testament comes from 'the grace of the same Mediator' (*Inst* 2.10.1). In spite of the difference in the mode of dispensation, says Calvin, '[t]he covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same' (*Inst* 2.10.2). From the same covenant of grace, 'we can conclude with full certainty that the Lord not only communicated to the Jews the same promises of eternal and heavenly life as he now deigns to give us, but also sealed them with truly spiritual sacraments' (*Inst* 2.10.6).

In this way, for Calvin, the entire history of the Old and New Testaments is understood in the light of God's promise to be with us, which '*comes in the form of covenant*' (Smit 2007:400). The category of covenant, according to Opitz, 'makes it possible for Calvin to take the whole of the Old and New Testaments seriously, and precisely as complex and tension-filled history, with complete respect and regard for the original contexts, including all contingency and contradiction' (:400).

Calvin's focus on the covenant of grace carries at least two valuable implications. First, it leads us to know God as *the God of the covenant of grace*, as the one and same God throughout the covenantal history, despite all the complexities and pluralities of the accommodating Word (Smit 2007:402). More importantly, it leads to a crucial understanding that, in a very real sense, the "content" of the Old and New Testaments is God Himself, more precisely, 'the living, accommodating, electing, speaking Triune God before whom we live in history and in creation' (:400). Second, it also provides a practical, pastoral understanding about *who we are* on the basis of *who God is*. By the same God in His covenant of grace, we are endowed with the same Spirit of faith; become heirs of the same promise; and participate in the whole story of God's salvation.

Institutes, after dealing with the doctrine of sin and law. For a more detailed account of this structure, see Breukelman (2010).

130

The hermeneutical lens of the covenant of grace provides the people of God with a particular way of viewing and reading the Bible, in which the story of the whole Bible comes to be brought into our life and our life stories become part of *the* story.

3.5 REVITALISING THE REFORMED PRINCIPLE OF *SOLA SCRIPTURA*

3.5.1 The Reformation Meaning of *Sola Scriptura*

Since the Reformation, the Protestant *sola Scriptura* principle has been held as the architectural and pivotal principle which determines one's whole account of Christianity as well as faith and practice in all sound theology. Admittedly, the Reformers' whole understanding of Christianity hinged on the principle of *sola Scriptura,* which asserts emphatically that 'Scripture, as the *only* Word of God in this world, is the *only* guide for conscience and the church, the *only* source of true knowledge of God and grace, and the *only* qualified judge of the church's testimony and teaching, past and present' (Packer 1974b:48-49). It is the Reformers' emphasis upon the "*sola*" rather than *supplementary* character of the ultimate scriptural norm that distinguishes the Reformers from not only Rome but also their predecessors (Lehmann 1946:333).

As Vanhoozer (2005:232) rightly points out, '*sola scriptura* no more rules out the role of faith or the Holy Spirit than *sola fide* rules out *sola gratia*, or that *solus Christus* rules out God the Father and God the Spirit.' Each of the Reformation *solas* — *sola Scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus* — was the response to a specific theological question in the Reformation context. *Sola Scriptura* is not the answer to the question about how many sources one should use in doing theology. Rather, *sola Scriptura* was the answer to the question as to by what unchallengeable criterion Christian faith and practice are to be evaluated. As the answer to that question, the Reformers point to *sola Scriptura:* we are to judge all things "by Scripture alone."

What was the exact meaning of *sola Scriptura* for the Reformers? Anthony Lane (1994) provides a helpful account of the meaning of *sola Scriptura* by considering its qualification under the rubrics of "the sole resource," "the sufficiency of Scripture," "the sole authority," and "the final authority." According to Lane, there are three inappropriate categories for the meaning of *sola Scriptura*. Firstly, *sola Scriptura* does not mean that Scripture is the sole, legitimate resource of the theology (:300-313). For the Reformers, *sola Scriptura* was not intended to preclude extrascriptural resources as legitimate theological resources or sources. The assertion of *sola Scriptura* means neither that Scripture is God's only revelation, nor that we rely on Scripture alone independent of other resources in every connection. In other words, the Reformers' appeal to *sola Scriptura* was not meant to deny the importance of church tradition, philosophy, the church fathers, or the sciences and arts. Secondly, the meaning of *sola Scriptura* cannot be reduced to the material sufficiency of Scripture, albeit the material sufficiency of Scripture is at least a part of what is meant by *sola Scriptura* (:313-320). Thirdly, *sola Scriptura* must not be taken as the point of claiming to reject all other authorities, which was in no sense the intention of the Reformers (:320-322). The claim that Scripture is our sole authority is no more viable than the claim that Scripture is the sole resource or source.

What, then, is the essence of the *sola Scriptura*? According to Lane (1994:323), *sola Scriptura* is, for both the Reformers and us, neither the claim of the sole resource or the sole authority, nor of the material sufficiency of Scripture; but rather, the claim that 'Scripture is the final authority or norm for Christian belief.' The Reformation meaning of *sola Scriptura* must be understood not as *nuda Scriptura,* but as *Scriptura valde prima* (Bloesch 1992:193; Welker 2003:377). Scripture is our *primary* authority, not our *only* authority, and in that sense, Scripture is 'queen among all other testimonies' to God — to cite Welker's description (2003:377-378). The tradition, creeds, and the teaching office of church have, as invaluable resources, a real authority — but not a final authority and hence they should be subordinated to the final authority of Scripture. In this sense, it may be said appropriately that Scripture does not close the doors to other forms of revelation, but rather serves as our open window on the full cosmic dimensions of God's world (Spykman 1992:78). Particularly in the Reformation context,

Luther asserted *sola Scriptura* for the purpose of denying the final authority of church or pope (Gerrish 1982:54). To put it simply, the Reformation slogan *sola Scriptura* was 'the statement that the church can err' (Lane 1994:324). While the authority of tradition and church can be critically questioned and are open to be corrected and reformed, Scripture is the *norma normans non normata,* that is, the norm or rule that rules but is not itself ruled.

Besides, *sola Scriptura* functions as a hermeneutical principle, namely the claim of 'the supremacy of the text over its interpreter' (Lane 1994:326). Scripture needs to be interpreted; but it does not need an authoritative interpreter, nor a normative interpretation. In this sense, the principle of *sola Scriptura* affirms the priority of "the authority of the biblical text" over "the tradition of its interpretation." From this view, the Reformers developed corresponding hermeneutical principles such as the clarity of Scripture and the idea of *Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres,* which we have already seen.

3.5.2 Reconstructing the Relationship of Scripture and Tradition in the Light of *Sola Scriptura*

The *sola Scriptura* principle inevitably poses a question about the relationship between Scripture and tradition because it appears to put aside any reference to tradition in the formation of Christian doctrine. However, unlike the radical wing of the Reformation, the magisterial Reformers had a very positive understanding of tradition. As McGrath (1999:155) points out, the idea of a traditional interpretation of Scripture was acceptable to the magisterial Reformers, '*provided that this traditional interpretation could be justified*' [McGrath's italics]. From such a point of view, the magisterial Reformers retained most traditional doctrines of the church, such as the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and infant baptism, which were rejected by the radical wing for the reason of "non-scriptural." The magisterial Reformers were convinced that those traditional interpretations of Scripture were consistent with Scripture and hence correct. In addition, the Reformers used to appeal to the fathers of the church as generally

reliable interpreters of Scripture. For example, Calvin's writings contain plenty of references to the church fathers.[71] In particular, Calvin seemed to align the programme of the Reformation with Augustine.[72]

In spite of the magisterial Reformers' affirmative, yet qualified, attitude towards tradition, however, the Reformers' elevation of *sola Scriptura* in the context of ongoing polemic against the Catholic Church served as a cause of the so-called "Protestant antitraditionalism." The Reformation loyalty to Scripture eventually issued a serious theological challenge to tradition. The significance of tradition within the trajectory of Protestantism has been continually diminished — though not eclipsed —, and the separation of Scripture and tradition has been exacerbated (Franke 2004:198-199). Concerning the consequence of this historical trajectory, John Franke (2004:200) states succinctly as such:

> Since the sixteenth century, Protestants have generally looked on tradition with considerable suspicion. The constant polemic against the Catholic position became, and continues to be in some contexts, a staple of Protestant theological exposition. In many respects, the denial of tradition as an authoritative source for theological construction has even constituted the Protestant raison d'être. This negative attitude toward tradition born in the Reformation came to maturation in three contexts: the elimination of tradition in Anabaptist theology, the devaluation of tradition in Protestant orthodoxy and the undercutting of tradition in the Enlightenment.[73]

To be sure, the profound influences of these historical contexts contributed significantly to the shape of conservative-evangelical thought towards the virtual elimination of tradition.

---

[71] On Calvin's use of the early church and medieval traditions, see Lane (1981). According to Lane (1981:159), 'Calvin's use of the fathers is primarily, but not exclusively, polemical.' That is, by naming and citing the fathers, Calvin considered them as authorities, although they might be seen as lesser authorities in that their teachings should be subject to the final authority of Scripture.

[72] On the uniqueness of Augustine among the church fathers in Calvin's writings, see Han Sung-Jin's Stellenbosch doctoral dissertation, *Augustine and Calvin: The Use of Augustine in Calvin's writings* (2003).

[73] For a more detailed account of these developments, see Grenz and Franke (2001:102-105).

In my view, historical development that eventually resulted in the mutually exclusive relationship between Scripture and tradition has brought about the subsequent alienation between authoritative text and interpreting community, between authority and hermeneutics, and so on. However, a proper understanding of the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* would open up the way forwards reconstructing the relationship between Scripture and tradition in a way that integrates them. To this end, we need to draw out some helpful implications of *sola Scriptura* as below.

Firstly, the Reformation *sola Scriptura* principle means in no sense *nulla traditio*. As Vanhoozer (2005:233) cogently puts it, *sola Scriptura* was not meant for 'a protest against tradition as such but *against the presumption of coincidence between church teaching and tradition*' [Vanhoozer's italics]. 'The Reformation,' goes on Vanhoozer (2005:233), 'was not a matter of Scripture versus tradition but of reclaiming the ancient tradition as a correct interpretation of Scripture versus later distortions of that tradition.' The *sola Scriptura* principle does not obviate the necessity of interpretation and of interpretative tradition. Scripture must be interpreted and this interpreting activity always takes place and is shaped in the theological and cultural context in which interpreters participate. Thus, as Bloesch (1994:155) felicitously expresses it, '[t]he church without Scripture is blind; Scripture without the church is empty.' It must be affirmed without reservation that Scripture *alone* is the supreme norm for Christian faith and practice; however, the other side of the dialectic must be asserted, namely that this norm is not effective apart from the church. The church is 'an interpretative tradition, a communally embodied, living, and active commentary on Scripture' (Vanhoozer 2003a:168). From this, it would be justifiable to say that without the Christian community, the biblical texts would not have taken their distinctive shape; furthermore, the Christian Bible would not even exist.

Secondly, the church or tradition has a *ministerial* authority in determining matters of doctrine and life in the community, whereas the authority of Scripture remains always *magisterial* (Fackre 1987:94; Horton 2009:22-23). Tradition is necessary to Scripture, yet corrigible by Scripture. Ecclesiastical authority is derived from Scripture through which God the Holy Spirit is speaking and thus is subservient to the authority of

Scripture. To recognise the ministerial authority of tradition is not to say that tradition stands alongside Scripture as a parallel source of authority. Scripture as "*norming* norm" has the *sovereign* authority; tradition as "*normed* norm" has the *subordinate* authority. If the relationship of Scripture and church is to be referred to in terms of *speaking* and *hearing*, church tradition is best described as 'a *hearing* of the Word rather than a fresh act of *speaking'* (Webster 2003:51).

Thirdly, the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* is a critical principle asserting that church tradition, which presents itself as an interpretation and application of Scripture, must be tested and evaluated by Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* is a claim that Scripture is something *over against* tradition — even if it is also *within* tradition —, by which the authenticity of tradition may be assessed and by which the development of tradition may be guided (Wood 1987:9). Insofar as *sola Scriptura* has a key role to call into question the authenticity of any human tradition, it can be rehabilitated in and carry considerable implications in our postmodern context. In the following section, I will develop and press this crucial point.

3.5.3 *Semper Reformanda*

The Reformation's affirmation of Scripture as God's Word and its appeal to *sola Scriptura* have gradually developed into the Reformed vision, which is well expressed in the phrase *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda secundum Verbum Dei*. More concretely, Reformed theology has been shaped and characterised by the fundamental recognition: both that the church is always in need of ongoing reformation and that '*the reforming activity in the church and in its surroundings proceeds from God's word'* (Willis & Welker 1999:x). From this view, only traditions that allow themselves to be called into question by the Word of God can be regarded as "Reformed." In other words, an authentic Reformed tradition must be 'in dynamic, always-reforming relationship to the Scriptures as a whole' (Rigby 2007:337), and by so doing it must be always prepared to challenge all human traditions, including the Reformed tradition itself, insofar as Scripture as the Word of God encourages us to do so (N T Wright 2005:77).

136

As Dirkie Smit (2007:388) rightly puts it, theology is for Calvin 'an ongoing hermeneutical activity, a continuous reading of the Scriptures in order to listen for the living Word of the still-speaking God.' The ongoing process of *semper reformanda* is inextricably bound up with Scripture as the Word of God — *sola Scriptura*. On that account, an ongoing process of being reformed might be described as a "return to Scripture." A return to Scripture, however, does not mean "return to a particular view of Scripture," or 'a backward-looking traditionalism' (Green 2000:177). On the contrary, the ongoing process of *semper reformanda* is a hermeneutical process of wrestling with biblical texts to listen, discern, and obey the Word of God who continues to speak through Scripture in our ever-changing contexts.

This hermeneutical openness of Reformed theology entails what Heidelberg Reformed theologian Michael Welker (1999:136-137) calls 'the typical mentality and spiritual attitude of Reformed theology,' more precisely, 'Reformed theology's delight in innovation and new departures, its interdisciplinary, cultural, and ecumenical openness.' With this special openness, says Welker, Reformed theology has been exposing itself to continual renewal and, during the era of modernity, it seems to have brought Reformed theology into a profound crisis. However, to avoid that stress of innovation or to shut out the hermeneutical openness would be to betray what is at the heart of Reformed theology, as is observed in what is commonly called biblical literalism or fundamentalism. Therefore, the Reformed affirmation of "always reformed according to God's Word" means that, via the presence of the living Word of God, the church and theology are 'continually stabilized and strengthened, but also reformed and renewed' (Welker 1999:141). Moltmann (1999:120-121) also endorses explicitly Welker's consciousness on the orientation of the Reformed theology, by saying that Reformed theology is nothing other than *reformatory* theology; according to God's Word, *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda*, and therefore also *theologia reformata et semper reformanda* — not a onetime action, but permanent reformation. From this, it follows that fidelity to Scripture, or commitment to *sola Scriptura*, means openness towards innovation in theology and the church according to God's Word.

What implication, then, does this fundamental Reformed conviction carry for our discussion of the authority of Scripture? Dirkie Smit's appreciation of "the ability and the willingness of Reformed theology to revise its earlier positions, formulations, and decisions" sheds well-focused light on that question. Smit writes (2005:200): 'Since any such decisions do not possess any a-historical authority as propositions in that specific form, or as doctrinal and confessional documents formulated in that specific way, but are provisional, Reformed people should have much freedom to commit themselves to new interpretations and expressions of Christian faith, provided it can be convincingly demonstrated that and how these new claims appeal to the clear message of the Scriptures.' In other words, the Reformed principle of *semper reformanda* works as a constant reminder that the authority of Scripture is not established but rather only acknowledged in ever-new situations, and also that this acknowledgment must be continually renewed and reformed. In this light, Berkouwer (1975:36) insists that 'the confession of Holy Scripture is never a finished business but a continuous evangelical mandate.'

3.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored Calvin's thought on the authority of Scripture and by so doing sought to draw out the essential implications for our current discussion. As we have noted throughout this chapter, Calvin believed adamantly that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the very Word of God in its simplest and most literal sense. Based on this conviction, he attempted to elucidate his idea of scriptural authority as the living Word of God with clarity and resolve.

Calvin's discussion of scriptural authority takes as its starting point the epistemological issue of knowing God. We gave particular attention to the point that with his notion of twofold knowledge of God and ourselves Calvin brought the objective and the personal aspects together and then illustrated the relationship of them in a more integrated way than modern epistemological theology. I argued that this is primarily because Calvin's

138

epistemology was deeply bound up with soteriology and the triune God's economy of salvation.

After the reflection on Calvin's epistemological idea, I attended in more detail to the question as to how Calvin articulated his thought on scriptural authority in the *Institutes*. First, Calvin sought to affirm the ultimate authority of Scripture as the Word of God with the notion of self-authenticating Scripture. On the one hand, the self-authentication of Scripture implies that its authority does not depend on any recognition or reception of the reader or the church. On the other hand, Calvin's appropriation of the term "self-authenticating," which is the translation of the Greek *autopistos*, reveals his intention to tie "the truth and truthfulness of Scripture" *and* "the trust and faithfulness of it" together.

This point comes to be more explicit in the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, which is emphasised by Calvin not as the subjective counterpart of the ultimateness and objectivity of scriptural authority, but as the counterpart of the witness of the church. Calvin's prominence of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* not only reflects the Reformed conviction that the triune God is speaking through Scripture, but also calls our attention to the covenantal and personal character of Scripture. In addition, I argued that Calvin's deliberate relating of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* mutually with the objective majesty of the Word of God could be ascribed, to a considerable degree, to his vigorous concern for spirituality and piety.

From our discussion of Calvin's idea of *duplex cognitio Dei* as the starting point of his construal of Scripture, I drew the conclusion that Calvin's position can be described as a "theological foundationalism" in a way that is not analogous to modern epistemological foundationalism and thus does not presume a dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity, between externality and internality. In other words, Calvin's way of speaking of the authority of Scripture in close relation to the testimony of the Spirit allows no room for an object-subject dichotomy.

With reference to Calvin's hermeneutics of Scripture, I noted that a remarkable feature of Calvin's thought on Scripture is "the intimate interrelation between the authority of

Scripture and the content of Scripture." For Calvin, Scripture is authoritative not by the bare word of it (*ad verbum),* but by the rightly interpreted content of it (*de sensu verborum).* This point offers a valuable implication for our discussion, namely that an account of scriptural authority must entail an account of reading Scripture. Scripture as the Word of God is clear, coherent, and sufficient for fulfilling the purpose of God — salvation — by the power of the Holy Spirit for the faithful reader. Most importantly, for Calvin, to read Scripture is to listen to *the living voice of God*, who is addressing us today in and through Scripture. Therefore, to acknowledge the authority of Scripture as the living voice of God cannot be thought of apart from a proper interpretation, through which Christian readers faithfully respond to God's Word in reverence, worship, affection, trust, and obedience. With the notion of God's accommodating Word, Calvin reminds us of the necessity of ongoing hermeneutical tasks to discern what God ultimately says through His accommodating Word to our capacity and context. In this way, the authority and the content of Scripture are integrally tied up with each other. Furthermore, in this way, the command to honour the authority of Scripture is extended to the command to interpret and understand it; furthermore to the command to embody it in the thought, act, and life by obeying and believing it. Through this way of reading and living the Bible, we become the children of the living, accommodating, and speaking God in *the covenant of grace,* and participate in the triune God's story of salvation.

In the light of above-mentioned points, we can reappropriate the implications of the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* in a way that affirms not only the primary, final authority of Scripture but also the necessity of interpretative tradition. The normativity of Scripture cannot be effective without the existence of an interpretative tradition, the church, which is called to read, embody, and live Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* prescribes for what the authority of church or tradition should be, namely that the interpretive community has a *ministerial* authority in relation to the *magisterial* authority of Scripture. Thus, the church and tradition should always be tested and evaluated by the Scripture as the norming norm.

In this sense, the Reformation slogan *Semper Reformanda* asserts the authority and capacity of Scripture 'to question the presupposed framework of tradition' (Thiselton 1992:148). All interpretations, all perspectives, and all traditions must allow themselves to be continually reformed according to God's Word. If we adopt this Reformed point of view, then we must think of the hermeneutical activity to listen, discern, and obey the living Word of God, who is still speaking in and through Scripture, as an authentic way to acknowledge and honour the authority of Scripture.

To be sure, Calvin offers insightful and promising implications for our discussion of scriptural authority by uniting integrally three aspects: the knowledge of God and ourselves (epistemology), the triune God's economy of salvation (soteriology), and the interpretation of Scripture (hermeneutics). It should be noted that for Calvin the authority of Scripture depends not so much on what it is in itself as on the triune God's purpose in the economy of salvation. However, in spite of the fact that the whole of the 1559 *Institutes* may be seen as Calvin's elucidation of the Christian message in the trinitarian structure of the Creed, a trinitarian hermeneutic seems implicit, rather than explicit, at least in Calvin's explication of the authority of Scripture. Therefore, we need to turn to the trinitarian hermeneutics of scriptural authority in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A DOCTRINAL ACCOUNT OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY BASED ON A TRINITARIAN-PNEUMATOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I argued that an appropriate account of scriptural authority should not be restricted within an epistemological dimension, and asserted — in anticipation of what follows — that it must be articulated in a broader framework of criteria incorporating epistemology, the doctrine of God, and hermeneutics. What is particularly noteworthy in the previous chapter is that core concepts such as "self-authenticating," "*testimonium Spiritus sancti*," "self-interpreting and clear," "God's self-accommodating," and "the covenant of grace," which Calvin formulates for his account of the authority and interpretation of Scripture, point to the manner in which Scripture is authoritative in matters pertaining to what God has done and is doing toward us, namely *God's economy of salvation*. Calvin's characteristic perspective on the Word of God functions as a crucial reminder that those constituents of scriptural authority are all intrinsically related to the doctrine of God, because they are functions of God's involvement with Scripture by virtue of its testimony to the saving action of God in Jesus Christ. In other words, if we approve of the Reformed assertion that Scripture is nothing other than the living Word of God, the question about the ontology of Scripture — what Scripture is and how it relates to its Author, God — comes to be highly pertinent to our present discussion.

Based on this, this chapter seeks to provide *an appropriate dogmatic account of scriptural authority with a trinitarian-theological hermeneutics*. This move is based on the assertion that an adequate account of Christian doctrine and practice of Scripture

must be provided in inseparable relation to all other Christian doctrines. Bearing in mind the point made in the previous chapter that the focal point of Reformed theology on the authority of Scripture lies in its being *the living Word of God*, I will reflect on a trinitarian-pneumatological hermeneutics of Scripture for our overall discussion of scriptural authority.

First of all, our search for an adequate dogmatic account of scriptural authority will embark on dealing with the question as to *where to locate the doctrine of Scripture in the whole structure of systematic theology*, because how to answer this question has a profound influence upon our overall scheme to articulate more adequately the authority of Scripture. After pointing out some weaknesses of "scriptural foundationalistic location of bibliology in prolegomena," I will examine as an alternative suggestion what is called a "doctrinal approach," which considers the doctrine of Scripture among doctrines as its legitimate location. Particularly, I will focus on an important argument underlined by a doctrinal approach, namely that any discussion of scriptural authority must be reintegrated into the doctrine of the triune God.

To set forth a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture, I will draw on the two prominent theologians' works on the issue addressed here: John Webster and Kevin Vanhoozer. John Webster, through a dogmatic ontology of Scripture, gives an account of Scripture in the saving economy of God's self-communication. Kevin Vanhoozer, employing analytical concepts of speech-act theory, delineates a doctrinal account of Scripture as God's speech act and develops a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture. I will pay particular attention to some claims and arguments put forward by Webster and Vanhoozer, which I believe would provide crucial implications for our effort to shape a more adequate understanding of scriptural authority.

One of the key arguments of this chapter is that a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture would offer a way out of an impasse that is often reached by the discussion of scriptural authority, which is deeply bound up with a false dichotomy between epistemological and soteriological aspects, between property and function of Scripture. To bolster the appeal to a trinitarian approach, I will appreciate the so-called performance metaphor —

grand story and dramatic script — as a more adequate image for theological description of Scripture. The performance metaphors of Scripture, by seeing the relationship between authority and performance in an integrated way, would prepare the way for a fresh proposal concerning the nature of scriptural authority.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to provide a trinitarian grounding for the talk of scriptural authority within the Christian doctrine of the triune God and the trinitarian economy of salvation, prior to considering the proper practice of reading Scripture in the next chapter.

4.2 THE LOCATION OF A DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE STRUCTURE OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

4.2.1 The Location of Bibliology in the Prolegomena

4.2.1.1 The Locus of Bibliology in Reformed Orthodox Theology

Calvin discussed the authority of Scripture at the beginning of the *Institutes* within the context of the knowledge of God. In his talking of the authority of Scripture, as we have noted, Calvin put a significant stress on the *testimonium,* which as the work of the Spirit belongs to the discussion of faith in soteriology. However, in spite of Calvin's spiritual and soteriological concern, his decision to deal with the authority of Scripture in the introduction of the *Institutes* has brought about a far-reaching effect on the shape of Reformed orthodox bibliology. Following Calvin, most Reformed orthodox theologians placed the discussion of scriptural authority in the first loci of the system of theology, usually after the nature of theology and before the existence and attributes of God.[74]

---

[74] According to Van den Belt (2008:126), several exceptions that dealt with the authority of Scripture not exclusively in the prolegomena can be found in early Reformed orthodoxy. For example, Robert Rollock (1555-1599) located the issue of scriptural authority in the context of soteriology in his *Treatise of God's Effectual Callings* (1597). William Ames (1576-1633), in his *Medulla theological* (1623), discussed Scripture in the ecclesiology.

In his definitive study on Reformed orthodoxy, the American Calvin scholar Richard Muller (2003:35), professor of historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, examines the continuities and discontinuities between Reformation and Reformed orthodoxy in the interpretation and locus of Scripture. Muller (2003:68) notes that there are differences between the medieval view of the place of Scripture and that of the Reformers as follows:

> [W]e are in a position to recognize both the continuity of the scholastic view of Scripture as *principium* of theology from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries and the discontinuity in the approach to Scripture between the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. This discontinuity, moreover, can be seen at the root of both the Reformers' kerygmatic appeal to *sola Scriptura* and the Protestant orthodox theologians' massive development of a distinctively Protestant *locus de Scriptura* separate from the prolegomena (where the medieval doctors had placed it) and far more elaborate than the discussions of Scripture available to the orthodox in medieval systems.

During the era of Reformed orthodoxy, however, the place of Scripture was gradually moved towards the prolegomena, from the premise of which every theological statement should be deduced. It seems natural and logical for the Reformers and their successors, who wanted to make sure that all of their teaching was drawn from the Scripture principle, to position the doctrine of Scripture at the beginning of the theological system and to make a firm statement on the authority and perspicuity of Scripture before dealing with any other doctrine.

In spite of certain continuity, however, there is the discontinuity between the Reformers and Reformed orthodoxy as to the nature of the authority of Scripture.[75] According to Muller (2003:259,263), a balance kept by Calvin 'between the subjective and inward certainty resting on the Spirit and on faith alone and an external objective certainty

---

[75] The complicated patterns and aspects of historical development and thereby of the continuity and discontinuity between the Reformation and Reformed orthodoxy are not our primary concern here. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see the recent standard work of Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca.1725* (2003).

resting on evidence' became increasingly difficult to be maintained at the time of Reformed orthodoxy, owing to 'an increasingly apologetic emphasis on the observable or empirical *notae divinitatis* in the text.'

This relative shift in emphasis is, to some extent, related to different contexts. In a simple way, several aspects of those different contexts can be illustrated. First, there was a "genre difference" between the works of the Reformers and those of Reformed orthodox theologians. As Muller (1996:136) takes an example elsewhere, whereas the *Institutes* was designed and understood by Calvin as 'a basic instruction in issues related to the study of Scripture,' the dogmatic works of Polanus and Turretin 'were intended from the outset as complete systems of theology based not on catechetical but on earlier dogmatic models.' From this genre difference, the place of the authority of Scripture was shifted into a general introduction of the whole system of theology. Second, due to the institutionalisation of Reformed orthodoxy at the universities, theology came to be recognised as a "science." Just as all sciences have self-convincing *principia*, so theology takes Scripture as the *principium* of theology that is necessarily authoritative. The Reformed orthodox theologians' location of the authority of Scripture rested upon the framework within which theology was viewed as a *scientia*. In this process, as Van den Belt (2008:175) argues, the concept and use of the authority 'shifted from its original place in the *locus* on Scripture to the *locus* on theology and was transformed from a confessional statement into a logical starting point of theology.' In other words, for Reformed orthodoxy the authority of Scripture came to be used as a logical necessity rather than a confessional statement. Third, the emerging Enlightenment might carry a powerful influence upon using the authority of Scripture as a warranty of epistemological certainty. Against the crisis of theological certainty caused by the rise of the Enlightenment rationalism, the Reformed orthodox put more emphasis upon the objective attributes of Scripture than the *testimonium* of the Spirit (Muller 1996:128). For example, a high Reformed orthodox theologian of the seventeenth century, Gisbertus Voetius, did draw a sharp distinction between Scripture as the *principium externum* and the illumination of the Spirit as the *principium internum* within the context of the early Enlightenment. Voetius then put a significant emphasis on the

146

objectivity of the authority of Scripture to counterbalance the contemporary subjective tendency (Van den Belt 2008:174).

These different contexts and a corresponding shift in emphasis indicate that there was obviously a development within Reformed orthodoxy towards an increasingly formal, rigid approach to the doctrine of Scripture. However, according to Muller, this does not imply that the Reformed orthodox theologians departed significantly from the Reformation understanding of the authority of Scripture. Although the Reformed orthodoxy theology, by employing medieval scholasticism as models for systematising theology, differed in *form* from the Reformers, nevertheless it retained the basic doctrinal *content* of the Reformation. Muller goes so far as to contend that the form of the Reformed orthodox did not significantly impair the basic theological content they inherited from the Reformation.

I agree substantially with Muller that there are manifest continuities of Reformed orthodox position with the Reformation in the content of the doctrine of Scripture. However, even if we admit Muller's claim that Reformed orthodoxy's innovation over the Reformation was not in content but in form, it does not follow that we can simply ignore a profound influence of the Reformed orthodox formalisation of scriptural authority upon the later theological formulation and understanding of it. In addition, the innovation of form, by means of locating the doctrine of Scripture in the philosophical prolegomena to theology for the epistemological certainty, had a significant bearing on an attempt to establish the formal authority of Scripture not so much by virtue of the content of Scripture as by virtue of the doctrine of biblical inspiration.

4.2.1.2 The Locus of Bibliology in Conservative-Evangelical Theology

In much of the conservative-evangelical tradition, the discussion of the authority of Scripture is located at the beginning of systematic theology. To be sure, this position follows Calvin's decision to discuss the authority of Scripture in the introduction of the *Institutes*, but more particularly it follows the way of B B Warfield, 'evangelicalism's bibliological Church Father' — to cite Telford Work's characterisation (2002:317).

Warfield, who adheres to Reformed orthodoxy, [76] has a great influence on the conservative-evangelical formation of the doctrine of Scripture.

Following Calvin and Reformed orthodoxy, Warfield places the discussion of the authority of Scripture in the prolegomena.[77] For Warfield, at the centre of scriptural authority is the doctrine of inspiration. What makes Scripture authoritative depends on the fact that it is inspired. However, for Warfield the doctrine of Scripture — especially, the doctrine of plenary inspiration — is, as Kelsey (1975:21) aptly points out, '*methodologically indispensable* for doing theology…but *logically dispensable* so far as the explication and defense of other doctrine is concerned' [Kelsey's italics]. This point emerges explicitly, as Kelsey also cites, from the passage in Warfield's classical work *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture of the Bible* (Warfield 1948:210):

> Let it not be said that thus we found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration. We found the whole Christian system on the doctrine of plenary inspiration as little as we found it upon the doctrine of angelic existences. Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord and of His authoritative agents in founding the Church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historical witness of the living Church. Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures.

---

[76] Warfield argues that the later orthodox Protestant dogmatic view of Scripture did comport with Calvin's position. Warfield rejects the opinion of some theologians — such as Cramer and Pannier, as he cites — that there is a substantial gap between the late Reformed orthodox conception of Scripture and Calvin's basic idea of Scripture, and then concludes: 'Yet nothing is more certain than that Calvin held both to "verbal inspiration" and to "the inerrancy of Scripture," however he may have conceived the action of God which secured these things' (Warfield 1931:60-61).

[77] Setting aside the locus of bibliology, Warfield's concept and use of the authority of Scripture seem to differ from that of Calvin and even the Reformed orthodox to some extent. By Van den Belt (2008:217), while the authority of Scripture is for Calvin a confessional statement and for the Reformed orthodox a logical necessity, Warfield deals with it as 'an objective and demonstrable attribute of Scripture.'

It seems here that for Warfield the discussion of the authority of Scripture centred on inspiration and inerrancy is logically *extrinsic* to the Christian faith, and thus the doctrine of Scripture can be dispensable for other Christian doctrines. In other words, the doctrine of Scripture comes to be apart from other doctrines and then be 'acting *solely* as an inerrant witness to events and beliefs that are otherwise complete in themselves' (Work 2002:318).

Warfield's formation of bibliology is closely connected with the modern context, as is already noted in Chapter 2. Warfield's account of inspiration was developed within what is primarily an apologetic context. As Gunton (1995:18) points out unambiguously, the tendency of theology in the modern world has been dominated excessively by epistemology and this leads to a seeing of the problem too much in the light of modern developments and preconceptions. From such an epistemological concern to secure Scripture's foundational status as the *principium cognoscendi* not only of theology but also of all truths, Warfield appealed to the doctrine of inspiration. Within the conservative-evangelical circle following in the wake of Warfield, talk of Scripture, by being shifted from "among doctrines" to "in front of doctrines," has been held for the purpose of 'the establishment of an inerrant doctrinal source and norm'; particularly the doctrine of inspiration is rendered 'merely as a warrant for Scripture's *theological* authority, and therefore for its role in controversy' (Webster 2003:36).

4.2.1.3 The Need to Relocate the Locus of Bibliology

The positioning of the doctrine of Scripture in the prolegomena of the whole theological system provokes some serious problems.

Firstly, as Wolfhart Pannenberg (1997:214) points out in his short, yet insightful, article *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, the prolegomenal positioning of bibliology is 'to use the idea of the divine inspiration of the biblical scriptures in a formal way in order to establish the authority of the Bible before dealing with the contents of Christian

149

teachings.'[78] Behind it lies the desire to establish firmly Scripture's status as the ultimate epistemological foundation prior to treating the contents of Scripture. The placement of bibliology at the beginning of the dogmatic corpus makes the doctrine of Scripture responsible for providing the epistemological warrants for Christian truth claims. However, the attempt to formalise scriptural authority independently of the content of Scripture inevitably leads to the logical dispensability of the doctrine of Scripture with, or the isolation of it from, other Christian doctrines. It is because the doctrine of Scripture comes to be thought of as "the formal, ultimate *principium* and *fundamentum* from which those other doctrines are deduced" and thus as "preceding and warranting all other Christian doctrines" (Webster 2003:13).

Secondly, the place of bibliology in the prolegomena leaves the impression that Scripture can stand alone as a foundation and source of epistemological certainty prior to and hence apart from the triune God's redemptive activity. This brings about the devastating effect, namely to take the primary focus away from God in talk of the authority of Scripture (McGowan 2007:28). Not only Scripture is taken away from the talk of God as its proper starting point and habitat, but also it has a logical or theological priority *over* God. Like theology itself, talk of the authority of Scripture as well must take place in the trinitarian, soteriological, and ecclesial contexts. Once the authority of Scripture is disconnected from its trinitarian, soteriological, and ecclesial contexts, it easily falls into a general source of proof texts instead of the *viva vox Dei*.

Thirdly, the use of the authority of Scripture as the prolegomena or an axiom of theology makes it possible to separate the discussion of scriptural authority from soteriology. 'The formalisation of Scripture's authority,' says Webster (2003:56), 'can take place when the juridical function of Scripture in theological polemic is abstracted from its soteriological function, that is, from the content of Scripture as the gospel of salvation and the directedness of Scripture towards the enabling of life in truthful

---

[78] Instead of the placement of bibliology before any discussion of the content of the biblical writings, Pannenberg (1997:214) suggests that the appropriate place to explicate the authority and primacy of Scripture must be 'between christology and the doctrine of reconciliation on the one hand and the doctrine of the church on the other hand.' Although Pannenberg's proposal can be seen to some extent as trinitarian, I will attempt to relocate bibliology within a doctrine of the triune God in a manner somewhat different from his suggestion.

fellowship with God through the ordering of the church's speech and action.' Within the modernist epistemological milieu modern theology shared, the discussion of the doctrine of Scripture has been rooted in theoretical-polemical rather than practical-soteriological concerns. In this way, bibliology comes to be taken out of the trinitarian, soteriological, and ecclesial context. With respect to this problem, Berkouwer (1975:35) sounds a prophetic warning that any attempt for the formalisation of scriptural authority, by detaching easily bibliology from a trinitarian-soteriological context, could fall into what Bavinck called "dead orthodox":

> What [Bavinck] wants to point out is that subjection to the authority of Scripture…is also threatened by those who, within a formal and traditional scriptural confession, really do not subject themselves to this authority and do not manifest the reality of their confession in daily life….Further, he wants to emphasize that scriptural authority and belief may not be formalized, for faith and its certainty cannot exist for a moment if they are not related to the content and the message of Scripture….so our belief in Scripture is true only when our confession of its authority is accompanied by a response to its testimony in faith. Bavinck's warning is so serious and meaningful because it is possible for the confession of Scripture's authority and inspiration to be maintained for a long time as an apparent part of the church's heritage of faith without there being any evidence of a real living faith anymore. It is possible never to question the authority of Scripture without walking in the truth.

From all these problems arises the pressing need for the relocation of bibliology into the Christian doctrines. As Pannenberg (1997:215) puts it straightforwardly, the authority of Scripture is 'not the authority of the letter but that of the content that is accessible through the letter.' Talk of scriptural authority should not take place isolated from the Christian doctrinal materials such as Trinity, soteriology, the Spirit, church, and eschatology. For the reason stated above, the doctrinal mislocation of bibliology must be corrected and overcome by means of 'its reintegration into the comprehensive structure of Christian doctrine, and most especially the Christian doctrine of God' (Webster 2003:13).

4.2.2 The Relocation of Bibliology into Christian Doctrines

4.2.2.1 Stanley Grenz: Under the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

In his *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, Stanley Grenz advocates a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of Scripture in his proposal of a revisioned doctrine of Scripture for evangelical theology.[79] Grenz points out that the theological methodology of Protestant systematic theology has separated bibliology from pneumatology. Through separating bibliology from 'its natural embedding in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit' (Grenz 1993:115), the Holy Spirit comes to be alienated from His vehicle, and as a result the understanding of the relationship between Spirit and Scripture turns out to be static.

According to Grenz (2001:64-66), the integral relation between Spirit and Scripture has been a central tenet of the evangelical tradition since the Reformation. This is explicitly affirmed by what Bernard Ramm calls "the Protestant principle of authority" as follows (Ramm 1959:28): '*the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, which are the product of the Spirit's revelatory and inspiring action, is the principle of authority for the Christian Church*' [Ramm's italics]. The Westminster Confession of Faith, one of the most influential statements of the Reformed theological tradition, also affirms this position in the chapter of the Holy Scripture as follows: 'The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture' (Leith 1973:196). As Grenz rightly observes, the Reformers always tried to place Scripture in the trinitarian context, particularly in relation to the work of the Spirit. In this sense, a revisioned bibliology is to be seen as restoring the genuine evangelical

---

[79] Stanley Grenz is known as a forerunner of so-called "postconservativism," which has been advocated by Roger Olson, Robert Webber, Brian McLaren, and others. Grenz has engaged in the task for revisioning evangelical theological methodology from a postconservative perspective, which involves methodological proposals and historical-sociological analyses of the evangelical movements. Grenz's programmatic work of revisioning evangelical methodology emerged in his earlier work *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (1993) and has been developed more comprehensively and deeply in his recent work *Beyond Foundationalism* (2001) written in collaboration with John Franke. For his methodological proposal on bibliology, especially see chapter 3 of *Beyond Foundationalism*.

tradition traceable to the Reformation, which firmly maintains the mutual bond of Word and Spirit.

At the heart of Grenz's proposal for a revisioned evangelical bibliology is 'the concern to bring Word and Spirit together in a living relationship' (Grenz 2000:124). Grenz (1993:114) insists that 'the reestablishment of the integral link between Spirit and Scripture must begin methodologically through the reorientation of the doctrine of Scripture under the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.' In other words, a revisioned pneumatological bibliology suggests that talk of the authority and function of Scripture should be placed under the broader discussion of pneumatology. Scripture, as a dimension of the Spirit's broad activities towards us, ought to be understood as the vehicle or instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, who appropriates it so as to speak to God's people today (Grenz 1994:495). Grenz thus writes (1994:524):

> [T]o understand the authoritative function of the Bible, we must return to the pneumatological context in which all aspects of our discussion concerning Scripture properly lie….Whatever authority the Bible carries as a trustworthy book, it derives from the trustworthiness of the divine revelation it discloses and ultimately from the Spirit who infallibly speaks through it. In declaring the trustworthiness of the Bible, therefore, we must keep in mind that it is ultimately not the book itself which we are affirming. Rather, we are confessing our faith in the Spirit who speaks his revelatory message to us through the pages of Scripture.

Grenz takes the point of the Protestant principle — that Scripture is above all the instrumentality of the Spirit — a step further to say that 'the authority of the Bible is in the end the authority of the Spirit whose instrumentality it is' (2001:65). The Christian affirmation that Scripture is the ultimate authority in the Christian faith and practice is not about the property of Scripture itself; rather it must be a confession that Scripture is the trustworthy instrumentality of God the Spirit. Simply stated, *the authority of Scripture is none other than the authority of the Spirit who is speaking through it.*

What is noteworthy at this point is that Grenz relates the Spirit's use of Scripture as the instrumentality of the divine speaking particularly with the Spirit's world-creating or community-forming work. Grenz (2001:79) asserts that the central work of the Spirit is 'to bring into being a new community' in accordance with the Word, Jesus Christ. This Spirit's work to create a new community and to shape a new identity in it, by Grenz (2001:78-83), occurs by way of the Spirit's appropriation of Scripture in a twofold way: "narrating our paradigmatic past" and "disclosing the vision of the future." On the one hand, the Spirit appropriates Scripture to create a new community in the present by connecting us with the 'primary paradigmatic events' narrated by the biblical texts. On the other hand, the Spirit appropriates Scripture to form the present community into the eschatological community, which views itself in the light of God's eschatological future and opens itself to the vision and power of that glorious future. In other words, as the instrumentality of the Spirit, Scripture provides us with 'a communal interpretive framework,' with which we refashion our world into a new world the Spirit creates.

For Grenz, placing the doctrine of Scripture at the front of prolegomena apart from the life of believing community can never exhaust the Spirit's speaking to us through Scripture in the here and now. This consideration leads to his suggestion that we must modify our understanding of scriptural authority in the light of the world-creating, community-forming work of the Spirit.

4.2.2.2 Telford Work: Among All Doctrines, Especially in an Economic Trinitarian Theology

In his insightful book *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*, Telford Work, professor of theology at Westmont College, claims that the proper doctrine of Scripture should be addressed in a way that appropriates not only the Bible's triune character and purpose but also its role in worship and salvation. Work suggests and develops "an economic trinitarian theology of Scripture" by approaching bibliology from multiple perspectives of Christian doctrines. In the Protestant systematic theology, he notes, there is a tendency to lock up the character and work of Scripture in the prolegomenal ghetto. In opposition to this tendency, Work argues that bibliology can be

properly reflected on in the light of every other locus of theology. All Christian dogmatics — such as Trinity, creation, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology — would play an essential part in framing the character, mission, and goal of Scripture. In its intimate relationship with the full resources of other dogmatics, Scripture will come to be appropriated as 'reaching into the very plan of God and the very heart of the Christian life' (Work 2002:9).

Work's suggestion of a trinitarian bibliology is based on three dogmatic convictions (2002:9-10). Firstly, given the premise that Scripture is the Word of God, Scripture must be thought of as reflecting God's triune character in some significant way and hence 'a Trinitarian ontology of Scripture.' Secondly, the function and work of Scripture is to be reflected in terms of the divine economy of salvation, and, as a result of this, a historical and personal soteriology of Scripture may be suggested. Thirdly, if Scripture is written, kept, and performed principally on behalf of the Church, then its character must reflect the character of the Church. This inextricable relationship of Scripture with the Church in its eschatological setting suggests an ecclesiology of Scripture. In this way, a trinitarian doctrine of Scripture has a *circular* characteristic in its mutual relationship with other resources of Christian dogmatics.

What is noteworthy in a trinitarian bibliology suggested by Work is that its multiplicity of starting points, along with the methodological circularity, plays a decisive role in setting free the doctrine of Scripture from under the prolegomenal confinement (Work 2002:33-34). Just as the doctrine of the Trinity sheds lights on the shape of all other theological considerations, so bibliology properly begins from trinitarian reflection. Pneumatology as well can be the point of departure for a bibliology in that we encounter the triune God through the person and work of the Spirit who operates in and through Scripture. For a full trinitarian ontology of Scripture, we need to consider both Scripture's pneumatological and Christological ontologies in an integrated way. In addition to these points of entry that begin "from above," there are the starting points of "from below" for an adequate account of Scripture. Given that Scripture's primary function is salvific, soteriology might be the proper category from which to begin bibliology. Besides, considering not only the Church's authorship and canonisation of

Scripture but also its formation by and obedience to Scripture, it may be reasonable to say that ecclesiology as well can be the proper starting point. 'No one entry point commends itself absolutely,' Work (2002:34) argues conclusively, 'because *all* these aspects of bibliology are relevant.' In other words, a thoroughly Christian account of Scripture must involve all dogmatic dimensions because they are so interrelated that no one can be explored fully and adequately except in terms of the others.

In spite of the multiplicity of entry points, Work (2002:34) takes as the key entry point "the theocentric approach," which gives ultimate priority to the divine perspective rather than the human, rejecting modern bibliology's 'salvation-historical, phenomenological, or existential points of entry which start "from below," from the human experience of salvation by means of the use of Scripture.' It does not seem that Work accepts a dichotomy between ontological and functional bibliology. To the contrary, Work's main point is that from the perspective of a trinitarian theology of Scripture, functional bibliology proceeds from ontological bibliology. 'If Scripture's character participates in the Father's will, the Son's *kenosis,* the Spirit's power, and the humanity of God's elect, then its use must participate in the divine economy of salvation' (Work 2002:127). Since the initiative in the economy of salvation belongs to the triune God, the shift in emphasis between ontological bibliology and functional bibliology must not be "from God to humanity," but "from immanence to economy" (:128).

As noted above, Work not only points out rightly the multiplicity of doctrinal entry points in articulating bibliology, but also and more significantly, maintains the priority of an economic trinitarian perspective over others.

4.2.2.3 John Webster: Within the Doctrine of the Triune God Embracing All Other Doctrines

The Anglican Reformed theologian John Webster is one of the few theologians who seek to explore talk of Scripture from the viewpoint of Christian dogmatics. Webster (2001:1) deplores the absence or scarcity of dogmatic exposition of the nature of Scripture in recent theology as follows: 'Extensive and elaborate use is often made, for

example, of philosophical accounts of the nature of interpretation, literary theory, or the sociology of texts, correlated rather loosely with doctrinal considerations and often, in fact, assuming the lead voice.' For Webster, neither modern — which has been dominated by the epistemological agenda — nor postmodern — which tends to appeal to certain non-theological theories — accounts of Scripture can do full justice to what Scripture really is and how it works within the church, owing to the absence of any deep description in *theological* terms.

By contrast, a properly Christian account of Scripture insists on "the primacy of the church's dogmatic depictions of encounter with the Bible," and thus it would refer to the language of God, Christ, Spirit, faith, and church (Webster 1998:308). Over and against the decline of theological terms in recent accounts of Scripture, Webster calls attention to the need for appealing much more directly to dogmatic resources in giving an account of Scripture. To retrieve a Christian account of Scripture in theological terms, Webster argues that the doctrine of Scripture should be rooted in the doctrine of the triune God, which embraces all the dogmatic material references such as Christology, pneumatology, and soteriology.

At the core of what Webster (2003:54) calls 'a dogmatic move' is *the centrality of the doctrine of the triune God*. Webster (:43) says, 'Christian theology has a singular preoccupation: God, and everything else *sub specie divinitatis*.' 'All other Christian doctrines,' Webster continues, 'are applications or corollaries of…the doctrine of the Trinity, in which the doctrine of the church, no less than the doctrine of revelation, has its proper home.' Based on this reflection, Webster (:39) insists emphatically that 'the proper location for a Christian account of the nature of Holy Scripture is the Christian doctrine of God.' On this account, an attempt to reshape a doctrine of Scripture in theological terms confronts us with the need to direct full attention towards the properly Christian doctrine of God. Besides, in order to assume the true significance of the doctrine of Scripture, a renewed theological account of Scripture should be brought into the realm of Christology, pneumatology, and soteriology. We can only then claim legitimately that the unique character and authority of Scripture as revelation is more

than the provider of unique information, but also the bearer of saving knowledge, a vehicle of the Word of God.

The main point of Webster's dogmatic move of bibliology is that talk of the nature, function, and authority of Scripture must be moved to its authentic theological locus within the doctrine of God. In other words, Christian talk of Scripture is in critical need of reconsideration in terms of the doctrine of the triune God, in terms of the triune economy of salvation, and hence in the light of the salvific activity of Father, Son, and the Spirit. I will look into Webster's dogmatic approach to the doctrine of Scripture in more detail.

4.2.3 The Locus of the Authority of Scripture in God Himself

4.2.3.1 All Authority is God's Authority

As the British Congregationalist theologian P T Forsyth (1952:122) elucidated clearly a century ago, the ultimate authority, which vindicates every other authority in its degree and measure, is God the Creator and Redeemer. Nothing can be the final authority but God Himself, the gracious God in the gospel, the triune God, 'who is at once the most external yet the most intimate and the most absolute of authorities' (:316). Therefore, it can be said that all other authorities stand ranged into a hierarchy according to their closeness or necessity for God's purpose or God's action (:302).

In line with this thought, N T Wright (2005:138) argues that the authority of Scripture should be understood within the context of God's authority. According to Wright (1991:11-14), the regular views of Scripture both outside and inside evangelicalism, which attribute the authority of Scripture to "the repository of abstract truths and rules," "witness to primary events," or "timeless function," fail to do justice to Scripture as we actually have it. All these answers offer too low a view of Scripture and actually belittle Scripture by shifting the real locus of authority from Scripture itself to something else. The authority of Scripture, by Wright, must be addressed legitimately from Scripture's view of authority, which always gives a primary focus on the authority of God Himself.

In Wright's observation (1991:14; 2005:23), what we are actually saying when we use the phrase "the authority of Scripture" is a shorthand way of saying that albeit all authority belongs to God, God has somehow invested His own authority in Scripture. Seen from the light of the whole Bible — not just the light of the biblical statements about authority —, it can be surely affirmed that all authority does belong to God and is vested in the triune God Himself — Father, Son, and Spirit (N T Wright 1991:15).

On this account, the proper understanding of the notion of God's authority precedes the understanding of what means when we use the phrase "the authority of Scripture." The notion of God's authority is based on the fact that 'God is the loving, wise, creator, redeemer God' (N T Wright 1991:15). This is a challenge to the world's view of authority that is often regarded as the power to control people. On the contrary, 'God's authority vested in scripture is designed, as all God's authority is designed, to liberate human beings, to judge and condemn evil and sin in the world in order to set people free to be fully human' (:16). In a word, the authority of Scripture is a shorthand expression of God's authority which is exercised somehow *through* Scripture by the Creator and Redeemer God in the economy of salvation (:30-31). Wright (2005:114) conclusively states that 'the shorthand phrase "the authority of Scripture," when unpacked, offers a picture of God's sovereign and saving plan for the entire cosmos, dramatically inaugurated by Jesus himself, and now to be implemented through the Spirit-led life of the church *precisely as the scripture-reading community*.'

4.2.3.2 The *De Jure* Authority of Scripture in its Relation to God

Methodist theologian Shubert Ogden explicates the authority of Scripture in terms of *de jure* and *de facto* authority. Ogden observes the general distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* authority. While the *de facto* authority is asserted whenever it is recognised as having the right to command or to act concerning action and belief, the *de jure* authority is not dependent upon the recognition of it. According to Ogden, however, the *de jure* authority is not a self-authorising authority. Any *de jure* authority, which claims the right to command or to act concerning the action or belief of others, presupposes some rule or rules that would confer such right and thus authorise it as an authority. In other

words, 'all *de jure* authority,' says Ogden (1976:246), 'is by logical necessity "rule-conferred authority."'

Ogden takes this general observation of authority a step further by applying the implications of it to the theological discussion of the authority of Scripture. Concerning the authority of Scripture, Ogden (1976:245-246) approves of both *de facto* and *de jure* authority. On the one hand, Scripture may be said to have a *de facto* authority for theology whenever it is recognised as a standard or norm for determining the relevance of a theologian's assertions. On the other hand, apart from the fact that *de facto* authority presupposes *de jure* authority, the authority claimed for Scripture by Reformed theology is more than a merely *de facto* authority, as is evident in the Reformation scriptural principle *sola Scriptura*. Scripture is deemed to have a *de jure* authority in that it *ought to be* authoritative whether its authority is recognised or not. However, Scripture's authority, in spite of its unique normativeness over all other theological norms, ultimately stands on the same level as those who are subject to its authority since 'according to the so-called material principle of the Reformers, it is Christ alone who authorizes Scripture as *norma-normans, sed non normata*' (:246). In other words, the authority of Scripture is by its very nature 'not only an authorized authority but also an authority that is to be authorized by controlling its commands or actions in relation to the still higher authority, or source of authority, under which it itself stands' (:247).

Put differently, it is God Himself, the Author of all authority, who grants the *de jure* authority to Scripture via the delegation of His authority. The initiative in appointing Scripture as the means, through which God addresses us and His presence is pledged, lies entirely with God. Scripture has and enjoys the authority of God who wills to speak in and through Scripture. This nature and locus of scriptural authority is well expressed nowhere but in the Reformed affirmation that *Scripture is the Word of God*.

Considering this, it may be rightly said that a proper account of scriptural authority requires a well-balanced consideration for both *de facto* and *de jure* authority — *de jure* authority in relation to God, the ultimate Author of authority itself. This point reminds

us that Fiorenza critiques Kelsey's functional interpretation of scriptural authority as that which 'does not sufficiently spell out the *de jure* authority' (Fiorenza 1990:359). It is important to note that the *de jure* authority of Scripture assumes the externality — not as outwardness or distantness, but as otherness — of it from those who are subject to it. Viewed from this perspective, it would seem that a functional view of scriptural authority tends to deprive Scripture of any *de jure* authority and to make scriptural authority 'an immanent feature of ecclesial existence' (Webster 2003:55). However, as Webster (2003:53) states clearly, '*de facto* authority is only of any real force if it is grounded in *de jure* authority.' Without dealing with the *de jure* authority of Scripture in its relation with God, one cannot expect that full justice to scriptural authority will be done.

4.2.3.3 The Centrality of the Doctrine of God in Talk of Scriptural Authority

One's understanding of God is always in such a close relation to one's understanding of everything else that the former has a profound influence in forming and transforming the latter. This is also the case with one's understanding of Scripture. Judgements about one's view of Scripture rest upon prior judgements about his/her understanding of who God is and what God is doing.

Vanhoozer is especially cognizant of the pivotal role of the doctrine of God as prior judgements in determining how to approach the doctrine of Scripture. One's view of Scripture, says Vanhoozer (2002:131), is always correlated to one's view of God. The pathway into the doctrine of Scripture always intersects with the doctrine of God. In this sense, what is said about Scripture can be thought of as an extension of what is said about the triune God. To say it more precisely, what is said about the nature, function and authority of Scripture draws on theological doctrine with reference to the nature and purpose of God and God's relation to the world.

This reflection directs our attention to a proper context within which talk of scriptural authority should take place. Just as theology itself properly begins with God, so does the doctrine of Scripture. Neither the origin nor the function of Scripture can be

appropriately set forth outside the context of the being and acting of God. In other words, the doctrine of Scripture must be settled solidly in a habitat of a trinitarian context, namely in a thoroughly theological, Christological and pneumatological context. This assertion is in no sense to deny that Scripture is objectively the Word of God. Rather, by way of the housing of a doctrine of Scripture in the context of the doctrine of the triune God, talk of scriptural authority can be articulated in a way that is 'liberated from the human quest for epistemological certainty and rooted in the God-centred revelation' (McGowan 2007:30). This, if properly done, will chart the way forwards for a more full and promising theological articulation of scriptural authority as the Word of God.

As noted throughout this dissertation, there have been tensions between external and internal authority, between objective and subjective authority, and between ontological and functional authority, within the discussion of scriptural authority. These tensions pose a difficult dilemma for any theological reflection on scriptural authority, and often drive theologians to a quagmire hard to find the way out. The way to move beyond that impasse, I believe, could be found in a Christian doctrine of God. More particularly, the Christian doctrine of the triune God and the principal implications of a trinitarian economy of salvation can offer the only guarantee of a theologically sound conception of authority in matters of Christian belief and action. Without taking into serious consideration the trinitarian hermeneutics, there can be no way of resolving the dilemma we are facing. This recognition leads us to the following reflection.

4.3 A TRINITARIAN THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

4.3.1 A Trinitarian Ontology of Scripture[80]

John Webster, in his book *Holy Scripture*, begins with a dogmatic account of Scripture, first of all, by addressing the question of what Holy Scripture is and how it relates to

---

[80] I owe the material of this section to John Webster's discussion of "revelation, sanctification and inspiration" in his *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (2003).

God, namely the question of *the ontology of Scripture*. A dogmatic account of Scripture Webster proposes employs broad doctrinal materials and therefore carries broad applications. It draws upon theological doctrines of the nature and purpose of God and His relation to the world, of the church in relation to Word and Spirit, and of the nature of human interpretations and acts in relation to Scripture. Among these broad materials across the dogmatic corpus, by Webster (2003:2), a genuine departure point of a properly dogmatic depiction of Scripture must be 'a dogmatic ontology of Holy Scripture: an account of what Holy Scripture *is* in the saving economy of God's loving and regenerative self-communication.' Within properly theological order, according to Webster, both Scripture as a text and the uses of the text made by readers are subservient to the self-manifestation of the triune God, of which the text is a servant and by which readers are addressed.[81]

To articulate a dogmatic ontology of Scripture, Webster considers three primary concepts, that is, *revelation, sanctification, and inspiration*, which as three aspects of God's activity concerning Scripture are deeply bound up with the ontology of Scripture. Both the *sanctification* of Scripture and its *inspiration* are an extension of God's activity of revelation, and *revelation* is 'God's triune being in its external orientation, its gracious and self-bestowing turn to the creation' (Webster 2003:9). These revealing, sanctifying, and inspiring acts of the triune God are essential constituents of Webster's shaping of the ontology of Scripture.

---

[81] Webster (2003:6-7) points out two kinds of 'disorderly ontology of Scripture.' One type is, as has appeared in Western Protestant theology for a long time since the Reformation, that which isolates the text from its place of God's revelatory activity and from its reception in the community of faith. Another type is, as emerges in recent theology, that which grants the primary reference to the use and function of Scripture in the community and only secondarily to the reflection of the economy of God's communicative activity. Webster takes an example of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1993:ix), who asserts that there is no ontology of Scripture. By Cantwell Smith, Scripture is none other than human activity, human propensity, and potentiality; there is thus no need for the ontology of Scripture existing independently of readers. To the contrary, for Webster (2003:31), the properties of Scripture are the result of its annexation into the communicative activity of the triune God. Consequently, an ontology of Scripture is determined by the divine use of the triune God, not by the uses of readers. It is the divine decision that authorises and appropriates the biblical texts for the divine purpose of the economy of salvation.

4.3.1.1 Revelation as the Self-Communicative Presence of the Triune God

Webster (2003:13) draws a brief sketch of revelation as such: '*revelation is the self-presentation of the triune God, the free work of sovereign mercy in which God wills, establishes and perfects saving fellowship with himself in which humankind comes to know, love and fear him above all things*' [Webster's italics]. This statement entails three points to be noted.

Firstly, revelation is *the self-presentation of the triune God* (Webster 2003:13). The *content* of revelation is not something other than God's own self such as impersonal information, but His own proper reality. Therefore, talk of revelation may be thought of as identical with talk of God's own being in His active self-presence. The *agent* of revelation is the triune God Himself, whose reality is in and of itself self-presence. Webster (2003:14) speaks of the reality of God's self-presence in a trinitarian way: 'As Father, God is the personal will or origin of this self-presence; as Son, God actualises his self-presence, upholding it and establishing it against all opposition; as Holy Spirit, God perfects that self-presence by making it real and effective to and in the history of humankind.'

Secondly, revelation as the triune God's self-presentation is a '*free work of sovereign mercy*' (Webster 2003:14). 'God's revelation is God's *spiritual* presence' and 'as spiritual presence, the presence of God is free': it is not forced by any reality other than itself (:14-15). God's self-communication occurs in the majesty of His sovereignty and according to His own purpose. In this sense, God's revelation is inevitably *mystery* and thus cannot be reduced into something plain and available for classification or systematisation (:15).

Thirdly, revelation is purposive, having as its *telos* 'the establishment of *saving fellowship*' (Webster 2003:15). Revelation moves beyond cognitional, noetic dimension; revelation is reconciliation, salvation, and hence fellowship. Revelation as reconciliation, which is achieved by 'the overcoming of human opposition, alienation and pride, and their replacement by knowledge, love and fear of God,' works forwards the

establishment of fellowship (:15-16). This fellowship with God is a communicative fellowship that is established in the processes of knowing God, on the one hand, and a relational fellowship within which we come to know, fear, and love God, on the other.

In this light, Webster (2003:17) asserts, revelation is to be understood as 'the corollary of trinitarian theology and soteriology.' Revelation must be considered first of all as 'a function of the doctrine of salvation' (Gunton 1995:111). It is by means of the divine action of revelation that human blindness, opposition, and alienation can be overcome and the redemption of the creation can be achieved. In this sense, Christian doctrine of revelation is much more than epistemological foundation. The denotation of revelation should embrace fully 'the communicative, fellowship-establishing trajectory of the acts of God in the election, creation, providential ordering, reconciliation, judgement and glorification of God's creatures' (Webster 2003:17).

4.3.1.2 Scripture as a Sanctified Means of God's Self-Communication[82]

Webster (2003:18) refers to the old-fashioned, yet unresolved, problem, that is, the question as to how to conceive the relation between the divine Word and human words, more precisely, 'between the biblical text as "natural" or "historical" entities and theological claims about the self-manifesting activity of God.' The core of this problem, says Webster (2003:19-20), lies not in the affirmation of the biblical texts' being "natural history," but in the denial of that. This denial is the complex legacy of dualism and nominalism in Western Christian theology, which denies any capacity of creaturely forms to indicate the presence and activity of the transcendent God. The dualistic framework of modern naturalism exerted significant influences not only upon historical-naturalistic biblical critics, but also upon their opponents. Some theologians sought to defend Scripture 'by espousing a strident supernaturalism, defending the relation of the

---

[82] Webster (2003:9-10) adds an explanatory remark on his adoption of the term "sanctification," which is usually used in the field of soteriology, specifically in giving a theological account of the application of salvation. By him, the concept of sanctification may be legitimately extended to the description of setting apart creaturely realities by God for the specific tasks in the economy of salvation. Thus, in our present discussion of the ontology of Scripture, 'sanctification functions as a middle term, indicating in a general way God's activity of appointing and ordering the creaturely realities of the biblical texts towards the end of the divine self-manifestation.'

Bible to divine revelation by almost entirely removing it from the sphere of historical contingency, through the elaboration of an increasingly formalised and doctrinally isolated theory of inspiration' (:20). Instead of describing how creaturely entities may be used as the servants of the divine self-presence, they sought to dissolve the problem by eliminating the creatureliness — humanness or humanity — of the text. Webster correctly points out that both pure naturalism and pure supernaturalism fail to do justice to the ontology of Scripture by the lack of a properly theological reflection of God's relation to the world through the creaturely reality of the biblical texts (:21).

In this regard, Webster underlines the utility of the notion of sanctification primarily because it may provide a more fruitful account of the relation between "Scripture as the divine revelation" and "Scripture as creaturely texts" than other available concepts.[83] For Webster (2003:26-27), sanctification is most of all the activity of the Spirit, 'through which creaturely realities are elected, shaped and preserved to undertake a role in the economy of salvation.' As the work of the Spirit, sanctification is a process in which creaturely entities are invested with holiness to serve the divine purpose in a way that their creaturely reality is not extracted from their creatureliness. On the one hand, since God the sanctifying Spirit is *the sovereign Lord*, sanctification is in no sense "transubstantiation," which is understood as 'a process of cooperation or coordination between God and the creature' (:27). Creaturely realities become holy by virtue of a sovereign act of separation by the Spirit as Lord. On the other hand, the sanctifying Spirit is not only Lord, but also *Life-giver*, 'the bestower of genuine and inalienable creaturely substance' (:27). The Spirit, by way of sanctifying act, does not abolish

---

[83] Webster (2003:23-26) gives a brief, yet helpful, analysis of several theological concepts, which may be used in describing the relation of a creaturely text to divine revelation: (1) the notion of accommodation, (2) the analogy of the hypostatic union, (3) the genre of prophetic and apostolic testimony, (4) the concept of "means of grace," and (5) the concept of the servant-form of Scripture. In his estimation, though these notions have their own values in talk of the ontology of Scripture, nevertheless they are not to be said fitting perfectly to our purpose. Webster points out that the former two concepts may find it difficult to articulate the relation of creaturely texts to divine revelation without falling into transcendentalism. It would seem for this reason that the latter three concepts — testimony, means of grace, and service — are more positive for its potential to resist the drift into dualism. Alongside with, or as a supplement of, those concepts, sanctification may be preferable particularly because, while notions of testimony, means of grace, and serve, are likely to apply to the text as finished entity, the application of sanctification can cover the full range of process from the pre-textual tradition to the interpretation of the text.

creatureliness; rather, the Creator Spirit preserves creatureliness within the reality of creature.

Regarding particular applications of sanctification to the nature of the biblical texts, Webster (2003:27) contends that sanctification integrates communicative divine action and the creatureliness of the biblical texts which are appointed to the service of God's self-presentation. This reflection carries at least two implications (:27-28). First, the biblical texts sanctified by the Spirit are not simply natural entities, but fields of the Spirit's activity in the publication of the knowledge of God. Second, the biblical texts as sanctified means in the divine economy do not imply 'their withdrawal from the realm of human processes.'

Within and from the formative economy of the sanctifying Spirit, talk of the ontology of Scripture can take place. The biblical texts' being as the Holy Scripture should not be determined by a naturalist ontological assumption that all texts including the biblical texts are simply natural, historical entities. Rather, as Webster (2003:28-29) insists, 'the biblical text *is* Scripture; its being is defined...by the fact that it is *this* text — sanctified, that is, Spirit-generated and preserved — in *this* field of action — the communicative economy of God's merciful friendship with his lost creatures' [Webster's italics].

4.3.1.3 Scripture as the Inspired Textual Servant of God's Presence

Webster (2003:30) says, 'Inspiration is the specific textual application of the broader notion of sanctification as the hollowing of creaturely realities to serve revelation's taking form.' Based on this premise, Webster takes into account three particular requirements to be met if the notion of inspiration is to be dogmatically profitable.

Firstly, insomuch as Scripture is legitimately conceived as revelatory divine action, a dogmatically orderly articulation of inspiration must occur in a dependent relation to the broader concept of revelation. Put differently, inspiration is not foundational, but derivative as a corollary of the self-presence of God. An account of inspiration is not given from the need for epistemological certainty within an apologetic context, because

it may easily turn inspiration into 'a formal property insufficiently coordinated to the gospel content of Scripture.' Rather, a dogmatically proper account of inspiration is rendered by 'the fact that through Holy Scripture God addresses the church with the gospel of salvation' (Webster 2003:32).

Secondly, the notion of inspiration must avoid two false extremes: on the one side, the objectification of the divine activity, and, on the opposite side, the spiritualisation of the divine activity. At the one extreme of objectification, 'the inspired product is given priority over the revelatory, sanctifying and inspiring activities of the divine agent' (Webster 2003:33). The pressure of the need of Scripture as epistemological foundation is likely to make Scripture independent of God's activity and thus to render it 'an entity which embodies rather than serves the presence of God.' At the opposite extreme of spiritualisation, the centre of gravity shifts away from the text towards apostolic authors, community, or readers. In this case, the self-communicative divine presence is replaced by readerly activity. Webster (:35) criticises both ways of articulating the notion of inspiration, especially because of their pneumatological deficiency, whether by reducing the Spirit's relation to the text simply to a textual property or by detaching the Spirit from the text. A more orderly account of inspiration, by Webster (:35), 'will thus refuse to identify inspiration either with textual properties or with the experience of author, community or reader, and instead give an account of inspiration which is primarily concerned with the communicative function of texts in the field of God's spiritual self-presence.'

Thirdly, the notion of inspiration needs to be discussed in close link to the purpose of Holy Scripture, that is, 'service to God's self-manifestation' (Webster 2003:35). If a notion of inspiration is construed in such a way as to separate Scripture from its soteriological context and is concerned only with warranting Scripture's theological authority, then the doctrine of Scripture cannot avoid becoming formalised, decontextualised, and dogmatically disordered.

With these prerequisites in mind, how can we speak of a dogmatically orderly account of inspiration? Webster (2003:36) insists that 'inspiration is not primarily a textual

property but *a divine movement* and therefore *a divine moving'* [italics mine]. Inspiration as the divine movement is thus not a voluntary, self-originating movement caused by human spontaneity: rather, it is 'being moved' by God the Spirit, who is present in creaturely reality without eliminating its creatureliness. In this sense, 'the action of the inspiring Spirit and the work of the inspired creature are concursive rather than antithetical' (:38-39). Properly understood, inspiration indicates that Scripture, as part of the sanctifying activity of the Spirit, serves as the vessel of God's majestic presence and of the treasure of the gospel. In other words, Scripture is taken up by the Spirit's sanctifying work into the economy of God's communicative action.

To sum up: from the perspective of a dogmatic ontology of Holy Scripture, revelation belongs to a dimension of *the divine activity of self-communicative fellowship of the triune God Himself*, and Scripture is rightly viewed as *a sanctified and inspired instrument of such divine revelatory activity*. An orderly dogmatic account of the ontology of Scripture paves the way forwards for the acknowledgement of the Bible as "divine communicative action," which I will explore in what follows.

4.3.2 God's Word as Divine Communicative Action

4.3.2.1 The Use of Speech-Act Theory in a Theological Account of Scripture

The Oxford philosopher J L Austin, in his pioneering work *How To Do Things With Words*, spells out the concept of a "speech act" and asserts that 'to say something is in the full normal sense to do something'(Austin 1962:94). For the analysis of the concept of speech act, Austin introduces three distinguished kinds of acts in a total speech act, namely "the locutionary," "the illocutionary," and "the perlocutionary" act. (1) *A locutionary act* is the act of simply uttering words with a certain sense and a certain reference, and hence 'the performance of an act *of* saying something.' (2) *An illocutionary act* is what one does by way of those words — promising, asserting, warning, and so on —, and hence 'the performance of an act *in* saying something.' (3) *A perlocutionary act* is 'certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons' one wishes to bring about

by virtue of a certain illocutionary act — for instance, alerting by way of warning, and convincing by way of arguing (Austin 1962:94,99,101). Through this tripartite schema of speech act, Austin shows that 'language is not so much concerned with *saying* as with *doing*' (Porter 2004:112). [84]

The precepts and implications of speech-act theory have been adopted and applied to various theological issues by a number of theologians.[85] The notable figures among them are Nicholas Wolterstorff, Anthony Thiselton, and Kevin Vanhoozer. In what follows, I will examine particularly the work of Wolterstorff and Vanhoozer.

Prior to engaging with them, we need to deal with a question: Why speech-act theory? Vanhoozer provides a helpful answer to this question. Quite sympathetic to Webster's notion of the ontology of Scripture, Vanhoozer holds that the task of bibliology is to seek to answer the question as to how and why the Bible is the Word of God. 'A doctrine of Scripture,' according to Vanhoozer (1994:144), 'tries to give an account of the relation of the words to the Word and of how this relation may legitimately be said to be "of God."' In other words, Vanhoozer clearly sees the need for a proper theological account of the relation between divine agent and human agent. To approach this challenging task, he engages with, and draws on, speech-act theory, which would provide a useful means to describe an ontological link between God and Scripture, between the human words and the Word of God.

---

[84] It is not necessary and beyond the confines of this dissertation to rehearse thoroughly the feature of speech-act theory here. It would suffice to outline the essential feature of speech act theory at its simplest way. Speech-act theory is a set of pragmatically based principles, the major thought of which is developed by the so-called ordinary language philosophers, J L Austin and John Searle. At the heart of innovative observation of speech-act theory is that to state something is fundamentally not to communicate knowledge but *to perform an act*. With this assumption, Austin focuses on the irreducibility of the illocutionary act. In other words, the main purpose of Austin's whole argumentation is to distinguish the illocutionary from both the locutionary and perlocutionary. He thus writes (1962:103): 'Our interest…is essentially to fasten on the second, illocutionary act and contrast it with the other two [locutionary and perlocutionary act].' By extension and further development of Austin's insight, Searle develops a taxonomy of illocutionary act, which is composed of what he calls "assertive, directives, commisives, expressives, and declarations." By this all-important notion of illocution, Searle brings to the fore the author's role as an agent.

[85] See Richard Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (2001). Briggs offers not only a helpful introduction to speech-act theory but also a broader discussion and summary of many issues relevant to the application of speech-act theory in theological hermeneutics. Our main concern here is how and to what extent speech-act theory is appreciated and deployed in theological accounts of Scripture.

Furthermore, Vanhoozer (1994:147) recognises the necessity that a theological account of Scripture can be clear and intelligible only in the light of a whole network of other doctrines including revelation, providence, and pneumatology. In his estimation, the concept of speech-act theory provides a helpful vantage point from which to integrate and interpret various doctrinal categories such as revelation, inspiration, and infallibility. More importantly, a promising merit of deploying the concept of speech-act theory is that 'it allows us to transcend the debilitating dichotomy between revelation as "God saying" and "God doing"' (:147). The concept of speech-act theory may function as an appropriate interpretative framework for talk of scriptural authority, not least because it brings to the fore the speaker's/author's role as an agent, especially with its notion of illocution. Vanhoozer (2002:291), however, makes it clear that the use of speech-act philosophy is only *secondary* and *supplementary* to a theological purpose, in spite of the usefulness and relevance of speech-act for talk of Scripture.

4.3.2.2 Scripture as Divine Discourse

A properly theological account of Scripture must begin from, and be committed to, the premise that "God speaks"; the premise that 'God is a communicative agent, able to use language for communicative purposes' (Vanhoozer 2003a:165).

In his influential book *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks*, the Reformed philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff defends and affirms the claim that *God speaks,* by means of an insightful appropriation and creative engagement with speech-act theory. Wolterstorff (1995:8) calls attention to the fact that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have traditionally spoken of God as commanding, promising, blessing, forgiving, exhorting, assuring, asserting, and so on. These traditions have claimed that God's speaking is fundamentally mediated textually by means of the sacred texts of these communities, but the media of divine speech consist of much more than words, be those in the form of texts or not.

In opposition to the widespread tendency in theology to reduce divine speech into propositional revelation, Wolterstorff (1995:10,29) contends that speaking must not be

171

identified with *knowledge-transmitting* revelation composed of the communication of knowledge from one person to another. Wolterstorff (1995:32) goes so far as to claim that '[s]peaking is not communication; it doesn't even require communication.' What then does speaking mean for Wolterstorff? He (1995:76) develops his account of what it is to speak, that is, what he calls a '*normative theory of discourse*' by fully drawing on the argument of speech-act philosophers J L Austin and J R Searle, namely that the basic unit of speech is the illocutionary act. Wolterstorff's concept of speech may be looked on as 'a rigorous development of the implications for human action in general and speaking in particular of Austin's initial observation that to speak is not to communicate but to act, taking proper account of the fact that speech acts are always performed in a relational and moral environment,' to cite the description of Timothy Ward (2002:99).

How can the general account of speech-act concerning *spoken* language also be applicable to *written* language? How is divine speech connected to Scripture? To deal with the question of the speaking activity of God — although his initial suggestion is that divine discourse may be conceived of as consisting of illocutions performed by non-verbal locutions —, Wolterstorff turns particular attention to divine speech acts performed by verbal means. To describe God's action as a speaker in relation to the Bible, Wolterstorff (1995:38-54) introduces the notion of "double agency discourse," namely deputized and appropriated discourse.[86] God speaks by way of either deputizing or appropriating human discourse. If the Bible is really a medium of divine discourse, the best way to comprehend the relationship between the divine discourse and the human discourse of the text would be as a relationship of *appropriation*. In other words, God appropriates the human discourse for His own illocutionary actions. Human beings

---

[86] To explain *deputized discourse*, Wolterstorff (1995:45-46) takes an example of ambassador. If the ambassador is deputized to say in the name of his/her head of state, then the head of state speaks by way of the utterings of the ambassador. The ambassador is performing locutionary acts which count as illocutionary acts performed by his/her own head of state. This is equivalent to the case of the Old Testament prophets, who delivered God's message in the name of God by virtue of deputization. In the case of the New Testament, the apostles were commissioned to communicate what God said and did in Jesus Christ. They were called to represent Jesus, to speak in His name, to deputize for Him (:288-295). Another mode of double agency discourse is *appropriated speech*, in which one person speaks by means of another's illocution, not just their locution. One appropriates someone else's discourse by responding to someone else's speech with, "I agree with that" or "She speaks for me too" or "I share those commitments" (:52-53).

are the agent of the appropriated discourse and God is the agent of the appropriating discourse (:54). In this way, Wolterstorff (:56) views Scripture as human discourse which was a medium of divine discourse in the past and which may serve as 'a medium of *contemporary* divine discourse, a medium of God's *here and now* addressing you and me' [Wolterstorff's italics].

In his recent essay titled *"True Words,"* Wolterstorff (2006:36) himself recapitulates the gist of *Divine Discourse*. In *Divine Discourse*, firstly, Wolterstorff intends to approach Scripture in terms of *speech*, going beyond competing categories of the truth and revelation. Secondly, he emphasises speech not as symbol-system, but as *action*, as *discourse*. Thirdly, he distinguishes between locutionary acts and illocutionary acts. Finally, with the concept of double-agency discourse, he offers an account of how God might *speak* through the writing and speaking of the biblical writers. 'The novelty of Wolterstorff's proposal is,' as Howard Marshall (1997:53) correctly observes, 'that in the case of God it separates the illocutionary from the locutionary, so that instead of God himself speaking he can produce the illocutionary effect by using the locutionary acts of other people whose speech he authorizes.' On this account, Wolterstorff also spells out how the locutions of Scripture may serve as the vehicles of divine illocutions.

Along with Wolterstorff, Vanhoozer has also recognised the potential of speech-act theory to help us understand the nature of God's speech in Scripture. In profound agreement with Wolterstorff's claim,[87] Vanhoozer maintains that from the biblical viewpoint God is a *speech agent*. Much of God's acts depicted in the Bible — commanding, promising, forgiving, informing, calling, comforting, and so on — He does by speaking. Vanhoozer (1994:171) thus says: 'If God is personal, albeit transcendent, agent, and if God can do some things, then there is no *prima facie* reason why God could not speak as well.'

On the basis of the model of God's Word as speech act, Vanhoozer (1994:149,170) argues that the *identity thesis* that "Scripture is the Word of God" can be affirmed in

---

[87] For Vanhoozer's reference to the work of Wolterstorff, see Vanhoozer's essay collection *First Theology* (2002), especially chapter 6 titled "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts."

such a way as to do full justice to the semantics as well as the personal dimension of God's self-revelation.[88] According to Vanhoozer, identifying Scripture as the Word of God does not lead necessarily to bibliolatry. What is in view by the identity thesis is not ontological identity: the Bible is in no sense a part of the Godhead. Rather, identity is between "what God wills to communicate" and "the linguistic expression," in the words of Farley (1982:35). Therefore, what is claimed by the identity thesis is that the Bible is a *work* of God. As Bloesch (1994:26) puts it, 'the presence of the living Word in Holy Scripture is not an ontological necessity but a free decision of the God who acts and speaks…on the basis of God's promises.' A creaturely entity sanctified and inspired by the Spirit for God's self-communication should be viewed as 'a substitute presence not for the divine being but for a divine *work*' (Vanhoozer 1994:167). The Bible is the Word of God because it is the result of divine self-communicative action. The claim that the Bible is really the Word of God is justifiable, insofar as God's communicative acts are not confused with and misinterpreted into the divine being itself.[89]

To summarise: by relating the written words of Scripture to God's speaking, Wolterstorff and Vanhoozer, in line with the Reformed tradition, underline that Scripture not merely conveys information, but rather *is* the mediation of God's presence. Thus, the authority and authenticity of Scripture as the written word of God is guaranteed by a "real presence" (Vanhoozer 1998:87).

---

[88] Vanhoozer designates Edward Farley's *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* as one of the most incisive theological attacks on the identity thesis. Farley (1982:38) points out that 'the principle of identity involves interpreting the creaturely entity as the ersatz presence of the divine, a synthesis of divine intention and human interpretation into one content, and the explanation of that content by divine causal efficacy.' The consequence of this is 'an identity of content between what is divinely willed (revealed) and what is humanly asserted.' However, identity between Creator and creaturely entity is a 'cognitive identity, a truth or reality known by God and, resulting from an act of communication, now known by human beings.' (:39) The principle of identity indicates not ontological, but cognitive identity; thus it does not require attributing divine qualities to either the bearer of identity or the creaturely forms of expression. Farley ultimately rejects the identity thesis, along with the Scripture principle, because it leads to authoritarianism in theology by stressing divine sovereignty at the cost of loving God. Against Farley's rejection of the identity thesis, Vanhoozer, by deploying the insights of speech-act theory, restates and reaffirms the identity thesis. For a more detailed discussion about the principle of identity, see Farley (1982), especially chapter 2.
[89] It seems at this point that a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture proposed by Vanhoozer focuses on the economic-trinitarianism rather than the immanent-trinitarianism. There will be to some extent a shift of this focus in Vanhoozer's thought, however, as we shall see.

4.3.2.3 A Trinitarian Theology of Scripture in Terms of Speech-Act Theory

In his essay *God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today*, Vanhoozer speaks of the triune God's being by analogy with three concepts of speech-act theory: Father to locution, Son to illocution, and Spirit to perlocution. *Firstly*, God the Father's activity is parallel to locution. 'God the Father,' says Vanhoozer (1994:177), 'is the utterer, the begetter, the sustainer of words.' He goes on to say, 'God the Father's locution is the result of his providential involvement in the lives of the human authors of Scripture. God works in and through human intelligence and human imagination to produce a literary account that renders him a mighty speech agent.' *Secondly*, the second article of the Trinity, the Son, can be conceived of as illocution. Vanhoozer (:177) says, 'The Logos corresponds to the speaker's act or illocution, to what one *does* in saying. The illocution has content…and a particular intent (a force) which shows how the proposition is to be taken. It is illocutionary force that makes a speech-act count as, say, a promise. What illocutionary act is performed is determined by the speaker; its meaning is therefore objective.' *Thirdly*, the perlocutionary act, the third aspect of a speech-act, is matched with the Spirit's activity. The perlocution pertains to the efficacy that an illocutionary act achieves on the actions or beliefs of the hearer. From the perspective with which Vanhoozer deploys the concepts of speech-act theory analogously, the triune God is first and foremost a communicative agent and the triune God's very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of discourse: Father as speaker, Son as Word, and Spirit as reception (Vanhoozer 1998:456).[90]

In particular, Vanhoozer pays attention to the concept of "perlocution" as one of the most promising insights of speech-act analysis. The category of perlocution enables us to speak more clearly of the Spirit's relation to the Word of God. The Spirit's work of illumination enables the reader of Scripture to grasp the illocutionary point, that is, to recognise what the Scriptures may be doing. The role of the Spirit is to bring the

---

[90] In his later work, Vanhoozer (2002:291-292) states this analogy in a softened way as follows: 'God makes himself known in word and deed. God is the initiator of this action (agent), the Word or content of this action (act) and the Spirit or power of its reception (consequence).' Elsewhere, he (2002:162-163) says that 'the triune God is communicative agent (Father/author), communicative action (Son/Word) and communicative result (Spirit/power of reception).'

illocutionary point home to the reader and by so doing to achieve the corresponding perlocutionary effect, such as belief, obedience, praise, and repentance. In this view, the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* is nothing less than 'the effective presence of the illocutionary force' (Vanhoozer 1994:177).

It is important at this point to note Vanhoozer's concern and engagement with general hermeneutics. According to Vanhoozer, the triune action of God — the triune God's locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary action — must be viewed as the paradigm for human speech action. Vanhoozer (2002:202) argues that '[t]he paradigm for a Christian view of communication is the triune God in communicative action.' The trinitarian characteristic of God understood in terms of speech-act theory would function as an analogous paradigm from which to form an anthropology of communicative action.

Mark A Bowald (2007:62-63), professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College, points out two factors indicating that Vanhoozer's appeal to the trinitarian model underwrites a general theory about human speech action. First, although admitting that there is some communication within in the immanent Trinity, nevertheless Vanhoozer's suggestion is to 'develop a theological understanding of communication on the basis of the "economic," not the immanent, Trinity' (Vanhoozer 2002:168). Vanhoozer continues to say that '[t]he economic Trinity is the technical term for the way the triune God progressively reveals himself in human history. The economic Trinity is the name for God in communicative (and self-communicative) action' (:168). By confining the analogy to the economic Trinity in this way, Vanhoozer's account of the relationship of God's speech action to human speech action leaves a degree of ambiguity to resolve. The second point, according to Bowald (2007:63), relates to Vanhoozer's 'radical identity of meaning and truth,' which stems from his persistent interest in constructing a general theory of hermeneutics. Appealing to the unity of truth in God and the conditions of all languages in general, namely "inherently theological," Vanhoozer (2002:208) maintains that 'the Bible should be interpreted "like any other book," but every other book should be interpreted with

norms that we have derived from a reflection on how to read Scripture.' In other words, for Vanhoozer (2002:213), 'the best general hermeneutics is a *theological* hermeneutics.' This argument is developed more clearly in his *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* At the conclusion of this book, Vanhoozer (1998:457) makes a clear statement concerning the relationship between the triune God's speech act and human speech act as follows:

> The thesis underlying the present work takes God's trinitarian communicative action as the paradigm, not merely the illustration, of all genuine message-sending and receiving….The triune God is therefore the epitome of communicative agency: the speech agent who utters, embodies, and keeps his Word. Human speakers, created in God's image, enjoy the dignity of communicative agency, though as sinners their speech acts (and interpretations) are subject to all the imperfections and distortions that characterize human fallenness.

The basis of the claim that all hermeneutics are trinitarian hermeneutics is that our reading of every other text shares the same theological presuppositions we bring to our study of the Bible, namely our beliefs about God, ourselves, and the world. Therefore, our reading of every other book must be ruled by norms that we derive from our understanding of the triune God, namely a trinitarian hermeneutics. What noted so far is that Vanhoozer has sought to integrate divine and human agency by appropriating the concepts of speech-act theory. It seems, however, that Vanhoozer's focus is more on general hermeneutics than on special hermeneutics involved in reading the Bible as Scripture and responding to the Spirit's particular work accompanying the Word of God. How, then, does Vanhoozer's trinitarian hermeneutics of communicative action, which is a general hermeneutics, have a bearing on his view of Scripture, which is a special hermeneutics? I will turn to this question below.

4.3.2.4 Scripture as Divine Canonical Discourse

By Vanhoozer, the claim that Scripture is the Word of God can be made more fully and appropriately under the rubric of "divine communicative action" rather than with the concept of propositional revelation. According to Vanhoozer (2005:277), the concept of

"divine communicative action" has several significant advantages for viewing Scripture as the Word of God. First, by embracing both "saying" and "doing" in a holistic way, it helps us overcome the dichotomy between personal and propositional. Second, it is consistent with the biblical witness to God, according to which most of God's doing is accomplished by words. Third, it deals more adequately with the plurality of the biblical literary forms. Fourth, it contributes to the notion of canonical authority by urging us to turn our attention not only to the propositional contents of Scripture but also to all the communicative activities God is doing through Scripture to fulfil His covenant. Fifth, it leads us to viewing Scripture as God's gracious means, by which He addresses us personally and in which we participate in the covenantal relation with God. Considering all these, Vanhoozer concludes that the notion of divine communicative action would provide a promising vantage point from which to articulate fully and clearly the authority and function of Scripture in theology and the Christian life.

According to Vanhoozer's suggestion (1994:173), Scripture 'is best viewed neither as a set of propositions nor as a sacramental story that mysteriously renders Christ, but rather as a set of *human-divine communicative actions* [italics mine] that do many different things.' To put it in a trinitarian way, Scripture is conceived of as *God's mighty speech-act* by which God the Father reveals Himself in the Son through the power of the Spirit. God is present in Scripture as a communicative agent and thus the ultimate Author of Scripture. 'The agency behind the variety of communicative acts in the Bible, then, must be ascribed not only to its human authors but ultimately to God' (Vanhoozer 2002:35).

The perspective of viewing Scripture as God's communicative action sets forth as the premise the inseparable relationship between God and Scripture, and by so doing clarifies how God relates to us through Scripture. Vanhoozer (2002:35) offers a clear statement of the point as follows:

> [T]he best way to view God and Scripture together is to acknowledge God as a communicative agent and Scripture as his communicative action. The virtue of this construal, as far as first theology is concerned, lies in its implicit thesis

that one can neither discuss God apart from Scripture nor do justice to Scripture in abstraction from its relation to God. For if the Bible is a species of divine communicative action, it follows that in using Scripture we are not dealing merely with information about God; we are rather engaging with God himself — with God in communicative action. The notion of divine communicative action forms an indissoluble bond between God and Scripture.

The view of Scripture as God's communicative action, namely divine speech-act, casts light on how to think of the unity and diversity of Scripture. On the one hand, this view helps to appreciate what Vanhoozer (1994:173) calls the 'polygeneric' character of Scripture. Scripture contains a variety of literary forms or speech genres, such as 'recounting (narrative), praising God (psalms), foretelling (prophecy), cultivating the fear of the Lord (wisdom), anticipating the end of history (apocalyptic), and so forth' (Vanhoozer 1998:216). The recognition that Scripture's composition of a variety of divine communicative acts — warning, greeting, statement, question, et cetera — has to do with the attitude of rejecting any reductionist view of Scripture genre, be it propositional, narrative, or experiential. Rather, Scripture as God's communicative action enjoys a 'multifaceted authority' (Vanhoozer 2002:35). Hence, its warnings are to be heeded; its promises trusted, its commands obeyed; its songs sung; its assertion accepted; its prophecy fulfilled; and its teaching believed. On the other hand, God's variegated communicative action directs towards and reaches its culmination in *the Christ event*. In other words, the variety of God's communicative action finds its unity in the Christ event, 'the supreme covenant blessing and crown of creation' (Vanhoozer 1994:176).

The Christ event as the unifying point of God's diverse communicative actions is fully understood from the perspective of God's eternal covenant with His people. In terms of speech-act theory, "making a covenant" is a 'commissive' speech act, which commits the speaker to a certain course of action (Austin 1962:156). God is an agent who performs promissory covenantal speech-acts; God is the agent who is true to His fundamental covenant promise that "You will be my people, and I will be your God" (Jr 30:22, NIV). In this light, one can say with justification that Scripture is *God's*

covenantal speech-act in both senses of a testament and an act, and that Scripture is 'a collection of diverse speech-acts that together "render" the covenantal God' (Vanhoozer 1994:176).

4.3.2.5 Scripture as Divine Canonical Practice

To look into Vanhoozer's view of Scripture, we need to take into more serious consideration his recent work *The Drama of Doctrine*,[91] in which he has developed a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture in great richness. It may be said furthermore that this work is a watershed of Vanhoozer's theological thinking largely because his deeper, explicit, and fuller engagement with special hermeneutics is carried out in this work,

In *The Drama of Doctrine*, Vanhoozer shows the culmination of the development in his thought on how to integrate divine and human agency. Bowald (2007:71) clarifies the development of Vanhoozer's thinking as follows: 'whereas before he anchored the meaningfulness and truthfulness of Scripture abstractly in the speech actions of its human authors and sought to create a hermeneutic for all texts which unpacked this against the backdrop of the stability of language inherent to creation, he now emphasizes divine agency to the point that he dismisses his earlier assertion that all texts should be read like the Bible.' A clear indication of this change can be found in Vanhoozer's renewed assertion that '*The Bible is not like other texts* [italics mine]; it has been commissioned by Jesus and prompted by the Spirit. It is part and parcel of God's communicative action that both summons and governs the church' (2005:71). This change may result from a shift in Vanhoozer's concern and focus: from general to special hermeneutics; from human authors to divine author; and from "every other book" to "the Bible."[92]

---

[91] As is hinted at the subtitle *"A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology,"* this work can be seen as 'a deliberate play off George Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" approach in *The Nature of Doctrine*' — to cite Bowald's phrase (2007:70) — because Vanhoozer's development of canonical-linguistic approach 'roots theology more firmly in Scripture while preserving Lindbeck's emphasis on practice' (Vanhoozer 2005:xiii). What is noticeable in this work is that Vanhoozer appropriates creatively drama theory to highlight the active, practical, and participatory nature of Christian doctrine.

[92] It needs to be reminded that Vanhoozer's assertion in *Is There* is not that 'we should read the Bible like any other book,' but rather that 'we should read every other book as we have learned to read the Bible' (1998:379).

With this renewed concern and focus, Vanhoozer explicates the uniqueness of divine communicative action in, with, and under Scripture in ways that are more explicit. Vanhoozer (2005:16-17) speaks of the uniqueness of divine action in Scripture over the church in a way to affirm the creative retrieval of the principle of *sola Scriptura*:

> One of its fundamental theses is that *sola scriptura* refers not to an abstract principle but to a *concrete theological practice:* a *performance* practice, namely, the practice of corresponding in one's speech and action to the word of God. The supreme *norm* for church practice is Scripture itself: not Scripture as used by the church but Scripture as used by God, even, or perhaps especially, when such use is *over against* the church [Vanhoozer's italics].

It is only after presuming that 'the divine speech and action are prior to and take precedence over the human response' (Vanhoozer 2005:35) that the centrality of communicative action, both human and divine, can be affirmed in the canonical-linguistic approach Vanhoozer champions. It is important to note at this point that in the thought of Vanhoozer (2005:114), 'Scripture is divine communicative action, *a divine canonical practice*, before it is a practice of the church.'

The emphasis on the aspect of *the divine practice* in Vanhoozer's account of Scripture becomes reinvigorated by his employment of dramaturgical concepts. For Vanhoozer, doctrine is for seeking not only to state theoretical truths but also *to embody truth in ways of living*. Christian doctrines can be said fundamentally "dramatic" in that they involve speech and action on behalf of Jesus' truth and life, and thus always concern the way of living according to that truth. The truth claim of the Christian faith cannot be detached from the way of life with which it is linked (Vanhoozer 2005:15). In this dramatic view, talk of scriptural authority can be extensive to the point that all three aspects — God, Scripture, and reader — have their proper ordering on the pattern of authority. On this matter, Vanhoozer (2005:101) argues:

> What comes first — that to which doctrine is primarily accountable — is triune communicative action. In the beginning was the word — the *promissio,*

a communicative act — not propositions or religious experience or community practices. To the extent that Scripture has been taken up into the economy of triune communicative action, it has meaning *before* it is used by the interpretative community or socialized into the church's life. At the same time, Scripture is incomplete in the sense that, as an authoritative script, it calls for appropriation on the part of the believing community — in a word, *performance*.

This ordering or pattern of authority indicates that Vanhoozer seeks to bring together all three aspects, namely God, text, and reader, with keeping in mind the priority of the divine practice/use over the others.

What then is the role of Scripture in the drama of God's salvation from Vanhoozer's theo-dramatic perspective? Vanhoozer draws on an *analogia missio* between the two-hands of God, that is, the Son and the Spirit, and the two-handed mission of Scripture. Firstly, Scripture depicts what God is doing in Jesus Christ. 'As the definitive word about the new covenant in Christ, Scripture becomes a focal point of the drama insofar as it contributes to the realization of God's purposes for the world. Scripture is thus a collection of statements — and promises, commands, warnings, and so on — all on their respective missions' (Vanhoozer 2005:70). As the Son's mission is not simply to convey information but to convey the personal promise, presence, and power of God, similarly the words of the Bible are not simply carriers of information but means of *transformation*. Secondly, the mission of Scripture cannot be completed without the Spirit. The Spirit's mission is to quicken communicative action towards its proper goal, that is, understanding, response, and communion. The holiness of Scripture comes from both its ultimate communicative agent and its ultimate communicative aim — to bring us to Jesus Christ and to sanctify us in the truth. Consequently, Scripture is 'the locus of God's ongoing communicative action in the church and in the world' (:71).

From Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach, therefore, Scripture is not only *divine canonical discourse*, but also *divine canonical practice or performance*,[93] 'a mode of divine communicative action whereby the triune God furthers his mission and creates a new covenant people' (Vanhoozer 2005:176). Drawing a distinction between the material principle — the subject matter of Scripture — and the formal principle — Scripture itself — of the drama of redemption, Vanhoozer asserts that Scripture, as covenant document, is 'itself a revelatory and redemptive word-act of the triune God.' Vanhoozer (:177) writes:

> To speak of divine canonical discourse is to highlight the role of *God as the divine playwright who employs the voices of the human authors of Scripture in the service of his theo-drama.* Attending to Scripture as divine communicative action and to God as the ultimate author of the canon casts performance in a new light. What becomes paramount is *God's* use of the biblical texts. The word of God is living and active: the Bible is not merely a record of revelation but the means by which God, in and through the human authors, has an ongoing speaking part.

This argument carries far-reaching implications for the practice of reading Scripture. By participating in the canonical practice of reading Scripture to hear the Word of God, we come to participate in what God is doing in Scripture and to be caught up into the economy of divine revelation and redemption. In this sense, Scripture is conceived of as 'a divine command performance' (:178). The triune God — as the ultimate agent of canonical discourse — ensures the truthfulness of the testimony of Scripture and guarantees the fulfilment of its promise.

The triune God in communicative action has the supreme authority for Christian belief and life. Authority remains with Scripture only to the extent that, from its relationship to

---

[93] According to Vanhoozer's definition (2005:125,216), a "canonical practice" is a communicative practice in a canonical context with a covenantal end. It is a habitual form of communicative activity, through which authors and readers relate. More precisely, canonical practices establish covenantal relations between God and His people. A canonical practice is a 'divinely authorized use of language and literature' (:219) or 'the media of the Spirit's communicative action' (:211). In this sense, Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic theology can be seen as 'being instructed by, being apprenticed to, and participating in the communicative practices that comprise the Scripture' (:211).

the triune God's communicative action, Scripture helps determine how to respond the divine discourse. Scripture is most of all 'an exemplar of divine use and divine practice: God's word' (Vanhoozer 2005:219), and thus *what determines scriptural authority is the divine illocutions, that is, God's use of Scripture*. Scripture involves the divine illocution and hence an instrument in the communicative economy of the triune God. What makes Scripture authoritative is not the church's need for a criterion, namely the churchly/readerly use, but its being 'part of the revelatory and redemptive economies of the triune God,' namely the divine use (:124).

4.3.3 The Hermeneutical Significance of the Spirit

One remarkable contribution of a trinitarian theological approach to Scripture is that it offers a promising way for retrieving the hermeneutical significance of the Spirit and by so doing would be helpful in clarifying a proper relationship between Word and Spirit and between Word and Church. It seems imperative to touch on these implications for our discussion of scriptural authority.

4.3.3.1 The Spirit as a Minister of the Word

A proper articulation of a trinitarian ontology of Scripture leads to a proper understanding of the relationship between the Spirit and the Word. Vanhoozer provides a helpful explanation of the Word-Spirit relation by way of a speech-act model of divine communication. As the divine agency, the Spirit participates in all three aspects of the divine speech-act: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. First, the Spirit is the locutionary efficacy of the Word in that He inspires the human authors to employ the right, divinely intended words. Second, the Spirit's illocutionary act pertains to understanding of meaning. By virtue of bringing about the understanding of the Word's meaning and 'impressing on us the full force of a communicative action' (Vanhoozer 1998:427), the Spirit renders the Word effective. Third, given that a perlocutionary effect means what a speaker/author intends to accomplish in the hearer/reader by virtue of speech-act, the Spirit's perlocutionary act is to prepare and transform the reader's

mind and heart in order that the Word can bring about its full-intended effect. Vanhoozer (1998:428) thus describes the relation between Word and Spirit as follows:

> The Spirit's agency consists, then, in bringing the illocutionary point home to the reader and in achieving the corresponding perlocutionary effect — belief, obedience, praise, and so on. The Word is the indispensable instrument of the Spirit's persuasive (perlocutionary) power. On the one hand, the Spirit is "mute" without the Word; on the other hand, the Word is "inactive" without the Spirit. Word and Spirit together make up God's active speech (speech act).

In particular, Scripture's perlocutionary effects depend on the Spirit's agency. Scripture, as the triune God's communicative action, cannot bring about the intended perlocutionary effect without the perlocutionary activity of the Spirit. The Spirit empowers readers into a faithful and active response to the Word so that it can achieve its intended effect. In this process, however, the Spirit neither supplements nor alters the literal meaning; but rather sustains and fulfils it. Therefore, the Spirit is most legitimately thought of as 'the *effective presence of the Word*, or as the *Word's empowering presence*' [Vanhoozer's italics] (Vanhoozer 1998:429).

Additionally and significantly, the Spirit is the One who guarantees and confirms *the relevance of Scripture*. According to Vanhoozer (1998:421-423), "biblical relevance" is constituted by two aspects, namely 'revelatory meaning' and 'relative significance.' In accordance with these two factors, the Spirit's ministerial work in our understanding and interpretation of Scripture can be described in terms of *the Spirit of understanding* and *the Spirit of significance, or of wisdom,* respectively.

Firstly, the Spirit of God's Word is *the Spirit of understanding*. Reading is to overcome the various kinds of distance — linguistic, historical, cultural, moral, and spiritual — that may hinder the interpreter from encountering and appropriating the meaning of the text. Thus, reading must entail the process of struggling with the text to overcome those distances (Vanhoozer 1998:407). However, human capacity for understanding is debilitated seriously by cognitive, moral, and spiritual depravity. The enormous distance

185

between reader and texts impedes understanding itself. With this hermeneutical condition in mind, Vanhoozer (1998:407-431) asserts that only *the Spirit of understanding* can bridge those distances, particularly moral and spiritual distances. In addition, the Spirit enables us to avoid the most interfering obstacle for understanding, namely self-love or self-deception. The Spirit is the creative power behind the fusion of the text's and the reader's horizon. The Spirit leads the reader to recognise the single correct interpretation, the literal sense; at the same time, the recreative work of the Spirit — operating within the life of interpreter — allows the reader to be shaped, reformed, and transformed by the truth received from the text (Vanhoozer 1998:415). Seen from this, understanding is ultimately 'a matter of spirituality' and a real understanding can be brought about only by *the Spirit of understanding,* whose role is 'to witness to what is other than himself (meaning accomplished) and to bring its significance to bear on the reader (meaning applied)' (Vanhoozer 1998:413).

The activity of *the Spirit of understanding* in ministering the Word, by Vanhoozer (1998:413), can be discerned as three distinctive aspects in terms of speech-act theory. That is, the Spirit (1) *convicts* us that the Bible as the Word of God is indeed a divine-human locutionary act; (2) *illumines* the letter so that readers may grasp the illocutionary action, that is, what they are — warnings, promises, commands, assertions — together with their implicit claim on the minds and hearts of readers; and (3) *sanctifies* readers to accomplish the illocutionary and perlocutionary purpose of the letter, to conform their interests to those of the text.

Secondly, the Spirit of God's Word is *the Spirit of significance* or *of wisdom.* Vanhoozer (1998:421-424) draws a distinction between the Word's meaning and its meaningfulness. A text, on the one hand, has a single, determinate meaning and, on the other hand, has its extended, applied, or recontextualised meaning in present contexts, namely contemporary significance. While the former is 'revelatory and fixed by the canonical context,' the latter is 'relative and open to contemporary contexts' (:423). Given this distinction, it may be said that while the primary concern of understanding the text is to grasp the intended meaning of 'a text construed as a past communicative act' (:423), the central concern of interpretation is to appreciate and use it in a wide

186

variety of new, present, and particular contexts. Although these two concepts are distinguished, however, there is no contradiction between them. The emphasis on the Spirit's work allows no room for a 'contradiction between asserting that a text has a single, though not simplistic, determinate meaning on the one hand, and a plurality of significances on the other' (:421). It is because the Spirit's work in interpretation is to nurture 'a Pentecostal conversation about the correct interpretation of the Word's past meaning and present significance'(:421). *The Spirit of significance* directs us into the right appreciation and use of Scripture; *the Spirit of wisdom* guides us into living biblically. Vanhoozer (:423) argues conclusively that by the ministry of the Spirit, '*the Word of God in the text (meaning)*' functions as '*the Word of God for today (significance)*' and in turn becomes '*a witness to the living and eternal Word of God in the Trinity (referent).*'

From what has been said above, Vanhoozer draws a conclusion that the Spirit is a vital minister of a determinate Word; the Spirit has the *ministerial* authority in relation to the Word. The Spirit's work to bring about perlocutionary effects is above all for *creating the new people of God* and *leading them to covenantal relationship with the triune God.* The Spirit does so by creating an understanding of the interpreting community to the canonical testimony. In a word, the Spirit 'ministers the word that communicates Christ, the word that relates us to Christ, the word that enables communion with Christ' (Vanhoozer 2005:208), and in this sense the Spirit's authority is *ministerial*.[94]

What is especially noteworthy is that the Spirit ministers the Word in a dynamic way to enable us to engage, embody the Word. As Vanhoozer (1994:180) puts it, 'Jesus Christ is the unique and definitive embodiment of God's Word, the divine foundation and fulfilment of the covenant. The church, as the body of Christ, is a secondary and derivative embodiment — the human response to the covenant of grace.' In a very real sense, the ultimate purpose of the Word of God for the faith community is *embodiment*. Scripture as the living Word of God seeks to be continually embodied in the lives,

---

[94] In Chapter 3, I did refer to the authority of tradition as a ministerial authority, distinguished from Scripture's magisterial authority. In a similar fashion, I suggest in the present discussion that tradition is part of, or participate in, the Spirit's ministerial authority in that tradition also ministers the Word. For a distinction between magisterial and ministerial authority, see 3.5.2.

words, and actions of the people of God. Darrell Jodock (1989:143) offers a succinct statement of the point: 'The Scriptures mediate the presence of God, an arresting, transforming, identity-forming, and relationship-forming presence. An encounter with the presence of God calls for an existential response to be embodied in a renewed life that lives the shalom of God's kingdom.'

The Spirit's dynamic work as the engaging, embodying agency is carried out by way of contextualisation. The Spirit is the divine agency who enables Christians to relate their reading practice of Scripture not only to the triune communicative action, but also to the particular realities, cultural conditions, and concrete situations in which they find themselves. What is notable at this point is the way Vanhoozer describes the significant role of the Spirit in contextualising canonical practices in the life of the faith community as follows (2005:318):

> The Spirit is the bearer of canonical communicative practices, the bearer of a covenantal culture, the bearer of the kingdom of God…*word and Spirit together, canonical language and the Spirit of life, are the joint bearers of that unique culture of the kingdom of God that entered the world in Jesus Christ* [Vanhoozer's italics].

Vanhoozer thus argues that what Scripture ultimately bears and transmits is '*covenantal* life' and '*eschatological* culture.' The Spirit is the actualising bearer of *that* life and *that* culture, who enables us to find the world that the biblical text opens up and empowers us to live in accordance with the ways it suggests.

4.3.3.2 Re-Integration of the Spirit's Twofold Work of Inspiration and Illumination

Stanley Grenz criticises the traditional evangelical understanding of the Spirit's work of inspiration and illumination, observing its tendency to put more emphasis on the former than the latter primarily because it considers the goal of bibliology as the establishment of the divinity of the biblical texts as the Word of God. This one-sided emphasis on the

divinity of Scripture leads to the resultant tendency to ignore, or to pay merely lip service to, the affirmation of the humanness of Scripture. The depreciation of the human character of Scripture has some bearing on its tendency to 'deemphasize the Spirit's ongoing activity in speaking through Scripture in favor of a focus on the Spirit's completed work in inspiration' (Grenz 1993:117). It is not to say that the traditional evangelical view does not recognise the significance of the illuminating work of the Spirit, but that for many evangelicals, illumination seems to remain merely a secondary work of the Spirit, subordinate to the primary work of inspiration.

Over and against the tendency to do little justice to the Spirit's work of illumination, Grenz argues that a revisioned pneumatological bibliology must be aware that the twofold work of the Spirit, inspiration and illumination, are reciprocally related to each other. Grenz (1993:118) thus maintains:

> The assertion of the inspiration of Scripture cannot function as the theological premise from which bibliology emerges, nor as the focal point of our understanding of the relation between the Spirit and Scripture. On the contrary, as the actual practice of evangelical spirituality suggests, the confession of the inspiration of the Bible is closely intertwined with the experience of illumination. Inspiration is more closely bound to illumination than the classical evangelical description indicates.

From this viewpoint, the inspiration of Scripture in the past and the illumination of Scripture in the present need to be seen as distinguished, but inseparable, aspects of one continuous work of the Spirit. The Spirit, who *was* at work in the community that created the text, *is* operating His work in the community that recreates the text by interpreting it for today. The work of the Spirit is both historical and ongoing, and thus inspiration and illumination are the "twin doctrine" indicating the twofold work of the Spirit.

Moreover, a renewed understanding of the Spirit's illuminating work draws our attention to a specific historical-cultural context, within which the Spirit's illuminating

activity actually takes place. This is based on the affirmation that our hermeneutical goal is to listen to the living voice of the Spirit speaking through Scripture and 'that voice speaks to us in the thought-forms, categories and conditions that impact our existence from the world in which we live' (Grenz 1993:128).

For Vanhoozer (2005:226), the notion of inspiration and illumination indicates that Scripture is 'a practice of the Holy Spirit in which both past human authors and present human readers participate, though in distinctly different ways.' Vanhoozer (1998:227) redefines inspiration in theo-dramatic terms, namely '*a matter of the Spirit's prompting — urging, assisting, recalling to mind, supplying the right words — the human authors to say just what the divine playwright intended*.' Inspiration has to do with the divine process of enabling the biblical authors to participate in the triune economy of divine communicative action. Through the process of inspiration, the Bible is taken up into the theo-dramatic action.[95] Whereas inspiration is the Spirit's work to enable human authors to participate in the theo-drama of salvation, illumination is the Spirit's work to take up readers into the theo-dramatic action by enabling them to read Scripture as the living Word of God and to live accordingly.

The twin doctrine of inspiration and illumination gives a justification for the claim that the canonical practice of reading Scripture is *to hear the living Word of God* and by so doing *to encounter God through His self-communication in Scripture*. The Spirit participates in the whole process of canonical practice, from the historical process of producing Scripture to the process of bringing about understanding of Scripture among present-day readers. Therefore, the doctrines of inspiration and illumination have a significant bearing with the church's confession that the Spirit *is* at work in and through Scripture within the faith community.

---

[95] As we have seen earlier (4.3.1), inspiration is part of the Spirit's sanctifying work and inspired biblical texts are the result of the Spirit's sanctifying work.

4.3.3.3 Re-Understanding of the Scripture-Church Relation

The leading Lutheran theologians Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson highlight the significance of pneumatology in talk of the doctrine of Scripture for the church. It is *by the activity and power of the Spirit* that we are linked up with the mystery of God's salvation in Jesus Christ; that the Bible is taken up into the canon of holy Scripture; that the gospel is proclaimed and heard as an authentic historical truth; and that the church becomes a gathering of those who are called into the covenantal life with the triune God and others. From this, Braaten and Jenson (1995:xii) conclusively claim that 'the Holy Spirit is the great communicator, the sine qua non of reclaiming the Bible for the church as canonical Scripture and of recovering true authority in the church.'

Scripture cannot carry the force of normative authority in all areas pertaining to faith and life of the faith community apart from the Spirit who is at work in and through it. Thus, the Christian practice of reading Scripture is governed not by readers of it but by the sovereign Holy Spirit who enables readers to participate in the divine economy of redemption. Without appropriately respecting the work of the Spirit to use Scripture in the economy of salvation, therefore, the authority and function of Scripture cannot be fully understood.

A trinitarian-communicative ontology of Scripture, according to which the hermeneutical significance of the Scripture is underlined, clarifies the relation between Scripture and the church. In this regard, some aspects need to be discussed in such a way as to relate "from the beginning to the end of the church" to Scripture.

First, the proper departure of an account of the relationship between Scripture and church must be *the priority of the Word as God's communicative action* over the being of the church. Recent theological turn to communal tradition, which underlines the importance of the church, must not end up what Webster calls 'a broadly immanentist ecclesiology,' which tends to accord great significance to the church's sociality by focusing on anthropological concepts such as "practice" and "virtue" and, by so doing, to put the centre of gravity of bibliology on the uses of the church rather than God's

191

activity (Webster 2003:43). To locate the locus of Scripture within ecclesiality without an account of its being in God's activity is, as we have already discussed before, problematic.

The church is, to borrow the expression of the Tübingen theologian Christopher Schwöbel (1989:122), '*creatura verbi divini*: the creature of the divine Word' in that the church is generated and preserved by the divine Word. The church owes all of its existence and activities to the God's Word and not to itself. The church is the community which is brought into being and preserved in life by Scripture as the triune God's communicative action. The church has been formed and maintained by the God who addresses it through His Word that is preserved for it in Scripture. That the church is constituted by the Word forms the resultant characteristic of the church as the *hearing* — not speaking — church. As a result, the church as the creature of the Word always expects to hear the living voice of God through Scripture. The key practice of the church is listening, responding to, and performing the Word of God. The identity of the church as the hearing church means that 'the presence of Holy Scripture in the life of the church is not the presence of an immanent ecclesial entity' (Webster 2003:45). Rather, Scripture stands *extra ecclesiam*. The hearing church is also the community of faith, which is the consequence of the Spirit's work to bring about understanding and render the Word efficacious. In this sense, it may be said that the church is the sphere of the work of the Spirit, both illocutionary and perlocutionary.

With this in mind, one can view Scripture as an *ecclesial reality*, in terms of Webster (2004:369-370), 'because the place of Scripture is in the economy of salvation, and the economy of salvation concerns the divine work of restoring fellowship through the gathering of the *sanctorum communio*.' The scope of the divine economy of salvation always involves the faith community, the church. However, the order between Scripture and church is not obscure. Scripture is not the word of the church, but the Word of God; the church is the church of the Word. The Word of God is the Word of God *in, for,* and *over* the church. Therefore, 'confession of Scripture's authority is avowal by the hearing church of that which the Spirit undertakes through Scripture's service of the Word, and its proper context is therefore soteriological' (Webster 2003:52). For the church,

192

scriptural authority is a matter of *acknowledgement* rather than of establishment. The church is not competent to confer authority on Scripture any more than it is competent to be a speaking church before it is a hearing church.

Secondly, an understanding that ascribes the being of the church to the externality or otherness of the Word that is other than the church, leads to *the openness of the church towards the Word of God*. Scripture, by addressing itself to the church in judgement and mercy, constantly interrupts the church. Scripture is the instrument of Christ's rule in the church and thus stands over against the church. For this reason, a church of the Word cannot be a closed community, but an open culture in the sense of its subjection to the interceptive Word of God. 'Holy Scripture is,' says Webster (2003:47), 'the location of a struggle for the proper externality of the church, for true hearing of the *viva vox Dei*, for true attention to the sanctified and inspired servant through which God announces the judgement and promise of the gospel, above all, for faith as the end of defiance and false confidence and the beginning of humble listening.' The Reformed slogan *"always being reformed by the Word of God"* reaffirms this point by insisting that the church continues to be reshaped by the power of God's Word and that the church is always in need of ongoing renewal by the transformative work of the Spirit through Scripture.

In accordance with the openness towards the Word of God, the Christian community needs to recognise properly its being and action in extended dimensions of openness, namely *public* and *eschatology*. Our hearing of the Word of God takes place in social and public dimension because 'Christian faith points the individual believer immediately to other believers and ultimately to all human beings and our common human concern for the future of our universe' (Jeanrond 1989:85). In addition, the practice of the church is directed towards the transformation and consummation of the human history according to God's will, and hence *eschatological* openness.

Lastly, the church is a continuous hermeneutical community, which moves towards *eschaton*. The practice of reading Scripture in the church can be rightly viewed as an eschatological act. The church's movement towards *eschaton* is not self-generated and

193

thus can claim no perfection. The church's movement as an eschatological act is generated and governed by the Spirit. The church's movement is part of the discernment process of which the Spirit takes the lead. However, the church as a community of sinners is on the way to the final consummation of redemption. Accordingly, an eschatological movement of the church requires the recognition of the *provisional, tentative* character of present knowledge and interpretation. The church should not be the final criterion for scriptural interpretation. Instead, 'Scripture calls the church to ongoing discernment, to continually fresh rereading of the text in light of the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in the word' (Davis & Hays 2003:5).

Obviously, these reflections are of crucial importance because only on this premise may a renewed emphasis on the role of church in recent theology be made fruitful in a way that *sola Scriptura* is not replaced by *scriptura et traditio* or *sola traditio*.

4.3.3.4 Reconstruction of the Practice of Reading Scripture in the Triune God's Economy of Salvation [96]

The point we have continually made thus far is that talk of Scripture must not be formally isolated from God's economy of salvation because Scripture testifies of, and is directed towards, that salvation. Only in the context of economy of salvation can we recognise fully the authority of Scripture as the living Word of God. As noted earlier, this point can be made more explicit by a trinitarian account of Scripture in terms of its role in God's communicative action.

The aim of God's communicative action involves the restoration of communicative fellowship between God and human beings. This communicative fellowship cannot be rebuilt unilaterally; it needs the restoration of the human partner to an authentic participation in the knowledge of God (Webster 2003:71). From this, it follows that churchly or readerly practice of reading Scripture plays a significant role in the economy of revelatory grace, but only to the extent that it is rooted in firm relation to

---

[96] I will address some hermeneutical issues concerning the reading of Scripture in more detail in Chapter 5. For our present purpose, it may suffice to make a brief reference to some points by way of introduction.

the divine communicative action. An account of Scripture as God's communicative action cannot be completed without an account of the church as the hearing and reading community or without an account of readers and reading in the economy of salvation.

As Webster (2003:3) clearly points out, a dogmatic account of Scripture is not intended to control or replace exegetical work; it rather plays only a modest role, ancillary to the reading and interpretation of Scripture. By describing the origin, nature, and ends of Scripture in terms of theological doctrines, a dogmatic account of Scripture offers a theological ontology of Scripture and thereby helps Christian exegetes to understand their place in the divine economy. It may be said in this sense that a dogmatic account of Scripture works as an auxiliary to interpreting labour (Webster 2004:356).

Viewed from the trinitarian hermeneutics, the practice of reading Scripture in the church is most of all "faithful reading," which takes place in the economy of grace. By Webster (2003:86-87), a faithful reading of Scripture is to participate in the history of 'the overcoming of fallenness, in the form of ignorance and idolatry.' In this sense, reading Scripture is thus a moral, spiritual matter. The Christian act of reading Scripture always involves 'the fundamental pattern of all Christian existence, which is dying and rising with Jesus Christ through the purging and quickening power of the Holy Spirit' (:87-88). This pattern of mortification and vivification inherent in reading Scripture indicates that the Christian practice of reading is fundamentally soteriological and pneumatological, because the overcoming of sin belongs to the work of Christ and the Spirit.

In addition, a faithful reading of Scripture in the economy of salvation means that it is the work of *pupil* in the school of Christ, rather than of *master*. A trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture makes it explicit that reading Scripture is not simply a matter of the gathering of meaning, but of participating in the triune God's economy of salvation. The practice of reading Scripture is an eschatological act, and thus is not a closed, but a part of the journey of redemption in Christ by the power of the Spirit. Therefore, a faithful reading of Scripture is in no sense the process to master the biblical text. Rather, the Christian faithful reading of Scripture is, as Todd Billings (2010:203), professor of Reformed theology at Western Theological Seminary, delineates

195

felicitously, 'about being mastered by Jesus Christ through a biblical text that functionally stands over us as the word of God, not under us as a word we can control, rearrange, and use for our own purpose.' Reading Scripture in the economy of salvation signifies that by way of reading Scripture we come to enter into the triune God's own communicative fellowship. If such is the case, then reading Scripture is related closely to our identity as *disciples* of Jesus, as children of God the Father. As Stephen Fowl and Gregory Jones (1991:20) point out in their book *Reading in Communion*, reading Scripture is for Christians a matter of embodying their Scripture-reading in life. The ultimate goal of the Christians' reading of Scripture lies in being 'transformed into the likeness of Christ' (Fowl & Jones 1991:63). On this account, Fowl and Jones (1991:1) contend that the Christian practice of reading Scripture requires 'the formation and transformation of the character appropriate to disciples of Jesus.' Such a transformation takes place in and through the practices of the Christian community, more importantly, by the Spirit who initiates and empowers the formation and transformation of both individual and community.

To sum up: the Spirit is viewed as the efficacy and the perfection of a practice of reading Scripture as the transformation of readers into the likeness of Christ. Only with the Spirit's work can churchly acts of reading or interpretation be properly related to the divine communicative action, through which the triune God reveals Himself and makes His presence among His people.

4.4 THE COMMUNICATIVE-PERFORMATIVE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN THE TRIUNE GOD'S DRAMA OF REDEMPTION

4.4.1 The Grand Story of the Bible

Viewing the Bible as the grand story is arguably one of the most fruitful developments of biblical interpretation. The significance of the story is noted by N T Wright (1991:23) as follows: 'Stories determine how people see themselves and how they see the world. Stories determine how they experience God, and the world, and themselves, and

others….They have invited people to see themselves in that light, and people's lives have been changed.' It may be thus said that story is 'one of the most basic modes of human life' and also 'the best way of talking about the way the world actually is' (N T Wright 1992:38,40). In order to understand our world, to make sense of our lives, and to make our most important decisions about how we ought to be living, we need and depend upon a large background story. Individual experiences make sense and acquire meaning only when seen within the context or frame of some story we believe to be the true story of the world. 'To be human means to embrace some such basic story through which we understand our world and chart our course through it' (Bartholomew & Goheen 2004a:19). By way of embodying, exemplifying, and reinforcing the frame of story, namely worldview, a story provides a vital framework for how we experience, perceive, and relate to the world.

One may call some basic, foundational stories, which provide us with an understanding of our whole world and of our own place within it, as "metanarrative," "grand narratives," or more preferably "grand stories." [97] Grand stories are in principle *normative* because they define starting points and ways of seeing what is true. In addition, they are *comprehensive* because they give an account of the whole. To understand the world in which we find ourselves and to give shape and meaning to our experience of life in that world, we inevitably depend upon some *particular* grand story. In the line of this thought, the British missiological theologian Lesslie Newbigin (1989:15) says: 'The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is a part? That is the question which determines what we believe to be success and what failure.'

---

[97] It would be helpful for our discussion to note the distinction between story and narrative that Gérard Genette, a French literary theorist, draws in his *Narrative Discourse*. According to Genette (1980), a narrative is to be distinguished from the story it tells. The order in which events are narrated is different from the order of events in the story. A story can be narrated from a number of different points of view, conveying different information, stressing different aspects of significance. In this sense, the narrative is not identical with the story, in spite of the fact that the story is not given apart from its telling in narrative. While the story relates to the unity, the narrative brings the diversity to the fore. Given this distinction between story and narrative, we can understand how Scripture's various narratives can tell *one* story. The plurality of narratives in Scripture would not pose an impediment to viewing Scripture as a single coherent story because all the narratives tell and each partially tells *that* story. For a helpful summary and explanation of Genette's distinction, see Gerard Loughlin (1996:52-63).

Scripture presents itself to us intrinsically as a narrative, not only a historical narrative but more significantly a metanarrative or a grand story. It tells us the dramatic story of the triune God's activity of creating, judging, and redeeming the world. The biblical grand story stretches from Genesis to Revelation — as is often presented as four-point narrative: creation, fall, redemption, and eschaton —, and thus is indeed 'an account of the universe we inhabit and of the new creation we are destined for' (C Wright 2006:55). The grand story of Scripture is not a part of some larger narrative; rather, 'it is itself the larger narrative of which all other true narratives are parts' (Jenson 2003:34). Therefore, as N T Wright (1992:41-42) aptly argues, 'the whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is *public truth* [italics mine].' The biblical grand story should not be understood simply as a local worldview about a certain ethnic religion; rather it makes a universal and comprehensive claim, which entails the beginning of the creation of all creatures and the finale of the renewal of them.

The whole point of "metanarrative" or "grand story" is to make sense of life *as a whole*. Such grand stories therefore cannot easily be mixed up with each other. The biblical grand story subverts all other various competing narratives or worldviews,[98] and by so doing encourages and invites us to see *this* story as *our* story. The Christian community

---

[98] The British New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham (2003:45-47) points out that the grand biblical narrative must be distinguished from the totalising modern metanarratives, against which postmodernism harbours incredulity. By postmodern philosophy, metanarrative is rejected as attempting to subsume all events, all perspectives, and all forms of knowledge in comprehensive explanation, and consequently as being necessarily authoritarian and oppressive. By this postmodern hermeneutics, the possibility of any single coherent truth is ruled out and only a multiplicity of perspectives is accepted. However, this postmodern story claiming the end of metanarrative is proved that in spite of its certain plausible account of contemporary Western culture and some instructive critique, it offers no cogent or effective resistance to the new forms of late-modern metanarratives such as consumerist individualism and free-market globalization. Bauckham (2003:47-53) views the biblical story as nonmodern metanarrative for several reasons: (1) the universality of its claim; (2) its account of history in terms of the purpose of the divine agency and of human agency's response to it; (3) its recognition of contingency in history and its description of divine providence not identical with the immanent reason of history; (4) its recognition of a tension between the divine moral order and incomprehensive evil; (5) the existence of three dialectics between androcentric and gynocentric perspectives on the story (Ruth), between the evident activity of God and His hidden providence (Esther), and between Israel's privilege and YHWH's concern for the nations (Jonah); (6) its characteristics of resistance up against the dominant narratives of the great empires from Pharaoh to Rome; and (7) its breaking by the cross of the cycle by which the oppressed become oppressions. From this, Bauckham concludes that the only way forwards to resist effectively the ideological distortion and oppression of the modern metanarratives of progress is a retrieval of the biblical grand story over against economic globalisation.

is invited to indwell the grand story of Scripture. The Christian faith is primarily to be understood as an interpretation of the biblical grand story and hence 'a matter of dwelling in a story of God's activity' (Newbigin 1989:51). The biblical grand story provides the paradigm for the faith community and thus is constitutive for the identity of it. In other words, at the core of the function of the biblical grand story is what Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (1990:363) calls 'the constitution of an ongoing community.' The metanarrative of Scripture serves 'as the instrumentality of the Spirit in bringing sinful humans to change direction, to reinterpret their own narratives in terms of the categories of that story and to link their own stories with the story of God through connection with the story of the people of God' (Grenz 1993:126). In particular, the biblical grand story shapes the church as 'a counter-cultural community of discipleship' (Hays 1990:47). The church is called to embody the alternative story of the Bible that, as a sign of God's redemptive purposes in the world, stands against the world's other stories.

It is worthy of note that it is the Spirit's work to make the biblical grand story our own story. Robert Jenson (2003:30) insightfully says: 'Not only is Scripture within the church, but we, the church, are within Scripture — that is, our common life is located *inside* the story Scripture tells.' The purpose of the biblical grand story is not 'to provide us with certified information about some entity *outside* us, whether that third entity be God or certain classical religious experiences or the theological history of Israel and the primal church or whatever' (:30). Rather, Scripture establishes the continuation of its story to include us. When reading Scripture, we are engaged in the biblical grand story as one who is already in — not outside — the story told by Scripture. *The primary driving force of the biblical grand story to make the people of God enter into — and indwell — its story is the triune God's self-communicative activity.* More precisely, it is the Spirit's work that enables the text-inscribed story of God — the story of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself — to become our own story.

This understanding of Scripture as a single grand story has crucial implications for our attempt to recover the authority of Scripture in our life and to retrieve our faithful

reading of Scripture in today's world. As noted above, the perspective that describes Scripture as a story rather than as a systematic list of propositions does more justice to what Scripture is. This means that for a proper and rich understanding of the authority of Scripture, we are in need of viewing Scripture as an all-embracing grand story. Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen (2004b:144), professors at Redeemer University College, pinpoint the necessity of this perspective as follows: 'if we really want to recover the authority of Scripture in our lives, then we urgently need to recover Scripture as a grand story that tells us of God's way with the world from creation to re-creation, from the garden of Eden to the new Jerusalem.' The perspective that sees Scripture as the single grand story through which we understand our own experience and upon which we hinge our thoughts and actions, would provide a helpful vantage point from which to read and hear Scripture as the authoritative living Word of God for us.

It should be noted at this point that speaking of Scripture as a grand story is not to ignore the diverse voices of the canon. As Vanhoozer (2005:287) correctly remarks, Scripture is a '*complex simplex* — a chorus of diverse voices that nevertheless all testify to the same multifaceted reality.' No single canonical voice or literary form fully articulates the diverse biblical worldview. The unity of a single grand story must be affirmed in a way that is not in contradiction with *the irreducible plurality of the metanarrative of Scripture*. To see Scripture as a grand story is at the same time to affirm that the biblical texts in both their canonical unity and their literary diversity are the normative means of forming and transforming our though, deed, and life itself. Therefore, Scripture must enjoy both *unified authority of the single grand story* and *multifaceted authority of multiple narratives*.[99]

---

[99] Vanhoozer uses two kinds of metaphor to describe the nature and authority of Scripture: "drama-script" and "atlas." Scripture is both *the theo-drama script* and *the canonical atlas* —'a collection of maps that variously render the way, the truth, and the life' (Vanhoozer 2005:294). While the image of script indicates the theo-dramatic unity of Scripture, the metaphor of atlas conveys the plurality of Scripture in that there are *many* ways in *a* map to reach the end of journey. Vanhoozer draws a parallel between the diverse literary forms of the unified Scripture and the different kinds of maps in a unified atlas: 'the biblical stories, commands, promises, songs, prophecies, and didactic discourse all mediate God's communicative action, but not all in the same way' (:297). The canonical atlas is composed of the diverse biblical maps providing various types of orientation to the whole. As is implicit in the metaphor of script

4.4.2. The Authority of the Biblical Grand Story

If Scripture can be understood more fully from the perspective of a grand story, then how does God exercise His authority through this biblical grand story? On what ground can we claim that a story exerts the normative authority for our thought and deed?

N T Wright's work on this topic would offer an insightful answer to this question. In his well-known, suggestive essay *How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?*, N T Wright attempts to explore what it means to say that Scripture as a story is authoritative. For an account of this, Wright suggests an analogy of "five-act Shakespeare play" as follows (1991:18):

> Suppose there exists a Shakespeare play whose fifth act had been lost. The first four acts provide, let us suppose, such a wealth of characterization, such a crescendo of excitement within the plot, that it is generally agreed the play ought to be staged. Nevertheless, it is felt inappropriate actually to write a fifth act once and for all….Better, it might be felt, to give the key parts to highly trained, sensitive, and experienced Shakespearian actors, who would immerse themselves in the first four acts, and in the language and culture of Shakespeare and his time, *and who would then be told to work out a fifth act for themselves* [Wright's italics].

Wright (1991:18) continues to suggest how the established authority of the first four acts shapes and forms the improvisation of actors:

> This "authority" of the first four acts would not consist in an implicit command that the actors should repeat the earlier parts of the play over and over again. It would consist in the fact of an as yet unfinished drama, which contained its own impetus, its own forward movement, which demanded to be concluded in the proper manner but which required of the actors a responsible entering into the story as it stood, in order first to understand how the threads

---

and map, the function of Scripture is to provide directions 'to make interpreters into active participants in the theo-drama, followers of the Way' (:295).

could appropriately be drawn together, and then to put that understanding into effect by speaking and acting with both *innovation* and *consistency*.

Then, Wright applies this model to the biblical grand story, which is unfolded into five acts: (1) Creation; (2) Fall; (3) Israel; (4) Jesus; and (5) the Church.[100] Just as Shakespearean actors are asked to work out the fifth act under the authority of the first four acts, so the church lives and performs under the authority of the extant story.

What is especially noteworthy is Wright's insight into *how to live in the fifth act*. Wright (2005:124) writes: 'To live in the fifth act is thus to presuppose all of the above, and to be conscious of living as the people through whom the narrative in question is now moving toward its final destination.' This has much to do with the notion of *improvisation*. According to the Anglican moral theologian Samuel Wells (2004:65), the notion of improvisation provides a crucial reminder to us that 'there is a dimension of Christian life that requires more than repetition, more even than interpretation — but not so much as origination, or creation de novo.' Improvisation is required not out of a desire to be original, but out of a desire to adhere to the biblical grand story in new contexts. Therefore, improvisation is a kind of "practical knowledge" or *phronesis* in terms of Gadamer,[101] which refers to a form of knowledge about how to respond with wisdom and virtue in the new concrete situation of daily life.

Vanhoozer adopts and develops the concept of *phronesis* more fruitfully. He redefines the concept of *phronesis* in terms of the canonical-linguistic approach as such (Vanhoozer 2005:332): *'Phronesis is the canonically nurtured ability to say and do the "fit in Christ" in relatively singular contexts in ways appropriate to their relative*

---

[100] Wright's five-act structure of the biblical story is modified by some theologians. For example, Samuel Wells (2004:53) revises Wright's five-act model. Wells sees the fall as part of Act One and places Jesus in the middle of the story. In addition, he distinguishes the church from the eschaton. As a result, Wells suggests his revised version as follows: (1) Creation; (2) Israel; (3) Jesus; (4) the church; and (5) the eschaton. Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen (2004a:26-27), using the kingdom of God as an overarching theme, reconstruct the biblical story as a six-act drama: (1) God establishes His kingdom — Creation; (2) Rebellion in the kingdom — Fall; (3) The king chooses Israel — Redemption initiated; (4) The coming of the King — Redemption accomplished; (5) Spreading the news of the King — The mission of the church; and (6) The return of the King — Redemption completed.

[101] Gadamer (2002) used the term *phronesis* concerning hermeneutics, which Aristotle referred to moral knowledge in contrast with theoretical knowledge (episteme).

singularity' [Vanhoozer's italics]. From the theo-dramatic perspective, *phronesis* can be said as '*a form of virtuous perception and disciplined improvisation that leads to creative understanding'* (:332). In other words, *phronesis* or improvisation is the ability to continue the same theo-drama in new contexts.[102]

4.4.3 Scripture as the Theo-Dramatic Script

The benefit of viewing Scripture in terms of a grand story is amplified by "performance metaphor" — specifically "drama" metaphor.[103] According to Vanhoozer, the biblical grand story is first and foremost the triune God's drama of redemption, namely *theo-drama*. Drawing on the insights of Urs von Balthasar, Vanhoozer (2000:92) describes the triune God's activity in the economy of salvation in terms of dramaturgy as follows:

> God is the author-producer who as creator undertakes the divine project, the
> play of the world. God is the actor, the one who through word and deed —
> especially through the words and work of Jesus Christ — carries the action

---

[102] Another example of the description of improvisation is given by the Methodist theologian and patristic scholar Francis Young, in the final chapter of *The Art of Performance*. Young (1990) argues convincingly that the process whereby the ancient biblical text is allowed to speak today as Scripture is understood more fully by the analogy with "the cadenza" in a classic concerto. The performer of a cadenza adheres to the style and themes of the concerto, but at the same time shows virtuosity and inspiration in keeping with the setting and forms. Young draws a parallel between individual performances of Scripture in preaching and teaching *and* the improvisation of the performer of the cadenza. However, Young's use of improvisation that is compared to cadenza seems to be confined somewhat narrowly to preaching. Young (1990:161-162) writes: 'Just playing the old classic without a cadenza is like reading the lessons without a sermon. It is true that reading well depends on good translation and interpretation, but only the preaching enables proper development of the classic themes for a new situation. It is no good simply replaying the old cadenzas, because each generation has to appropriate the themes anew, and the renewal alone can effect communication. In order to improvise these essential new cadenzas, which will inevitably be somewhat ephemeral, the preacher needs skills, philological skills, hermeneutical theories, imaginative insights, and a lot of sensitivity to context.' With the term "improvisation," however, I here intend to mean a more comprehensive range of practices including reading, preaching, performing Scripture.

[103] In the last decades, considerable attention has been given to "drama and performance metaphors" as a particularly appropriate concept for articulating the relationship of God's action, Scripture, and the faith community. To list only a few out of many: One of the most significant proponents of the performance metaphor is Hans Urs von Balthasar in his five-volume work, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988-1998). Kevin Vanhoozer has employed the thought of Von Balthasar for the presentation of a drama as the context for scriptural interpretation. The British Catholic theologian Nicholas Lash (1986:37-46), in his seminal essay *Performing the Scriptures,* highlights performance as a central act of interpretation, drawing the analogy of a Beethoven score and Shakespearean tragedy for a description of scriptural interpretation. Frances Young, in *The Art of Performance*, suggests that the use of the analogy with musical performance could stimulate new insights for not only the art of biblical interpretation, but also a theology of Holy Scripture.

toward the completion of the plot. The whole existence of Jesus Christ is an "interpretation" of the Father. And God is the director, the one who, as Holy Spirit, mediates between text and actors. It is the director's job to bring about a performance marked by creative fidelity, a performance that does justice both to the author's vision and to the abilities of the actors.

This perspective provides a trinitarian context for the church's performance of Scripture. Using a theatre analogy, Vanhoozer (2005:448) illustrates vividly how the church's performance is engrafted into the divine drama by the divine performance:

[T]he Father is the playwright and producer of the action; the Son is the climax and summation of the action. The Spirit, as the one who unites us to Christ, is the dresser who clothes us with Christ's righteousness, the prompter who helps us remember our biblical lines, and the prop master who gives gifts (accessories) to each church member, equipping us to play our parts.

Here, the performance of the theo-dramatic script is governed directly by the triune God, and hence, first of all, *the divine performance*. The church's performance is not a dominant, but a *resultant* performance. Vanhoozer's explication seems to be more explicit than Wright's analogy of five-act play on this point.

More precisely, if Scripture is to be seen as *the theo-drama script,* this drama is first of all the divine drama; the script of the theo-drama involves 'an instance both of God saying (a means of revelation) and of God doing things by saying (a means of redemption)' (Vanhoozer 2005:133). More to the point, Scripture as the script of the theo-drama not only describes the triune God's drama of creation, redemption, and consummation, but also constitutes the covenantal relationship between God and human beings. In this sense, the perspective of the theo-drama script sheds more fresh light on our understanding both of God as *the God of the covenant of grace* and of the Bible as *the book of the covenant of the living God towards us*.[104] Furthermore, the analogy of drama-script enables us to understand Scripture as embracing performance because

---

[104] For Calvin's hermeneutical understanding of the covenant of grace, see 3.4.5.

Scripture is itself the divine performance before being performed by us. Scripture, as the theo-drama script, comes into its own only when it is performed. To put it differently, until we perform the script by submitting ourselves to the perlocutionary power of it in such a way that the life and thought of ours are transformed by it, we cannot learn what the script really means. In this sense, one may go so far as to say that performing the script not only enriches but also enables our understanding of the script as such.

Seen from this vantage point, reading Scripture, we can say with justification, is the process to participate and engage in the triune God's drama of redemption, in the very life of the triune God. If such is the case, then Scripture must be thought of not as a textbook filled with propositional information but as a drama-script that calls for faithful yet creative performance (Vanhoozer 2005:22).

The metaphor of the theo-drama script has significant potential for our discussion of the nature and authority of Scripture. Several distinct strengths must be touched on in brief.

Firstly, although the metaphor of dramatic performance highlights the language of actions richer than the merely propositional, it still confirms the crucial importance of the script and author's intention, namely the cognitive and truth-telling dimension. The perspective of the theo-drama script attempts to chart the course that relates propositions, experience, and narrative in an integrated way. To be more precise, the dramatic framework of Scripture puts the relation of God's communicative action, scriptural meaning, and performance into a proper ordering. By so doing, it establishes the pattern of authority into which those elements fit.

Secondly, the metaphor of the theatre reminds us that knowing God is not simply about a matter of intellectual assent but about *a matter of indwelling and participating in a world* in which the triune God is present in the activity of saving, judging, and redeeming. The theo-drama metaphor locates our understanding and reading of Scripture in a wider context of the trinitarian drama of redemption.

Thirdly, the theo-drama metaphor enriches our appreciation as to what is involved in biblical authority by providing us with a complex yet concrete model for conceiving the relationship between text and interpretation, between interpretation and performance. Actors should work thoroughly at the script in order to figure out author's intention and by so doing to embody fully the meaning of the script. Performance of the actor is itself a form of the interpretation of the script, and thus genuine performance is the goal of interpretation. Seen from this theatrical analogy, theological interpretation of Scripture must entail both belief and behaviour, theory and practice, and reading and performance.

In addition, the metaphor of script casts light on dealing with the tension between the closure of the text as it witnessed to the history of Jesus Christ *and* the open-endedness of the text as it engages the history of its readers (Vanhoozer 2005:236-237). On the one hand, Scripture as the divine script of the divine drama is "closed" in the sense that God has spoken His definitive Word in Jesus Christ. In this sense, Scripture is 'a unified book in which the divine author takes up a plurality of human words and literary forms as a means of instructing and engaging his covenant people' (:236). On the other hand, Scripture as the church's script is open in the sense that it continually calls for the church's ongoing understanding and participation. The point is lucidly made by Yale professor Shannon Craigo-Snell. According to her (2000:480-481), Scripture as a script is *both complete and incomplete*: On the one hand, Scripture faithfully witnesses to the triune God's activity and by so doing provides the authoritative norm for our performance; on the other hand, in the very nature of being a script, Scripture is 'incomplete, inherently moving towards greater fulfilment in the event of performance.' Scripture is open towards further completion in the continuing life of the church and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the use of the dramatic script metaphor leads to a more adequate understanding of Scripture not merely as a criterion for understanding what God has done in the past but also as a criterion for understanding what is adequate to say and do today.

Fourthly, the theatrical metaphor encourages readers to consider their lives as drama full of tension and urgency. With the idea of the theo-drama script, both knowledge of God's will and performance of it come to be looked on as expressing a single thought,

namely *practical wisdom*. Knowing how to perform the Word of God in new and complex situations is a matter of practical wisdom — the formation of heart, mind, and imagination. In particular, daily life facing new problems in new situation requires improvisation (Vanhoozer 2005:80) and calls for our serious consideration about the hermeneutical task.

Lastly, the theo-drama metaphor provides helpful insights for reconstructing the Scripture-tradition relationship not as antithetical but as mutual. Scripture as a script may be self-interpreting, but it cannot be self-performing. Both the uniqueness of Scripture — *sola Scriptura* — and the inevitability of tradition — a particular way of interpreting and performing Scripture in life and thought — are not necessarily exclusive to each other (Vanhoozer 2005:151-154). On the one hand, *sola Scriptura* claims the primacy and finality of the script as a norm for assessing subsequent performance without pre-empting the need for tradition (:235). On the other hand, tradition plays an assisting role in performing Scripture. The role of tradition is to facilitate or to enable the authentic performance of the Word of God in the particular social-historical context in which readers are situated. 'The Christian tradition provides a historically extended, socially embodied context in which to interpret, apply, and live out the communally formative narratives contained in the canonical texts' (Grenz & Franke 2001:128). A theo-dramatic perspective takes seriously the role of interpretative tradition, which, by providing the indispensable hermeneutical context, is an essential component of the process of performing Scripture.

4.4.4 The Divine Communicative-Performative Authority of Scripture

Does the use of performance metaphor mean that the reader is taken into the place of an author who determines what a text means? Before we draw a conclusion from what we have discussed so far, this question needs to be answered carefully.

Having observed a marked turn to performance interpretation, Wolterstorff draws a sharp distinction between "performance interpretation" and "discourse interpretation" he champions. Wolterstorff does not advocate performance interpretation, primarily

because the end results of performance interpretation are incompatible with those of the authorial-discourse interpretation. While, for the discourse interpretation, the criterion of correctness is whether to make accurate truth claims about what the discourser said, the criterion of the performance interpretation is on the basis of value for the community. According to Wolterstorff's observation (1995:181), '[t]he performance interpreter doesn't claim to have *found out* what the author said.' If this is the case, then is it indeed inevitable to see the relationship between authority and performance, between authorial discourse interpretation and performance interpretation, in an antithetical way? Although we have already dealt indirectly with this issue thus far, Vanhoozer's categorisation would be more helpful for answering clearly this question.

Vanhoozer (2005:151-185) contrasts two models: "Performance II," in which 'the interpretative community authors and directs' and "Performance I," in which 'the interpretative community responds and enacts.'

Performance II interpretation is a kind of ecclesial performance interpretation and its typical example is Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach. In this model, the aims and interests of the interpreting community are privileged over those of the divine play-wright. More weight is given to the performance of the community than the script. What is authoritative is the community's use/performance of the script. In other words, what ultimately bears authority is not the story of Scripture but the church's use of this story. Performance II interpretation tends to highlight the aim and intent of interpretation of Scripture, that is, "the formation and transformation of Christian character" (Fowl 1998:7). However, Vanhoozer (2005:176) criticises that Performance II interpretation, by exclusively focusing on the aim and interest of the community, tends to overlook *the aim and interest of the author*. The favour of performance by the community may not do full justice to authorial acts of discourse, the divine illocutions.

As a correction and alternative, Vanhoozer suggests and advocates *Performance I interpretation*, from the perspective of which Scripture 'is itself a performance — an act of discourse — before being script (a design for further performance)' (Vanhoozer 2005:152). Scripture is above all *the divine canonical discourse*. More specifically,

Scripture, as *covenant document*, is a revelatory and redemptive word-act of the triune God, and hence *the triune God's performance*.[105] The perspective of *Performance I interpretation* is committed to the fundamental premise that God is "the ultimate author and playwright of the script of God's theo-drama." Only in the light of the divine performance can the significance of performance be adequately acknowledged, asserted, and appreciated. The affirmation of the importance of performance in the form of *Performance I* is not made with the negation or minimization of the authority of the text. This approach is alert against a pitfall that the emphasis on the community's use of the biblical text might obscure the question of the divine use of the text.

Scripture as the script is, as Vanhoozer (2005:167) argues, 'both *transcript* of the theo-drama — the divine once-for-all "command performance" — and a divine *prescript* that commands performance by others (e.g., the church)' [Vanhoozer's italics]. What is authoritative is not the communal use of Scripture but the divine authorial use. Utmost priority is given to God's use of the script of theo-drama. The authority of Scripture is related above all to its being the means by which God is speaking today. The aspect of divine performance that is inherent in Scripture itself is prior to the aspect of communal performance that the church is called to do continually.

To put it another way, Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach (Performance I) understands the concept of performance in a different way from Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach (Performance II). In the view of the former, performance is 'a matter not of authoring but of "answerability," of *acknowledging* what the playwright is doing in the many voices in Scripture and of *responding* to it in an appropriate manner' (Vanhoozer 2005:180). In a manner somewhat different from Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach, Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach privileges Scripture itself over the performance of it by the community because Scripture is the communicative action of its divine author; yet it does so with appreciating fully the significance of the context of the interpreting community. The interpreting community

---

[105] Two distinct levels of triune performance are to be distinguished (Vanhoozer 2005:176-177). At the one level, God's word-act from creation to consummation is the *material* of the theo-drama and the subject matter of Scripture; at another level, Scripture as the script is the *formal* principle of the drama of redemption.

is not "using," but "being used by," authorial discourse. To put it in terms of speech-act theory, *Performance I interpretation* acknowledges that the perlocutionary dimensions of the divine drama (*pathos*) can be achieved only by recognising the primacy of the divine illocutions (*logos*), whereas *Performance II interpretation* attempts to achieve the former without underlining the latter (:182).

At the heart of *Performance I interpretation* is the claim that ultimate authority and normativity is located in the divine use of Scripture, not in the interpretative community's. The church is not authoring/speaking, but answering/hearing community to Scripture as the script of the theo-drama. Thus, the church's privilege and responsibility is to render the meaning of the drama of redemption in new contexts where it is situated. By way of *Performance I interpretation*, divine communicative discourse is effectively combined with divine performance. From this integrative perspective on the relationship between authority and performance, Scripture still enjoys the supreme norm and authority for Christian faith and life, not as an *epistemic norm* that quenches the modern desire for certainty, but as a *sapiential norm* that provides direction for our participation in the great drama of redemption.

Upon this reflection emerges a major conclusion that we are in need of considering the authority of Scripture not simply in terms of conveying propositional truth claims but also in terms of the divine *communicative-performative* script that directs our performances and practices according to the aim and interest of the divine author.

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I attended to the question of how and to what extent the authority of Scripture can be related to the triune God's activity in the economy of salvation. To answer this crucial question, I set forth a dogmatic account of Scripture from a trinitarian-pneumatological perspective.

Conservative-evangelical theology locates bibliology in the prolegomena and appeals much more heavily to the doctrine of inspiration for establishing the divine authority of Scripture. This positioning follows, to a great degree, the course of the Reformed orthodox theologians, who, by placing the discussion of Scripture in the first loci of the system of theology, sought to formalise scriptural authority. What is more, the prolegomenal positioning of bibliology, by receiving an impetus from the modern desire to establish the ultimate epistemological foundation, led to an unfortunate consequence of the logical dispensability of bibliology with other Christian doctrines. A devastating consequence is that talk of scriptural authority comes to take place apart from not only the being and acting of the triune God but also the soteriological context.

This observation points in the direction of a necessity that our talk of scriptural authority must occur in close relation to the doctrine of the triune God and the triune economy of salvation. This reorientation of bibliology involves some suggestions: that talk of scriptural authority must be rooted in the doctrine of the triune God; that the ontology of Scripture must be retrieved in its relation to God Himself; and that both *de jure* and *de facto* authority of Scripture must be articulated within the context of God's authority. In addition, a trinitarian hermeneutics enables us to understand the authority and interpretation of Scripture in the context of the triune God's redemptive activity towards us.

The departure point of a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture must be a dogmatic ontology of Scripture, which views Scripture not only as the "self-communicative activity of the triune God for saving fellowship," but also as a "sanctified and inspired instrument of that revelatory-redemptive activity." A trinitarian hermeneutics affirms that Scripture is the *divine discourse*, through which God is speaking. Thus, Scripture *is* the Word of God and Scripture as the divine self-communicative action mediates the presence of God. This point might be explicated more fully in terms of speech-act theory. Scripture is above all *the triune God's mighty speech-act* — the triune God's locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary actions —, by which God the Father communicates Himself in the Son through the power of the Spirit.

Scripture is not only *divine canonical discourse*, but also *divine canonical performance*. On the one hand, the notion of divine canonical discourse underlines that God is *the* communicative agent; Scripture is His communicative action, which is carried out through both the unity and the plurality of the biblical texts. The notion of divine canonical performance, on the other hand, stresses that Scripture is most of all "a divine canonical practice" before a practice of the church. Through Scripture as the divine performance, God fulfils the aim of His revelatory and redemptive action: to unite us to Christ, to sanctify us in the truth, to create us into the people of God's covenant, and by all these to bring us into the economy of divine revelation and redemption. One of the most significant implications of the notion of the divine canonical performance is its great emphasis on *the primacy of divine use/practice of Scripture*. The churchly use of Scripture is a subsequent consequence of the divine use, and thus cannot constitute the principal source of scriptural authority. It is not to say that the churchly or readerly use of Scripture may be ignored in talk of scriptural authority. Rather, by clarifying the order and pattern of authority, a trinitarian hermeneutics fully appreciates the important role of the churchly or readerly use in a new light. By deploying some helpful implications of speech-act theory, a trinitarian hermeneutics is able to develop the point that understands integrally the relation between God's speaking and God's acting, between divine discourse and divine performance, and thereby between ontological and functional aspects of Scripture.

In addition, a trinitarian hermeneutics contributes to the retrieval of the hermeneutical significance of the Holy Spirit in talk of scriptural authority. The work of the Spirit is to bring about perlocutionary effects for the people of God and in so doing to lead them to covenantal fellowship with the triune God. The Spirit of understanding equips readers for authentic understanding by enabling them to overcome the distances hampering the appreciation of the meaning of the text. Moreover, the Spirit of significance empowers faithful readers to engage and embody the Word of God in the particular historical-cultural situations in which they find themselves. In this sense, the Spirit is the bearer and enabler of canonical communicative practices in Scripture. The hermeneutical significance of the Spirit has crucial implications for our understanding of the relation between Word and Spirit, between Scripture and tradition, as well as of the practice of

reading Scripture. A trinitarian-pneumatological hermeneutics of Scripture declares the identity of the church as hearing, responding to, and performing the living Word of God. A Christian reading of Scripture must be a matter of embodying the Scripture-reading in life and of participating in the triune God's economy of salvation. Faithful readers, as not masters but disciples of Jesus, are caught up by the power of the Spirit into the triune God's self-communicative presence.

A conclusive argument of this chapter is that scriptural authority is above all *the communicative-performative authority in the triune God's drama of redemption*. This crucial point becomes much more explicit by performance metaphor. Scripture is best understood as a metanarrative or the grand story, which determines how we experience God, the world, and ourselves. The biblical grand story is first and foremost the dramatic story of the triune God's activity of creation, redemption, and consummation, and hence *the theo-drama*. Scripture as the theo-dramatic script not only describes the triune drama of salvation, but also brings us into participating and engaging in *that* theo-drama. The theo-dramatic script can be faithfully performed by us only through the driving force of God's communicative activity, particularly by the work of the Spirit who makes the biblical grand story our own story and enables us to enter into that story.

A dramatic metaphor of Scripture offers helpful implications and certain clarifications for our consideration of performance in talk of scriptural authority. Drawing on Vanhoozer's insight, I suggested that a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture, which is enhanced by the theatrical metaphor, could bring together three essential components in talk of scriptural authority, namely God, Scripture, and the community. A trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture does it by the proper ordering of the relationship between "God's communicative action," "the meaning of Scripture," and "performance by the interpretive community." The point of the suggested trinitarian hermeneutics is clear: *What makes Scripture authoritative is not the community's use of Scripture but the divine authorial use.* The performative authority of Scripture derives from the divine canonical performance, and on this account, Scripture as the theo-dramatic script directs the performance of the interpretive community towards the will and intention of the triune God.

The whole of the arguments presented in this chapter affirms the necessity to bring the hermeneutical dimension into our talk of scriptural authority. This chapter functions not only as an encouraging impetus, but also as a framework and criterion for the subsequent discussion of the hermeneutical aspect of scriptural authority.

CHAPTER 5

RECLAIMING THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN THE LIGHT OF HERMENEUTICS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

If the authority of Scripture is confessed or proclaimed, but not performed or practised in the life of Christians, it might be no more than a theory, a hypothesis, or even a "lip service." For this reason, the Reformers, as noted in Chapter 3, related the agenda of scriptural authority firmly with the contents of Scripture and with proper interpretation. As I argued in the previous chapter, the core of scriptural authority lies in its being the divine/human communicative performance. On the one hand, the "communicative" aspect of Scripture indicates that the revelatory activity of God is not completed until it has accomplished its *telos*, namely the establishment of "saving fellowship," which sets "the reception by a communicative-covenantal partner" as a premise. On the other hand, the "performative" aspect of Scripture implies that Scripture is intended to encourage and enable both interpreting individual and community to participate in the triune God's performances. This understanding allows for the necessity of the hermeneutical task. In other words, the need for the middle term *interpretation*[106] emerges between the divine

---

[106] Albeit the term *exegesis, interpretation, reading*, and *hermeneutics* are often used interchangeably, some distinctions would be helpful for the purpose of our discussion. *Exegesis* refers to the endeavour to discover what a text meant in its original settings and thus exegesis is working with the elements present in the text. *Interpretation* refers to the normal manner in which all human beings endeavour to discern what a text means and to make sense of things, events, and texts. In a sense, interpretation is used as a mid-way term between exegesis and hermeneutics. *Hermeneutics* includes, to cite Thiselton's terms (2009:4), 'the second-order discipline of asking critically *what exactly we are doing when we read, understand, or apply* texts' [Thiselton's italics]. Hermeneutics is critical reflection on the aims, conditions, and criteria of interpretation that are set for valid, responsible, or appropriate interpretation. Whereas exegesis and interpretation designate the actual processes of interpreting texts, hermeneutics embraces the general principles that govern the broader interpretational task and thus interacts with various academic disciplines. *Reading* is a more practical term which is characterised as 'less overlain with the complexities of hermeneutical theory, less patent of exposition through a theory of the human subject, and less likely to be overwhelmed by psychological or philosophical abstraction' (Webster 2003:86). In spite of all these distinctions and differences of nuance, however, as Thiselton (1992:2) rightly asserts, 'each of

215

communicative performance (revelation) *and* the human participating performance (faithful obedience). As I argued by employing the dramatic script metaphor in the previous chapter, the doctrine of Scripture always involves issues about preparing and guiding disciples of Jesus to interpret and perform the biblical texts — 'training actors to interpret texts,' in the words of Vanhoozer (2000:94). From this, it becomes evident that the serious consideration of hermeneutics is a necessary ingredient in talk of scriptural authority. To the extent that one's view of the nature of texts and of the interpretation of them are mutually interrelated, the hermeneutical discussion must of necessity be thought of as *a constitutive, componential, critical part of talk of scriptural authority* rather than a subsequent consequence of it.

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have tried to distance myself from a formalistic construal of the authority of Scripture, and instead argued that talk of scriptural authority must always involve the interpretation and performance of Scripture, which is governed and sustained not so much by the churchly/readerly use of Scripture as by the divine use of Scripture. This point, in my view, comes to be in close convergence with Thiselton's conviction that the cutting edge of scriptural authority lies in 'its capacity to perform acts of salvation, liberation, forgiveness, renewal, authorization, appointment, commission, and above all acts of promise and pledges of love' (Thiselton 1994:116). In order that Scripture comes to be genuinely authoritative as the divine communicative performance in the economy of salvation, the task of hermeneutics is of necessity and of great importance.

In the beginning part of this chapter, I will look into the problem that is provoked by conservative-evangelicals' pre-hermeneutical way of constructing the doctrine of scriptural authority, in which a proper doctrine of scriptural authority is thought of as 'the necessary *precondition* [italics mine] for valid interpretation and must have a prominent role in hermeneutical reflection' (Wood 1987:4). Then, I will attend to the question as to why the hermeneutical dimension should be reintegrated into a doctrinal account of scriptural authority.

---

terms…needs to be broadened to include hermeneutical issues about understanding, knowledge, communication, and truth, as well as questions about the competency of the reader at the semiotic level.'

The rest of this chapter will deal with several hermeneutical issues, which, in my judgement, have immediate or potential relevance to our talk of scriptural authority. However, the concern of this chapter is not to comprehensively reflect the implications of philosophical hermeneutics for theology, but to set the stage for integrating the hermeneutical dimension into our talk of scriptural authority. Thus, I will narrow the focus of our attention to key hermeneutical issues pertinent to this end. Key hermeneutical issues with regard to the authority of Scripture are to be described as threefold: *discerning, indwelling*, and *listening to other voice(s)*.[107] First, hermeneutics helps readers to *discern* their interpretation, themselves, and the world in accordance with the script of God's redemptive drama, by raising critical questions about the basis and validity of interpretive activity. Second, hermeneutics enables readers to *indwell* the world that the text presents to them, by facilitating an engagement with the text by which readers are addressed. Third, hermeneutics may nurture the wisdom to *listen* to not only the living voice of God but also the voices of others, and by so doing paves the way forwards anticipating the divine last Word which will be fully revealed at the consummation of God's drama of salvation. For the discussion of scriptural authority, I will develop these threefold hermeneutical issues into a hermeneutical art of *removing interpretive idols*, of *facilitating ongoing life-engagement with the biblical texts*, and of *listening to other voice(s)*, respectively.[108]

Bearing in mind the necessity and potentiality of hermeneutics for talk of scriptural authority, one can argue convincingly that advances in the area of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics would provide abundant resources for our discussion of scriptural authority. Given this, this chapter aims to *reshape* and *reclaim* the authority of Scripture in light of hermeneutical insights. To this end, I will engage with and appropriate critically significant hermeneutical voices such as Gadamer, Ricoeur, Levinas, and Bakhtin. Particularly, for some parts of this chapter, I will follow the path of the concerns and insights of Anthony Thiselton, who is not only a leading

---

[107] Concerning an idea of the threefold task of hermeneutics, I am indebted to Thiselton's insight. For a summarised expression of the threefold task of hermeneutics, see Thiselton (1994:116).

[108] The term "art," which is hinted from the book *The Art of Reading Scripture* (2003), is deliberately used here because it entails such implications as creativity, imagination, engagement, complexity, difficulty, and so forth. In addition, the term "art" shares common ground with metaphors or images that I have employed in this dissertation, such as grand narrative, grand story, drama, script, and performance.

authoritative voice in the field of biblical and philosophical hermeneutics but also one of the few theologians who give special attention to the relationship between authority and hermeneutics. Thiselton, especially in his recent work *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, attempts to retrieve the formative-transformative impact of Christian doctrines upon the Christian life in the light of the resources of contemporary hermeneutics. Thiselton's emphasis on the significant interaction between hermeneutics and doctrine is based on his firm conviction that the resources of hermeneutics have considerable potential that can serve to understand, explore, appropriate, and apply Christian doctrine. In deep sympathy with Thiselton's claim, I believe that some valuable insights and implications derived from contemporary hermeneutics may provide some adequate means to retrieve the hermeneutical nature of the doctrine of scriptural authority for the communal life of the church.

5.2 THE REINTEGRATION OF HERMENEUTICAL DIMENSION INTO TALK OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

5.2.1 The Demise of Hermeneutics in Conservative-Evangelical Thought on Scriptural Authority

As we have discussed in Chapter 2, the discussion of scriptural authority, within a traditional conservative-evangelical theology, has taken place in a way that privileges epistemology as a primary agenda over hermeneutics. Out of a stalwart commitment to secure the objectivity of scriptural authority, the conservative-evangelical task to construct the doctrine of Scripture has often been undertaken in relative isolation from the hermeneutical task. In this manner, the hermeneutical task has been deemed to be subjected to a prior commitment to the authority of Scripture. On the presumption that interpreters must submit to the text, they are enforced to accept or choose a particular view of scriptural authority and to be shaped by it, be they to understand it (Wood 1987:4). Put in terms of Wilhelm Dilthey's distinction between explanation (*Erklären*) and understanding (*Verstehen*), it happens within the conservative-evangelical effort to construct scriptural authority that more weight and priority has been placed on

epistemology as the art of explanation than on *hermeneutics* as the art of understanding. Unfortunately, that which is called "the formalisation of scriptural authority" leads to a negative outcome that hermeneutics is disparaged or at least not given proper attention.

We need to look briefly at the historical trajectory or context — in spite of its complexity and ambiguity — in which the conservative-evangelical disengagement of hermeneutics from the construal of scriptural authority came into play. For example, there was a shift *from* the Reformers' position, in which objectivity and subjectivity were closely kept together, [109] *to* a tilt towards objectivity within Reformed orthodoxy. In the context of the Reformers' conflict with Rome, according to Van den Belt (2008:316-317), more focus was put to the reception of Scripture, along with the *testimonium* of the Spirit, than the inspiration of Scripture. During the process of development of Reformed orthodoxy, however, the production of Scripture, namely the issue of inspiration, gains importance increasingly. Reformed orthodoxy attempted to draw a connection between the authority of Scripture and the authenticity of the autographic texts. As a result, 'the *autopistia* of Scripture moves away from the reception of Scripture to its production, away from the *testimonium* to the inspiration of Scripture' (Van den Belt 2008:317). It is already noted in Chapter 2 that the tendency to stress the objective status of Scripture has been intensified in the context of the modern dichotomy between objective and subjective.

Moreover, a failure to view integrally the relation of the divine and the human aspects of Scripture play a crucial part in exacerbating conservative-evangelicals' indifference towards hermeneutics in their bibliology. [110] Colin Gunton (2002:520), a renowned British Reformed systematic theologian, points out the two errors in speaking of Scripture's unique inspiration: One is of supposing that the Scriptures are merely the products of a religious culture; the opposite other is to claim for Scripture the kind of truth that denies its character as the product of human culture. Conservative-evangelical

---

[109] For a discussion of Calvin's thought on "the intimate relation between the *autopistia* of Scripture and the *testimonium* of the Spirit," refer to Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[110] The modern dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity has much to do with a dichotomous framework of the above-below or the divinity-humanity dualism, because the objectivity of Scripture has often been thought of in close relation to "ontological objectivity" at least in conservative-evangelical thought. For the discussion of this topic, see 2.2.5.2 of this dissertation.

theology may fall under the second error, that is, to lose sight of the human aspect of the Scriptures (Lienhard 1995; Strange 2000:81). Put differently, an unyielding emphasis on an oracular-prophetic paradigm of verbal inspiration tends towards 'a docetic view of the word which denies both the humanity and the spirituality of the Scripture' (Vanhoozer 2002:135). Conservative-evangelicals espouse a so-called supernaturalism in order to protect biblical authority from the dualistic framework of modern historical naturalism, which is applied to the critical study of the biblical texts. In so doing, they adamantly defend the relation of the Bible to divine revelation whereas almost entirely removing it from the sphere of historical contingency through the elaboration of a doctrinally isolated theory of inspiration (Webster 2003:19-20). In other words, the conservative-evangelical emphasis on the construction of the one true set of doctrines has eventually 'replaced treating the Bible as text with the quest for the revelation that supposedly lies behind the texts of scripture' (Grenz & Franke 2001:63).

In addition to this, an account of the rejection or disinclination of hermeneutics by conservative-evangelicals can be given with reference to *how to understand the nature of doctrine*. Conservative-evangelicals tend to place great emphasis on the close identification of "formulations of core doctrines" with "what is directly taught in Scripture," and thereby to understand doctrine as lying at the centre of Christianity's essence. They overtly define doctrine as a first-order language of divine revelation (Olson 1998:42,44).[111] From this view, the progress of theology is nothing other than effective spelling out of past achievements in theology and translating them for the contemporary world. This viewpoint of the nature of doctrine makes little room for a possibility of hermeneutics. Even if hermeneutics might be taken seriously, it would be presumably an objectivist theory of interpretation — for a typical example, Hirsh's determinist theory of interpretation.[112]

---

[111] I borrow this description from Roger Olson's characterisation of the division among evangelical theologians. Olson delineates two emerging parties within North American evangelical theology, which are labelled by him as "traditionalist" and "reformist," respectively. The overall extent of Olson's illustration of traditionalist, in my view, seems fitting for our present description of conservative-evangelicalism, which I have termed "scriptural foundationalism" in Chapter 2.

[112] E D Hirsh inexorably defends the objective accessibility of verbal meanings. He claims that the verbal meaning is determinate and unchangeable, and thus the reader must try to grasp the clearly determined original meaning of the text. According to this theory, the goal of textual interpretation is the recovery of the author's intention. Hirsh's objectivism — often pejoratively called "the naive Romantic

The conservative-evangelical hesitation or demurral about hermeneutics often comes from an uncomfortable attitude towards hermeneutical insights such as the corrigibility or provisionality of judgement, interpretative plurality, and so on (Thiselton 2007:122; Treier 2008:147-148). Those strands of hermeneutical thought seem to be considered as destructive to and incompatible with Christian doctrines on account that Christian truth-claims and sense of control over meaning might be jeopardised by them. It is because, for conservative-evangelicals, theology is constructed 'by way of careful induction from all the relevant texts…with little concern for the context of the original passage of differences of meaning between a first-century and a twentieth-century context' (Lints 1993:23). In other words, theology is considered as "culturally neutral" or "value-free" rather than "culturally and historically conditioned." As the Presbyterian Reformed theologian Richard Lints (1993:27) points out, conservative-evangelical theology neither readily recognises nor takes seriously the humanity of both the biblical texts and those who are reading and interpreting them. The assumption that the biblical text is possible to interpret in a culturally neutral way allows conservative-evangelicals to be 'uncritical of the biases and prejudices associated with their own cultural vantage point in the reading of the Bible' (Lints 1993:27).

Obviously, an excessive desire to secure the objective authority of Scripture has a profound effect on the evangelical way of reading Scripture. William Stacy Johnson (2003:118-119), professor of systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, provides an acute description of 'modes of modern biblical exegesis,' which might be called a "scriptural foundationalist reading." According to Johnson, modern biblical exegesis tends to treat Scripture as a book of propositional statements that provides 'an epistemological criterion for truth.' For modern biblical exegesis, reading Scripture is nothing more than 'to probe the text for a singular, determinate meaning,' and the biblical text is 'more an abstract object of investigation than a concrete, living subject that speaks, and continues to speak, in the church's life.' This excludes the need for ongoing reading and reflection of Scripture and, by making the Bible superfluous, results in "the silencing of the text in the church."

---

intentionalism" — is used as a dominant, or at least most popular, hermeneutical approach for 'those theologians who wish to proclaim the inerrancy of Scripture' (Jeanrond 1991:98).

Even further, a misleading conception of the so-called "fundamentalist hermeneutical principle" assumes that Scripture can be read without interpretation and faithful reading makes hermeneutics unnecessary. Fundamentalists tend to equate the meaning of the text with their way of reading it. Consequently, they regard the authority of interpretive traditions or institutions as identical to the authority of the text itself. This brings about the fundamentalist mindset, namely that 'they alone apprehend the true, objective, absolute, determine meaning of the Bible,' to cite Kathleen Boone's trenchant description (1989:69). Seen from this, the fundamentalist hermeneutics seems quite different from the Reformers' notion of "the self-interpretation of Scripture," which claims that Scripture should be interpreted in terms of its own paradigm, not of a particular interpretive community (Green 2000:179).

In spite of its lofty intention to honour the Bible as Scripture, the conservative-evangelical approach in effect seems to contribute to *the loss of dynamic-hermeneutical relation between text and reader*. Conservative-evangelicals are not so much culturally-sensitive as biblically-sensitive. The scarcity of hermeneutical reflection leads to the meagreness of contextual sensitivity and in turn it brings about serious ruptures between "fidelity to the authoritative texts" and "applicability of them in the context of real life."[113]

5.2.2 The Retrieval of the Essential Role of Hermeneutics in Talk of Scriptural Authority

5.2.2.1 The Road to Emmaus

The term "hermeneutics" derives from the Greek *hermeneuo*, of which the etymological origin might be "Hermes," messenger of the gods in Greek mythology. Berkouwer (1975:108) finds the origin of the term "hermeneutics" in the New Testament's use of the word *hermeneuein*, which means 'to transpose into another language, to translate —

---

[113] Recently, some evangelical theologians have taken seriously hermeneutical issues and have taken step forwards in development of general hermeneutics. Some of the most important contributions to this development have been made by, to name but a few, Anthony Thiselton, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Roger Lundin.

also in the sense of interpreting or explaining.' Among many passages in the New Testament relating to the issue of interpretation, the story of the Emmaus road (Lk 24:13-35) draws our particular attention.[114] In this story, by expounding and appealing to Scripture, the risen Christ elucidated His life, death, and resurrection, to two disciples who could not recognise Him. This story helps us make explicit the point that *reading does not necessarily lead to clear understanding*. Neither a genuine understanding of the way of Jesus and of the whole picture of God's redemptive drama, nor participating in that way and that story, is warranted merely by activity of reading/interpretation. According to Berkouwer (1975:110), this is not because of 'the obscurity and impenetrability of the words,' but because of our lack of capacity to truly and sincerely listen to the message of salvation and the deficiency of our hearts, such as 'a correct state of receptivity, the necessary enlightenment of the eyes, and the illumined understanding.' At this point, the core issue of hermeneutics comes to the fore. Assuming that the interpretation of Scripture is inseparable from both the context of God's salvation and the context of faith and life as a whole, one can understand hermeneutics above all as 'the bridging of the gap,' in terms of Berkouwer (1975:108), between the activity of interpreting Scripture and that at which it really aims, namely the salvation.

The Roman Catholic theologian Nicholas Lash addresses the problem of a gap, by attempting to answer the question as to *what authority the past has for our present.* Lash (1986:49) notes that Christians have accredited unique and unsurpassable authority to certain past events — particularly "the event of Jesus of Nazareth" — primarily because 'they believed that, in these past events, God has revealed himself in a manner, and with a finality, which definitively surpasses the manner of his revelation in all other events or sequences of events.' Lash argues that the past of God's action in Jesus has authority, not because it is past but because it is perceived to embody God's promise for our present and future. In God's action of revelation, Christian faith is a constitutive element and for this reason 'it makes no sense to speak of "preserving" revelation, but only of continuing its history, which is the history of faith' (:53). For

---

[114] For some helpful treatments of the Emmaus story from a viewpoint of biblical hermeneutics, see Hauerwas (1993:47-62) and Moberly (2000:45-70).

Lash, our proper relationship to the particular past is not "preservation" or "attempted linguistic immobility" because those attempts are 'subject to continual changes which are largely beyond our control' (:54). 'A strategy of preservation' cannot preserve the past; contrary to its intention, a strategy of preservation 'obliterates the meaning of the past by transforming it into anachronism,' and, as a result, '[w]e lose sight of what past forms originally meant and, by failing to change them, invest them with new meanings' (:54). Instead, Lash contends, 'our fidelity to the past,' due to the demand for our continually risking change in the present, can be achieved not through preservation and immobility, but through ongoing change, more precisely 'the therapeutic, salvific task of critical appropriation' (:55,60). Lash offers the conclusive answer to the question of *what authority our past has* as follows (:61):

> For all people, whether or not they are religious believers, the past has the authority of whatever truth and value have been perceived and achieved in the past, truth and value that can only be 'recovered' and sustained to the extent that *we risk critically appropriating that past in transformation of the present for the construction of our future* [italics mine].

Lash's insight provides a needed reminder to us that a genuine concern about the nature of Scripture should be always linked with a critical issue of the nature of interpretation. Here it is important to remember the point made in the previous chapter, namely that Scripture is properly and fully understood as "grand story" or "theo-dramatic script," which leads readers to participate and dwell in the triune God's drama of salvation. If this is indeed the case, then we can say that a more appropriate way of entering into *that* grand story of Scripture would necessitate not propositional formulae deduced from the text, but an interpretative framework — 'a complex of interpretive rules and habits' (Vroom 1993:353) — which is formed by an analysis of inference. In this light, McGrath (1990:62) maintains that Scripture is not primarily a set of propositions, but rather 'a specific mode of discourse and pattern of thinking, which requires transposition into an interpretative framework.' In other words, that Scripture is the grand story means that the Christians' reading of Scripture is much more than interpreting the past story of Israel; it always entails reinterpreting and reshaping their

224

own stories by wedding their stories to the grand story of God's salvation. The biblical grand story is continually retold and applied to our real life as the story interpreted within *such* a framework.

In brief, a hermeneutical task is adequately described as "bridging the gap" between the activity of reading *and* the actual effect of reading; between the authority of the past *and* the appropriation of the past in the present transformation. Hermeneutics may provide an interpretative framework within which what the reader reads can be applied in and extended to everyday life. Through hermeneutics, a meaning of the text is not fixed in its original historical context, but reaches out to our present situation.

5.2.2.2 The Living Word of God as Life-Related Authority

Given that a claim about "authority without meaning" is only formal and empty, any attempt to confess the authority of Scripture is confronted with the need to recognise the command to understand and to interpret Scripture (Berkouwer 1975:137). 'Authority,' as Gabriel Fackre (1987:54) rightly puts it, 'cannot be exercised without interpretation, our way of appropriating and rendering intelligible assertions of authority.' A view of the authority of Scripture always entails a position on interpretation, and thus the rubric *authority* is inseparably connected with and accompanied by *interpretation*.

To the extent to which truth is related with life, one can affirm the indivisible relation between authority and hermeneutics. The word of truth is not different from the word of life. Scripture is not merely an information-provider; rather, it offers to its readers invitations to live by it. By employing "performance" as an adequate metaphor for interpretation in the previous chapter, I have argued that to confess the authority of Scripture by interpreting and understanding it means nothing other than *to perform and live by it*. The Reformed notion that *the Bible is the Word of God* is not merely a claim about the truth of Scripture, but also the essential hermeneutical principle. To take the Bible as Scripture means that when reading the Bible we actually listen to the *living* Word of God in order to *live* accordingly. According to the postliberal theologian Garrett Green (2000:176), the activity of reading is responding — listening — to the

triune God's active communication and thus is necessarily a *personal* activity because 'the God of the Bible is the Living God, a free agent who cannot be manipulated or treated as a mere object.' The living character of the Word of God signifies that it cannot be treated as 'simply given, fixed, and available to' our understanding. 'The literal sense of the biblical text tells us…what God *says*; but it requires an act of interpretation to discern what God *means*.'[115] This hermeneutical imperative is, Green thus argues decidedly, something to be celebrated, not to be lamented, because it must be thought of as 'a sign of God's grace, a source of joy and hope for believers' rather than as 'a problem to be endured'; as 'the hermeneutical consequence of the mystery of God' rather than as an inevitable consequence of our finitude (:177).

Listening to the *living* voice of God through reading Scripture always requires an evaluation and differentiation. In this regard, Berkouwer (1975:73) states:

> When the Word of the Lord comes to a man, it comes into his own life on his own level. It does not come in a strange extraterrestrial or supratemporal manner, consequently making it unnecessary to distinguish it from other voices because it is incomparably and therefore irresistibly unique. Instead, it confronts man in his own creaturely existence. This also happens in preaching with human speech and even more so when the Word comes to us in writing, in a human attestation.

However, our encounter with God does not occur outside of human media; rather, it takes place through what Berkouwer (1975:135) calls 'the prism of humanity travelling the Spirit's paths.' Thus, it comes to be necessary to distinguish and discern the living voice of God speaking in and through Scripture from other voices including our own voice. A major hermeneutical concern lies in struggling for the faithful engagement and embodiment of the Word of God in our real life.

---

[115] It is noteworthy that Green makes a distinction, *not* between "what the Bible meant in the past" and "what it means for the present," *but* between "what God says" and "what God means." By this theological distinction, Green intends to underline that both what the Bible meant to the original hearers and what it means to us are 'the fruit of hermeneutical labor,' presupposing what it literally says, namely the text itself (Green 2000:176).

Recent advancement of hermeneutical discussion, as James Packer (1992:336), a prominent evangelical theologian, rightly observes, comes to a very considerable extent from the desire to recover 'awareness of the text as God here and now addressing us…and teaching us from it, challenging us.' This increasing concern for hermeneutics comes from the desire to retrieve the *living* character of the Word of God. Particularly, the postmodern context, in which the old interpretive framework seems to be breached and thereby Christians could be confused with how to apply what they read to their own lives, puts forwards the urgent need for the complementation of hermeneutics to the discussion of scriptural authority. For the church and Christians to benefit from the discussion of scriptural authority, issues of the doctrine of Scripture must be intertwined with interpretative practice and hermeneutical reflections. No discussion on the nature and authority of Scripture is set up satisfactorily without dealing with the matter of how we read and live Scripture in the context of life. Therefore, the issue of *how to construe the authority of Scripture* must reach out to the issue of *how to live Scripture* by performing and conforming our lives to it.

5.2.2.3 The Hermeneutical Significance of the Reader/Reading Community

As we have already seen in Chapter 4 and also partly in Chapter 3, speaking of the authority of Scripture in close relation to interpretation does not suggest that Scripture derives its authority from our interpretation of it. On the contrary, Scripture is already authoritative before it is believed or interpreted.

In spite of the priority of scriptural authority over anything human — be it faith or interpretation —, however, the hermeneutical reality[116] still poses "a hermeneutical dilemma of appropriating biblical authority." As the Fuller New Testament scholar David Scholer (1990:63-64) correctly points out, the locus of meaning as experienced is *in practice* found in an individual interpreter or a particular community by the complex interplay between the eternal, transcendent God's revelatory *text* and socially, individually, ecclesiastically, and theologically conditioned *interpreter*. In like manner,

---

[116] Lategan (1984:14) calls it 'the reality of application-oriented interpretation.' That is, the aim of the Christian reading of the Bible is not 'for intellectual stimulation or aesthetic enjoyment,' but 'to achieve...theological clarity and to prepare the ground for decision making' (:13).

Jeanrond (1988:104), by reflecting on the general relationship between text and reader, claims that 'a text has an identity which, from the point of view of its design, is never purely, univocally and objectively comprehensible but is rather in constant need of an individual reading act in order to be able to present itself.' The activity of reading is thus 'a dynamic process which remains in principle open-ended' and 'a projection of a new image of reality, as this is co-initiated by the text and achieved by the reader in the relationship with the text in the act of reading' (Jeanrond 1988:104).

Obviously, this understanding somehow reflects a paradigm shift in Western culture, often labelled "postmodern." A peculiar feature of contemporary postmodern society is a new emphasis on the knower. The modern epistemology assumed the possibility of objective, universally valid knowledge through the scientific methods and thereby rendered the role of the knower/reader peripheral. Over and against this modern thought, various contemporary disciplines have increasingly come to underline the significance of the knower/reader. From this point of view, the activity of reading must not be perceived merely as unveiling the meaning objectively inherent in a text, but as interacting with the text. Furthermore, readers are considered as actively and intimately involved in the creation of both a new meaning and their own world in the process of reading (Jodock 1990:371-372).

However, from the viewpoint of theological hermeneutics, such an understanding has much more to do with *the discovery of the significance of the reader/reception,* which, as one of the most important and influential developments in the field of hermeneutics, has had a profound influence upon various forms of contextual hermeneutics and contextual theologies (Lategan 1997:117-118). The Stellenbosch theologian Bernard Lategan (1997:119), who is a leading scholar and specialist on theological hermeneutics, argues that this emerging hermeneutical trend indicates a shift of concern or focus in the history of hermeneutics, namely from *origin* (author or source) to *structure* (text or message) to *reception* (reader or receptor).[117] By Lategan (1984:13), this movement leads to some positive, yet not without challenge, consequences for theological

---

[117] For a helpful, historical review of this shift in theological hermeneutics, see Lategan (1984).

hermeneutics. That is, it makes it possible that 'the *completion* of the act of understanding has become a recognized (if not the dominant) part of theoretical reflection of the communication process.' Furthermore, it brings into the fore 'theological *loci* like the conventions of the believing community and the role of the Spirit' (Lategan 1984:13). Most of all, it mounts a significant challenge for theological hermeneutics, that is, how to deal with the creative and dynamic dimension of interpretation and understanding (Lategan 1984:14).

This has crucial, and challenging, implications for our reflection on scriptural authority. Authority must be acknowledged *in order to* be authoritative; the text's authority cannot be appropriated without *by* the interpretation and *through* interpreters. Scripture is meant to be interpreted, believed, and lived. Thus, our attempt to reintegrate hermeneutical practice into talk of scriptural authority must involve the recognition that the authority of Scripture can be fully honoured in our correct interpretation and embodiment of what God means through Scripture. Authentic appeal to the authority of Scripture must be an appeal to Scripture *rightly interpreted*. This understanding gives rise to the need to give due attention to the proper role of reader/reading in the process of interpretation.

However, the recent emphasis on and attention to the role of the reader must not go so far as to endow the reader with the status of a creator of meaning. It must not boil down to the claim that authority is ultimately grounded only in interpreter's subjective response to Scripture. Thus, only with proper qualification can we draw out constructive implications for our theological account of the Christian reading/reader. A more adequate account of reading is offered by John Webster. According to Webster (1998:335), at least for Christians, reading is 'being addressed, being known, being scrutinised, not just adding to the store of our knowledge.' Reading is 'a practice, a way in which we have dealings with the world by undertaking certain acts and being acted upon.' The reader participates, as an actor, in the historical process of God's drama of salvation. Reading Scripture is a dynamic activity of participating in this history. Therefore, the activity of reading is 'moral and spiritual and not merely cognitive or representational' (:336). In other words, an act of reading goes through what happens in

the history of salvation, that is, 'the dynamic of idolatry, repentance and resolute turning from sin which takes place when God's Word addresses humanity' (:336). T F Torrance (1995:8) offers a lucid statement of the point as follows:

> [T]he Word of God…comes to us in the limitation and imperfection, the ambiguities and contradictions of our fallen ways of thought and speech, seeking us in the questionable forms of our humanity where we have to let ourselves be questioned down to the roots of our being in order to hear it as God's Word. It is not a Word that we can hear by our clear-sightedness or master by our reason, but one that we can hear only through judgment of the very humanity in which it is clothed and to which it is addressed and therefore only through crucifixion and repentance.

Viewed from this perspective, paying due emphasis to the reader/reading has little to do with the affirmation of the authority of the reader.[118] Quite the opposite, a proper theological account of the reader/reading suggests that it is not the Bible, but the reader that, as the first object of criticism, is subject to critical scrutiny. Drawing on C S Lewis's work, the Anglican theologian Stephen Wright reiterates the point in poignant terms. According to Wright (2000:244), an emphasis on the reader is 'not a question of asserting the individual's prerogative to decide on the meaning of the text. To the contrary, it is a question of the individual's yearning to open herself as fully as possible to the text and the realities which it reveals.' The core value of an emphasis on the hermeneutical significance of the reader is that *critical* attention is shifted from the text to ourselves as readers. On that condition, a new emphasis on the reader would have a positive implication for our discussion of scriptural authority.

---

[118] For an example of the advocacy of readerly authority, see David Clines ([1997] 2005). Clines argues that the Bible must be seen as 'a cultural artifact' and thus not beyond criticism. The ultimate arbiter, for Clines, is not the Bible but the readers who resist the social or institutional force's imposition of their interpretation upon the readers. In this view, the primary object of criticism is the Bible and the subject of that criticism is the readers. I definitely distance my position from that of Clines.

5.2.3 The Critical Appreciation and Appropriation of Philosophical Hermeneutics in Talk of Scriptural Authority

How and to what extent does theological hermeneutics accommodate general hermeneutics to its interpretation of Scripture?[119] "General hermeneutics" refers to critical reflection on the practice of interpreting texts in general — in a broader sense, all human understanding. "Special hermeneutics" is critical reflection on the practice of interpreting particular texts for a particular purpose — for example, interpreting the Bible as Scripture. Given this distinction, what then do we designate with the term *theological hermeneutics*? Theological hermeneutics is not merely the application of a general hermeneutics to a specific kind of text — the biblical text. Rather, theological hermeneutics is, according to Charles Wood (1981:21), 'a reflection upon the aims and conditions of what may be called the "Christian understanding" of Christian scripture and tradition.' Since Christian understanding is 'an understanding whose criteria are informed by the particular aims and interests that motivate it,' argues Wood (:21), theological hermeneutics should not be dominated by general hermeneutics.

In spite of the fact that theological hermeneutics cannot be separated from the distinct aims, concerns, interests, and practices that Christians bring to the interpretation of Scripture, it is not necessary for theological hermeneutics to be isolated from other approaches to the texts. As Lategan (1992:150) lucidly points out, the difference between general (secular) and particular (biblical) hermeneutics lies not so much in different methods and technologies but rather in the particular nature of the biblical

---

[119] This is related with the question of so-called "general" versus "special" — or "philosophical" versus "theological" — hermeneutics, which remains problematic amongst theologians. For some helpful typologies of different positions responding to this question, see Jeanrond (1991:163-165) and Vanhoozer (1991). Jeanrond divides Christian thinkers into three approaches: (1) *A radical approach* which favours an open-ended dialogue between general and theological hermeneutics (Tracy, Küng, and Berger); (2) *A limited approach* which adopts general hermeneutics only on the level of micro-hermeneutics, to confirm a particular reading of Scripture (Stuhlmacher, Lindbeck); (3) *A dogmatic approach* which rejects applying the insights of philosophical hermeneutics for its own interpretative work in order to secure the integrity of the sacred texts (Barth). On the other hand, Vanhoozer provides a fivefold typology of the relationship between theology and philosophy in terms of Christ-concept relation: (1) Christ subsumed under concept (Kant, Hegel, Buri); (2) Christ grounded on concept (Justin Martyr, Tillich, Tracy); (3) Christ in dialogue with concept (Aquinas, Schleiermacher, Bultmann); (4) Christ the Lord of concept (Barth, Frei, Lindbeck); and (5) Christ the contradiction of concept (Luther, Wittgenstein). After evaluating all these approaches, Vanhoozer suggests his own view, namely *Chalcedonian view of the theology-philosophy relationship*, which affirms the mutual accountability of theology and philosophy.

texts and the interpretative community in which they are interpreted. Therefore, theological hermeneutics may be enhanced by general hermeneutics and furthermore general and theological hermeneutics may be mutually enriching. In this regard, the evangelical theologian Daniel Treier offers a helpful definition of "theological hermeneutics." According to Treier (2008:136), this term suggests two kinds of quest for Christians to pursue. On the one hand, the task of theological hermeneutics is 'to develop an account of text interpretation or even human understanding in interaction with Christian doctrine(s).' In this sense, "theological" denotes the mode of applying *general* hermeneutics in that all texts and general hermeneutical reflections have implicit theological dimension. On the other hand, the task of theological hermeneutics is 'to develop an account of how biblical interpretation should shape, and be shaped by, Christian theology.' In this sense, "theological" denotes the specific character of not only the material content, but also the Christian interpretation and understanding, which are involved in *special* hermeneutics.

For Christians, Scripture is not like any other book primarily because it is the Word of God. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that the Word of God in Scripture is mediated in ways of humanity — human history, culture, and production. On this level, Scripture is to be read in the same way of a human-produced book. Given this, one can give at least two valid grounds for the appropriation of general hermeneutics in our reading of Scripture (Billings 2010:33-36). First, owing to the affirmation that *all the truth is God's truth,* we can appropriate insights from a wide range of human disciplines as we read Scripture. Second, reading the Bible requires the same processes as reading any other book that belong to the realm of general hermeneutics: syntax, morphology, genres, history, sociology, and so on.

In spite of the usefulness of general hermeneutics, however, we must maintain the primacy of theological hermeneutics as the overall framework for interpreting Scripture. It is mainly because we should take as the starting and ending point of biblical interpretation "a trinitarian hermeneutic of God's communicative-performative activity through Scripture in the economy of salvation." All truth that we encounter in general hermeneutical reflection needs to be discerned in the light of the triune God's drama of

salvation. The point I have pressed in a number of phases in this dissertation is that the goal of reading Scripture is to live in and participate in the triune God's drama of salvation. This process is not possible at all by what general hermeneutics produces, but only by the activity and power of God the Spirit. Considering all these, it is legitimate to say that theological hermeneutics is, first of all, a special hermeneutics. Only on that ground can the principles and insights of general hermeneutics be appropriated and recontextualised into a theological context for the sake of the Christian reading of Scripture. In other words, the general hermeneutics should be adapted and reshaped in a way fitting for the purpose, concerns, and aims of the Christian reading of Scripture.[120]

Put differently, the appropriation of general hermeneutics must root its fundamental assumption not in critical human reflection, but in the divine use and purpose. An authentic understanding of what God is saying to us in and through Scripture comes only through the illuminating work of the Spirit. Principles, rules, and insights from general hermeneutics should be considered as tools *taken up, sanctified, and used by the Spirit* for the sake of God's people. As I argued in the previous chapter, Scripture is the divine discourse/performance, and thus the Christian understanding and interpreting Scripture is governed not by the critical human activity, but by the triune God's communicative activity.

To be sure, contemporary philosophical hermeneutics may provide some valuable implications not only for transforming the ways in which we read Scripture but also for restoring and reclaiming the relevance and authority of Scripture for today. The enormous potentials of hermeneutics can be realised in the Christian practice of reading Scripture when they are used as the tool of the Spirit of understanding. In what follows, I will explore the potentials of hermeneutical insights, which would contribute to our attempt for reclaiming the authority of Scripture, particularly by focusing on three key hermeneutical issues.

---

[120] In contrast with this position, Schleiermacher asserted that hermeneutics should not be an instrumental discipline used to approve of theological or Christian doctrinal conclusions of which some have already arrived. Rather, Schleiermacher made theological hermeneutics subordinate fully to the validity of the principles of general hermeneutics. For more on Schleiermacher's view of the relationship of theological-general hermeneutics, see Jeanrond (1991:44-50).

5.3 KEY HERMENEUTICAL ISSUE ONE: A HERMENEUTICAL ART OF REMOVING INTERPRETIVE IDOLS

5.3.1 A Hermeneutical Task of Exposing Idols of the Self and Culture

The Christian hermeneutical task to listen to the Word of God speaking through Scripture is rendered significantly complicated by at least two hermeneutical hindrances: *the reality of sin* in our lives and *the culture* that shapes concrete ways and forms of our lives.

Firstly, our capacity of interpreting and understanding Scripture is inevitably limited by creaturely finitude and undermined by our bondage to the reality of sin. We as sinners wilfully and viciously reject God and incessantly distort, resist, and subvert the Word of God. Calvin speaks of our sinful nature to project our own image onto God as such (*Inst* 1.4.1): 'They do not…apprehend God as he offers himself, but imagine him as they have fashion him in their own presumption….[W]hatever they afterward attempt by way of worship or service of God, they cannot bring as tribute to him, for they are worshiping not God but a figment and a dream of their own heart.' We are expert at projecting our own values and interests onto the text we are reading. Instead of submitting ourselves to Scripture's judgement, we are susceptible to our sinful nature to appropriate Scripture for our own desires. By using Scripture to confirm our presuppositions, we actually resist the Word of God speaking to us and deny Scripture as the living Word of God.

An important task of hermeneutics emerges from the recognition of the reality of hermeneutical sin, that is, *to expose self-interest, self-deception, self-affirmation, self-centredness in manipulative interpretation* (Thiselton 2006:634-635). Hermeneutics makes us aware of our sinful tendency to use Scripture as 'a manipulative device to confirm the wishes of the reader, as if "God" were a mere projection of the reader's will' (:635). It can be said that the modern context has been involved in nurturing and intensifying this hermeneutical sinful nature by assuming an absolute autonomy and freedom of readers over against a text. Against this, an essential task of contemporary

hermeneutics is often described as to provide 'an essential corrective to our modern tendency to look upon our world and our texts from a great height, objectifying them and making them merely subject to our control' (Gunton 1990:248-249). This challenge of hermeneutics leads, as a corrective art of reading to self-projective reading, to what Ellen Davis (2003:16) calls 'reading with openness to repentance,' which exposes and resists the sinful tendency to read the Bible *for ourselves* and underlines the immediate need for reading Scripture *over-against ourselves*, allowing it to question our presuppositions and lives.[121]

Secondly, our capacity of interpreting and understanding Scripture is impeded by our sinful tendency to conform Scripture with the cultural idols that seek to domesticate and distort the message of Scripture by its own cultural interests and priorities (Billings 2010:108). The interpretative individuals and communities are not isolated from culture — the environment that shapes the way of life. Our ability to interpret Scripture is inescapably affected by culture in which we receive Scripture. On this account, contemporary hermeneutics emphasises the need to extend the concept of "text" to not only interpreter but also culture and the world where he/she lives. We need to approach culture as text-like and then read our own culture critically. In other words, we as Christians are in compelling need both of discerning "how our reading Scripture is impacted on by our own culture" and of answering "how we are to embody our reading in our everyday life."

Considering this, we can conclude that a critical task of hermeneutics is *to expose cultural idols* and *to discern the mode of the Spirit's presence and work from the spirit of the age* (Vanhoozer 2007:17; Billings 2010:136-141). For Christians, cultural hermeneutics is a part of the hermeneutic imperative. As Garrett Green (2000:175) insightfully puts it, while the world simply exists from the viewpoint of secular modernity, however, the world waits and demands to be interpreted from the Christian

---

[121] The phrase "reading Scripture over-against ourselves" is Stephen Fowl and Gregory Jones's, from their *Reading in Communion*. In this work, Fowl and Jones emphasise the importance of reading Scripture over-against ourselves for the life of Christian communities, and then take two different examples: one of doing such reading in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the other of failing to do such reading in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

view — 'it cries out for interpretation,' to cite Green's expression. Reading culture and the world is a part of the process of discerning the transforming work of the Spirit from cultural idolatry. It is also a part of the process of discerning the grand biblical story, in which we are called to participate, from other stories.

5.3.2 Reading and Being Read

With the notion of *conversation*, Gadamer illustrates the interpretation as the dynamic and interpersonal process. Gadamer asserts that the possibility of understanding is dependent on the possibility of conversation. Understanding is possible at all only by the engagement of our 'legitimate prejudices' in conversation. Gadamer (2002:398) writes: 'To try to escape from one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to bring one's own preconceptions into play so that the text's meaning can really be made to speak for us.' The relation of the interpreter to the text, by Gadamer, must be seen as a *dialogue* of subject-to-subject relationship, not as a monologue of subject-to-object one. Understanding is rendered possible always from what Gadamer terms 'the fusion of horizons' (:304-305,367).[122] In other words, we can understand the horizon of the other only through our own. In a genuine conversation, we first approach the text with our own interests, concerns, and perspectives, but then the text questions and transforms our understanding. 'To reach an understanding in a dialogue,' says Gadamer (:371), 'is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were.'

From the perspective of Gadamer's notion of conversation, the text must not be treated as an object to be mastered or dominated. Rather, in a truly interactive conversation, we must be open towards the text's claim on us. Genuine conversation of interpretation demands us vulnerability and trust, even thorough risk, because, by putting our own

---

[122] Gadamer (2002:301) uses the metaphor of *horizon* to designate 'the range of vision that includes everything can be seen from a particular vantage point,' such as the worldview or cultural assumptions of a particular standpoint.

horizon at risk, certain part of our preconceptions will be called into question, challenged and transformed, as we allow ourselves to be addressed by the text.

However, as Gunton (1990:250) correctly points out, the notion of conversation does not mean the dialectic relationship between Scripture and reader, assuming the equivalent relation between two conversational partners. In reference to Scripture, we first affirm the priority of God speaking in the conversation and then claim our position of hearing. The conversation is, first of all, *the divine discourse*, because the triune God initiated it at the creation, continues it through the history of salvation, and calls the particular human being to respond to it (Gunton 1990:259). Seen from this, the Christian reading of Scripture is not so much reading, using, possessing as *being read, being used, being possessed* by the living Word of God. To claim the Christian reading as being read by Scripture highlights an essential aspect of scriptural authority, as is lucidly stated by Thiselton (2006:627):

> [I]t is of the essence of biblical authority that Scripture challenges, transforms, corrects and reshapes the prior horizons or network of assumptions that humankind brings to the text on the basis of natural reason, individual consciousness and prior experience. The Holy Spirit communicates a life-changing word from "Beyond." The word of Scripture is *creative*; it is no merely passive "mirror" of prior or private prejudices.

5.3.3 The Theological Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Trust

5.3.3.1 A Theological Hermeneutic of Suspicion

In *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, Thiselton (1992:143) portrays in a simple way pre-modern hermeneutics as based on *trust*, modern hermeneutics as steered by *doubt*, and postmodern hermeneutics as dominated by *suspicion*, respectively. Particularly, according to Thiselton, the postmodern world emerging in the wake of the so-called "three great masters of suspicion" — Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx — has attempted to suspect corporately shared beliefs, to unmask manipulative interests, and to debunk myths lurking within convention. In this way, the postmodern

world replaces "a hermeneutic of trust" with "a hermeneutic of suspicion," which is characterised as 'the deliberate attempt to expose the self-deceptions involved in hiding our actual operative motives from ourselves, individually or collectively, in order not to notice how and how much our behaviour and our beliefs are shaped by values we profess to disown,' to cite Westphal's description (1993:13).

The crucial breakthrough on the need for "a hermeneutic of suspicion" in reading the Bible came by Raul Ricoeur, a major figure in the late twentieth-century hermeneutical theory and also a Christian in the Reformed tradition. In his *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,*[123] Ricoeur (1970:33) analyses the work of the three masters of suspicion, who 'clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new reign of Truth, not only by means of a "destructive" critique, but by the invention of an art of *interpreting*.' The heart of Ricoeur's theory of hermeneutics can be found in the following statement (:27): 'Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.' By Ricoeur, the first fundamental task of hermeneutics is *doing away with the idols*, which means being critically aware of the self-projection of our own interests, desires, and selfhood onto what the text claims on us, and hence *a hermeneutic of suspicion*. The second necessary task of hermeneutics is *listening to the symbols*, 'to allow creative events to occur "in front of" the text, and to have their effect on us' (Thiselton 1992:26) and hence *a hermeneutic of retrieval*. In interpreting the text including the Bible, a hermeneutic of suspicion is a necessary process of destroying idols, which represent unwitting projections of our own image onto the text and God.

How can we employ a hermeneutic of suspicion in a Christian manner, without adopting the principle of suspicion as a worldview? The necessity for Christians to make adequate use of suspicion and self-criticism arises from the fact that 'churches and theological traditions...are not exempt from disguised forms of power-interests' and that they can be always tempted to use traditions of biblical interpretation 'to impose their interests on other in the name of the Word of God' (Thiselton 1994:139). Furthermore,

---

[123] For a helpful overview of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory, see Thiselton (1992:344-378). In this session, I depend heavily on Thiselton's reading of Ricoeur.

insights of a hermeneutic of suspicion are, to a very considerable extent, in resonance with 'biblical and theological assertions about the deceitful, opaqueness, and duplicity of the human heart' (Thiselton 1992:14).[124] In a real sense, Scripture is the book full of the most profound anti-idolatry impulse. A multitude of crucial points in the biblical story deal, implicitly or explicitly, with the trenchant critique of self-serving, self-gratifying idolatry. To cite but one example, the second commandment of the Decalogue issues a stern warning against idolatry, by prohibiting any attempt to blur the absolute distinction between the Creator God as the speaking Author and human being as a hearing and interpreting creature.

To the extent which it points to our deep sinfulness of idolatry, suspicion can be conceived as 'a kind of spirituality' (Westphal 1993:288). Vanhoozer (1998:463-465) reinterprets a hermeneutic of suspicion in a Christian way, namely what he calls "*a hermeneutic of humility*." By Vanhoozer, humility is a 'prime interpretive virtue' in our hermeneutical situation of persistent temptation to make idols of self-projection. More precisely, humility, which is antithetical to pride, makes interpreters recognise that they are not makers/speakers, but receivers/hearers, of meaning. By making explicit the aims and objectives of hermeneutics, humility stands interpreters on the basis of 'hermeneutical realism,' which drives out hermeneutical fantasy (Vanhoozer 1998:464). Furthermore, humility functions as a constant reminder of not only epistemological acknowledgement of our fallibility but also ethical sense of hermeneutical responsibility. In a positive way, humility allows readers 'to wait upon the text, to participate in the covenant of discourse, and…to empty oneself' for the sake of real encounter between reader and realities which the text opens up (:464). From this, Vanhoozer concludes that a hermeneutic of humility is a distinctively Christian contribution to hermeneutics.

In a similar vein, Garrett Green (2000:192) asserts that the legitimate grounds for Christian suspicion must be rooted not in the source of modern atheism, but in the biblical-theological grounds, that is, in the cross of Christ. Christians must look for the

---

[124] According to David Lyon (1997:100), the origin of the hermeneutics of suspicion can be traced particularly to the Reformation tradition, in a sense of attempting to perform an interpretive practice, which affirms 'the power of the biblical texts to provide a critique of the self and of society' in the process of critique against the Roman Catholic interpretive practices.

valid criterion of Christian suspicion in *the hermeneutics of the cross*. For Christians, the hermeneutics of the cross is 'the hermeneutical expression of God's judgement' (:22) and this makes a Christian hermeneutics of the cross much more radical than the secular hermeneutics of suspicion. In a theological sense, a hermeneutic of suspicion, by Green (:192-193), is necessary for Christians in order not to be deceived by the Father of Lies. Therefore, a hermeneutics of suspicion is nothing less than the wisdom of discerning the spirits and of distinguishing between a lying spirit and the Holy Spirit.

5.3.3.2 A Theological Hermeneutic of Trust

However much benefit suspicion may have, the absolutely extreme stance of suspicion is impossible and self-contradictory because it eventually undermines its own ground (Green 2000:199). For this reason, even the most radical suspicion should be in direct or indirect relation to a trust that grounds and supports it. In this sense, the real issue addressed by the hermeneutics of suspicion is about "what the ground of its trust should be."

The point is explicitly made by Ricoeur. At the heart of Ricoeur's hermeneutics is *the interaction of a hermeneutic of suspicion with a hermeneutic of retrieval*. As Thiselton (1992:344) rightly observes, Ricoeur seeks to bring together the two major dimensions of hermeneutics: "explanation," which entails the willingness to suspect and to destroy the idols of self-projection, and "understanding," which requires a willingness to listen with openness to symbols and to symbolic narrative discourse. In other words, Ricoeur affirms the need for both *critical* tool, which serves to do away with the idols, and *constructive* tool, which serves to restore the power of language for creative purpose.[125] A hermeneutic of suspicion must be supplemented by a hermeneutic of retrieval with integrity, as is well expressed in Ricoeur's saying (1970:531): '*Thus the idols must die — so that symbols may live*' [italics mine].

---

[125] For this reason, Lategan (1992:120) refers to the significant role of Ricoeur as "mediating two different, even seemingly mutually exclusive, approaches of hermeneutics": on the one hand, *hermeneutical philosophy*, 'more directed toward understanding the past and its significance for the present': on the one hand, *critical hermeneutics*, 'more directed toward the future and changing the present.'

One-sided emphasis on a hermeneutic of suspicion fails to do justice to what Christianity contributes to hermeneutics. From a Christian point of view, Merold Westphal (1993:284-289), professor of philosophy at Fordham University, points out three dangers posed by one-sided speaking of a hermeneutic of suspicion: *Pharisaism, cynicism*, and *forgetfulness.* The first danger of suspicion is that we could become merely adept at suspecting the presence of idols in *others*, not in *ourselves*. The process of unmasking Pharisaic hypocrisy could ironically make us a Pharisee. The second slippery slope of suspicion is towards "cynicism," which is confident in a complacent way that 'there is nothing but self-interest, self-righteousness, and self-deception.' Cynicism mocks at any affirmation of the good. The most critical danger of suspicion is "forgetting the grace of God" in the remembrance of sinfulness. This spiritual oblivion, while reminding us of human sinfulness, fails to make us remember the broader, deeper theological context of God's grace and love manifested in the economy of salvation.

Therefore, a Christian hermeneutic of suspicion/humility must be balanced by a hermeneutic of trust/conviction. The use of a hermeneutic of suspicion in a Christian fashion is not the same as 'the transformation of the principle of suspicion into a world-view' (Thiselton 1992:126), which submits the biblical paradigm itself to suspicion. On the contrary, a Christian hermeneutic of suspicion must be firmly based on the fundamental trust in God on which Christian life and beliefs stand. A hermeneutic of trust functions as the antidote to interpretive skepticism and spiritual cynicism, which might be spawned by placing too much emphasis on suspicion. That which commits Christians to a hermeneutic of suspicion should be a commitment of faith on the trustfulness of God.

The Duke New Testament theologian Richard Hays, in his essay *A Hermeneutic of Trust*, offers a compelling account concerning the primacy of a hermeneutic of trust in its integrated relation with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Hays (2002:267) observes that 'many practitioners of the hermeneutics of suspicion…are remarkably credulous about the claims of experience. As a result, they endlessly critique the biblical texts but rarely get around to hearing Scripture's critique of us or hearing its message of grace.' While affirming the necessity of a proper use of a hermeneutic of suspicion, however, Hays

241

insists that a hermeneutic of trust is both necessary and primary and that a Christian hermeneutics must take as its starting point a hermeneutics of trust. By attending to Paul's hermeneutics, Hays renders an account of a hermeneutic of trust in terms of *a hermeneutic of resurrection*. According to Hays (:269-270), for Paul trust in God is intimately related to the formation of the covenantal relation between God and human beings. Our trustful relationship with God is restored by God's initiative redemptive activity through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, who is 'the embodiment of trust in God.' Therefore, a crucial task of a hermeneutic of resurrection is to equip Christians with 'a readiness to receive trustingly what a loving God desires to give us through the testimony of those who have preceded us in the faith' (:271). A Christian hermeneutic of resurrection enables us to understand Scripture as a story about the life-giving power of the God. The biblical story read in the light of resurrection is most of all 'a story about God — a God who has revealed himself definitively through a mighty act beyond all human capacity, raising Jesus from the dead and transforming the cosmos' (Hays 2003:232).

The dialectic of a hermeneutic of suspicion and trust, of humility and conviction may play a critical role in the hermeneutical journey to open up ourselves to the transforming, life-giving Word of God. It helps us to avoid both hermeneutic dogmatism and skepticism, and serves as a useful reminder that a Christian hermeneutical task is about a matter of faithful struggle against the voice of self-projective idols in order to hear the living Word of God through Scripture.

5.3.4 Provisionality and Authority

The hermeneutic circle is an axiomatic principle in hermeneutics theory.[126] The term "hermeneutical circle" refers to the process or movement of hermeneutic inquiry in two ways (Packer 1992:348-349; Astley 2004:107; Thiselton 2009:14). Firstly, it denotes

---

[126] "The hermeneutical circle" has become a technological terminology of hermeneutics from the nineteenth century, following Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) and Schleiermacher (1768-1834). The term has been adopted and developed by Dilthey, Heidegger, Bultmann, Fuchs, and Gadamer. Especially, by Heidegger, the concept of the hermeneutical circle has been developed into a broader concept including ontological dimension.

the process that the interpreter must relate the parts to the whole of a text or work because the whole needs to be understood in terms of its individual parts and vice versa. Secondly, it also indicates a constructive process of moving from the interpreter's earlier pre-understanding to fuller understanding, and then coming back to scrutinize critically the need for correction in his/her pre-understanding. Through the reciprocity between our interpretation of the text *and* the text's interpreting us — or "the fusion of horizons" in Gadamer's version of the hermeneutical circle —, the interpreter's own presupposition, framework, or viewpoint, which enables him/her to interpret the text, can be challenged and reshaped by the text itself.

The point drawn out from the notion of the hermeneutical circle is that interpretation is not a "once-for-all event," which produces 'tight, brittle, fully formed systems of thought that are "closed" against modification or further development'; rather, it is a "process," which is 'always moving and expanding, and always subject to fresh appraisal' (Thiselton 2009:15). [127] Thus, the hermeneutic circle leads us to the recognition of *the provisionality, contingencies, ambiguities, and particularities of our understanding in hermeneutical inquiry*.

The corrigibility and provisionality of interpretation could be seen as compromising the coherence of Christian doctrine, which is found upon God's definitive revelation. The provisionality appears at first glance to be incompatible with Christian truth-claims. Such would be the case, however, only when provisionality is confused with and misunderstood as radical relativism. Postmodern radical relativism claims that there is no such thing as reality or truth, but only perspectives and interpretations. According to this view, there is no possibility of communication or conflict between the respective horizons, which is often called *incommensurability*.[128] As a result, there comes to be no

---

[127] In this light, the term "circle" is to some extent misleading because it cannot do the full justice to the opportunities for expansion and development in a hermeneutical movement. The crucial implication of the hermeneutical circle is perhaps better carried by "the hermeneutical spiral," as Grant Osborne used the term as the title of his book. According to Osborne (2006:22), the term *spiral* is a better metaphor because interpretation is not rounding a closed circle, in which we never discover the true meaning, but spiralling closer and closer to the text's intended meaning through the process allowing the text to continue to correct and revise alternative interpretations.

[128] The term *incommensurable* or *incommensurability* comes from contemporary philosophy of science, particularly Thomas Kuhn's work. It implies "not translatable one perspective, worldview, or language

room for talk of Scripture's authority. However, this is not true of the concept of provisionality.

To recognise the provisionality of our present interpretation and judgement is to accept the finitude, contingency, historicity, and fallibility of any stance in the tradition including ours. Provisionality thus calls for the constant correction and revision of our prior understanding on the continuing journey to fuller understanding. Seen from this, it is not necessary and not justifiable to understand the provisionality and particularity of hermeneutical inquiry as in contradictory relation with the coherence and commitment of Christian truth-claims. In actuality, this point has something in common with the Reformation doctrine of the fallibility of the Church. For the Reformers, whilst infallibility was to be ascribed to Scripture, 'the church's own understanding and use of Scripture...participated in the fallibility of all ecclesial and individual judgment' (Thiselton 1994:134). As is manifest in the notion of *ecclesial reformata et semper reformanda*, for the Reformers, any interpretive tradition is fallible and provisional in the light of the truth of Scripture as a whole, and thus is in need of ongoing reformation. Provisionality is not contradictory, but necessary, for the coherence of the truth of Scripture.

Nevertheless, a tension between provisionality and authority seems to be an inescapable and necessary component of any systematic theology because there must be the tentative nature of all theological constructions in relation to the final authority that they rest on in their belief structure. Given this tension, how then can we assert the certainty of Christian truth-claims without compromising the provisionality and historical relativity of all thought? To answer this question, Thiselton (1994:137) offers a formulation of hermeneutical principle concerning the relation between scriptural authority and interpretation in terms of sanctification:

> Just as sanctification entails a process of transformation into the image of
> Christ, although through justification I already am 'in Christ', clothed in his

---

game to another." For an example of commensurability and incommensurability between religion and science, see Nancy Murphy (1997:105-107).

righteousness, even so interpretation and understanding of Scripture entails a process of grasping more fully the implications, entailments, nuances, and perhaps further commitments and promises that develop what has been appropriated in faith.

The provisionality of our interpretive judgements can be more fully articulated in light of eschatology and trinitarian theology. On the one hand, the provisionality/particularity points to the finality/universality. The aim of theology is 'a particular universality' — to cite the phrase of Gunton (1990:258) — with its provisional coherence. Put otherwise, the finitude, particularities, and provisionality of our judgements look forwards to 'the final verdict of God,' which will stand as a definitive judgement and the last Word. The provisionality of the interpretative community is "spiralling upward" towards the finality of the Kingdom of God. As the American Reformed theologian Cynthia Rigby (2007:343) correctly puts it, a Christian interpretive judgement holds 'the eschatological reservation,' and thus is '*real*…not yet *full*' within the context of the whole story. On the other hand, the provisionality of our interpretation is the mark of our creatureliness and finitude and, at the same time, it points to *our essential relatedness to God*. As Green (2000:183-184) insightfully remarks, the provisionality and ambiguity — *elusiveness,* in his terms — of our interpretation comes mainly from the *divine mystery*, which would never become comprehensible, exhausted, or under our control. On this account, Green argues that scriptural interpretation is thus a thorough engagement of the whole person in an unfathomable, unpredictable relationship with the triune God, which thrives on the elusiveness of persons.

From these considerations, we may conclude that the appeal to the hermeneutical circle and the provisionality of our interpretive judgement underlines an eschatological aspect of scriptural authority. The eschatological authority of Scripture derives from the final definitive verdicts of God, which are brought forwards from the *eschaton* when all promises will be fulfilled and all the truth will be revealed unambiguously. This point highlights, in addition, the hermeneutical significance of the Holy Spirit, who, as the power of the futurity, transforms the corrigible provisionality of our interpretation into that which coincides with the last Word of God.

5.4 KEY HERMENEUTICAL ISSUE TWO: A HERMENEUTICAL ART OF FACILITATING ONGOING LIFE-ENGAGEMENT WITH SCRIPTURE[129]

5.4.1 Life-Related Hermeneutics

In his recent work *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, Anthony Thiselton argues that the historical, intellectual, and moral resources of hermeneutics can contribute to retrieving doctrine from its marginalized function and abstraction from life, and thereby to re-establishing and reinforcing the formative-transformative nature of Christian doctrine in the life of the church.

As Thiselton (2007:xvi-xvii) puts it, hermeneutics is above all the art of understanding and embodying the text. Hermeneutics thus underlines that engagement with the *text* must be accompanied by engagement with the *life*. Such is indeed the case with Christian doctrine. Doctrine is not merely a theoretical system of truths isolated from life. To the contrary, Christian doctrine is supposed to make a formative impact upon our thoughts and daily lives. Vanhoozer (2005:15) reiterates the point when saying: 'Doctrine seeks not simply to state theoretical truths but to embody truth in ways of living.' Doctrine must be seen as practices of life or formation that generates habits and performances.

The notion of embodiment is, according to Thiselton (2007:77), deeply rooted in the Bible and Christian tradition such as 'the incarnation, sacramental theology, the importance of time and place, the contrast with Gnostic thought, New Testament research on "body" and the public domain, and many other ways.' More concretely, Thiselton looks into three convergent lines of thought from the biblical and Christian

---

[129] For the discussion of this section, I draw heavily on Thiselton's arguments and insights in *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, especially the Part I, in which he attempts to expound the distinctive perspectives and methods from the resources of contemporary hermeneutics. By so doing, Thiselton sets out the hermeneutical groundwork that paves the way for a hermeneutic of Christian doctrine.

tradition, which view the nature of Christian doctrine as *life-relatedness, self-involvement, and embodiment*.

First, confessions of faith in Israel and the early Christian creeds make explicit the life-related hermeneutics of doctrine. Considering the works of Oscar Cullman, Larry Hurtado, Vernon Neufeld as well as early Patristic writings, Thiselton (2007:8-18) suggests that confessions and creeds in the New Testament always keep in mind the aspect of formation or self-involvement, along with doctrinal truth-claims. For example, the confession "Jesus is Lord" operates at least two functions (:12): 'nailing one's colors to the mast as a self-involving act of Christian identity and commitment,' on the one hand and declaring 'a belief that a state of affairs is the case,' that is, truth-claim about the death and resurrection of Jesus by the power of God, on the other hand. Thiselton draws particular attention to the extent to which first-person belief-utterances relate to the self-involving and action-related character. First-person utterances of the form "I believe" are rightly seen as self-involving speech-acts. The expression "I believe" indicates not only 'the truth of an assertion,' but also *'the speaker's personal endorsement of it, as one who "takes a stand"'* [Thiselton's italics] (:28). Thiselton goes on to say: 'Doctrinal declarations often follow this pattern: "We believe in God..." indicates a personal or communal pledge on the part of a community; it is an illocutionary act of corporate testimony, as well as the recital of a narrative that the believer or believing community believes to be true' (:28).

Second, the life-relatedness of doctrine becomes more explicit by dispositional accounts of individual belief and of communal doctrine. Thiselton (2007:19-42) explores dispositional accounts of belief by drawing on the insight of the Welsh philosopher Henry Habberley Price (1899-1984). By Price's definition, the term "disposition" denotes 'the reservoir of knowledge, understanding, or conviction upon which the believer draws to perform appropriate belief-utterances or action' (:30). 'This dispositional reservoir,' continues Thiselton, 'becomes operative and *counts* when the believer risks *staking himself or herself* on it *by manifesting an appropriate stance and by performing appropriate utterances and habituated actions in the public domain'* [Thiselton's italics]. This philosophical analysis of dispositional approaches sheds light

247

on the way to understand the relation of Christian doctrine with the dispositional response to live and act in the public domain. That is, "believing" is best understood as a 'disposition to respond to situations both by expressing and by "standing behind" belief-utterances in situations that challenge belief, or that demand action appropriate to belief' (:21). From this viewpoint, Thiselton affirms that belief is '*action-orientated, situation-related*, and embedded in the *particularities and contingencies* of everyday living' [Thiselton's italics] (:21). To believe entails 'action, contingency, particularity, and the public world of embodied life,' which are essential constituents of a hermeneutic of doctrine (:21).

Third, the life-relatedness of Christian doctrine is underlined by the focus on the significance of *embodiment and place* in the biblical writings and Christian theology. Thiselton notes the point made by Ernst Käsemann that a trustful and obedient response to God in the public domain is mediated by the embodied self. According to Thiselton (2007:47), the embodiment of the self is for Käsemann 'the mode of existence given by God the Creator as a *gift* for the good of his people,' and thus 'the *living out* of faith, thought, and discipleship takes the form of a *visible, tangible, practical, bodily mode of existence; a disposition, habit, and action*' [Thiselton's italics]. The point of the bodily or public understanding of belief can be supplemented by underlining the significance of place. In his intriguing study on a Christian-biblical perspective on the concept of *place* — unlike a more abstract term "space" —, the Anglican Bishop and theologian John Inge (2003) points out the problem of 'loss of a sense of place' in Western society, of which the dehumanizing effects eventually lead to anonymity, rootlessness, abstraction from life. Inge suggests that we can recover the importance of place with the resources within the Bible and the Christian tradition, in which places are viewed in ways of sacraments and God-people relation. As Thiselton (2007:54) observes, Inge, with his notion of "place," contributes to affirming the significance of everyday life and action in Christian discipleship in relation to the specificity of Christian experience of God and the particularity of life. What is important here is to note that the importance of place is not contradictory to universality. The 'ongoing tension between place and placelessness (or universality)' must be dealt with in the light of the particularity of the

incarnation (Inge 2003:54). Showing much sympathy with Inge's notion, Thiselton (2007:55) lucidly explicates the point as such:

> The incarnate person of Christ witnesses to *embodiment.* Invisible grace is sacramentally mediated and lived out through the *visible, tangible, and everyday.* Thus the importance of "place" broadens into the axiom that grace comes into being in visible, embodied form, in accordance with the classic definition of a sacrament [Thiselton's italics].

From all these considerations, Thiselton suggests that the life-relatedness of Christian doctrine can be nurtured and restored in the interactive relation with hermeneutics, of which primary concerns entail contingency, particularity, life, intersubjectivity, and action.

5.4.2 A Hermeneutic of Temporality and Communality

A key constituent in the relation of Christian doctrine with hermeneutics is *a hermeneutical dialectic between "definitive truth" and "our awareness of it in temporality*." At the outset of *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, Thiselton (2007:3-8), by referring to Gadamer, addresses the issue of the historical or temporal nature of human understanding. Gadamer connects the art of understanding closely to the art of questioning when he writes (2002:367):

> …we can say that we understand only when we understand the question to which something is the answer, but the intention of what is understood in this way does not remain foregrounded against our own intention. Rather, reconstructing the question to which the meaning of a text is understood as an answer merges with our own questioning. For the text must be understood as an answer to a real question.

With this close relationship between questioning and understanding, Gadamer gives particular attention to the *historical-situatedness* of understanding. Understanding is

'always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning' because questioning opens up possibilities of meaning (Gadamer 2002:368). It is important to note that Gadamer makes a contrast between "problems" and "questions that arise."[130] Problems are not real questions that arise out of concrete forms of life; hermeneutical reflection thus must dispel the illusion that 'problems exist like stars in the sky' (:369). Problems must be transformed back to questions 'that arise and that derive their sense from their motivation' (:370). Drawing on Gadamer's distinction, Thiselton criticises the way of addressing problems as *fixed, ahistorical, timeless*, and *abstracted from real life*. The primary concern of hermeneutics, argues Thiselton (2007:4-5), lies in not "free-floating problems," which derive from the paradigm of timeless, ahistorical, Kantian rationalism, but "questions," which arise from particular concerns and motivations.

This point carries a significant implication for Christian doctrine. Thiselton takes a noticeable example from Justo González's hermeneutical account of the doctrine of creation. According to Justo González (2005:35), a Cuban-American historical theologian and leading voice in Hispanic theology, a doctrine of creation, in the Jewish-Christian tradition, initially developed out of Israel's experience and worship of Yahweh the Redeemer and Liberator. A doctrine of creation was not for answering the question about the origin or function of the world, but for worshiping a loving and saving God, who at the same time had made all things good. Thus González (2005:39) argues that the starting point of the Christian doctrine of creation was not 'as an explanation of the origin of the world, but as the foundation for life in the world and as an expression of the faith the church celebrated and shared in its acts of worship.' Gonzalez's point is that the main source of doctrine including a doctrine of creation is not theological or intellectual speculation, but the life and experience of worship. Thiselton endorses González's claim with appropriate qualification. Thiselton (2007:5-6) thus maintains:

---

[130] Gadamer (2002:369) writes: 'The concept of the problem is clearly an abstraction, namely the detachment of the content of the question from the question that in fact first reveals it. It refers to the abstract schema to which real and really motivated questions can be reduced and under which they can be subsumed. Such a "problem" has fallen out of the motivated context of questioning, from which it receives the clarity of its sense. Hence it is insoluble, like every question that has no clear, unambiguous sense, because it is not really motivated and asked.'

…while an emphasis upon creation as expressing human finitude, dependence upon God, and self-involving stewardship and accountability remains valid and constructive, the cognitive truth-claim that God performed an act of creation as Ground and Originator of all that is, cannot be reduced to a mere existential attitude of self-awareness or self-understanding, without remainder.

In other words, a hermeneutical emphasis on historical-situatedness, the everyday particularity of life, and temporality is far from excluding or bypassing cognitive truth-claims; rather it presupposes such truth-claims.[131]

To develop and clarify this point, Thiselton deals with a critical question: Can a hermeneutic of temporality, which claims that Christian doctrine is formed, and functions, within a temporal frame and context, still be valid when reflecting the nature of God from whom doctrine ultimately derives? Thiselton (2007:63) answers in the affirmative: the triune God is the living, dynamic, ongoing God, and thus '*doctrine will be no less "living" and related to temporality than God*, who acts in human *history*' [Thiselton's italics]. From this, Thiselton (2007:63) draws a very significant conclusion as follows:

The *particularity, contingency,* and *temporality* of hermeneutical inquiry remain not only appropriate but also necessary for exploring the truth-claims, meaning, and life-related dimensions of Christian doctrine. To say that doctrine is derived ultimately from God, far from suggesting that doctrine inhabits an abstract, timeless, conceptually pure domain, underlines the temporal and narrative character of its subject matter.

In line with this, the term *temporality* must not be understood as antithetical to transcendence; rather, it indicates the transcendental ground for the possibility of the

---

[131] In *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, Thiselton (1992:272-279) makes a similar point with reference to the hermeneutics of self-involvement. Exploring the two kinds of the hermeneutics of self-involvement, namely existentialist models of hermeneutics from Kierkegaard to Bultmann *and* the speech-act theory of J L Austin and Donald Evans, Thiselton concludes that the latter is more adequate than the former. It is primarily because, while existentialist hermeneutics tends to set up a devastating polarization between the dimensions of objective description and existential address in mutually exclusive way, the speech-act model does justice to both self-involvement and descriptive truth-claims by interweaving them.

presence and activity of God in time. Again, Thiselton (2007:64) offers a lucid statement of this point :

> The term [temporality] allows for recognition of the truth that God is neither conditioned by "human" time nor "timeless" in the sense of being unrelated to time. God interacts with the world through actions marked by *purpose, duration, periodicity, tempo, and eventfulness,* even if "God's" time is not to be equated with "human" time, but relates to temporality as the transcendental ground for time. Meaning and truth are not "timeless" in relation to God [Thiselton's italics].[132]

The indispensability of the temporal dimension for understanding sets the stage for the notion of Christian doctrine as grand narrative or theo-drama, which we have discussed in the previous chapter. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur asserts that the coherence and continuity of narrative is maintained by performing three functions of *memory, attention*, and *expectation* (quoted by Thiselton 2007:65). Drawing on Ricoeur's insight, Thiselton (2007:65) argues that 'Christian doctrine relates closely to memory of God's saving acts in history; attention to God's present action in continuity with those saving acts; and trustful expectation of an eschatological fulfillment of divine promise.' From this, it becomes evident that Christian engagement with the biblical text presupposes hermeneutical activities of memory, attention, and expectation, which take place within the horizon of time. This also means that Christian doctrine is characterised not as "static" or "closed," but "temporally conditioned and open to the future," and hence a journey *en route*.

Additionally, it is important to note that Thiselton connects the philosophical analysis of dispositional belief with Christian doctrine as *communal* belief. Christian doctrine is a matter of communal understanding and transmitted wisdom rather than of individual belief. Therefore, Thiselton (2007:43) emphatically argues that 'confessions of faith in the New Testament and the early church are *communal* belief-utterances that share commonly transmitted and received apostolic testimony or doctrine.' Aforementioned

---

[132] For more on temporality and time, see Thiselton (1999:183-209).

dispositional accounts of belief are closely related to *communal* doctrine rather than merely to the individual-centred belief. In other words, for Thiselton, Christian doctrine must be perceived above all as 'the corporate memory and communal celebration of the narratives and drama of God's action in the world and in the life of Israel and the church' (:43).

Viewed from a hermeneutic of temporal and communal narrative, Christian doctrine is primarily *a practice, a performance,* or *an activity*, which takes place in concrete life-situations. Christian doctrine always entails and demands *embodiment*. More to the point, Christian doctrine carries a communal commitment and a communal formation within the temporal horizons of human experience and life, yet it does so without losing its epistemological status of truth-claims. In so doing, Christian doctrine invites and enables us to participate in the *divine activity of the living, dynamic, ongoing God in human life*.

5.4.3 A Hermeneutic of Formation/Transformation

The primary concern and aim of hermeneutics is, to a very considerable extent, the *formation* of character, judgement, habits of thought, action, and life. For Christian doctrine, understanding is above all a matter of *formation*. The convergence between hermeneutics and Christian doctrine becomes still more evident in the light of a hermeneutical emphasis on formation, which has been articulated by Gadamer and Ricoeur, among many others.

Gadamer's primary concern about formation is explicitly disclosed in his use of the notion of *Bildung*. Gadamer draws on the notion of *Bildung*, which means cultivation, more precisely, 'the properly human way of developing one's natural talents and capacities' (Gadamer 2002:9). However, Gadamer uses the term beyond 'that of the mere cultivation of given talents' (:10). For Gadamer, the concept of *Bildung* entails self-formation, education, or cultivation, and is thus equated with *formatio* in Latin, *formation* in English, or *Formierung* in German (:10). Gadamer underlines as the general characteristic of *Bildung* 'keeping oneself open to what is other' (:15). The

ultimate aim of hermeneutical task is, for Gadamer, to learn *how to be open to the text as the other* and *how to respect the text on its own terms*. Put differently, if we are to enlarge and expand our boundaries of finite and historically-conditioned horizons, we must learn to respect '*the distinctiveness of the horizons of the text* as against the distinctiveness of our own reader-horizon' (Thiselton 1992:8). On this ground, *the fusion of horizons*, in which texts can actively challenge, reshape, and transform the understanding, expectation, assumptions, and goals that readers initially bring to texts, can be actualised. In other words, for Gadamer, formation is possible by the capacity of texts not merely to transmit certain information but to bring about certain transforming effects, because formation is nothing other than an *enlargement or expansion of prior horizons* of understanding.

While Gadamer speaks of "openness to the other" with reference to the critical process of formation, Ricoeur speaks of "destroying narcistic idols." Drawing critically on Freud, Ricoeur (1970:426) identifies narcissism as the most extreme form of 'resistance to truth.' By Ricoeur, authentic hermeneutical experience is possible only when disguises of self-affirmation, self-legitimation, and self-projection, which trap individual consciousness, are stripped away. Ricoeur explains a self-imposed barrier that disguises the self from the self in psychological terms. The human self has in himself/herself a barrier separating the conscious and the unconscious, which Ricoeur (1970:392) calls 'another text' that lies 'beneath the text of consciousness.' Mere introspection is not enough to break down this barrier of disguise (:463). Rather, 'genuine hermeneutical engagement with "the other" may begin to erode this spell of idolatrous self-deception, and may begin to *re-form* and *form* an "intersubjective" self that is capable of relations with others, by reaching out beyond the isolated self,' to cite Thiselton's reading of Ricoeur (2007:85). More significantly, for Ricoeur, the real power of a text lies in its transformative power, namely 'the power to suggest, to propose, to open up, to make possible, to produce "a world in front of the text"' (Smit 1998:301). By moving beyond narcissistic horizons of the isolated self, readers are capable of participating in and indwelling the world the text presents, with a new way of living, being, and acting.

254

In the process of formation, Ricoeur emphasises the creative effect of symbols, metaphors, and narratives because those can open new possibilities to extend and reach beyond prior horizons of the isolated self. Elsewhere Ricoeur compares the process of formation with growth from childhood to adulthood. He writes: 'How does a man emerge from his childhood to become an adult?...Images and symbols guide this growth, this maturation....Growth itself thus appears as the interactions of two systems of interpretation...a movement which must be rediscovered in the...structure of institutions, monuments, works of art, and culture' (quoted by Thiselton 2007:85-86). In a word, for Ricoeur the central aim of hermeneutical endeavour is formation by way of overcoming narcissism of the isolated self and listening to symbols and others.

The hermeneutical notion of formation has immediate relevance for the formative nature of Christian doctrine. The formation/transformation of the individual or corporate self is one of the most essential functions that Christian doctrines carry out.[133] For, as Kelsey (1975:91) rightly puts it, '[p]art of what it means to call a text "Christian scripture" is that *it functions to shape persons' identities* so *decisively as to transform them'* [Kelsey's italics]. In what follows, I will look into some aspects of formation brought about by the Christian reading of Scripture.

5.4.4 A Creative, Formative, and Transformative Reading of Scripture

The hermeneutical reflection on the formative effect of the text sheds fresh light on the nature of the Christian reading of Scripture. Thiselton (1992:8) argues that the Christian reading of Scripture should be *eventful, creative*, and *transforming*. 'Because of their capacity to bring about change,' says Thiselton (:8), 'texts and especially biblical texts engage with readers in ways which can productively transform horizons, attitudes, criteria of relevance, or even communities and inter-personal situations.' For Christians, reading Scripture is above all a matter of *being*. The life of interpreter is the fundamental form of the Christian interpretation of Scripture. In other words, a creative,

---

[133] On this formative/transformative function of Christian doctrine, see Ellen T Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (1997). By Charry, the primary aim of Christian doctrine is forming/reforming believers' character by shaping goodness, developing virtue, increasing excellence, and guiding them in godly living.

formative, and transformative reading of Scripture is based on the recognition that Scripture is not primarily *informational,* telling us things about God and ourselves, but *formational*, shaping us into our true being. Reading Scripture is not merely conveying and accepting propositions; rather it is to be accompanied by life-embodiment, which seeks to appropriate and concretize Scripture's meaning in individual and communal life. The overriding concern of Christian hermeneutics is an active and transforming engagement between Scripture and the life of readers.

On this account, Vanhoozer (1998:440) asserts that the ultimate goal of Christian reading is *embodiment*. The process of embodiment can be referred to as following the way of Jesus, who is the fullest embodiment of God's wisdom and love. Vanhoozer (1998:440) writes:

> Jesus Christ is the preeminent interpreter of God's self-communication, the unique and definitive embodiment of God's self-communicative act or "Word." The church, as Christ's body, is a secondary and derivative embodiment. The Word seeks, by the Spirit, to be taken to heart, to be embodied in the life of the people of God. Scripture's warnings call for attention, its commands call for obedience, its promises call for faith. *The vocation of the biblical interpreter is not simply to point at biblical meaning, but to embody it — to walk the way the Word goes* [Vanhoozer's italics].

Both individual interpreter and interpretive community, argues Vanhoozer (1998:441), are "bearers of the Word," who witness to the Word by doing and being the Word. In lives and thoughts of bearers, the Word continually grows, extends and bears fruits.

From the Christian perspective, formation as the end of reading Scripture has bearing on at least two aspects or directions: *transformation into the image of Jesus Christ* and *entering into covenantal life with God*.

Firstly, the Christian reading of the Bible aims to bring about the transformation of readers into *the image of Jesus Christ*. For Christians, to read Scripture for formation

256

and transformation involves two phases: *cross and resurrection, mortification and vivification*, or *a death to our old self and a rising again in Christ*. This process of transformation into the image of Christ is primarily the work of the Spirit, in spite of the fact that human activities are incorporated into it. For the Spirit is, as Calvin (*Inst* 3.1.1) notes, the bond by which Christ unites believers with Himself, the Christian reading of Scripture as the process of transformation is governed by the Spirit. Indeed, the biblical texts are the Spirit's instrument in the process of dying in our old self and rising in, and transforming into, Christ (Billings 2010:122-123).

Secondly, the transforming biblical texts serve as an instrument through which readers are drawn into the new relationship with God. As Charles Wood (1981:40-41) correctly points out, to take Scripture as the Word of God has profound hermeneutical consequences, namely *formation and transformation*. The transforming force of Scripture derives from its being the Word of God, its being God's self-communication and self-disclosure to readers. As the Word of God, the biblical texts lead readers to wholly new horizons of *covenantal life with God*, 'whose identity is enacted according to these narratives, and enacted definitely in Jesus Christ' (Wood 1981:41). Put differently, the capacity of biblical texts to reshape, reform, and transform readers has its deepest origin in the divine activity of self-communication for the saving fellowship with God's people.

From this, it follows that the Christian reading of Scripture must be considered as a crucial part of Christians' way of participating in the process of conforming to Christ and of participating in the triune God's drama of salvation. The proper starting point of Christian reading is not ourselves, but the revelatory-redemptive work of the triune God; not the use of Scripture by interpretive individual or community, but the use of it by the triune God. This makes the point explicit again that the trinitarian hermeneutics, in which Scripture is viewed as the tool of the triune God in the communicative economy, provides the context for our understanding of the formative nature of reading Scripture.

5.5 KEY HERMENEUTICAL ISSUE THREE: A HERMENEUTICAL ART OF LISTENING TO OTHER VOICE(S)

5.5.1 Reading as Hearing

The stance I firmly adhere to in this dissertation is that Scripture as the written word of God is the means by which the living God addresses us. The perception of Scripture as the Word of God presupposes above all *Deus loquens* — the speaking God. This, in part, means that God's address is essentially *oral* prior to written and thus the Word of God speaking through the biblical text is fundamentally meant to be *heard* prior to read. For Calvin, as we have discussed in Chapter 3, the practice of reading Scripture is determined by the nature of Scripture as the instrument of divine speech, in and through which God is speaking to and addressing us.[134]

It would be helpful — though often not taken seriously enough — to note that the written word of God is initially transmitted *orally*. By Randall Zachman (2009:118), Calvin attributed the credibility and foundation of Scripture to 'the oracles and visions revealed to the patriarchs and transmitted through countless generations by an oral tradition that faithfully preserved these oracles.' For Calvin, Scripture is the third and latest form that the Word of God has taken in the history of revelation. The continuity *from* the first form of oracles, visions, and dreams of the patriarchs and prophets *through* oral transmission *to* the final form of the written Scripture is guaranteed by the Spirit who operates in all those processes (Reid [1957] 1981:48). In conjunction with the recognition of oral tradition, the fundamental approach of Reformed theology to the interpretation of Scripture is not merely a process of finding answers to our questions, but a way of being challenged by, being addressed by, and hearing the living voice of God.

---

[134] According to Bouwsma (1982:204-208), Calvin's concept of knowing shows frequently his preference for listening (the ear) over beholding (the eye) as the adequate sense of, or the primary human instrument for, the acquisition of religious knowledge. It derives mainly from Calvin's emphasis on Scripture as the living voice of God.

This point becomes more explicit in the light of distinction between *reading* and *hearing*. For an account of reading as hearing, Webster draws on the German philosopher of religion and theologian Ingolf Dalferth's distinction between "hearing" and "reading." According to Dalferth, hearing has the character of *actual* personal interaction, whereas reading is a matter of *virtual* personal encounter (Webster 2003:86). On Dalferth's account, not reading but hearing is appropriate for description of faith's encounter with the presence of God, because reading has a propensity to divert Scripture from the kerygmatic and liturgical context of the church's use.

The significant difference between reading a word and hearing a word is appreciated in further depth by the Jesuit theologian Walter Ong in *The Presence of the Word*.[135] Ong (1967:12) argues that there is the centrality of oral-aural grounding as a point of reference within the Hebrew-Christian tradition. The distinctiveness of the Hebrew-Christian tradition emerges from 'the importance of the word as the focus of personal communication' (:12). God is believed and thought of not to be writing to human beings, but to be speaking to them. The Word of God is 'not an inert record but a living something, like sound, something going on' (:12). From this view, the word is an event in its original habitat of sound because sound is more real or existential than other sense objects in its close relation to present actuality and simultaneity (:111). 'Since sound is indicative of here-and-now activity,' says Ong (:113), 'the word as sound establishes here-and-now personal presence.' In this way, 'sound and hearing have a special relationship to our sense of presence' (:130). Moreover, Ong (:283) argues that an oral-aural culture is communal, non-individualistic, and authoritarian, whereas a typographic culture tends to be strongly visualist, to isolate individual from the community, to minimise interpersonal communication, and to be in favour of objectivity as the route to truth. While literacy has much to do with interiorization, orality has a deep connection with exteriorisation — greater openness.

Drawing out the implication of Ong's distinction, we may say that the act of reading Scripture is not directly identical with the act of listening to the Word of God. Speaking

---

[135] For a more complicated account of the orality-to-literacy shift and its effects, see Ong's another work *Orality and Literacy* ([1982] 2000).

and hearing are always ahead of writing and reading. In other words, the act of speaking and hearing is an *event* or a *movement* in spatial-temporal dimension, and thus has much more to do with immediacy, interpersonal encounter, and presence than writing and reading. Likewise, our reading of Scripture is always preceded by speaking and hearing, which, as God's self-communicative present event, take place in the drama of salvation history. Within that drama, the reader is an actor and reading is a performance. Put otherwise, reading Scripture is not merely cognitive activity towards propositional objects undertaken by epistemological subjects, but moral and spiritual practice performed by disciples. It is not a matter of methodical technique, strategy, or program, but a matter of spirituality. In this sense, the reading of Scripture is best described as *reading in faith*, or *Lectio Divina*, which Eugene Peterson (2006:116) defines as a 'cultivated, developed habit of living the text.'[136]

To link the Christian reading of Scripture with a sense of hearing means to perceive Scripture as a sphere of God's presence and speech. An emphasis on reading as hearing is, in part, a way of reappreciating the spiritual, faithful practice of reading Scripture. It warns against a so-called consumerist reading, in which the act of reading hinges on reader's initiative, intention, convenience, use, and control. In that case, reading merely serves for reader's self-presence, not God's communicative presence. Through a spiritual, faithful reading or *Lectio Divina*, the Spirit brings readers into God's presence, into the inexhaustible riches of the Word of God. The authenticity of Scripture as the written Word of God is guaranteed only when it mediates the real presence of God by the power of the Spirit.

5.5.2 A Hermeneutic of Otherness

According to the American Roman Catholic revisionist theologian David Tracy (1994), postmodernity is 'an ethics of resistance' against what modern thinkers — such as Descartes — embrace, namely the drive to objectivity, the turn to the subject, the

---

[136] For recent renewed interests in religious, spiritual practices of reading Scripture, see Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (2006) and Paul Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (1999).

concern with method, and the over-belief in sameness. Among many faces of postmodernity, argues Tracy (1994:108), the real face of postmodernity is 'the face of the other,' which resists against violence to put the other into his/her own single conceptual scheme. For Tracy, the postmodern turn to the other leads eventually to the return of the otherness, of the repressed under the complacencies of modernity, and crucial part of that is "the return of biblical Judaism and Christianity" or "the return of the Word of God."

The turn to the other and relationality seems to have been gaining its considerable impetus from philosophical voices such as Gadamer, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Gadamer, as noted earlier, underlines the importance of the hermeneutical dimension of otherness and distance. The aim of hermeneutical task is, by Gadamer (2002:12,15), to learn *how to be open to the other* and *to respect for the other on its own terms* by 'learning to affirm what is different from oneself' and by '[distancing] oneself from oneself and from one's private purposes.' Openness to the other is nothing less than "to be aware of the otherness of the other" or "to acknowledge that some things standing over against me assert their own rights and require due recognition of that" (Gadamer 2002:356). In other words, to understand the other on its own terms demands not to impose the self's own horizon on the other. As Thiselton (2007:98-103) puts it in terms of Hans Robert Jauss, the respect for the other requires *a hermeneutic of alterity,* according to which the other should not be fully assimilated into the horizons of the self; rather the provocation and alienation should challenge the self not to domesticate or reduce the other to self's own terms.

The emphasis on the other shares much common ground with the philosophical turn to relationality.[137] The Jewish religious philosopher Martin Buber's well-known concept of *I-Thou* relation provides a classical statement of the philosophical understanding of relationality. Buber (1970:54) states, 'There is no I as such but only the I of the basic

---

[137] For a brief, yet helpful, summary of the philosophical turn to relationality, see Shults (2003:11-38).

word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It. When a man says I, he means one or the other.' Thus, genuinely human 'I' stems not from non-relational "I," but from the reciprocal, dialogical relation with the other. To understand "I" becomes possible only in the light of the "Thou," in the light of 'the real association of the real duality, I and You' (Buber 1970:108). In this way, the turn to the other is related to a so-called "social personalism," which understands the self as determined in social relation and hence "without the social relation, no personality itself" (Grenz 2001:10-11).

Buber's concept of *I-Thou* relation resonates with another Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. In his influential work *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas sets forth an analysis and description of the so-called "phenomenology of the other." To explore his transcendent ethics, Levinas (1969:34) embarks on criticism against self-centric, totalistic, and reductive thinking that fails to do justice to 'the remoteness, the alterity, and the exteriority of the other.' Against an egocentric point of view, Levinas insists that the other person is not an *alter ego*, another self with different properties and accidents. In real conversation with the other, it is necessary to recognise that the other is not an object that must be interpreted exhaustively by my alien light. A real conversation can take place when we pay attention to the other and the other's strange world that is basically different from mine. As is indicated in the title of his book, Levinas makes a contrast between the idea of *totality,* on the one hand, and the idea of *infinity,* on the other hand. Levinas then gives the philosophical primacy on the latter. The idea of totality strives for power and control for the sake of order and system. Thematization or conceptualization, which is 'the first generalization and the condition for objectivity' (Levinas 1969:76), easily tends to suppress, possess, and manipulate the other. As a result, it fails to do justice to the radical heterogeneity of the other. On the contrary, the idea of infinity seeks for freedom and creative advance for the sake of a higher quality of life. For Levinas (1969:24), the term *infinity* presumes the Other beyond the capacity of the "I," and thus is an expression of "the exteriority or transcendence in the face of the Other." The idea of infinity suggests that a relation whose terms do not form a totality can be cultivated in primordial face-to-face relation with the other. Arguing that the human being thrives on the presence of the face of the other, Levinas insists that first philosophy is neither ontology nor epistemology, but

rather *transcendental ethics* on the ground that the transcendental presence of the infinite is mediated through the ethical relation to the other (Shults 2003:32).

For both Gadamer and Levinas, openness to the other is a crucial condition for genuine conversation. An influential, appropriate emphasis on dialogue comes from the voice of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Through his analysis of Dostoyevsky's novels, Bakhtin advocates the notion of *dialogism*. Bakhtin (1984:7) claims that Dostoevsky created the *polyphonic* novel, which is fundamentally against monologic novel. In monologic novel, characters function only as mouthpieces of the author who uses them to speak his own thoughts and values, to present his own viewpoint.[138] In opposition to monologic novel, Bakhtin asserts that '*A Plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels*' [Bakhtin's italics] (:6). Dostoevsky's major characters — "heroes" in Bakhtin's terms — are 'not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse' (:7). Therefore, heroes are not reduced to the dominating consciousness of the author, but, as autonomous discourse, are allowed to speak in their own voices.[139] Bakhtin thus argues that all elements and structures of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel are thoroughly constituted by 'an ultimate dialogicality' or 'the great dialogue as a whole' (:63).

From this analysis, Bakhtin (1984:32) presents a critique of *monologism*, which does not accept the existence of another consciousness with own right and own voice. Monologism is an attempt to reduce multiple voices *into* a monologic whole; the fundamental plurality of consciousnesses *into* the systematically monologic framework of a single consciousness. Over and against monologism, Bakhtin's dialogism draws our particular attention to the dialogical nature of human life. Authentic human life means

---

[138] Bakhtin takes Leo Tolstoy as a typical example of monologic authorship. In Tolstoy's story, according to Bakhtin, a dialogic relation between author and character is not present. Bakhtin (1984:71) thus writes: 'The words and consciousness of the author, Leo Tolstoy, are nowhere addressed to the hero, do not question him, and expect no response from him. The author neither argues with his hero nor agrees with him. He speaks not with him, but about him.'

[139] For example, in *The Brothers Karamazov,* major voices appear such as Ivan Karamazov, Alyosha Karamazov, and the Orthodox church elder Zosima. These heroes represent different perspectives and worldviews with their own voices.

'to participate in dialogue; to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth' (:293). The self is determined by a dialogic relationship towards the other (:287). Life itself calls for full acknowledgement of participation in a great dialogue. More importantly, Bakhtin's dialogism suggests that *the search for a unified truth needs to be carried on in not a monologic but a dialogic way*. Certain truths come into view from the dialogue between different perspectives and different voices. In that case, a plurality of consciousnesses are required in the postulation of a unified truth (:81). By Bakhtin, it is not necessary to see multiple consciousness and multiple voices as incompatible with a unified truth; to the contrary, a unified truth can be advanced with them.

Above-mentioned philosophical, hermeneutical emphasis on otherness, relationality, and dialogue urges Christian theology to appropriate critically *the realities of otherness*. Its profound impact on theological thought seems to be extended to the understanding of the nature of being human, God-world relation, God's inner relationship, theology itself, and so on. Thiselton (2007:231) observes that many theologians tend to relate the image of God in humanity to '*relationality* or *the capacity to relate to others* as an even more fundamental feature of this theme than *reasonableness or rationality* and *dominion or responsible stewardship*' [Thiselton's italics].[140] To cite one example, the Presbyterian Reformed systematic theologian Daniel Migliore (2004:144), drawing on Buber, asserts that being created in *imago Dei* implies that humans find their true identity in a coexisting relation with fellow other humans and with all other creatures. For example in construing God-world relation, Vanhoozer, in his recent work *Remythologizing Theology*, sets forth a model for conceiving the God-world relation as "authored dialogue." Appropriating Bakhtin's dialogical paradigm for authorship, Vanhoozer (2010:297-337) argues that "a dialogical polyphonic authorship" is consonant with the biblical notion of the dialogical interaction of God and human, and thus does justice to both authorial transcendence and immanence.

---

[140] For a more detailed account of theological anthropology in terms of relationality, see Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (2001) and LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (2003).

Furthermore, the theological application of the turn to otherness and conversation is closely related with *the public nature of theology*. As Lints (1993:238) rightly points out, the biblical revelation is a *public revelation* in that it witnesses to historical events and, as a result, Christian theology is a *public disciple* which 'makes claims of truthfulness applicable to all.' From this, Lints insists on the need to engage in conversation with other public realms — the church, the academy, and the world — on the basis of the primary obligation to engage in conversation with God through Scripture. Engagement in conversation demands us to recognise the realities of otherness and the plurality of other voices. How then is the commitment to otherness and conversation related with the issue at stake, namely the authority of Scripture? We need to deal with this question in what follows.

5.5.3 Plurality and Authority

A hermeneutical emphasis on polyphonic discourse claims that any single voice, perspective, or literary genre cannot articulate adequately and fully the whole truth of the text. This is also true of the biblical canon. As Vanhoozer (2000:78-81) clearly spells out, the pluralistic constitution of the biblical canon can be affirmed at two levels; *the plurality of biblical texts* on the one hand and *the plurality of biblical interpretation and interpretative traditions* on the other. At one level, there is a plurality of biblical voices. In the grand story of the Bible, the triune God's drama of salvation is unfolded in a variety of different genres and literary forms such as narrative, psalms, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, and so on. The variety of biblical literature must not be flattened in a monologic-reductive way that unduly privileges one literary genre as the dominant interpretive framework. In a sense, the unity of Scripture can be affirmed by the recognition that 'we need more than one interpretative framework to articulate fully its meaning and significance, just as it took four Gospels to articulate the truth of Jesus Christ' (Vanhoozer 2000:78).

At another level, there is a plurality of interpretative perspectives and interpretative traditions. Undeniably, our own postmodern age, with its sensitivity to differences, has cultivated the development of different interest, different understanding, and different

perspectives. It does so in favour of particular epistemic claims of race, gender, nation, and class, on the one hand and by dismissing the continuity or unity of reality and all forms of totalising metanarratives, on the other hand. In a sense, it is not necessary to deny the impact of societal and cultural pluralism upon the plurality of theological perspectives. However, the plurality of interpretative perspectives and theological traditions does not come entirely from historical, social, and cultural factors of postmodernism. Rather, a more adequate account of fundamental root of the diversity and plurality of interpretative traditions must be given from theological perspective.[141]

In this regard, Piet Naudé, a renowned South African public theologian, offers a helpful theological account of the plurality of interpretative traditions — what he terms 'hermeneutical vulnerability of the Reformed tradition.' According to Naudé, the virtual hallmark of the Reformed traditions is the developments of confessions in response to various challenges in various contexts. 'The very act of confessing,' says Naudé (2007:245-246), 'is a fundamental hermeneutical "moment of decision" where interpretation of the biblical text, the tradition, and the present context converge in credo as the church struggles to proclaim the gospel on issues of grave concern.' Thus, a confession is a proclamation of the church 'in a *specific situation* which requires an interpretation of a specific location…at a specific moment...about a specific issue...bringing the confession into the political, cultural and economic realities of society' (:246-247). Therefore, according to Naudé, the history of the Reformed

---

[141] The Stellenbosch Old Testament theologian, Prof Louis Jonker (2011) calls our attention to the point from the perspective of intra-biblical hermeneutics, namely that 'the canonical status of the texts that are transmitted to subsequent faith communities, does not extinguish the multi-vocal nature of the processes of reinterpretation that have been duly incorporated, but forms an inherent part of the continuum of these intra-biblical processes' (:136). Jonker presses this point by expounding an intra-biblical interpretation in the book of Chronicle in which he specialises. Furthermore and significantly, Jonker (:143-144) explicates the dynamics of a canonical hermeneutics as follows: (1) a canonical hermeneutics is *a hermeneutic of continuity*, which 'affirms a continuity with received traditions'; (2) it is *an inclusive canonical hermeneutics* that 'sees the biblical canon as a dynamic, multi-vocal dialogue' including the older traditions being interpreted; (3) it is also *a discursive hermeneutics*, which takes place 'within a space in which a multiplicity of voices engage in conversation with one other'; (4) it implies *a historical-contextual hermeneutics*, which demands a socio-historical sensitivity both 'to the conditions that created the received traditions' and to 'the contexts within which these received traditions are (re)interpreted'; (5) it is *a hermeneutics of discontinuity*, which means, in dynamic relation to continuity, that intra-biblical interpretation has been carried on by subsequent faith communities within new and different ways in changed contexts; and (6) it suggests that a hermeneutics must not be divorced from text and theology. It seems that my arguments of this chapter, in large part, come close to Jonker's insights and concerns.

confessional development is a clear evidence of the *pluralistic unity* of theological interpretative traditions.

At this point, it is of great importance to draw a definite distinction between "the plurality of biblical perspectives" and "the ideology of postmodern pluralism." Recognition of canonical and interpretative plurality does not go so far as to employ postmodern ideology of pluralism. Whilst plurality is a qualifier to recognise the diversity of voices, forms, and perspectives in the unity of Scripture, ideological pluralism leads only to the dissolution of all forms of unity by insisting that no one voice, form, or perspective is better than any other. This ideological disintegrative pluralism tends to legitimatize individualistic interpretation and egocentric discourse. In contrast, a real sense of plurality enables us to affirm that various voices in different interpretive situations can speak of substantive meaning and articulate a unified truth — though not comprehensively.[142]

Apparently, the plurality of voices, of languages, of methods, of perspectives, and of reality itself seems irreducible. However, this does not mean that all voices and perspectives are legitimatized without reservation, because some of them may result from our hermeneutical sin and resistance to Scripture's transforming work. The commitment to plurality is not unlimited, but *bounded* by the discernment of the Spirit because 'not all culturally embedded differences are from the Spirit' (Billings 2010:124). To state it differently, confronted by the irreducible plurality of voices, we can still affirm the possibility of a unified truth on the ground of "the oneness of God" underlying the plurality of voices. The ultimate ground for the possibility of a pluralistic unity is God, who is Himself truth. The unity of divine communicative activity in the unity of the revelation of God is an ultimate critical criterion to deal with all the complexity, difference, and diversity of the various voices.

---

[142] In the same vein, James Packer (1992:329) makes a distinction between plurality and pluralism. He writes: '…it has yet to be proved that things said in different ways at different times by different people are necessarily inconsistent with each other in substantive meaning….*Plurality in presentation does not…involve pluralism in substance*' [italics mine].

In this connection, Michael Welker finds the possibility of pluralistic unity in *the work of the Spirit*. Welker (1994:27) makes a definite distinction between 'individually disintegrative pluralism' and 'the life-enhancing, invigorating pluralism of the Spirit.' The Spirit is the One who enables us to gain unity not only with one another but also above all with Christ and God Himself. However, according to Welker (1994:23), the Spirit's activity for unity, intimacy, and immediacy is carried on not in a way of uniformity, but *in a way that cultivates differences, yet does not contradict the justice, mercy, and knowledge of God*. Welker (1994:25) thus writes: 'The action of God's Spirit is pluralistic for the sake of God's righteousness, for the sake of God's mercy, and for the sake of the full testimony to God's plentitude and glory.' Welker's point is clearly stated in the following (Welker 2006:229):

> The pouring out of the Spirit brings about a pluralistic striving for God's righteousness and truth. The complex multicontextual and polyphonic unity brought forth by the Spirit is not a luxury or a "postmodern" invention. The pluralistic unity of the Spirit is the divine power by which God works through frail and finite human creatures against the powers of sin and distortion.

To clarify the point, Welker (1994:235) draws our attention to the Pentecost event, in which, through the pouring out of the Spirit, God gives rise to '*a world-encompassing, multilingual, polyindividual testimony to Godself.*' In the miracle of the Pentecost, the Spirit unites the plurality of languages, cultures, and traditions into a unified witness to the gospel event without eliminating their different voices and identities. By the life-enhancing power of the Spirit, plurality is embraced for the profound witness to the richness of the gospel, without falling into arbitrariness or confusion of pluralism. The Spirit transforms differences into creative plurality, which serves to witness the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

All these reflections would carry significant implications for the way of articulating the authority of Scripture. Various dimensions of scriptural authority must not be reduced into a narrower understanding of propositions; the diversity of Scripture's literary genre

leads us to the recognition of various models of scriptural authority. [143] More significantly, Scripture's various ways of speaking can be properly acknowledged by 'genuine wrestling, search and struggle, in expectancy of a divine event of "speaking" to a ready heart' by the help of the multicontextual and polyphonic presence and work of the Spirit (Thiselton 2006:633). In order to listen appropriately to the Word of God speaking through Scripture, we must not only take care to note 'the multiplicity and vitality of the biblical testimonies' (Welker 2003:384), but also learn to how 'to celebrate diversity with integrity' (Mouton 2007:241).

5.5.4 Hearing the *Viva Vox Dei* as Otherness

As Dirkie Smit (1998:314) correctly puts it, hermeneutics is the art of understanding and respecting otherness: *'the otherness of the ancient literary texts,' 'the otherness of the tradition,' 'the otherness of other readers,' 'the otherness of new contexts,' 'others who are critical of our interpretation.'* Most of all, Smit continues to say, 'as people who hope to hear God's Word speaking to us from these documents, we must respect this Other, the transformative power of these documents that we call the Bible.' For Scripture to be read and heard as the Word of God, it is an essential prerequisite to recognise the *extra nos* character of the contents of Scripture, which refer to God's reality and activity in creation and redemption. Readers must be prepared for hearing something different from what they already hear and think. Exteriority of the biblical text signifies that the text must be read and heard without distortion, domestication, or internalization of it by means of reader's self-righteousness or self-projection. Scripture is always a "disruptive Word" which draws readers out of the prison of their own horizons into the Great Other who Scripture mediates. The Reformation notion of *sola Scriptura* serves to affirm the otherness of biblical texts by claiming that textual meaning is not dependent on our interpretations, which as merely secondary commentaries never enjoy the authoritative status of the text itself (Vanhoozer

---

[143] For example, Goldingay, in his book *Models for Scripture* (1994), suggests various models of Scripture in accordance with the diversity of biblical genre. He applies "Scripture as a witnessing tradition" to the historical narrative; "an authoritative canon" to the Torah; "an inspired word" to the prophets; "an experienced revelation" to psalms, apocalypses, psalms, wisdom books, and the epistles. See also Bartlett (1983).

1998:321). On this account, a sense of transcendent otherness, which reminds us that a voice mediated through Scripture is not our own, becomes imperative in hearing *the living Word of God* through Scripture.

The otherness of Scripture as the Word of God does not allow readers to make a premature, naive, or complete assimilation of the text. T F Torrance (1969:53) states the point succinctly, yet explicitly, in terms of the transcendence of the truth of God as follows:

> God is present to us, and gives Himself to our knowing, only in such a way that He…distinguishes Himself from us, and makes Himself known in His divine otherness even when He draws us into communion with Himself.…He never resigns knowledge of Himself to our mastery, but remains the One who is Master over us, who resists, and objects to, every attempt on our part to subdue or redact the possibility of knowledge grounded in His divine freedom.…To know God in His Holiness means that our human subjectivity is opened out and up toward that which infinitely transcends it.

The otherness of Scripture as the Word of God derives, not directly but analogously, from God's otherness, utter transcendence, and holiness. To articulate scriptural authority more appropriately, however, reading Scripture as *otherness* needs to coincide with a belief of reading Scripture as the *personal presence* of God. To put it under the rubric of the *viva vox Dei* addressing us through Scripture, to take Scripture as the living Word of God means to affirm both "God's otherness and difference from us" *and* "God's intimate presence and relation to us." In line with this, Webster (2005:96) contends that the immensity of the triune God is 'at one and the same time the "otherness" of God over against created space and the divine capacity to stand in relation to space and to act in space without compromise to the divine freedom.'

To clarify a particular dimension of scriptural authority as otherness, it would be helpful to note Welker's account of "the fourfold weight of Scripture." Welker (2003:378-382) describes the authority of Scripture in terms of its fourfold weight: *historical, cultural,*

canonical, and *theological* weight. Firstly, *the historical weight of Scripture* points to its authoritative influence that has been accumulated through multiplicity of faith experiences of God over more than a millennium. Secondly, *the cultural weight of Scripture* denotes its diverse impacts on different life-situation and different cultural settings. Thirdly, *the canonical weight of Scripture* is constituted by the internal, canonical dialogue within Scripture that bears a multitude of 'contrasting and interlaced testimonies to God and God's activity' (:380). Finally, *the theological weight of Scripture* derives from the fact that Scripture is above all testimony to God, God's reality, and God's activity in creation. It is on the basis of the theological weight that the historical, the cultural, and the canonical weight of Scripture could work in shaping and regulating the belief and life of the Christian community. Therefore, the theological weight of Scripture is the innermost core of scriptural authority, which makes Scripture a living source of life and belief. On this account, Welker (:382) says: 'The historical, the cultural, and the canonical weight of Scripture are only a mirror and reflection of the theological weight bestowed upon Scripture by its content and object — the living God.'

What Welker calls "the theological weight of Scripture" can be identified with *the otherness of Scripture* among various dimensions of scriptural authority. The authority and power of Scripture standing against not only "idols in ourselves" but also "idols in Zeitgeist" — a spirit of an age, be it modernity or post-modernity —, comes from the otherness of the voice of Scripture, which mediates the reality and activity of God (Welker 2002). The otherness of Scripture does not allow us to reduce the great historical, cultural, canonical, and theological weight to our own voices that belong to a specific historical, cultural setting. In the same vein, Grenz and Franke (2001:88-89) rightly point out that "to read Scripture *theologically*" means to come to it as *other*, acknowledging 'the integrity of the text within its own world.' In addition, Fowl and Jones (1991:111) insist that Scripture is 'an outsider' addressing us 'over-against ourselves' and challenges our prior perspectives and presuppositions towards revision, reshaping, and transformation.[144]

---

[144] Fowl and Jones (1991:111-113) argue that engagement with outsiders and listening to their voices are crucial and necessary for our interpretive practices. According to them, Scripture and the resurrected Christ are the first type of outsider who governs the common life of the Christian community. The second

Additionally and very significantly, what is especially noteworthy is that a theological reading of Scripture as otherness must be related to "the doxological reading of Scripture." Christian practice of reading Scripture demands and evokes not merely *the respect and reverence for the living God speaking through Scripture*, but also *the enjoyment of both Scripture and God revealed through it*. In his influential book *Doxology,* which is written from the perspective of the liturgical forms of the church, the distinguished ecumenical theologian Geoffrey Wainwright (1980:149-181) offers an excellent account of reading Scripture from a doxological perspective. According to Wainwright, Scripture is fundamentally and originally liturgical texts that have been shaped and used in a liturgical context of the Church. The Church's liturgical use and experience of Scripture, asserts Wainwright (1980:165), has contributed substantially to 'the content, composition, establishment, delimitation and doctrinal exploitation of the scriptures.' The liturgy is the foremost place for the Church to read, meditate, contemplate, enjoy, pray, and live Scripture. In the connatural context of liturgy, the Church experiences the divine presence in the reading of Scripture (Wainwright 1980:179). From this, it can be legitimately said that the Christian reading of Scripture is ultimately "doxological", that is, 'not to decode or interpret, but to encounter, contemplate and worship' (S Wright 2000:264). In this sense, a task of the doctrine of Scripture, as well as theology as a whole, is to help the Church to experience the presence of God in His glory in and through the reading and preaching of the Word of God and, in that experience, to find the full enjoyment.

Moving along similar lines, Beverly Roberts Gaventa (2007:107), professor of New Testament and exegesis at Princeton Theological Seminary, argues that the Christian reading of Scripture, particularly within the Reformed tradition, should be 'the enjoyment of God in the reading and interpretation of Scripture.' According to her observation (2007:109), in spite of various use, application, and employment of Scripture — such as addressing questions in controversies of doctrine and polity, serving as sermon-making, cultivating and shaping virtues, and so on —, there is lack of the recognition that 'the reading of Scripture might in and of itself be an occasion for

---

type of outsider to whom Christian communities must pay particular attention is those who are estranged and distanced from our common life.

the glorification of God.' Against this, Gaventa argues that the ultimate goal of reading Scripture is *to glorify God and enjoy God forever,* as is asserted in the opening question of the Westminster Catechism. Scripture is a locus in which God is glorified and enjoyed. In the reading of Scripture, we experience God's own presence and thus glorify God (Gaventa 2007:113).

5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I attempted to reclaim the authority of Scripture in the light of contemporary hermeneutical insights, which would not only shed fresh light on, but also deeply resonate with the theological resources found in the Bible and the Christian tradition. To this end, I tried to draw on some valuable insights from contemporary hermeneutics in a way to reappropriate them for our discussion of scriptural authority and within theological framework.

At the outset of this chapter, I briefly reviewed some historical and theological reasons for the denigration of hermeneutics in the conservative-evangelical thought on scriptural authority, which have already been adumbrated in Chapter 2 under the rubric of "scriptural foundationalism." Considerable emphasis was placed upon the need to retrieve the dynamic hermeneutical relation between the authority of Scripture and the reading of Scripture and hence upon the need to reintegrate the hermeneutical dimension into our talk of scriptural authority. Within its reciprocal interrelation with scriptural authority, hermeneutics must not be used as an excuse for deferring obedience, performance, and embodiment, but rather must be considered as *a constitutive, componential, critical part of our articulation of scriptural authority*.

Concerning the relation between general and special hermeneutics, I argued for an *ad hoc* use of general hermeneutics, in which the principles and insights of general hermeneutics are critically appreciated, appropriated, and employed for the purpose, concerns, and aims of the Christian reading of Scripture. Hermeneutics must be used ultimately by God, the Author of all the truths, by the Spirit, the primary and authentic

273

Interpreter. For the Christian practice of reading Scripture, the Spirit uses hermeneutics not only in leading our interpretation to what God is really saying through Scripture, but also in wedding our performance of Scripture as closely as possible to our interpretation.

In subsequent parts, I explored major hermeneutical issues pertinent to our talk of scriptural authority. I unfolded some valuable hermeneutical issues in a threefold way: (1) a hermeneutical art of removing interpretative idols; (2) a hermeneutical art of facilitating ongoing life-engagement with Scripture; and (3) a hermeneutical art of listening to other voice(s).

The first critical task of hermeneutics is *to expose and do away with the hermeneutical idols*, which incessantly attempt to use Scripture as a manipulate tool both to legitimate and confirm our own interests, desires, understanding and belief *and* to distort the authentic message of Scripture. This task is also to discern "the use and presence of the Spirit in and through Scripture" from "the use and presence of the self or the spirits of the age." In tandem with this, I appropriated Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval in a Christian fashion. A Christian hermeneutic of suspicion is a hermeneutic of humility or of the cross, with which we can learn how to get rid of self-serving idols and how to put ourselves under the transforming Word of God. It must be noted that "a Christian hermeneutic of suspicion *on ourselves"* must take as its starting point and foundation "a hermeneutic of trust *on God's Word of promise*." Furthermore, I argued that a hermeneutical emphasis on the provisionality, contingencies, ambiguities, and particularities of our understanding does not undermine the authority of Scripture. To the contrary, it highlights an eschatological aspect of scriptural authority in deep resonance with not only the Reformed claim of ongoing reformation, but also eschatological, trinitarian theological reflection on "our provisional position expecting the final verdict of God" and "our essential relatedness to God."

The second key force of hermeneutics is *to facilitate our embodiment of Scripture in the particularity and temporality of everyday life*. Hermeneutics draws much attention to the fact that our understanding takes place in historical, temporal, and concrete life-situations. This concern about contingency, particularity, life, and action leads to the

primary aim of hermeneutics, namely the *formation* of character, habits of thought, and life. In so doing, hermeneutics paves a way forward recognising the nature of Christian doctrine as *life-related, self-engaging, and life-embodying*. The biblical text challenges, reshapes, and transforms "our horizons of understanding," "our assumptions and criteria of thought and action," and "our interests and goals of interpretation." By the transforming power of the biblical text, we can de-centre ourselves, encounter the strange reality that the text opens up, and dwell upon it. Seen from this, therefore, the authentic authority of Scripture lies not in its capacity to inform us of "about God," but in its force to form and transform us into the true identity in Christ and its ability to bring us to the covenantal life with God. The Christian practice of reading Scripture is a crucial part of this process of formation and transformation, which is initiated and governed by God the Spirit.

The third and most important task of hermeneutics for scriptural authority is *to listen to other voice(s)*. I insisted that Christian reading needs to be perceived as "hearing," which is more adequate for the description of both Scripture as the sphere of God's personal presence *and* our reading as moral, faithful, and spiritual practice. The most compelling appeal of hermeneutics is that we must listen carefully to the voices of others. A pivotal point of hermeneutics is *how to open to the other and to respect for the other on its own light*. This understanding comes from a hermeneutical turn to otherness, which recognises that the existence and cultivation of genuine humanity is possible only by accepting the exteriority, alterity, and otherness of the other. "Openness to the other" leads inescapably to "an emphasis on polyphonic dialogue," in which a plurality of voices and perspectives are involved in the search for a unified truth. In connection with this, I affirmed that the plurality of biblical texts and the plurality of interpretive traditions are necessary for our attempt to articulate more fully the truth of Scripture. Differentiated from "the ideological disintegrative pluralism of postmodernism," *the canonical plurality brought forth by the Spirit* can give faithful, creative testimony to the richness of God's truth.

A Christian hermeneutic of otherness is indispensable in the reading of Scripture. Reading Scripture as the Word of God demands "a sense of transcendent otherness,"

that is, to expect to hear the *viva vox Dei*, not *vox mei,* in and through Scripture. The otherness of Scripture is the deepest, weightiest root of Scripture's authority. However, the otherness of Scripture is not for the estrangement of God from us, but for the intimate presence of God with us. Thus, the authority of Scripture is fully acknowledged and honoured by not only the *respect and reverence* for God and Scripture, but also the *enjoyment* of God and Scripture. The authentic authority of Scripture emerges from the fact that Scripture is the locus of experiencing God's — not our own — presence and of enjoying and glorifying God.

To conclude: in the light of the whole of arguments in this chapter, we can *re*-read and *re*-hear the *viva vox Dei* speaking in and through Scripture in the here and now. Scripture as the living voice of God will *re*-shape, *re*-form, and *re*-formulate our dispositions, our identity, and our ways of living. In so doing, we can indeed *re*-discover, *re*-affirm, and *re*-claim the authority of Scripture. All these *re*-s indicate that our talk of Scripture's authority is not "once-for-all" but "ongoing" task (and enjoyment as well), which takes place en route to the triune God's renewal and consummation of all things.

CHAPTER 6

HEARING THE LIVING VOICE OF GOD IN AND THROUGH SCRIPTURE HERE AND NOW

6.1 GENERAL SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

In this final chapter, I will summarise previous chapters and then draw the various threads of arguments and implications together.

In Chapter I, I set the stage for this dissertation by explaining motive, clarifying problems and research question, and presenting a preliminary statement of main arguments. At the outset, I made a brief sketch of the historical background of debate over scriptural authority in the Korean Presbyterian church. From the early years of the Korean church, Scripture has been at the centre of the belief, life, and theology. From the 1930s onward, the authority and interpretation of Scripture has come into play as a key issue of not only theological debates between conservatives and liberals, but also of the fragmentation of the Korean Presbyterian churches. Given the dominant influence of the Old Princeton theology upon the shape of the Korean conservative-evangelical theology as a whole, I presumed that looking into the Old Princetonians' view of scriptural authority might be an adequate way of investigating the Korean conservative Presbyterian understanding of the authority of Scripture. To anticipate the development of subsequent chapters, I raised some problems of the Old Princeton's view of scriptural authority, which I would call "scriptural foundationalism," in a threefold way: (1) from an epistemological perspective, the domination and privilege of the modern epistemological agenda, namely the enthusiastic search for epistemological certainty; (2) from a doctrinal perspective, the prolegomenal positioning of scriptural authority for the whole theology and the lack of the soteriological consideration of the divine use of Scripture in the economy of salvation; and (3) from a hermeneutical perspective, the denigration of the hermeneutical dimension in talk of scriptural authority. Based on the recognition of these problems, I crystallised a crucial question: *How can we make a*

systematic-theological account of scriptural authority in a more adequate way as to appreciate fully both its epistemological status as the truth and its formative-transformative power in our concrete life in the here and now? To answer this question, I framed the structure and direction of the argument to be followed in a triadic way that brings epistemological, doctrinal, and hermeneutical perspectives together.

In Chapter 2, I attended to an issue of the epistemological status of Scripture by exploring the philosophical presuppositions underlying the construction of scriptural authority made by two different positions: "a scriptural foundationalist approach of the Old Princeton theology" and "a nonfoundationalist approach of postliberal theology." I critically analysed and evaluated some philosophical underpinnings — views of knowledge, of reality, of language, and so on —, which might be adopted, employed, or appropriated in formulating each view of scriptural authority. The Old Princeton theology's view of scriptural authority has been influenced, implicitly or explicitly, by certain philosophical bearings such as modern epistemological foundationalism, Scottish Common Sense Realism, the correspondence theory of truth, the propositional understanding of language, evidentialist apologetics, and the ontological dualism. These philosophical influences play important roles in shaping the Old Princeton theology's *objective-ontological view of scriptural authority*, in which epistemological objectivity is so closely engrafted into ontological objectivity as to identify Scripture with God. I paid particular attention to at least two toxic elements embedded in the Old Princeton theology's emphasis on external/formal authority, namely the modern epistemological obsession with rational certainty and doctrinal boundaries *and* modernity's debilitating dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity. I pointed out several weaknesses of a scriptural foundationalism, such as its rationalistic tendency; its foundationalist desire for noetic certainty; its tendency to reduce the full aspects of truth into accuracy or factuality; its failure to take seriously the diversity of biblical languages by placing too much emphasis on the assertive or propositional language; and its dualistic binary between above and below, objective and subjective, ontological and functional. In contrast, postliberal theology suggests a renewed account of scriptural authority in the postmodern milieu, in which the values of modern foundationalism, such as epistemological certainty, universality, rationality, and scientific method, are deprecated

and rejected. A postliberal construction of scriptural authority has been influenced by a variety of philosophical impetuses quite different from the Princeton theology, such as nonfoundationalist epistemology, intrasystematic or pragmatic theory of truth, *ad hoc* apologetics, and an emphasis upon narrative as a major biblical language. Based on these, postliberals argue that the authority of Scripture can be fully understood in terms of "its use and function in the life of the Christian community." A postliberal view of scriptural authority constitutes a genuine advance beyond a foundationalist notion of it, but at the same time it raises a new set of problems such as its antirealist or pragmatic view of truth; its reductionistic emphasis on the narrative form of biblical language at the expense of the diversity of biblical literary; its sectarian tendency; and its lack of an ontological account of Scripture. As an alternative to both approaches, I suggested that a more adequate epistemological ground for our talk of scriptural authority would be provided by a postfoundationalist approach. According to the viewpoint of post-foundationalism, the objective unity of truth is affirmed without losing the recognition of the provisionality, contextuality, and fallibility of all human knowledge. In addition, the adequacy and necessity of theological reflection on the truth mediated in Scripture, in spite of its provisionality and partiality, can be affirmed as the ultimate way to the reality of God. Furthermore, it understands the relationship between the cognitive-propositional and the personal-existential aspect of biblical language in a mutually integrated way. Based on these reflections, a postfoundational approach underlines the mutual, dynamic relation between epistemology and hermeneutics, and views the authority of Scripture most of all as an "authorized authority" and "redemptive authority." The authority of Scripture emerges primarily because it mediates the truth transcending our knowledge, the reality beyond us. However, at the same time, it is authoritative *pro nobis*, for our salvation in Christ. This chapter's reflection upon the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth plays a crucial part of the threefold argument on scriptural authority in this study.

In Chapter 3, I attempted to rehabilitate and reappropriate the Reformed principle *sola Scriptura* and the notion of the Word of God for our talk of scriptural authority, especially by looking into Calvin's thought on that issue. Calvin took, as the starting point of his account of Scripture as well as his whole theology, the *duplex cognitio* —

the twofold knowledge of God and human. Calvin linked the *objective* aspect closely with the *personal* aspect of the knowledge of God, and by so doing, epistemology with soteriology. In chapters 6–9 of the first book of the *Institutes*, Calvin dealt with the issue of Scripture's authority in three ways: (1) the self-authenticating authority of Scripture as the Word of God; (2) the internal witness of the Holy Spirit; and (3) the external proofs of the truth of Scripture. Firstly, for Calvin, the authority of Scripture as the Word of God is *self-authenticating,* and thus Scripture's authority for the certainty of faith and assurance of salvation is not derived from the determination or consent of the church, but from Scripture itself. However, for Calvin, the supreme authority of Scripture must not be spoken of in terms of the axiomatic principle for dogmatic speculation, which is detached from the soteriological context. Secondly and more importantly, Calvin associated the self-authenticating character of Scripture intimately with the *testimonium Spiritus sancti.* Calvin's prominence of the internal testimony of the Spirit and the mutual bond of the Word and the Spirit must not be understood in terms of the subject-object dichotomy, but rather in terms of his genuine concern of piety and spirituality. The grave concern of Calvin was *how we can hear with reverence and obedience the voice of the living God speaking through Scripture in the here and now.* Thirdly, Calvin dealt with the external proofs attesting the credibility of Scripture, but it was inferior to the internal testimony of the Spirit and hence "auxiliary." In the second half of Chapter 3, I explored Calvin's hermeneutics of Scripture. Calvin spoke of the authority of Scripture in its close relation to the interpretation of it. The authority of Scripture is related not to the bare word of it (*ad verbum*), but to the rightly interpreted content of it (*de sensu verborum*). Calvin kept bearing in mind a theological account of scriptural authority as the starting point and guiding map for a proper reading and interpretation of Scripture. *The self-interpreting clarity of Scripture* suggests that God speaks through the biblical texts in a fashion that is clear, coherent, and sufficient enough to fulfil His will and purpose, namely bringing believers to the authentic knowledge of God and to the unity with Christ. At the heart of Calvin's hermeneutics was his conviction that *Deus loquens* is still speaking to, and addressing, us in and through Scripture. The Word of God in and through Scripture is the self-accommodating Word of God, which implies that the Christian practice of reading Scripture must be understood as an attempt to discern what God ultimately says through

God's accommodating Word to the finitude of our perspective, context, and humanity. This ongoing hermeneutical task is confirmed by the Reformation slogan *Semper Reformanda*, which claims that all interpretations, perspectives, and traditions must allow themselves to be continually questioned, challenged, and transformed according to God's Word. Furthermore, the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* confirms the supremacy of Scripture over interpretative traditions; but nevertheless it does not negate the necessity of the interpretative community, which obtains a *ministerial* authority in relation to the *magisterial* authority of Scripture.

In Chapter 4, I set forth a dogmatic account of scriptural authority with a trinitarian-pneumatological hermeneutics. I began with the issue of how to locate bibliology in the structure of systematic theology. A formal approach to scriptural authority locates the doctrine of Scripture in the prolegomena, due to the desire to establish firmly the status of Scripture as the ultimate epistemological foundation prior to treating the contents of Scripture. Criticising this approach, I argued that a prolegomenal placement of bibliology might detach talk of Scripture from its proper habitat, namely a trinitarian-soteriological context. The doctrine of Scripture must be reintegrated into the comprehensive structure of Christian doctrines, especially the doctrine of the triune God, primarily because any talk of the authority and function of Scripture cannot take place appropriately outside the context of the being and acting of the triune God in the economy of salvation. On this account, a proper starting point of a trinitarian theological doctrine of Scripture must be a dogmatic ontology of Scripture, according to which revelation is most of all the self-communicative activity of the triune God for establishing saving fellowship with us and Scripture is understood as "a sanctified means of the Spirit's activity in the economy of God's communicative action" and "an inspired instrument to serve to God's self-presence." Scripture is the Word of God in a sense of divine communicative action, which appropriates human discourse as a medium of divine discourse to address us in the here and now. The authority of Scripture derives from the fact that through Scripture God is present as the ultimate communicative agent. Furthermore and more significantly, Scripture is not only *divine communicative discourse* but also *divine performance* to achieve the purpose of God's revelatory-redemptive action. The concept of "performance" refers primarily to God's

communicative-redemptive actions; it also refers to the churchly/readerly activity of interpreting Scripture. From this view, the churchly performance is a participation in God's performance. Scripture is *the* script of the triune God's performance in the economy of salvation and at the same time *a* script for the faithful and creative performance of the church in the concrete context of life. Therefore, what makes Scripture authoritative is primarily the divine use, and the churchly use of Scripture is a subsequent consequence of the divine use. The reading practice of the church, which is the creature of the Word, is basically hearing and responding to the Word, as the activity of participating in divine canonical performance in God's economy of salvation. Moreover, a trinitarian hermeneutics of Scripture reaffirms the significance of the Spirit in talk of the authority and interpretation of Scripture. The illuminating (illocutionary) activity of the Spirit brings about the understanding of the Word's meaning, on the one hand, and the formative (perlocutionary) activity of the Spirit enables readers to respond faithfully and actively to the Word so that it can achieve its full-intended effect, on the other hand. The Spirit is the divine embodying agent who enables Christians both to embody the Word in their particular lives and to participate in the triune God's drama of salvation. Furthermore, a trinitarian-pneumatological approach suggests the analogy of a grand story or a theo-dramatic script for understanding the relation of God (the Author), Scripture (script), and the Christian community (actor). Scripture can be viewed as a grand story of the triune God's activity of creation, redemption, and consummation in the economy of history. As the grand story of salvation, Scripture provides us with a basic framework to determine the way we experience, perceive, and relate to God, the world, and ourselves. More significantly, Scripture is the *theo-dramatic script* that calls for faithful, yet creative, performance of it in God's drama of redemption. Considering all these, I concluded that scriptural authority is best understood as *the divine communicative-performative authority in the triune God's drama of salvation*.

In Chapter 5, I brought hermeneutical discussion as a constitutive, componential, and critical part into our whole articulation of scriptural authority. To begin with, I pointed out that conservative-evangelical theology's demurring or indifferent attitude towards hermeneutics engenders the loss of a dynamic relation between biblical texts and

readers, and eventually renders the Bible superfluous and silent in the life of the church. From this observation, I argued for the urgent need to retrieve the essential role of hermeneutics in talk of scriptural authority. Given Scripture's being the living Word of God addressing us today, our talk of scriptural authority must be intertwined with and accompanied by the hermeneutical concerns and reflections, which aim at the true engagement with and embodiment of the text in real life. Concerning the use of general hermeneutics, I held that the principles and insights of philosophical hermeneutics should be appropriated critically and employed in an *ad hoc* manner, for the purpose, concerns, and aims of the Christian practice of reading Scripture. To appropriate some relevant hermeneutical insights, I unfolded the threefold task of hermeneutics into the hermeneutical art of (1) removing interpretive idols, (2) facilitating ongoing life-engagement with biblical texts, and (3) listening to other voice(s). The first critical task of hermeneutics is *to expose the lurking idols of the self and culture and to emancipate interpreters from the bondage of those idols*. By so doing, hermeneutics helps discern the authentic presence of the Spirit in the process of our reading Scripture from the self-presence or the presence of Zeitgeist. Particularly, a Christian hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval, of humility and conviction, and of cross and resurrection, would be helpful in our effort to get rid of self-serving idols and to retrieve the trust on God's Word of promise. The second task of hermeneutics is *to facilitate the embodiment of biblical texts in the particularity and temporality of our everyday life*. Hermeneutics pays much attention to the historical-situatedness, life-relatedness of our understanding in a way that does not bypass, but rather presupposes, cognitive truth-claims. The primary concern of hermeneutics is thus *formation* of character, habits of thought, action, and life. The formative effect of the text is brought about by "openness to the other," and "destroying narcistic idols and extending prior horizons of the self." This insight sheds light on our recognition of *the life-related* and *life-embodying* character of scriptural authority. The authentic authority of Scripture lies in its capacity to form and transform us into both the true being in Christ and the covenantal life with God. The third and most important task of hermeneutics is *to listen to other voice(s)*. I asserted that the Christian reading of Scripture must be perceived as "hearing" because Scripture is a sphere of God's speech, through which we could encounter the presence of God. A renewed hermeneutical emphasis on otherness urges Christian theology to appropriate

critically the realities of otherness and the plurality of other voices, including the plurality of biblical texts and of interpretive traditions. Most significantly, the otherness of biblical texts, which mediate the reality and activity of God, reminds us that through them we hear the living voice of God that cannot be assimilated with ours. However, the otherness of Scripture as the Word of God is not divorced from God's intimate presence through Scripture. In a real sense, Scripture comes to be authoritative when it emerges as the sphere to hear the *viva vox Dei*, to experience God's presence, and, in our proper response to that, to enjoy and glorify God.

6.2 A PERICHORETIC RELATIONSHIP OF THE THREE DIMENSIONS WITHIN A SYSTEMATIC-THEOLOGICAL TALK OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY[145]

How can we make the three strands of epistemological, trinitarian-pneumatological, and hermeneutical reflections on scriptural authority into one seamless garment?

The aim of this dissertation was to find a pathway towards an appropriate systematic-theological framework to retrieve the authority of Scripture for the life of the church. Throughout this dissertation, I have pressed the point that an adequate systematic-theological articulation of scriptural authority must be made with due respect to such dimensions as epistemology, Christian doctrines, and hermeneutics. This comes from the recognition that any attempt to recover the authority of Scripture would be called to delineate the possibility of three recoveries: (1) a recovery of confidence in the epistemological status of Scripture as the truth; (2) a recovery of the ontology of

---

[145] I borrow the term *"perichoretic"* (derived from a noun *"perichoresis"*) from a trinitarian theological discussion of the divine life. The concept of "*perichoresis*" was used by the so-called Cappadocians such as Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, in describing the unity of the community of the triune God's distinct persons or the mutual coinherence of the eternal divine life. According to Shirley Guthrie (1994:91), *"peri"* means "around" and *"choresis"* means "dancing." Its etymology thus suggests a picture that distinct persons are holding hands together and dancing around harmoniously. With the use of this term, I intend to demonstrate the circulatory character of a systematic-theological talk of scriptural authority. That is, the epistemological, doctrinal, and hermeneutical perspectives are reciprocally interacting, yet not uniformed or reduced to one.

Scripture as the Word of God; and (3) a recovery of the significance of hermeneutics for our concrete life of here and now.

On this ground, much of what is at stake in this dissertation was to *undo* — or at least discern — a devastating dichotomy that might break epistemological, doctrinal, and hermeneutical dimensions apart within talk of scriptural authority. This dissertation's approach thus parts company with that of modern theologies which tend to split the epistemological dimension of scriptural authority from the hermeneutical dimension and then to accord excessive privilege to the former from a desire for — or an obsession with — epistemological rational certainty. To the contrary, I have attempted to seek for a way to overcome that dichotomy and to retrieve the dynamic, interactive relationship between epistemological and hermeneutical dimensions. Based on this premise, I have tried to integrate the hermeneutical discussion into our talk of scriptural authority in a way that is not peripheral but critical and central.

Furthermore, not only within the overall structure but also within a number of points, I have tried to deal carefully with distinctive, yet inseparable, components in an integrated way, without collapsing into extreme of either part. To be precise: cognitive-propositional and personal-existential language; explanation and understanding; the objective unity of truth and the subjective diversity of knowledge; epistemological and soteriological aspects; the external authority of Scripture and the internal testimony of the Spirit; authority and interpretation; Scripture and tradition; ontological and functional authority; the divine and the human discourse; discourse (speaking) and performance (acting); authority and hermeneutics; authority and performance; provisionality and universality; unity and plurality; and so on.

A major suggestion made through the entire dissertation is that our discussion of scriptural authority must be made in a holistic way within the so-called "hermeneutical matrix" constituted by author, text, and reader. I have attempted to deal with all these three elements in a mutually integrated way: *the biblical text* in relation to the epistemological status as the truth (Chapter 2); *God the Author* as the ontological source and ground of scriptural authority (Chapter 4); and the significance of *the interpretative*

community as a hearing agent responding faithfully to the Word of God (Chapter 5). A historical survey of Chapter 3 offers not only a focal point of viewing Scripture primarily as the living Word of God but also a broader framework which embraces three aspects integrally — the epistemological starting point (the knowledge of God and of ourselves), the soteriological context (the internal testimony of the Spirit in the triune God's economy of salvation), and the hermeneutical concern (hearing the living voice of God) — from a Reformed perspective.

It thus is of great importance to underline that these three elements are inherently connected, mutually conditioned, and dynamically interrelated. The cognitive truth of Scripture takes the 'epistemological grace'[146] of the triune God as its indispensable condition. In other words, only in the light of the trinitarian-ontological theology of Scripture can the epistemological status of Scripture be spelled out fully. For this reason, the discussion of Chapter 2 presupposes that of Chapter 4; the former remains dim without the light of the latter. Likewise, Chapter 5 is also closely connected to Chapter 4 in that an account of the human, creative, and formative activity of reading must not be separated from an account of divine communicative-performative discourse. Over and against a priori, rigid view of scriptural authority, which attempts to formalise the authority of Scripture, I have firmly insisted that the hermeneutical task of obedience and application must not be deferred until the epistemological certainty of the truth mediated by Scripture is secured. It indicates that the epistemological concern of Chapter 2 and the hermeneutical concern of Chapter 5 must be drawn into each other more intimately.

The main point that I seek to make through this triadic-holistic structure is that a full articulation of scriptural authority must provide a plausible account of the interactive relationship between God the Author of the Bible, the biblical texts, and the interpretative communities. All three dimensions — (1) the divine/human agents *behind* the text, (2) the text embodying the Word of God *within* it, and (3) the formative and

---

[146] This phrase is from David Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (1993:62).

transformative force to change and shape our life and thought *in front of* the text[147] —
must be embraced as an integrated, interdependent, and holistic whole in talk of
scriptural authority. In a word, this *perichoretic* relationship of the three key dimensions,
if taken into account, could restore much greater coherence, relevance, and unity to a
systematic-theological talk of scriptural authority.

6.3 CONTRIBUTION IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

This dissertation does not pretend to state the final words on ongoing debates over the
nature of scriptural authority, but rather hopes to contribute to opening up fresh vistas in
talk of scriptural authority for Korean Presbyterian theology. To the whole arguments
and suggestions made thus far, I would like to add a point that would be helpful in
bringing them into the Korean context.

As I quoted the remarks of Dr Park Hyung-Ryung in Chapter 1, the hallmark of the
Korean Presbyterian church's theology can be correctly described as "the Puritanical
Reformed theology." This description indicates two distinguished, yet not separable,
historical trajectories that have formed the identity of the Korean Presbyterian church:
"the legacy of the Calvinist Reformed theology" and "the legacy of Pietism and
Puritanism." On the one hand, the Korean Presbyterian churches view themselves as the
legitimate heir of the Protestant Reformation and thus as confessionally orthodox. They
have faithfully adhered to the traditional-orthodox view of scriptural authority and
decisively rejected modern liberalism, which infiltrated into the church with the
tendency to repudiate the traditional oracular view of the Bible as Scripture. On the
other hand, the Korean Presbyterian theological orientation towards the Bible has been
influenced by the heritage of the pietistic Puritanism, which can date back to the
Evangelical Revival in England and the Great Awakening in North America, even
further to the Reformation. At the heart of the tradition of Puritanism and Pietism lies
the emphasis on 'a personal conversion experience, the life of sanctification, and

---

[147] This description is taken from Thiselton (2006:637).

assurance of one's election' (Travis 2004:252).[148] In accordance with these, the Korean Presbyterian churches have tried to read Scripture for living and practicing biblically, not just for knowing and professing orthodox doctrines. In the practice of reading Scripture, they always anticipate hearing the living Word of God and ultimately experiencing the presence of God.

The convergence of these two trajectories was prominent in the early stage of the Korean church, particularly in "the Great Revival of 1907."[149] This paradigmatic experience of the Spirit-led revival had provoked the collective confession of sin, the transformation of ways of life, the commitment to prayer and service, evangelical testimony of experience towards the community, and so on. What is especially noteworthy is that this epoch-making revival event was closely related with, and achieved by, what was called the *sakyunghoe* — a communitarian Bible reading meeting combined with a prayer meeting (J-C Park 1998:19). One of the remarkable aspects of early Korean Christianity thus can be said as its collective reading and interpretation of the Bible, along with the Holy Spirit movement. Within the archetypical experience of the gospel in the early stage of the Korean church, there seemed no dichotomy between "the objectivity of Scripture as the Word of God" and "the subjective experience of the transforming power of the Spirit working through Scripture." Scripture was looked to and experienced as the vehicles through which God the Spirit would lead sinners into conversion, sanctify their lives with a renewed identity in Christ, and eventually accomplish the triune God's economy of salvation.

However, the dominant influence of the Old Princeton theology and the modernist-fundamentalist controversy from the 1930s onward have led the Korean conservative Presbyterian theology towards privileging the scholastic trajectory over the Puritan-Pietist trajectory. Against this context, in the ethos of Korean conservative theology occurred a shift of emphasis about the Bible *from* the Puritan tradition that views

---

[148] For a helpful survey of early Pietism, see Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (1996).

[149] It has been taken for granted by many Korean church historians and theologians that an initial and triggering point of the growth of Korean church was the Great Revival in 1907, which began with the Bible conference in Pyongyang (Han 1983:51-53; Hong 1983:171-181; Kim 1983:17-46; Ro 1983:159-170; Min 1996:15-58). From this widely shared recognition, the Korean Protestant churches celebrated the centennial anniversary on a large scale in 2007.

Scripture as the vehicle of the Spirit's transforming work *to* the Protestant scholastic tradition that views the Bible as a conveyor of a set of universal-timeless propositional doctrines. Out of the overriding concern to defend the accuracy, factuality, and objectivity of biblical assertion against the encroachment of modernity, Korean Presbyterian theology has come to make the doctrine of Scripture a defensive weapon operating in a polemical context. In other words, the Bible has been thought of as an "arsenal" rather than a "treasury"[150] to such an extent that a doctrine of inerrancy, the ultimate weapon of the arsenal, might be used as the test words of "shibboleths" (Jdg 12:5-6, NIV) indicating participation in, or firm alliance with, conservative-evangelical camp.

Put in terms of the above-mentioned historical trajectory, therefore, the suggestion of this dissertation is to urge the Korean Presbyterian church to *undo the breakdown of the unity* between two strands to which the Korean church has been indebted for its shape and development. These two trajectories must not be treated as either/or from the perspective of the modern object-subject polarity; rather, they should be considered as interacting with and complementing each other. In this sense, the contribution of this dissertation would be suggestive rather than conclusive on the issue of scriptural authority, retrospectively by reminding the Korean Presbyterianism of the need to bring its historical trajectories together, on the one hand, and prospectively by pointing in the promising direction to chart a pathway towards rediscovering the unfathomable richness of the Word of God, on the other hand.

6.4 CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS

Talk of scriptural authority should not be trapped in the modern — sinful — desire for epistemological certainty, which has little to do with the event of God's self-communication in the history. Rather, it must be surely rooted in the context of the triune God's economy of salvation. This reorientation also must embrace

---

[150] These contrasting terms "arsenal" and "treasury" are borrowed from Andrew Louth (1983:101).

epistemological and hermeneutical dimensions as critical parts of the integrated whole of discussion.

The authority of Scripture is neither merely objective-external, nor merely functional-internal. Over and against this dichotomy, the authority of Scripture should be thought of as both *propositional* and *personal*, both *transcendent* and *immanent*, both *beyond us* and *for us*. Put differently, the authority of Scripture must be understood not simply in terms of conveying cognitive-propositional truth claims but also in terms of directing the way to dwell in the grand story of God's salvation and the way to perform the theo-dramatic script creatively and faithfully.

Ultimately, the authority of Scripture derives from the triune God's self-communicative presence and speech. Scripture is authoritative in our lives primarily because it is not only *divine discourse* but also *divine performance,* and hence *the divine speech-act.* The Word of God in and through Scripture not only *speaks to us* but also *acts for u*s. Scripture is the vehicle of the Spirit who appropriates it to accomplish the telos of God's communicative-redemptive action by uniting us to Christ, bringing us to the covenant community, and involving us in the grand drama of God's revelation and redemption.

The authority of Scripture is inseparably wedded to our interpretation and performance of it, which would give concrete and full expressions to our confession of scriptural authority. An authentic acknowledgement of Scripture's authority must necessarily lead to our responsive, resultant communication, with which we express our absolute trust in God and in the faithfulness and firmness of God's covenantal promise. Therefore, *professing* the authority of Scripture entails not only *perceiving* the powerful action of God working through Scripture but also *practicing* it with faith and obedience. It may be said that an avenue for the true confession of scriptural authority is opened up by entering into the drama of God's salvation. Furthermore, the authority of Scripture cannot be honoured fully apart from the framework of God's eternal covenant with His chosen people, or apart from the context of the real life. Within this larger framework, Scripture comes to be fully authoritative as *the* text by which we live our lives and in which we are engaged in the covenantal relationship with the triune God. Therefore,

Scripture indeed enjoys its *redemptive, divine communicative-performative, covenantal* authority in the triune God's economy of salvation.

From a Reformed perspective, Scripture claims its authority as the living Word of God over us. What is ultimately at stake is then how to hear even more faithfully *the living Word of God* in and through Scripture today. The genuine acknowledgment of scriptural authority turns out to be a matter of learning how to let Scripture speak for itself and learning how to let our innermost addressed, challenged, reshaped, and transformed by the *viva vox Dei* we hear through Scripture. This necessitates hermeneutically-critical, spiritually-discerning sensitivity to our sinful nature to put self-projective, self-serving overlays on the Word of God. In this light, the authentic honouring of the authority of Scripture inevitably leads to the renewal of our way of reading Scripture, which entails both resisting our sinful nature to deduce the Word of God into something to be controlled, comprehended, and mastered, *and* opening up ourselves towards the *dynamic, life-engaged, multifaceted, and transformative* authority of Scripture in every step of our lives.

Confessing the authority of Scripture with reverence, humility, and enjoyment, we readily submit ourselves to the judgement of the Word of God, which is 'living and active' (Heb 4:12, NIV) and thus 'will accomplish what [God] desire[s] and achieve the purpose for which [God] sent it' (Is 55:11, NIV).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, W J 1998. *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology: From the Fathers to Feminism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ahlstrom, S 1955. The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology. *Church History* 24:257-272.

Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007. *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity II*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

Astley, J 2004. *Exploring God-Talk: Using Language in Religion*. London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Auerbach, E 1953. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr by W R Trask. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Austin, J L 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*, ed by J O Urmson. 2nd ed. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bacote, V E, Miguélez, L C & Okholm, D L (eds) 2004. *Evangelicals Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

Bakhtin, M 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr by C Emerson. *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol 8. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Barr, J 1973. *The Bible in the Modern World*. London, UK: SCM.

Barth, K 1956. *Church Dogmatics*, vol I-2, ed by G W Bromiley & T F Torrance. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Bartholomew, C & Goheen, M W 2004a. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic.

--- 2004b. Story and Biblical Theology, in Bartholomew, C et al (eds) 2004: 144-171.

Bartholomew, C et al (eds) 2004. *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Milton Keynes, UK / Grand Rapids, Mich: Paternoster / Zondervan.

Bartlett, D L 1983. *The Shape of Scriptural Authority*. Philadelphia, Penn: Fortress.

Battles, F L 1977. God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity. *Interpretation* 31:19-38.

Bauckham, R 2003. Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story, in Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003: 38-53.

Berkouwer, G C 1975. *Holy Scripture*, tr by J B Rogers. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Bernstein, R J 1983. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.

Best, S & Kellner, D 1997. *The Postmodern Turn*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Billings, J T 2010. *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

Bloesch, D G 1992. *A Theology of Word & Spirit: Authority & Method in Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

--- 1994. *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

Boone, K C 1989. *The Bible Tells Them so: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bouwsma, W J 1982. Calvin and the Renaissance Crisis of Knowing. *CTJ* 17/2:190-211.

--- 1988. *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bowald, M A 2007. *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Bozemann, T D 1977. *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Braaten, C E & Jenson, R W (eds) 1995. *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

Bray, G 1996. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*. Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press.

Breukelman, F H 2010. *The Structure of Sacred Doctrine in Calvin's Theology*, ed by R H R Brouwer, tr by M Kessler. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Briggs, R S 2001. *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Brown, D W 1996. *Understanding Pietism*. Rev ed. Nappanee, Ind: Evangelical Publishing House.

Brown, H I 1988. *Rationality*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bryant, D J 1993. Christian Identity and Historical Change: Postliberals and Historicity. *JR* 73/1:31-41.

Buber, M 1970. *I And Thou*, tr by W Kaufmann. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Buchan, T 2004. Inerrancy as Inheritance?: Competing Genealogies of Biblical Authority, in Bacote, V E, Miguélez, L C & Okholm, D L (eds) 2004: 42-54.

Butin, P W 1995. *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Callahan, J 2001. *The Clarity of Scripture*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

Calvin, J 1950. *The Deity of Christ and Other Sermons*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 1960. *Institutes of the Christian Religions*, 4 vols, ed by J T McNeil, tr by F L Battles. *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol 20&21. Philadelphia, Pa: Westminster.

--- 1998a. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, tr by J Owen. *The AGES Digital Library Commentary*. Albany, NY: AGES Software.

--- 1998b. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, tr by W Pringle. *The AGES Digital Library Commentary*. Albany, NY: AGES Software.

Carson, D A 1986. Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1986: 1-48.

Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1986. *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.

--- (eds) 1992. *Scripture and Truth*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House.

Charry, E T 1997. *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Clines, D J A [1997] 2005. *The Bible and the Modern World*. Reprint. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix.

Comstock, G L 1987. Two Types of Narrative Theology. *JAAR* 55/4:687-717.

Conn, H M 1966. Studies in the theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church: An Historical Outline, Part I. *WTJ* 29:24-57.

--- 1967. Studies in the theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church: An Historical Outline, Part II. *WTJ* 29:136-178.

--- 1968. Studies in the theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church: An Historical Outline, Part IV. *WTJ* 30:135-184.

Craigo-Snell, S 2000. Command Performance: Rethinking Performance Interpretation in the Context of *Divine Discourse*. *MT* 16/4:475-494.

Davis, E F 2003. Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church, in Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003: 9-26.

Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Davis, R E 1946. *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers: A Study in Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin*. London, UK: Epworth.

Descartes, R 1988. *Selected Philosophical Writings*, tr by J Cottingham et al. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Dowey, E A 1952. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's theology*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Dulles, A 1983. *Models of Revelation*. Garden city, NY: Doubleday & Company.

Fackre, G 1987. *The Christian Story: A Pastoral Systematics*, Vol 2. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Farley, E 1982. *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method*. Philadelphia, Penn: Fortress.

Feinberg, J S 1984a. A Response to Adequacy of Language and Accommodation, in Radmacher, E D & Preus, R D (eds) 1984: 377-390.

--- 1984b. Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics, in Radmacher, E D & Preus, R D (eds) 1984: 1-50.

Fiorenza, F S 1990. The Crisis of Scriptural Authority: Interpretation and Reception. *Interpretation* 44:353-368.

Fodor, J 2005. Postliberal Theology, in Ford, D F & Muers, R (eds), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, 229-248. 3rd ed. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Forsyth, P T 1952. *The Principle of Authority: In Relation to Certainty, Sanctity and Society*. 2nd ed. London, UK: Independent Press.

Fowl, S E 1998. *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Fowl, S E & Jones, L G 1991. *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*. London, UK: SPCK.

Franke, J R 2004. Scripture, Tradition and Authority: Reconstructing the Evangelical Conception of *Sola Scriptura*, in Bacote, V E, Miguélez, L C & Okholm, D L (eds) 2004: 192-210.

Frei, H W 1974. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.

--- 1986. The "Literal Reading" of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?, in McConnell, F (ed), *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition*, 36-77. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Gadamer, H-G 2002. *Truth and Method*, tr by J Weinsheimer & D G Marshall. 2nd rev ed. New York, NY: Continuum.

Gamble, R C 1988. Calvin as Theologian and Exegete: Is There Anything New? *CTJ* 23/2:178-221.

Gaventa, B R 2007. To Glorify God and Enjoy God Forever: A Place for Joy in Reformed Readings of Scripture, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 107-115.

Genette, G 1980. *Narrative Discourse*, tr by J E Lewin. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Gerrish, B A 1982. *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Goldingay, J 1994. *Models for Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Goldsworthy, G L 1986. "Thus Says the Lord": The Dogmatic Basis of Biblical Theology, in O'Brien, P T & Peterson, D G (eds), *God Who is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr D B Knox*, 25-40. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House.

González, J L 2005. *A Concise History of Christian Doctrine*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon.

Green, G 2000. *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Grenz, S J 1993. *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

--- 1994. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman.

--- 2000. Articulation the Christian Belief-Mosaic: Theological Method after the Demise of Foundationalism, in Stackhouse, J G (ed) 2000: 107-138.

--- 2001. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox.

--- 2004. Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind: The Genesis of the Evangelical Scripture Principle, in Bacote, V E, Miguélez, L C & Okholm, D L (eds) 2004: 21-41.

Grenz, S J & Franke, J R 2001. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox.

Griffiths, P J 1999. *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Grudem, W A 1992. Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1992: 19-59.

Gunton, C E 1990. Using and Being used: Scripture and Systematic Theology. *TT* 47:248-259.

--- 1995. *A Brief Theology of Revelation: The 1993 Warfield Lectures*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

--- 2002. *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Gunton, C E & Hardy, D W (eds) 1989. *On Being The Church: Essays on the Christian Community*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Gustafson, J M 1985. The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church, and the University. *PCTS* 40:83-94.

Guthrie, S C 1994. *Christian Doctrine: Revised Edition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.

Han, C-H 1983. Involvement of the Korean church in the evangelization, in Ro, B-R & Nelson, M L (eds), 51-68.

Han, S-J 2003. Augustine and Calvin: The Use of Augustine in Calvin's Writings. D Th thesis, University of Stellenbosh.

Hart, D G 1984. The Princeton Mind in the Modern World and the Common Sense of J. Gresham Machen. *WTJ* 46:1-25.

Hauerwas, S 1993. *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon.

Hays, R B 1990. Scripture-Shaped Community: The Problem of Method in New Testament Ethics. *Interpretation* 44:42-55.

--- 2002. A Hermeneutic of Trust, in Lischer, R (ed), *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*, 265-274. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2003. Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection, in Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003: 216-238.

Helm, P 1982. *Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues*. London, UK: Marshall Morgan & Scott.

--- 1992. Faith, Evidence, and the Scriptures, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1992: 303-320.

--- 2004. *John Calvin's Ideas*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Henry, C F H 1976. *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Vol 2. Waco, TX: Word.

--- 1987. Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal. *TJ* 8:3-19.

Hensley, J 1996. Are Postliberals Necessarily Antirealists? Reexamining the Metaphysics of Lindbeck's Postliberal Theology, in Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds) 1996: 69-80.

Heron, A I C 1983. *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, the History of Christian Thought, and Recent Theology*. Philadelphia, Penn: Westminster.

Hodge, A A & Warfield, B B [1881] 1979. *Inspiration*, ed by R R Nicole. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker.

Hodge, C 1871. *Systematic Theology*, vol 1. London, UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons.

Hong, H S 1983. Social, political and psychological aspects of church growth, in Ro, B-R & Nelson, M L (eds), 171-181.

Horton, M 2009. Knowing God: Calvin's Understanding of Revelation, in Chung, S W (ed), *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*, 1-31. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox.

Hunsinger, G 2000. *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2003. Postliberal Theology, in Vanhoozer, K J (ed) 2003: 42-57.

Inge, J 2003. *A Christian Theology of Place*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Jeanrond, W G 1988. *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, tr by T J Wilson. New York, NY: Crossroad.

--- 1989. Community and Authority: The Nature and Implications of the Authority of Christian Community, in Gunton, C E & Hardy, D W (eds) 1989: 81-109.

--- 1991. *Theological Hermeneutics: development and significance*. New York, NY: Crossroad.

Jensen, P 2002. *The Revelation of God*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.

Jenson, R W 2003. Scripture's Authority in the Church, in Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003: 27-37.

Jodock, D 1989. *The Church's Bible: Its Contemporary Authority*. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress.

--- 1990. The Reciprocity Between Scripture and Theology: The Role of Scripture in Contemporary Theological Reflection. *Interpretation* 44:369-382.

Johnson, W S 2003. Reading the Scriptures Faithfully in a Postmodern Age, in Davis, E F & Hays, R B (eds) 2003: 109-124.

Jones, S 1995. *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety*. Louisvill, Ky: Westminster John Knox.

Jonker, L 2011. "Alive and Active"? The Hermeneutic Dynamics and Implication of (Re)interpretation in the Old Testament. *NGTT* 52:128-147.

Kelsey, D H 1975. *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. Philadelphia, Penn: Fortress.

--- 1980. The Bible and Christian Theology. *JAAR* 48/3:385-402.

Kim, J-G 1983. Korea's total evangelization movement, in Ro, B-R & Nelson, M L (eds), 17-49.

Kim, K 2007. *The Holy Spirit in the world: A global conversation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Klooster, F H 1984. The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Hermeneutic Process: The Relationship of the Spirit's Illumination to Biblical Interpretation, in Radmacher, E D & Preus, R D (eds) 1984: 449-472.

Kort, W A 1996. *Take, Read: Scripture, Textuality, and Cultural Practice*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Krohn, J B 2002. Knowing the Triune God: Trinity and Certitude in the Theology of John Calvin. D Th thesis, University of Stellenbosch.

Lane, A N S 1981. Calvin's Use of the Fathers and the Medievals. *CTJ* 16/2:149-205.

--- 1994. Sola Scriptura? Making Sense of a Post-Reformation Slogan, in Satterthwaite, P E & Wright, D F (eds) 1994: 297-327.

Lash, N 1976. *Voices of Authority*. London, UK: Sheed and Ward.

--- 1986. *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*. London, UK: SCM.

Lategan, B C 1984. Current Issues in the Hermeneutical Dabate. *Neot* 18:1-17.

--- 1992. s v 'Hermeneutics'. *ABD* 3:149-154.

--- 1997. Possible Future Trends From the Perspective of Hermeneutics. *JTSA* 99:116-121.

Lee, K-S 1966. *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism 1868-1945*. Philadelphia, Penn: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

Lee, S-G 2007. *The History and Theology of the Korean Church (한국교회 역사와 신학)*. Seoul: Saengmyungui Yangsik.

Lehmann, P L 1946. The Reformers' Use of the Bible. *TT* 3/3:328-344.

Leith, J H (ed) 1973. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Levinas, E 1969. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, tr by A Lingis. Pittsburgh, Penn: Duquesne University Press.

Lienhard, J T 1995. *The Bible, the Church, and Authority: The Canon of the Christian Bible in History and Theology*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical.

Lindbeck, G A 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia, Penn: Westminster.

--- 1989a. The Church's Mission to a Postmodern Culture, in Burnham, F B (ed), *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*, 37-55. San Francisco, Cal: Harper & Row.

--- 1989b. Scripture, Consensus, and Community, in Neuhaus, R J (ed), *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, 74-101. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2002. *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, ed by J J Buckley. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Lints, R 1993. *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Lopes, A N 1997. Calvin, theologian of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. *SBET* 15:38-49.

Loughlin, G 1996. *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Louth, A 1983. *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lundin, R (ed) 1997. *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Lyon, D 1997. Sliding in All Directions? Social Hermeneutics from Suspicion to Retrieval, in Lundin, R (ed) 1997: 99-116.

Marsden, G M 1983. The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia, in Plantinga, A & Wolterstorff, N (eds) 1983: 219-264.

--- 2006. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Marshall, I H 1997. "To Find Out What God Is Saying": Reflections on the Authorizing of Scripture, in Lundin, R (ed) 1997: 49-55.

McGowan, A T B 2007. *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

McGrath, A E 1990. *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

--- 1996. An Evangelical Evaluation of Postliberalism, in Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds) 1996: 23-44.

--- 1999. *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

McKelway, A J 2007. The Spirit and the Letter, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 198-216.

Migliore, D L 2004. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Milner Jr, B C 1970. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church*. Leiden, The Netherlands: E J Brill.

Min, K B 1996. *A History of the Korean Church (한국 교회사)*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press.

Moberly, R W L 2000. *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Moltmann, J 1999. Theologia Reformata et Semper Reformanda, in Willis, D & Welker, M (eds) 1999: 120-135.

Montgomery, J W (ed) 1974. *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*. Minneapolis, Minn: Bethany Fellowship.

Mouton, E 2007. Surprised by New Contexts? Challenges of Reformed Exegesis from within Liminal Spaces, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 230-242.

Muller, R A 1985. s v 'accommodatio'. *DLGTT*:19.

--- 1996. Calvin and the "Calvinist": Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities Between the Reformation and Orthodoxy (Part Two). *Calvin Theological Journal* 31/1:125-160.

--- 2003. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca.1520 to ca. 1725*. 2nd ed. *Holy Scripture*, Vol 2. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic.

Murphy, N 1994. Introduction, in Hauerwas, S, Murphy, N & Nation, M (eds), *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*, 9-34. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon.

--- 1996. *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda*. Valley Forge, Penn: Trinity Press International.

--- 1997. *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics*. Boulder, Col: Westview Press.

Murray, J 1960. *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House.

Naudé, P J 2007. Reformed Confessions as Hermeneutical Problem: A Case Study of the Belhar Confession, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 242-260.

Nevius, J L 1958. *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*. Philadelphia, Penn: Presbyterian and Reformed.

Newbigin, L 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 1996. *Truth and Authority in Modernity*. Valley Forge, Penn: Trinity Press International.

Nicole, R 1992. The Biblical Concept of Truth, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1992: 287-298.

Noll, M A 1991. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House.

Oden, T C 1998. The Real Reformers Are Traditionalists? *CT* 42/2:45-46.

Ogden, S M 1976. The Authority of Scripture for Theology. *Interpretation* 30/3:242-261.

Olson, R E 1998. The Future of Evangelical Theology. *CT* 42/2:40-42,44,47-48.

--- 1999. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

Ong, W J 1967. *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.

--- [1982] 2000. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Osborne, G R 2006. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Packer, J I 1974a. Calvin's View of Scripture, in Montgomery, J W (ed) 1974: 95-114.

--- 1974b. "Sola Scriptura" in History and Today, in Montgomery, J W (ed) 1974: 43-62.

--- 1992. Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1992: 325-356.

Pannenberg, W 1997. On the Inspiration of Scripture. *TT* 54/2:212-215.

Park, H-R 1983. *A Criticism of Modern Theology I (현대신학비평 상권)*, Vol Ⅷ. *Dr Park Hyung-Ryung's Complete Works (박형룡 박사 저작전집)*. Seoul: The Institution of Korean Christian Education.

Park, J-C 1998. *Crawl with God, Dance in the Spirit!: A Creative Formation of Korean Theology of the Spirit*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon.

Park, Y-K 1992. *Korean Protestantism and Biblical Authority: A History of Presbyterian Theological Thought in Korea (한국 장로교 사상사: 한국교회와 성경의 권위)*. Seoul: Chongshin Publishing Company.

Peterson, E H 2006. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton.

Phillips, T R & Okholm, D L (eds) 1996. *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversation*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

Placher, W C 1989. *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation*. Louisville, Ken: Westminster John Knox.

Plantinga, A 1983. Reason and Belief in God, in Plantinga, A & Wolterstorff, N (eds) 1983: 16-93.

--- 2000. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Plantinga, A & Wolterstorff, N (eds) 1983. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press.

Porter, S E 2004. Hermeneutics, Biblical Interpretation, and Theology: Hunch, Holy Spirit, or Hard Work?, in Marshall, I H (ed), *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology*, 97-128. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic.

Poythress, V S 1984. Adequacy of Language and Accommodation, in Radmacher, E D & Preus, R D (eds) 1984: 349-376.

Radmacher, E D & Preus, R D (eds) 1984. *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Academie Books.

Ramm, B 1959. *The Pattern of Religious Authority*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Reid, J K S [1957] 1981. *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible*. Reprint. Westport, Conn: Greenwood.

Reid, T 1997. *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, ed by D R Brookes. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Ricoeur, P 1970. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, tr by D Savage. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.

--- 1995. *Figuring The Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed by M I Wallace, tr by D Pellauer. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress.

Rigby, C L 2007. Redeeming Words: Hypostatic Union and the Reading of Scripture, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 331-348.

Ro, B-R 1983. Non-Spiritual Factors in Church Growth, in Ro, B-R & Nelson, M L (eds), 159-170.

Ro, B-R & Nelson, M L (eds) 1983. *Korean church growth explosion*. Seoul: Word of Life.

Rogers, J B & McKim, D K 1979. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*. San Francisco, Cal: Harper & Row.

Rorty, R (ed) 1967. *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Rossouw, H W 1982. Calvin's Hermeneutics of Holy Scripture, in Institute for Reformational Studies (ed), *Calvinus Reformator: His Contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, 149-191. Potchefstroom, South Africa: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

Sandeen, E 1970. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Satterthwaite, P E & Wright, D F (eds) 1994. *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Scholer, D M 1990. The Nature of Biblical Authority: A Moderate Perspective, in Blaisdell, C R (ed), *Conservative, Moderate, Liberal: The Biblical Authority Debate*, 57-68. St Louis, Mis: CBP.

Schwöbel, C 1989. The Creature of the Word: Recovering the Ecclesiology of the Reformers, in Gunton, C E & Hardy, D W (eds) 1989: 110-155.

Shults, F L 1999. *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2003. *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

Smit, D J 1998. Biblical Hermeneutics: the 20th century, in Maimela, S & König, A (eds), *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, 297-317. Pretoria, South Africa: JK van Schaik.

--- 2005. On Learning to Speak: A South African Reformed Perspective on Dialogue. *Scriptura* 88:183-204.

--- 2007. Rhetoric and Ethic? A Reformed Perspective on the Politics of Reading the Bible, in Alston Jr, W M & Welker, M (eds) 2007: 385-418.

Smith, J W 1961. Religion and Science in American Philosophy, in Smith, J W & Jamison, A L (eds), *The Shaping of American Religion*, 402-442. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Smith, W C 1993. *What is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach*. London, UK: SCM.

Song, T C-I 1999. A Theological-Ethical Study of the Relationship Between Eco-justice and Economic Growth in the Context of the Social Transformation of Modern Korea. D Th thesis, University of Stellenbosch.

Sparks, K 2004. The Sun Also Rises: Accommodation in Inscripturation and Interpretation, in Bacote, V E, Miguélez, L C & Okholm, D L (eds) 2004: 112-132.

Spykman, G J 1992. *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Stackhouse, J G (ed) 2000. *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books.

Steinmetz, D C 2006. John Calvin as an interpreter of the Bible, in McKim, D K (ed), *Calvin and the Bible*, 282-291. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Stell, S L 1993. Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics: Beyond Lindbeck and Tracy. *JAAR* 61/4:679-702.

Stephen, N W 1995. *Revelation and Reconciliation: A Window on Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Stout, J 1981. *The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press.

Strange, W 2000. *The Authority of the Bible*. London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Stroup, G W 1981. *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church*. Atlanta, Ga: John Knox.

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1982. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics. *JETS* 25/4:397-401.

Thiel, J E 1994. *Nonfoundationalism*. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress.

Thiemann, R F 1985. *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame.

Thiselton, A C 1978. s v 'Truth'. *NIDNTT* 3:874-902.

--- 1992. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

--- 1994. Authority and Hermeneutics: Some Proposals for a More Creative Agenda, in Satterthwaite, P E & Wright, D F (eds) 1994: 107-141.

--- 1999. Communicative Action and Promise in Interdisciplinary, Biblical, and Theological Hermeneutics, in Lundin, R, Walhout, C & Thiselton, A C (eds), *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 133-239. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2006. *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: The Collected Works and New Essays of Anthony Thiselton*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

--- 2007. *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 2009. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Torrance, T F 1969. *Theological Science*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

--- 1988. *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Scottish Academic.

--- 1995. *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Tracy, D 1994. Theology and the Many Faces of Postmodernity. *TT* 51/1:104-114.

Travis, W G 2004. Pietism and the History of American Evangelicalism, in Erickson, M J, Helseth, P K & Taylor, J (eds), *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, 251-280. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books.

Treier, D J 2005. s v 'Proof Text'. *DTIB*:622-624.

--- 2007. Scripture and Hermeneutics, in Larsen, T & Treier, D J (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, 35-49. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

--- 2008. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic.

Van den Belt, H 2008. *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Van der Kooi, C 2005. *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God. A Diptych*, tr by D Mader. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Van Hook, J M 1981. Knowledge, Belief, and Reformed Epistemology. *RJ* 31:12-17.

Van Huyssteen, J W 1987. *The Realism of the Text: A Perspective on Biblical Authority*. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa Press.

--- 1989. *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology*, tr by H F Snijders. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 1997. *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

--- 1999. *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science*. Grand Rapids, Mich / Cambridge, UK: Wm B Eerdmans.

Vander Kolk, J 1951. A Re-examination of Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture Based on Reading in His Commentary. D Ph thesis, The University of Chicago.

Vander Stelt, J C 1978. *Philosophy and Scripture: A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology*. Marlton, NJ: Mack.

Vanhoozer, K J 1986. The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms, in Carson, D A & Woodbridge, J D (eds) 1986: 49-104.

--- 1991. Christ and Concept: Doing Theology and the "Ministry" of Philosophy, in Woodbridge, J D & McComiskey, T E (eds), *Doing Thteology in Today's World*, 99-145. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

--- 1994. God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today, in Satterthwaite, P E & Wright, D F (eds) 1994: 143-181.

--- 1998. *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: the Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

--- 2000. The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology, in Stackhouse, J G (ed) 2000: 61-106.

--- 2002. *First Theology: God, scriptures & hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press.

--- (ed) 2003. *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

--- 2003a. Scripture and Tradition, in Vanhoozer, K J (ed) 2003: 149-169.

--- 2003b. Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: A Report on Knowledge (of God), in Vanhoozer, K J (ed) 2003: 3-25.

--- 2005. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox.

--- 2007. What is Everyday Theology?: How and Why Christians Should Read Culture, in Vanhoozer, K J, Anderson, C A & Sleasman, M J (eds), *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, 15-60. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic.

--- 2010. *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vroom, H M 1993. Scripture Read and Interpreted: The Development of the Doctrine of Scripture and Hermeneutics in Gereformeerde Theology in the Netherlands. *CTJ* 28/2:352-71.

Wainwright, G 1980. *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*. London, UK: Epworth.

Ward, T 2002. *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Warfield, B B 1931. *Calvin and Calvinism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

--- 1948. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Philadelphia, Penn: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing.

--- 1970. *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, 2 vols. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company.

Watson, F 1994. *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

Webster, J 1998. Hermeneutics in Modern Theology: Some Doctrinal Reflections. *SJT* 51/3:307-341.

--- 2001. *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark.

--- 2003. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

--- 2004. Biblical Theology and the Clarity of Scripture, in Bartholomew, C et al (eds) 2004: 352-384.

--- 2005. *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II*. London, UK: T & T Clark.

Welker, M 1994. *God the Spirit*, tr by J F Hoffmeyer. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress.

--- 1999. Travail and Mission: Theology Reformed according to God's Word at the beginning of the Third Millennium, in Willis, D & Welker, M (eds) 1999: 136-152.

--- 2002. Modernity and Post-Modernity as Challenges to Christian Theology. *SMT* 90/4:435-447.

--- 2003. *Sola Scriptura?* The Authority of the Bible in Pluralistic Environments, in Strawn, B A & Bowen, N R (eds), *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns.

--- 2006. The Spirit in philosophical, theological, and interdisciplinary perspectives, in Welker, M (ed), *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, 221-232. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Wells, S 2004. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos.

Werpehowski, W 1986. Ad Hoc Apologetics. *JR* 66:282-301.

Westphal, M 1993. *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Willis, D & Welker, M (eds) 1999. *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Wolterstorff, N 1983a. Can Belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?, in Plantinga, A & Wolterstorff, N (eds) 1983: 135-186.

--- 1983b. Introduction, in Plantinga, A & Wolterstorff, N (eds) 1983: 1-15.

--- 1995. *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

--- 2006. True Words, in Padgett, A G & Keifert, P R (eds), *But Is It All True?: The Bible and The Question of Truth*, 34-43. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Wood, C M 1981. *The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics*. Philadelphia, Penn: The Westminster Press.

--- 1987. Hermeneutics and the Authority of Scripture, in Green, G (ed), *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, 3-20. Philadelphia, Penn: Fortress.

Wood, W J 1998. *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous*. Leicester, England: APOLLOS.

Woodbridge, J D 1982. *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

Work, T 2002. *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm B Eerdmans.

Wright, C J H 2006. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVasity Press.

Wright, N T 1991. How can the Bible be authoritative? *VE* 21:7-32.

--- 1992. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress.

--- 2005. *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Wright, S I 2000. An Experiment in Biblical Criticism: Aesthetic Encounter in Reading and Preaching Scripture, in Bartholomew, C, Greene, C & Möller, K (eds), *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, 240-267. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

Yang, N-H 2008. *The History of the Korean Presbyterian Church (한국장로교회사)*. Seoul: Saengmyungui Malsseumsa.

Young, F 1990. *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture*. London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Zachman, R 2009. Oracles, Visions, and Oral Tradition: Calvin on the Foundation of Scripture. *Interpretation* 63/2:117-129.