The Theological Reception of the Book of Isaiah in the Nineteenth-Century Church of England

By

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Abstract

This study considers the matter of “theological exegesis” in the context of a divided Church. For the purpose of specificity, I direct attention to the nineteenth-century Church of England and the book of the Prophet Isaiah serves as the exegetical focal point for analyzing various commentators. The terminus a quo is a rather straight-forward one: in what sense does the practice of reading Scripture become fundamentally re-defined within a frangible ecclesial reality?

This project takes a novel approach to the reception-history of Isaiah and to the many changes that attended theological exegesis since the Reformation. I challenge the prevailing view that new historical-critical methods precipitate from external pressures on a Church unable to keep abreast of new discoveries. I argue, instead, that the emergence of such methodologies is the consequence of warring ecclesial factions. Thus, nineteenth-century exegetical strategies arise from the conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Restricting my purview to the Church of England and English Roman Catholicism, I consider the three well known parties within the former: Low Church Evangelicals, Broad Church liberal-minded exegetes, and the old High Church party. I also give some consideration to the Oxford Movement for purposes of comparison and contrast with the old High Church party. The central Isaiah commentators are Robert
Payne Smith, Thomas Kelly Cheyne and Christopher Wordsworth, respectively.
Moreover, as a foil for Anglican exegesis, I explore how English Roman Catholics read the book of Isaiah.

I employ three analytical categories that are definitive of a uniquely Anglican hermeneutical vision, namely, the nature of reading the Bible communally, Scripture as a unitary canon comprising the Word of God, and the christological interpretive approach to an Old Testament text like Isaiah. My conclusions suggest that the riven Church must reconsider and retrieve a vision of its existence as an entity that must undergo the “suffering” of the divine Word. This may constitute the beginning of a way out of the despair of the divided ecclesial self.
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# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 Introduction: The Problem of Exegesis in a Divided Church  
  1 Purpose  
  2 Methodology: Anglicanism and Exegesis  
  3 The Importance of Isaiah as an Exegetical Lens  
  4 The Problem of “Theological Exegesis”  

CHAPTER 2 The Scriptural Hermeneutic of Early Anglicanism:  
  1 Introduction  
  2 Pre- and Post-Reformation Hermeneutical Options  
  3 An Ecclesial Reading of the Bible  
  4 The Canon of Scripture  
  5 A Christological Reading of Scripture  
  6 The Old Testament and Isaiah in the Prayer Book  
  7 Conclusion  

CHAPTER 3 The Breakdown of Uniformity: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Competing Intra-Anglican Scriptural Visions:  
  1 New Challenges to the Anglican Hermeneutic  
  2 Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Commentaries on Isaiah  
    2.1 Nehemiah Rogers: The Song of the Vineyard  
    2.2 William Day and Samuel White: Heralds of a new Protestant Poetics  
    2.3 Richard Stafford: Ecumenical Minimalism and Religious Privatization  
    2.4 Richard Kidder and William Lowth: Defending Scripture  
    2.5 Robert Lowth and Proto-Romanticism  
  3 Conclusion and an Outline of Anglican Parties  

CHAPTER 4 Robert Payne Smith: Rescuing Isaiah From its Opponents:  
  1 Introduction  
  2 The State of Isaiah Scholarship in the Nineteenth Century  
  3 Smith’s Exegetical Methodology  
  4 The Church and the Individual  
  5 The Canon of Scripture  
  6 Smith’s Christological and Spiritual Hermeneutic of Scripture  
  7 Conclusion  

CHAPTER 5 The Politics of Division: Christopher Wordsworth and the Exegesis of Isaiah:  
  1 The Ecclesio-Political Vision of the High Church Party  
  2 Wordsworth and His Hermeneutical Orientation  
  3 The Church, Text, and Individual  
  4 Isaiah, Christ, and the Canon of Scripture
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
THE PROBLEM OF EXEGESIS IN A DIVIDED CHURCH

1 Purpose

The predominant aim of this project is to test the hypothesis that an inherently divisive ecclesial reality obscures the theological exegesis of Scripture in the nineteenth-century Church of England. The book of the Prophet Isaiah serves as the lens through which I perform this analysis. While it is well known that numerous and rancorous debates pervade Anglican discourse today, this is not explicitly a study of current trends in Anglican readings of the Bible. Rather, I consider the nineteenth century as emblematic of the confusion over the role of Scripture within the Church, the consequence of a combative matrix that dilutes Scripture’s theologically and ecclesially preeminent role.

A host of historical, political, and sociological accounts could be (and, indeed, have been) offered that depict the origin and development of contemporary controversial

1I give a working definition of “theological exegesis” below.

2See, for instance Miranda K. Hassett, Anglican Communion in Crisis: How Episcopal Dissidents and Their African Allies Are Reshaping Anglicanism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007) which discusses the phenomenon (generally, in the American context) whereby people who identify with the “conservative” wing of the Episcopal Church align themselves with similarly conservative Africans. This alignment is not only in terms of ideological solidarity: many have placed themselves under the authority of African bishops. The catalytic issue is often related to ordaining, blessing, marrying or otherwise affirming non-heterosexual relationships and identities. Stephen Bates, A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) describes this issue in terms of the Church of England feeling the need to adapt to radically changing social mores and William L. Sachs, Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) traces the issue historically, examining the underlying issues.
issues. I propose to situate my discussion strictly along theological lines, with the view that, as this is a discussion of “church,” the theological dimension is paramount and one under which all other matters must be subordinated. Such an examination could, for instance, be done under the auspices of “communion,” but even this is a concept that is in peril, when applied to the Anglican Church today, as a result competing claims to ecclesial self-identity even within the bounds of particular Anglican Churches themselves, now multiplied throughout the world.3

In The End of the Church, Ephraim Radner argues that the structure of theological engagement with Scripture by both Protestants and Roman Catholics is inherently divisive, and he does so in pneumatological terms.4 Among the ecclesial practices Radner discusses is the reading of Scripture: the Church finds it “normal” that the Bible can be read in contradictory ways. The claims of an Anglican “communion,” to say nothing of the “one, holy, catholic Church,” are therefore asserted in a context where there is little to no agreement on the theological role of Scripture in the Church, rendering the claims themselves confused and perhaps questionable. In the book In The Ruins of the Church, R. R. Reno argues, like Radner, that the Church in her divided condition reads Scripture dysfunctionally.5 Reno points to nineteenth-century thinkers who, in typical modernist fashion, use Scripture in such a way that it functions as a “hindering, limited, and ruined artifact of a now dead past” — a use Reno attributes to both “liberals” and “conservatives” who “flee from the body of received tradition.”6 This is so, whether


one clings, on the one hand, to a literalist interpretation of the Bible, or, on the other hand, to a careful peeling away of redactional layers for the hidden “core”: Scripture is no longer the driving engine, shaping the providentially ordered life of the one Church throughout history. Reno argues that it is not the historical-critical movement as such that tore the Bible from its ecclesial moorings, but a move away from the askesis of reading the Bible in common worship. This ascetic lack, which I argue arises out of theological controversy and even violence, bred modern ways of reading Scripture. Modern interpretations relocate the Bible within a particular context of attacks directed (whether explicitly or implicitly) against other parties within the Church. Moreover, approaches that esteem a critical orientation to the Bible tend to be funded by a desire to rise above division, but in the end escape from the idea of the Bible as Scripture. This is an exegetical orientation that regards Scripture in terms of historical and philological categories, with a view to avoiding the dogmatic dimension so key to exegesis for centuries before the Reformation.

This project takes Reno’s and Radner’s claims seriously. My intent is to add to them by considering the nature of exegesis within a particular historical time period. Such a focus grants greater resolution to the problem as it explores the struggle of the Church of England during a theologically pivotal time. It was during the nineteenth century that many of the various “wings” of the Church solidified, and this internal division generated a kind of identity crisis — though I also argue that this is the product of ecclesial struggles of previous centuries. This study is needed in order to explore the problem of a divided Church, based on questions of ecclesial identity, scriptural exegesis and various historical movements, rather than contemporary concerns of, for instance, sexual identity and the nature of marriage. These latter matters are epiphenomenal to

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6Reno, In the Ruins of the Church, 18.
much deeper issues related to the nature of the Church, which need to be explored within a specific historical context. In other words, in a highly localized manner, I am testing Reno’s assertion about biblical *askesis* and Radner’s allegation of the inherently divisive quality of post-reformational theology. This contributes to their claims by considering how the dynamic they describe functions and enters into the intellectual stream of thought at the level of the Church of England. Therefore, my analysis asks questions of ecclesial identity within a specific, local Christian community, namely, the Church of England, testing the hypothesis that confusion about the relationship between Scripture and the identity of the Church profoundly and negatively affects the practice of theological exegesis. The extent to which these conclusions can be subsequently transposed to a more “catholic” level I leave to my conclusion in Chapter 8.

The numerous competing factions of the Anglican Church are well known, and I describe them in the context of the nineteenth century with more detail at the end of Chapter 3. I outline them here very briefly. I refer to the Low Church party as comprising those who identify with the Evangelical Movement. The High Church party, out of which the Oxford Movement arose, comprises those who attempt to construe the Church of England as inheritors of the historically constituted catholic Church. Finally, for the sake of simplicity, I regard the so-called Broad Church party as thinkers who adhere to a “liberal” perspective. This latter group, in my construal, affirms an engagement with Scripture that attempts to cohere with modern notions of textual analysis. But, much more than this exegetical dimension, there is an entire theological anthropology that serves as the substructure of their orientation to Scripture and humanity in general. They tend to eschew theological propositions and dogmatic claims in favour of Christianity as an instance of a general “religious” quality inherent in human identity.

Of these three parties, the latter is the most difficult to define. Many thinkers straddle the boundaries between any of these movements. This makes choosing
appropriate exegetical exemplars difficult, and the hazard of offering caricatures must be avoided. For this reason, it becomes necessary to employ certain criteria in the selection of my central exegetical figures. One primary criterion is a significant engagement by each thinker in work at an academic level, while at the same time being a good exemplar of his particular ecclesial perspective. All primary exemplars were appointed to a university position and offered a notable contribution to Isaiah scholarship during their tenure. At the same time, none of the central figures were considered founders of their respective movements. For the Evangelical party, I have chosen to examine Robert Payne Smith’s lectures on Isaiah (Chapter 4). I consider Christopher Wordsworth as the representative of the High Church party (Chapter 5), and for that of the Broad Church Party, Thomas Kelly Cheyne serves as the focal exegete (Chapter 6).

Finally, all these thinkers thought of themselves as committed representatives of Protestant theology, and therefore the greatest catalyst for antagonistic thought was, in their minds, the ever-present spectre of Roman Catholicism. It is this rather amorphous and oft-persecuted minority in England to which I attend in Chapter 7. The Protestant attitude toward Roman Catholics often called for a defensive position by Catholic theologians, which played a major role in the combative matrix of theological exegesis. However, Roman Catholicism in nineteenth-century England was so disengaged from scriptural exegesis that my analysis cannot focus on only one exegete, nor on Isaiah, in a sustained way — which is itself notable with regard to a Roman Catholic view of the Bible. It was not until 1829 that legal restrictions on Roman Catholics were eased, and still quite some time before major English universities (Oxford and Cambridge) granted degrees to those who would not subscribe to the Articles of Religion of the Church of

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7 Of course, the Oxford Movement was the only party that can be considered to have a nineteenth-century date of founding and a clearly defined set of leaders. It was also the only movement that was uniquely Anglican. By the time of the nineteenth century, if one were to seek out English leaders of the Evangelical or liberal movements, they would not likely be members of the Church of England.
England. Therefore, it is much harder to find Catholic thinkers in England of equal academic stature to this study’s chosen Anglican exemplars, and who are nonetheless fairly representative of Roman Catholicism. Moreover, since Catholicism was the “common enemy” of all other factions, it was very difficult for English Catholics to engage in positive theological ventures. I therefore illustrate that, since the Bible was the battleground of division amongst the various Protestant parties, the subsequent response by Roman Catholics was to avoid any serious exegetical engagement, beyond a superficial level. In this case, I make use of academic periodicals, devotional literature and the writings of popular Catholic thinkers as the basis for my analysis. In rather simple terms, my argument is that the visible reality of Protestant divisiveness among various sects and warring factions was itself proof for Roman Catholics that the entire Protestant view of Scripture was a deviation from the one true Church of Christ. But I also argue that the project of “theological minimization” of Scripture that I outline in Chapter 3 bears some resemblance to the Catholic approach to Scripture in that there is a deep distinction, or bifurcation, between dogmatic theology and the text of Scripture.

2 Methodology: Anglicanism and Exegesis

How the Anglican Church in the nineteenth century came to find itself in a position of exegetical plurality requires a tracing of its exegetical and theological history from the time of the Reformation. Here I briefly outline my analytical approach to this exegetical revolution by describing what it meant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to read the Bible in the Church in a uniquely Anglican way. I expand on this in Chapter 2 as the analytic “touchstone” of my primary Isaiah exegetes.

My approach questions the sufficiency of most narratives that describe exegetical changes in the Anglican approach to the Bible. This project therefore attends to and describes an account of theological history that has often been overlooked. I outline new exegetical practices in the nineteenth century, which were in response to numerous
pressures within and outside the Church of England. I dispute the view that nineteenth-century controversies such as the relation between science and theology, the protection of the autonomy of the individual, and the development of the scientific analysis of the Bible, *viz.*, historical criticism, provide the impetus for new exegetical approaches. Rather, they are best described as inevitable consequences to those changes in ways of reading Scripture that were antecedent to such theological bombshells as *Essays and Reviews* (1860). This study seeks to put to rest the myth that exegesis failed because of the external pressures of new scientific discoveries and the development of new methods of historical research. The “new worldview” that arose, according to this viewpoint, is all too often construed as an external, alien interjection of ideas that permeated Christian thought with respect to Scripture, resulting in the Bible’s liberation (for “progressives”) or its diminishment (for “conservatives”). In contrast, I suggest that the vast changes in the very nature of reading and exegesis are epiphenomenal to ecclesial division.

In my account, new critical tools were developed by Christians in general to attempt to respond to religious conflict, and by Protestants in particular to reject

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This is the implicit view taken, for instance, by New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman in Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), a popular textbook on the New Testament. His approach is a “historical” one. As such, “historians, as historians, have no privileged access to what happens in the supernatural realm; they have access only to what happens in this, our natural world” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 15). Despite Ehrman’s supposed clarity in distinguishing between the “supernatural” and “natural” realm, this statement is indicative of his acceptance of a “natural” world and the ensuing scientific tools that precipitate from this assumption. With respect to the Old Testament, there is also James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), an illuminating indicator of the pluri-form, contradictory, and confusing approaches to relating theology and the critical study of the text. Particularly noteworthy is Barr’s statement that “since doctrinal theology uses *historical criticism* upon its historical sources, and has never had a moment’s doubt about doing so [!]”, this gives some support to the use of such criticism on the Bible also” (Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 607). These assertions by Ehrman and Barr, however, are rather oblique; Walter Brueggemann speaks to this notion more explicitly when he says, “the rise of science meant that the Bible came to occupy no privileged position of interpretation” (Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997], 9). Most modern textbooks take it as a matter of fact that exegesis has been completely reoriented, shorn of “pre-critical” biases, as a result of the power of a worldview ameliorated by science. Others accept that science is the cause of this shift and either fight against it or seek some way to accommodate those parts that are perceived to be theologically palatable.
perceived Roman Catholic hegemony. Most significant inroads into biblical criticism were done with an aim to help the Church, even if the result was to undermine it. These critical tools were therefore children of the Church itself. While some critical pilgrims were working with a measure of hostility toward traditional doctrinal exegesis (e.g., Spinoza, Reimarus), most saw themselves, rather, as working toward the betterment of the Church, aiming to solve the intractability of division.\(^9\) By the time of the nineteenth century, this desire for the improvement of religion was no different. Frederick Farrar’s 1889 Bampton Lectures offer a progressivist account of the history of biblical interpretation. Farrar says, “my sole desire has been to defend the cause of Christianity by furthering the interests of truth.”\(^{10}\) Or John Tulloch’s *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (1888) speaks of the genius of Coleridge’s rejection of biblical infallibility in favour of the “divinity of scripture” which resides “not in the letter but in the spirit.”\(^{11}\) Tulloch found unquestionable the necessity to divide the “spirit” of the Bible from “dogma,” for, “dogma splits rather than unites from its very nature.”\(^{12}\) This latter quotation is representative of what I claim is a common thread the runs through the exegetical history of many innovators of new biblical orientations. Farrar and Tulloch quite positively view the new exegetical environment as the consequence of an advance in knowledge, which is “nothing less than a new revelation of the ways and works of God.”\(^{13}\) Farrar and others conceive of the

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\(^{13}\)Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, ix.
“newness” of the age as external to the Church, that is, *despite* the Church or *to spite* the Church. However, the form of exegesis I describe is, fundamentally, *ecclesially* derived, misshapen as it may have been, and the result of the Church’s divisive climate.

Within Anglicanism today, the result of this divisive climate is, somewhat oxymoronically, a “communion” resting upon multiple, contradictory and often hostile ways of reading Scripture. Anglicanism has become a “pluralistic communion.” Rowan Greer’s position in *Anglican Approaches to Scripture*, one of the few recent treatments of Anglican hermeneutics, is characteristic of this condition. Greer traces the various uses of the Bible through Anglicanism’s development, and attempts to make the case that Samuel T. Coleridge (1772–1834), the Romantic literary critic, poet, and philosopher, provides the best paradigm for interpreting Scripture. He agrees with Coleridge’s view that “orthodoxy” (read: a traditioned, ecclesial reading of Scripture) “removes the human element from scripture and stifles the various voices.”14 If Greer has a hermeneutic, it is this: we cannot hear Scripture “as we move away from what is necessary to salvation or away from what will come to be called the ‘essence’ of Christianity.”15 This view is a common derivative of early modern attempts to bypass exegetical debate and division by extracting and abstracting a particular essence against which the Scriptures themselves and their multiple interpreters are to be judged.16 The consequence is a turn away from

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15Greer, *Anglican Approaches to Scripture*, xi.

16This is one facet of what I refer to as an “irenic” reading of the text, a term that I borrow and on which I expand from Michael Legaspi’s book *The Death of Scripture* (Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010]). It serves as a significantly influential and helpful term in this project. Briefly, an  irenic  is an approach that aims to move away from complexity and pluriformity of meaning in favour of certain “essences” of the “religious” system, avoiding particular dogmatic claims, perceived as inhibitors to the expression of individual faith. Lest this seem contradictory to Greer’s aim to prevent the “stifling” of various voices, the  irenic exegetical approach turns the uniquely Anglican approach to the text on its head, as it were. If there is a broadly “Anglican” approach to reading Scripture, and as some of the exegetes I
the particularity of the scriptural text in favour of external modes and tools of reading that seek to apprehend these essential meanings. The chosen tools, however, were multiple and varied, and were selected under the claim of an improved “certainty” of the textual meaning, independent of confessional commitments.

Roman Catholic scholar Aidan Nichols in *The Panther and the Hind* offers a more trenchant critique of Anglicanism in his assertion that this theological pluralism is far from a coherent identity and in fact contributes to an inherent instability within Anglicanism. While a major flaw in Nichols’ argument is an almost total lack of engagement with the Anglican biblical tradition, it is important to note that his conclusion regarding Anglican instability contributes to my argument. For Nichols, it is the historical development of the characteristically Anglican *via media* that exerts a disintegrating force on ecclesial identity. The *via media*, to Nichols, denotes a state of affairs in Anglicanism that attempts to forge a course between the extremes of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, but in doing so, chooses to make no significantly identifiable doctrinal decisions. This thus construes Anglicanism as a doctrinally amorphous entity. However, what is, to Nichols, the appearance of doctrinal ambiguity, is in fact a defining characteristic of early Anglicanism in which Scripture shapes theological thought instead of subjecting it to definitive confessional statements. Whether his interpretation of the *via media* is an accurate one (and it is, at best, historically simplistic), the greatest lacuna in Nichols’ work is a consistent discussion of how Scripture functions in the development of Anglican identity.

of Anglican identity. I propose to argue that his conclusion regarding Anglican instability is correct; however, I further argue that all hermeneutical schemes are bound to end ultimately in projects of despair.18

The goal of Chapter 2 is to describe a uniquely Anglican vision of Scripture in terms of certain exegetical categories. Before I give some detail of these categories below, I briefly describe three intellectual “movements” of sorts that exert a force on and are driven by a divisive ecclesial reality. They are often referred to as humanism, scepticism, and various spiritualist traditions. I regard these throughout this dissertation as the tools (and temptations19) that contribute to exegetical disintegration. They often play an important part of the “standard” account of early modern history. This account, however, often neglects their role in ecclesial division. I consider humanism within the context of understanding the nature of a text and its interpretation. With the attendant interest in ancient languages and culture associated with humanism, the Bible came to be subjected to new challenges on the basis of philology and historical reconstruction. The tendency was to aim for textual and ecclesial “repristination,” a desire to return to a kind of “golden age” of the Church (historically reconstructed), stripped of its perceived unnecessary accoutrements over time. As regards scepticism, it is an intellectual climate in which the sceptical reader can only achieve a “right reading” when the demands of certainty are met; yet these demands are constantly subverted by the competing claims of divided Christian churches. From Luther on, Scripture is only unclear if the reader is not “willing to look and accept what one sees.”20

18 As regards the notion of “despair,” see Chapter 8.

19 In Chapter 8, the Conclusion, I briefly mention Luther’s concept of tentatio, temptation, with regard to Scripture. It is not my intention to explore this any further, except to merely suggest that these are three temptations that present themselves to the Church with regard to exegesis. And, like many things that tempt, each temptation does not present obviously evil consequences, until one repeatedly succumbs to it.

20 Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (Berkeley, CA:
one sees derives from one’s inner conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, with the aim of establishing complete certainty. Finally, spiritualist modes of thought tended to subvert the concrete particularity of various textual referents in favour of those pertaining to the inner disposition of the individual. This also encouraged a minimization of the theological importance of the Old Testament, calling into question the unitary canonicity of the Bible. Likewise, just as Israel as a common people came to become theologically minimized, so also did the external, visible Church. These are some of the ways that spiritualist, humanist, and sceptical tendencies have historical exerted a divisive force on the Church.

I describe the uniquely Anglican hermeneutical vision of the Bible in terms of the Church’s central thinkers: Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), John Whitgift (c. 1530–1604) and Richard Hooker (1554–1600). There are three central categories under which I carry out my analysis of Isaiah commentaries. They are: (1) The relation between Scripture and the ecclesial community as a whole, vis-à-vis the individual; (2) the claim that Scripture functions as the one Word of God, that is, as a single canon, given its unity by virtue of its ultimate author, namely, God; and (3) the christological hermeneutic demanded by Scripture; that is, that the ultimate textual referent has to do with Jesus of Nazareth, not just in terms of prophetic prediction, but by way of figuralism and typology. These categories are not per se unique as regards a Protestant hermeneutic. What I present, however, is how they incarnate in a uniquely Anglican mode. I am not arguing for the normativity of Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker’s original vision of Scripture’s place in Anglicanism. However, I demonstrate how the nineteenth century’s variegated and divisive exegesis is not only incongruent with, but subversive of this foundational scriptural framework. This Anglican framework, as it is rooted in the use of the Prayer

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Book, continues to exert a kind of counter-witness to the increasingly incoherent exegetical efforts of Anglican scriptural expositors. At times, this is an exertion in the form of a kind negative shadow over exegetical experimentation, never entirely losing its sway.

With regard to the relation between the Bible and the Church, I employ the valuable work of Ramie Targoff, particularly in *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*. Targoff seeks to counteract the claims in which religious scholars, regarding Anglican attempts at liturgical uniformity, “frequently represented this commitment to uniformity in terms of the religious establishment’s political, and not devotional, motivations.” It is true that liturgical changes, often effected by Cranmer in consultation with Continental Protestants, were aimed at correcting Roman Catholic theological errors in matters such as the Eucharist. However, Cranmer also encouraged the laity’s immersion in “a competing model of community” in which all can engage in the *hearing* of Scripture, which heretofore was actively discouraged by Roman Catholics. I also employ the work of Peter Lake, in particular his book *Anglicans and Puritans?* Lake’s claim is that a consistent theme of early Anglican thinkers was the doctrine of *corpus permixtum*. This meant that “the visible church . . . contained an inextricable mixture of good and bad, elect and reprobate.”

Early Anglicanism was avowedly anti-sectarian, theologically supported by the


Augustinian concept of the *corpus permixtum*, a “mixed body” of Christian saints and sinners in which all of society was formed by common worship. Drawing on Lake’s analysis, my account describes the deep relationship between Scripture and the Church in this uniquely Anglican hermeneutical vision. Neither Hooker nor Cranmer argued for an individualistic reading of Scripture, but maintained the primacy of common devotional reading.

With respect to the canon of Scripture, I consider the debates between the Puritans and their Establishment foes — primarily Whitgift and Hooker — in the context of preaching. In the Puritan view, the Church of England did not consider Scripture in a sufficiently propositional mode, whereby only those practices which are explicitly outlined in Scripture are to be permitted. More importantly for the purpose here, Puritans like Thomas Cartwright (c.1535–1603) — Hooker’s primary foe — disliked what he considered to be a lack of focus on preaching. Puritans pushed for vigorous preaching, particularly of a more Ramist form, wherein scriptural propositions and syllogisms could elucidate the dogmatic structures within the Bible. At the same time, Puritan preaching tended to appeal to the individual person and to the “heart,” rather than attempting to benefit the common Church.

Whitgift and Hooker’s responses continue and develop Cranmer’s legacy by considering the *one* canon of Scripture as sufficiently comprising the Word of God. Against the Puritans, within a society shaped and ordered by charity and Scripture, a *bare reading* of the Bible is sufficient; to do otherwise is to subvert its power by insisting on human exposition as the *sine qua non* of its efficacy. This is not an argument against preaching, nor against the personal reading of the text; rather, it disputes the contention

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that Scripture cannot be communicated unless its words are construed in the form of
punctuated lessons. Indeed, this “bare reading” of Scripture is in itself an act of
preaching.

This, then, is the form of Anglicanism that I propose as the “touchstone” for a
distinctly ecclesial scriptural hermeneutic. It is clear that the Cranmerian conception of
Scripture did not last, at least at the national level, and has arguably virtually disintegrated
today. My analysis examines the hermeneutical situation of the nineteenth century as a
significant repudiation of Cranmer’s legacy, but in terms that diverge from accounts that
are given, both today and during the nineteenth century itself.

I therefore consider the nineteenth century to test the fruits of modern scriptural
obscurity, not only among and between Protestants and Catholics, but within the putative
Anglican Communion itself. The modern Church has no coherent, unifying, and
conceptual framework that clarifies the hearing of Scripture. Philosophically validated
standards of interpretation and competing ways of reading the text within vying Christian
communities begin to function as the engines of exegetical labours. I employ
commentaries on Isaiah to illustrate how the categories of ecclesiology, canonicity and
christology become theologically muddled in the nineteenth-century response to
humanism, scepticism and spiritualist traditions.

3 The Importance of Isaiah as an Exegetical Lens

For the purpose of exegetical focus, this project employs the book of the Prophet
Isaiah to explore the ways in which the ecclesial context of nineteenth-century England
impacts Anglican exegesis. This section accounts for my choice of Isaiah as an ideal
scriptural book through which to conduct this analysis. Paradigmatically, a consideration
of only one biblical book allows for a more penetrating analysis of hermeneutical issues,
avoiding broad generalities. More importantly, however, it is my contention that to get a
sense of how an exegete regards all of Scripture, his or her interpretation of Isaiah is key.
This is because, right from the origin of Christianity, Isaiah functions as a central “bridge” between the two Testaments.

The texts of the New Testament reveal a tradition in which Isaiah itself bears witness to New Testament realities. Brevard Childs and John F. A. Sawyer each provide an excellent outline of the presence of Isaianic themes and quotations within the New Testament.\textsuperscript{28} For instance, consider how the following passages bear witness to Isaiah’s impact on the early Church. Taking the generally accepted view that the genuine letters of Paul pre-date the Gospels, there exist in Romans 9 alone, one of Paul’s earliest letters, six citations of Isaiah (1:9, 8:14, 1:22,23, 28:16, 29:16, and 45:9). In 1 Corinthians 14–15, he quotes from Isaiah 28:11–13, and from 25:8. These letters are usually dated from approximately the sixth decade of the first century. Sawyer lists nine passages from Mark’s Gospel — thought to be the earliest written Gospel — in which the author explicitly cites or alludes to texts from Isaiah. All four Gospels quote from Isaiah 4:3 with regard to John the Baptist, as well as from 6:9–10, which also appears in Acts 28. The tradition also presents Jesus as perceiving his own ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah, as in the famous passage of Luke 4:

\begin{quote}
[Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. . . . He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
\end{quote}

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Here Jesus directly applies Isaiah 61:1,2 to himself. Finally, the book of Revelation is saturated with Isaianic imagery. Note that none of the passages I cite refer to the more traditional verses such as that of the Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14) or of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). All in all, “many of the most familiar themes and quotations from the ‘Fifth Gospel’ owe that familiarity to their appearance already in early Christian scripture as much as to the Church’s use of the original book of Isaiah. They had already received their Christian meaning, in other words, almost before the Church came into existence.”

Childs notes that “The United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament estimates that there are more than four hundred quotations, paraphrases, or allusions to the book of Isaiah in the New Testament” and that the distribution is “remarkably even.” Isaiah’s central position in Christian scriptural exegesis continues in subsequent centuries as the Church Fathers often use Isaiah as part of the development of the theological articulation of the faith as well as the inspiration for liturgical action. Angela Christman and Michael Hollerich draw primarily on the commentaries of four early Church Fathers (Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret of Cyrus), as well as less frequent quotations from sermons and other writings of John Chrysostom, Origen, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, and Gregory of Nyssa in *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators*. The result is a rich tapestry of a vast tradition in which Isaiah functions as a key hermeneutical connection between the two Testaments. It ought also

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29 There is also an allusion to Isaiah 61:1,2 in Matthew 11:5.

30 *Sawyer, The Fifth Gospel*, 29. Sawyer refers to Isaiah as the “Fifth Gospel,” though he does not reference anyone who uses this term. It is not, as far as I can tell, a denotation that is explicitly used by the early Church Fathers. The closest is a passage from Jerome, who says, “Isaiah is an evangelist and an apostle as well as a prophet.” (Angela Russell Christman and Michael J. Hollerich, *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators*, translated and edited by Robert Louis Wilken, The Church’s Bible [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007], 6).

31 Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 5.
be noted that there was pluriformity and controversy in interpretations; there were not (usually) multiple ecclesial communities competing with one another, yet interpretation was by no means uniform.\footnote{For instance, Theodoret of Cyrus was aware that Isaiah 28 was interpreted by Theodore of Mopsuestia in a non-christological manner, though the former rejected this approach (Christman and Hollerich, \textit{Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators}, 239).}

Since Isaiah is such a central book for New Testament authors as well as for the very earliest of the Church Fathers, it is also a fundamental text for the development of the relation between the two Testaments. Therefore, an analysis of how someone reads Isaiah indicates his or her view of Isaiah’s place within the Church, the connection between the Old and New Testaments, as well as the nature of a christological hermeneutic. The way in which a particular exegete upholds, defends, deviates, or challenges certain aspects of this reception history reveals the exegete’s particular theological commitments, at least with respect to the relation between certain theological claims and the biblical text.

4 The Problem of “Theological Exegesis”

I frequently use the term “theological exegesis” or “theological interpretation” in this project. It is a concept that is notoriously difficult to define, as numerous thinkers are in conflict over its essential features. Indeed, this conflict is precisely part of the problem: exegetes of all stripes consider their various commentaries as appropriate \textit{theological} engagement with the Bible. Many writers on the subject refrain defining the concept. For instance, Daniel Treier speaks of how theological interpretation declined “due to the rise of ‘critical biblical scholarship’,” only to be recovered by the exegesis of Karl Barth.\footnote{Daniel J. Treier, \textit{Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 11.} Elsewhere he speaks of theological interpretation as being theological when...
“Christians read the Bible as Scripture, authoritative as God’s Word for faith and life; thus, to encounter Scripture [is] to encounter God.”\textsuperscript{34} Clearly Treier believes that the task in which many present-day interpreters are engaging is not proper theological exegesis. Rather, these exegetes contribute to its decline. This is not to suggest that Trier’s work does not raise several laudable suggestions for moving beyond the critical work of nineteenth-century scholars. Yet he misses the point that these same scholars thought that by, for instance, uncovering the diachronic shape of the text, and exposing its redactional layers, exegesis, and even the Church, was all the better for it. Moreover, the aspects of particularly “theological” interpretation that Treier commends are not necessarily consistent with those of others. In a contribution to a book on theological interpretation, Stephen Fowl says “the key to interpreting theologically lies in keeping theological concerns primary to all others. In this way, theology becomes a form of exegesis, not its result.”\textsuperscript{35} This is in distinction to having any kind of “governing hermeneutic” in interpretation. Whose “theological concerns” are primary? For Walter Brueggemann, it is the Church who performs this interpretive task; yet “the Church” must determine “how to practice the normativeness of scripture in a way that lets all interpretations be taken seriously, so that all interpreters listen and submit their readings to the judgment of the whole church, without imagining ahead of time that the truth has been spoken by any single interpretive voice.”\textsuperscript{36} I argue in Chapter 8 that the entity known as “the Church” is in the state of existential despair; there is little to no meaning that can be given to the

\textsuperscript{34}Treier, \textit{Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture}, 13. This is also less a \textit{definition} than a disposition toward the text.


phrase “the judgment of the whole church.” Other “keys” to proper theological interpretation are legion: narrative, feminist, semiotic, canonical.

I am therefore in the quandary of having to employ a term for which giving a definition would bring it into irresolvable conflict with others. Again, this is precisely the theme of this project: ecclesial division renders theological interpretation highly problematic. For this reason, I can only provide a historical work that takes a particular case, the Church of England, and I present a peculiarly Anglican vision of what it means to read Scripture. Surely this does not mean that this model is a sufficient definition, but I suggest that it adequately holds together several strands, such as the centrality of the Church in not only performing the interpretation, but also being the one to whom, or against whom, Scripture speaks. It accepts that the central creeds of the Church give guidance to this interpretation and that the two Testaments are held together because they bear witness to Jesus Christ. Any interpretation that does not have these elements intrinsic to exegesis is not, strictly speaking, theological, in terms of the Anglican vision I explicate, and whose fate I explore.

Because my Anglican focus provides a description that is based on the work of Cranmer, Whitgift, Hooker and the central claims of the Anglican Prayer Book, it is highly limited and, even in historical terms, provisional. When I refer to the “canon” of Scripture, for instance, it surely implies the “final form” of the text. But it was not until much later that interpreters would even need to refer to such a term, as it was assumed during the sixteenth century that Scripture had no significant history of textual development.37 Again, the importance of “narrative” was also assumed by most, but “narrative criticism” for anyone before the late twentieth century would be an

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37 Questions regarding the famous “Johannine Comma,” in the seventeenth century, in addition to the humanist desire for more “pure” textual sources, initiated the process of recognizing inconsistencies between manuscripts. Some anti-Trinitarians, reacting particularly to the Johannine Comma, then began to assert that various texts were inserted in order to suppress the “true” doctrine of Christ.
incomprehensible term. Therefore, I appreciate that my Anglican definition limits my use of the term “theological exegesis.” But I also suggest that the use of broader terms still result in anachronism and lack of specificity.

To conclude, I have designed this project to be a highly specific exploration of the profound impact of ecclesial division within the Church of England on the exegesis of the book of Isaiah. This is a test of Radner and Reno’s hypothesis that the Church has lost both its way and a sense of its own identity as a result of confusion with regard to its relation to Scripture. But this test is directed toward a specific community: the Church of England in the nineteenth century. I use appropriate exemplars from the Low, Broad and High Church parties who made a notable contribution to the study of Isaiah. Furthermore, I also explore English Roman Catholic exegetical works on Isaiah and the Bible, as they are the primary oppositional “partner” of these Anglican parties. I employ three categories — ecclesiology, canonicity and christology — as analytic categories that aid in engaging the various Isaiah commentaries, as well as to give specificity to the meaning of “theological exegesis.”

Each Isaiah commentary has its own conclusions that emerge from the analysis. However, my general claims, as I have suggested above, are rather bleak, namely, that the divisiveness of the Church has made theological exegesis inherently incoherent. Since the Church’s own identity is confused, and Scripture is the very Word of God to the Church, then the Word is misunderstood, misconstrued, or just unheard.
CHAPTER 2
THE SCRIPTURAL HERMENEUTIC OF EARLY ANGLICANISM

1 Introduction

This chapter situates the context of my discussion of an enervated biblical exegesis by describing a uniquely Anglican reading of the Bible. This vision of reading Scripture is the organizing principle, or “touchstone,” for my analysis of the exegetical approaches to Isaiah in subsequent chapters. It also provides helpful categories for assessing the similarities and differences both amongst Anglican commentators and between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The intent is not to prescribe this hermeneutical vision as normative per se, but to employ it as a heuristic for exegetical analysis, based on historical and theological data. While the vision that emerges in early Anglicanism was a unique one, it did not survive intact; nonetheless, its impact continues to be perceived, however evanescent.

The foundational theological figures who shape this touchstone are Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), John Whitgift (1530–1604) and Richard Hooker (1554–1600). I attend to each of these insofar as their thought impacts a particular vision of reading Scripture. Three central categories emerge out of the crucible of division, primarily with respect to the Puritan movement, which are: (1) the relation between the Bible, the Church, and the individual; (2) the sense in which Isaiah and each book of the Bible participate in the canon of Scripture, as the one word of God; and (3) the nature of a christological reading of the Bible. In the context of Isaiah and the Old Testament, this means giving attention to the way the Old Testament is related to the New.

1 The Bishop of Salisbury, John Jewel (1522–1571), is certainly a formidable representative of Anglicanism, but I would suggest, despite his influence on Whitgift and Hooker, the latter thinkers more systematically integrated and extended his ideas within a more coherent vision of Scripture’s place within the Church.
It should be noted that my discussion of these three categories is rather asymmetrical; the first category is the most distinct and therefore I give it the most space. It is also the one category most closely bound to the identity of the Church. Subsequent hermeneutical points emerge from the close relationship I describe between ecclesial practice (especially liturgy and the use of the Prayer Book) and Scripture. The christological reading of Scripture and the claim that the entire Bible comprises the one Word of God are not *per se* unique to Christianity, but manifest certain peculiarly Anglican modalities of expression. It is in this third section that I attend to some specific uses of the Old Testament in general and Isaiah specifically in the Church of England

2 Pre- and Post-Reformation Hermeneutical Options

It is instructive to briefly mention some challenges and competing options amidst the various factions within the Church before and after the Reformation. I present spiritualist traditions, humanism, and a specific form of scepticism as historical movements that were instruments of division, though they were not themselves a direct cause of it.

I challenge the contention that the emergence of new hermeneutical options, particularly in a highly critical form, are primarily (though not exclusively) *external* rather than *internal* ecclesial phenomena. Indeed, many new approaches to the Bible arose for the purpose of edifying the Church rather than for destroying it.\(^2\) The standard account, as represented by Roy Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, suggests that “the doctrinal conflict between historical criticism and the dogmatic tradition” is “nothing less than a war between two worldviews of faith: the worldview of modern critical awareness

\(^2\)See, for instance, Ephraim Radner, *Hope Among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 164: “most practitioners of the historical-critical study of the Scriptures, since the seventeenth century, have used their studies apologetically as a primary means of communicating a vision of Christian truth.”
originating in the Enlightenment and the inherited Augustinian worldview of the Western church.”

Again, Gadamer states that “Enlightenment critique is primarily directed against the religious tradition of Christianity — i.e., the Bible. . . . This is the real radicality of the modern Enlightenment compared to all other movements of enlightenment: it must assert itself against the Bible and dogmatic interpretations of it.”

This story, in which new hermeneutical approaches emerged because of opposing external challenges to traditional doctrine, is mistaken, or at least too simplistic, based as it is on the presupposition that the Church is distinct from the rest of society. While such a distinction can perhaps be made today in the post-Christian West, the Reformation and its antecedents occurred in the midst of “christendom,” an era during which most people rarely had any other option than to be steeped in Christian beliefs. The typical narrative of ecclesial dissolution suggests that changes were imposed externally on the Church, as the “enemy” of a putatively “Augustinian worldview.” The debates between those who read the Bible in a traditional mode — one which attempts to reflect on the theological claims of the Church — and those who interpret by the use of historical-critical tools cannot, in my view, be effectively distinguished from each other as representations of two

3Roy A. Harrisville & Walter Sundberg, The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 5.


5An interesting case of a kind of “external” challenge to the Church, in scientific terms, is Galileo’s discovery of heliocentrism. This story has been appropriated by modern narrators as an example of ecclesial intolerance and the need for the Church to submit herself to the power of scientific discovery. This story has reached the level of a fable that teaches the perils of dogmatism. David C. Lindberg, however, presents an account of the Galileo affair in David C Lindberg, “Galileo, the Church, and the Cosmos,” in When Science & Christianity Meet, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33–60. Without entirely vindicating the Roman Catholic Church, Lindberg nonetheless has much to say regarding how Galileo’s rather abrasive manner got him into trouble. It must also be noted that the originator of Galileo’s ideas, Nicolaus Copernicus, was not subject to Catholic disapprobation, and he and his theory were even received with favour by Pope Clement VII.

An important distinction must be made between theories like heliocentrism or Darwinism and new interpretive and hermeneutical orientations. These latter theories are not, in my account, “discoveries” as such, but are methodological approaches that emerge in response to ecclesial division.
“worldviews of faith.” Instead, they issue out of the same Christian tradition. New modern interpretations are, in fact, the offspring of the Church, however misshapen and corrosive. They emerged in response to the divided Church’s claims on Scripture and were birthed through division and fragmentation. My account, therefore, is a theological/historical description of how this change in reading the Bible emerges internally to the Church, despite the claims of thinkers such as Harrisville and Sundberg who characterize it as an external assault on the Church’s traditional doctrines by those who whose goal was to attack “the Church” itself.

H. G. Reventlow outlines the effect of spiritualism on Puritanism, which impacted Scripture’s interpretation in England. It would be beyond the task of this

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6 What I mean by “modernity” is very specific in this context. It is not the development of new scientific methodologies and rational systems in themselves, i.e., Newtonian mechanistic science and Cartesian epistemology. Rather, it is the universalization of these methodologies to all human enterprises as sufficiently valid tools (and, as an important but not necessary corollary, that theology is not only an insufficient, but also an invalid tool) that informs my employment of “modernity.” In this I am following Stephen Toulmin’s argument in Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity (New York, NY: Free Press, 1990). See also Michael Allen Gillespie, The Theological Origins of Modernity (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008) in which Gillespie argues against the common story that modernity was the ushering in of an age that surpassed the need for religion and religious language, but rather, that the rise of modernity was a theologically/metaphysically derived phenomenon. His argument parallels to some extent (and in much greater detail) what I am attempting to show, which is that “modern” readings of the Bible were motivated by shifts in theological/philosophical ideas.

7 Numerous movements prior to the Reformation can be denoted as “spiritualist.” Spiritualist thinkers can be further characterized by their particular view of history, which saw the Church in a state of decline. The flow of history led to a point where the Church was to be renewed, shorn of its outward historical encrustations. Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202) was an exemplar of this Spiritualist position, which can be discussed only briefly (see Henning Graf Reventlow, The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985], 25–31) but there were many other groups such as the Brethren of the Common Life and Girolamo Savonarola’s (1452–1498) quasi-theocratic republic (Gillespie, The Theological Origins of Modernity, 88–89). Joachim’s interpretation of Scripture posited a shape to history based on the triune Godhead: the Old Testament period was that of the Father, and the New; events up to Fiore’s own time were those of the Son. Fiore and his followers envisioned the impending flowering of a new age of the Spirit in eschatological terms that saw the materiality of the world — including Holy Writ itself — as unnecessary. For Fiore, his intent was not a repudiation of Scripture, but a new age of the Spirit that would be the complete eschatological unveiling of everything the Bible was about. But for many of his spiritualist followers, “the sacraments become superfluous, the priesthood is unnecessary, [and] the significance of Scripture is in fact evacuated” (Reventlow, The Authority of the Bible, 27). At its heart was a form of dualism, which slowly began to isolate the individual from the external world, giving precedence to the inner life, which was synonymous to the life of the Spirit.
chapter to enter into the history of spiritualism in general. My more modest claim is that the Puritan discourse — taken up by the Evangelical movement in later centuries — takes on a spiritualist tenor, such that they can be seen as adopting spiritualist “traditions,” rather than being direct descendants of spiritualist thinkers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The primary characteristic of this tradition (or, better, set of traditions) is a focus on the inner life of the individual and a minimization of the Church’s concrete particularity. Its contribution to division within the Church is therefore obvious: the Church, as an entity that had always existed through time, plays a variegated but diminishing role within theological discourse in favour of more “spiritual” ideas that are detached from such an entity, such as “the Kingdom of God” or “the Body of Christ,” which refer to something other than the visible Church.

Humanism is an intellectual and cultural phenomenon with a complex history, but its impact generates a series of movements, which in turn influence biblical exegesis. Spiritualism can refer to a whole host of movements, both heterodox and otherwise. Spiritualism is characterized by dualistic concepts such as inner/outer and spirit/matter; it is also a philosophical move from a consideration of the self as (in the words of Charles Taylor) “porous” to one that is “buffered” (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007], 27). The spiritualist era begins an early-modern process whereby the world, once seen as “enchanted,” where there is a “fuzziness” between the inner and outer dimensions of the self, shifts to a “disenchanted” world in favour of an inner morality separated from the external world (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 35–89). External matters thus assume a diminished role in salvation. For some, this means arguing that the sacraments are unnecessary; but more subtly, various adherents dispense polemics against the excessive veneration of the saints, the cross, and other relics of the Church. The interest in the inner dimension of the individual human before God becomes determinative for a thought pattern that “sees man himself, his spiritual quality and his ethical conduct, as the decisive factor for salvation” (Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 25). It also leads to the idea of an “invisible” church, the real Church of Christ in distinction from the “visible” Church. This concern for the inner dimension in opposition to the visible Church engenders a kind of proto-rationalism whereby the search for moral goodness rendered dogmatic teachings matters of indifference. A high valuation of humanity in spiritualist humanism orients the individual to his or her moral behaviour and “illuminates” individualist readings of Scripture.

Again, as with spiritualism and modernity, the danger is to reify humanism such that it is not sufficiently rooted in history. My use of the term is akin to that of Reventlow (see Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 12–13). The beginning of the Renaissance in Italy led to an interest in antiquity, a focus on the individual, and an appreciation for the beauty of human achievement. There was as yet no rejection of biblical authority, and this appreciation of the human was always filtered through the biblical concept of the *imago Dei*. Yet the era of the Renaissance was one of increased interest in the moral
characterize this impact as one that results in a desire for a *repristination* of the Church and a concern for the moral life of the individual believer. It is the former that had a greater impact on ecclesial division, as a repristination of the Church suggests a desire to move theological and biblical discourse *ad fontes*. There is a tendency toward criticising the era following the patristic period, and a desire to remove perceived unnecessary accretions to ecclesial practices.

Finally, I follow Popkin’s account of scepticism’s impact during the Reformation as formative for theological discourse and the context out of which modern thinking developed.⁹ For instance, the agitation of William Tyndale (1494–1536) generated new rhetorical modes of disputation, as argued by Peter Auksi.¹⁰ While it may to some extent be a generalization, Auksi’s analysis of the debate between Tyndale and Thomas More (1478–1535) reveals that the Catholic history of *disputatio* led to a rhetoric in which (at least for More) “verbal expressions which religious certitude makes possible become conflated with or analogous to mathematical exactitude.”¹¹ In Tyndale’s mind, Catholic focus on logical syllogisms, distinctions between terms with agonizing exactitude, and hyper-rational sophistry insufficiently account for the affective or experiential mode of

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human sensation. No longer do these modalities reflect the simple message of Scripture; rather, they actively obscure it. Tyndale regards scholasticism as a belletristic veiling of Christianity’s truth, the result being the severe attenuation of its affective power. Thinkers like Tyndale, however, found new ways to argue their case against the rigorous scholasticism of Roman Catholic opponents. Therefore, while More appeals to the tradition of disputational methodology, Tyndale appeals to something entirely different: the experience and feelings of the individual believer — the “heart” being the catch-all phrase — to prove the veracity of his arguments. According to Auksi, “this polarity at the outset of the Reformation is a seminal one in that it is refracted, magnified, and mirrored in the religious polemic of the next two centuries as the various voices of dissent or conformity undertake to analyze and communicate religious experience.”

In Tyndale’s debate with More, targeting what he sees as dry scholasticism, he appeals to feeling, “because it indicates the crucial presence of the Spirit.” The labyrinth of Catholic scholastic argumentation is a Sisyphean effort that produces an empty faith. “The children of light . . . have empirical subjective experience of the internal, rejuvenating power of a ‘feeling faith’ which lies beyond the manipulations of reason and the authority of others.”

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12 Consider Tyndale’s mocking of Catholic methodology: “First, they nosel them in sophistry and in benefundatum. And there corrupt they their judgements with apparent arguments, and with alleging unto them texts of logic, of natural philautia, of metaphysic, and moral philosophy, and of all manner books of Aristotle, and of all manner doctors which they yet never saw . . . one holdeth this, another that; one is a Real, another a Nominal. What wonderful dreams have they of their predicaments, universals, second intentions, quiddities, haecceities, and relatives.” (William Tyndale, The Obedience of a Christian Man, edited and with an introduction and notes by David Daniell, Penguin Classics [London; New York: Penguin Books, 2000], 22–23).


15 Auksi, “Reason and Feeling as Evidence,” 14. This can therefore be seen as an instance in which Tyndale’s thought is reflecting deference to spiritualist tradition. His humanism can also be perceived in his desire to bring Christianity into a more simplified form, reliant only on Scripture, shorn of the destructive
disputational to the affective is indicative of a crisis of thought in religious belief, arising directly from disputes within a Church in crisis, rather than an intentional and conspiratorial attempt to usurp Christendom. Popkin describes the time of the Reformation as an “intellectual crisis” during which thinkers sought for means of achieving certainty.\textsuperscript{16} This intellectual crisis led to a rise of scepticism, a mode of thought that continues to dominate Western thinking. The resulting sceptical attitude accords with Tyndale’s approach. Using Erasmus’ defence of the Roman Catholic Church as an example, Popkin illustrates the impact of Erasmus’ scepticism:

All the machinery of these scholastic minds had missed the essential point, the simple Christian attitude. The Christian Fool was far better off than the lofty theologians of Paris who were ensnared in a labyrinth of their own making. And so, if one remained a Christian Fool, one would live a true Christian life, and could avoid the entire world of theology by accepting . . . the religious views promulgated by the Church.\textsuperscript{17}

Erasmus’ sceptical attitude leads someone like Luther to seek a form of absolute certainty, a quest that fails if it relies on the dictates of the Church. In turn, “the rule of faith for the Reformers . . . appears to have been subjective certainty, the compulsion of influences of ecclesiastical authority.

\textsuperscript{16}This need for definitive criteria of truth led eventually to what Popkin calls the \textit{crise pyrrhonienne} of the early seventeenth century. In Popkin’s account of Luther’s trial at the Diet of Worms, he argues that Luther’s rejection of the Pope as the standard for truth in favour of the higher standard of Scripture shows that “Luther set forth his new criterion of religious knowledge, that what conscience is compelled to believe regarding Scripture is true” (Popkin, \textit{The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes}, 3). See also Gillespie, \textit{The Theological Origins of Modernity}, 87–88. Such a claim was a radical departure from the standards regarded as sufficient for faith up to that point in the medieval era. This is the Pyrrhonic problem: once a new criterion has been established, by what other criterion can the new one be judged? The distinction is between Academic and Pyrrhonic scepticism. The former argues that “all we know is that we know nothing.” This form of scepticism, akin to modern scientific inquiry, makes claims to truth on the basis of probabilities. Pyrrhonic scepticism always brings into question all attempts at epistemological systems (represented in the writings of Sextus Empiricus); Popkin shows that a revival in this way of thinking coincided with the Reformation.

\textsuperscript{17}Popkin, \textit{The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes}, 6.
one’s conscience.”\footnote{Popkin, \textit{The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes}, 8.} While Luther does not resort as directly to feeling and personal experience as Tyndale, both attempt to solve the epistemological crisis in similar ways.\footnote{Popkin continues his argument by showing that John Calvin also follows the same line of thought with respect to Scripture in that one recognizes and affirms the certainty that Scripture is indeed the Word of God by the inner persuasion of the Holy Spirit. It is not my intention to follow Popkin’s arguments in detail, but only to show by illustration the “intellectual crisis” that arose during the Reformation era, and indeed is a part of numerous such crises at the time (see, for instance, Toulmin’s similar discussion, but in which he suggests there is a move away from an appreciation of the diversity of human culture in the Renaissance and the sixteenth century, followed by the “rationalism” of the seventeenth century, that was a reaction against such an affirmation [Toulmin, \textit{Cosmopolis}, 45–87]). My use of Tyndale should not be confused with a similar aim to show that they are exemplars of some form of proto-pietism; they are, rather, stages along the way.} The ensuing perennial Pyrrhonic problem brings into question new epistemological approaches to the Christian faith, out of which emerge further methods to validate the new method, resulting in an infinite regress of methodological scepticism. The discussion shifts from a concern about the meaning of the biblical texts to that of \textit{method}; each party therefore identifies with a particular school and its respective claims to certainty.

These concepts of spiritualist traditions, humanism, and scepticism historically situate the forces that impinge the theological milieu. It is also important to note that it is difficult to discuss any of these factors without invoking ecclesial issues: the challenges to the Church’s unity emerge out of the crucible of christendom. I focus on Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker as the primary theological shapers of an Anglican hermeneutical vision. I suggest that Cranmer instigates a uniquely Anglican way of reading Scripture,
Whitgift initiates the process of defending and clarifying the Anglican position, and Hooker represents the culmination of this hermeneutic

3 An Ecclesial Reading of the Bible

I characterize this first dimension of a uniquely Anglican reading of the Bible as an ecclesial reading of the text. This has to do with several important hermeneutical themes unique to Anglicanism that emerge out of the English Reformation. This reading is distinct from Roman Catholic practice (at least, from that of most of the Middle Ages) in that it urged a “laicization” of not only the Bible, but also of the liturgical practice of the entire Church in England, aiming at one “common” worship. While an episcopal structure remains that “imposes” various doctrines on parishoners, the aim is conformance for the common good of the Church. The perils of individualism are avoided, while at the same time, private reading, if not private interpretation, is encouraged within this common structure.20

20I deny the contention that Anglicanism in its inception, and thus in its scriptural vision, is a via media between Calvinism and Roman Catholicism, and thus that it was somehow “half-reformed.” Roman Catholic Aidan Nichols argues from this more typical perspective that the via media is the source of Anglican instability (esp. Chapter 2 of Aidan Nichols, The Panther and the Hind: A Theological History of Anglicanism, Foreward by the Rt. Revd Graham Leonard [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], which he attributes to Richard Hooker). Nichols claims the via media that developed “corresponded to the demands of realistic politics when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558” (Nichols, The Panther and the Hind, 38). This compromise, or “moderate,” position given impetus by the reality of strong Puritan parties within Parliament and prospective episcopal candidates, results in the need for concessions to the Puritans on the one hand, and a support for a power structure that ends with the power of the regnum. Nichols’ conclusion is that the consequence of the via media is the comprehensive nature of the Anglican Church, a kind of permissive large tent that allows for a wide spectrum of beliefs, leading to an unstable diversity that undermines Church unity. In comparison to the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England has no unique doctrinal standard or creed which gives it a formative and unique identity, in the view of thinkers like Nichols.

This is not an uncommon perspective. This oft repeated idea is one that has recently come under increased scrutiny. See for instance Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way of Reading Scripture,” Anglican and Episcopal History 75, no. 4 (2006). Null’s argument is a good one with respect to Cranmer’s reading of Scripture, though to equate his reading with “Anglican” readings more broadly disregards further developments by formative theologians whom I am arguing must be taken account of, viz., Whitgift and Hooker. What can be said of Cranmer, however, is that he has a strong appreciation of Calvin. I contend that, despite the popular use of the term via media, early shapers of Anglicanism aimed for a truly Catholic Church within England, an Ecclesia Anglicana. To cast Anglican identity as an entity
The rise of spiritualist and humanist traditions within the intellectual milieu of Christian thought during the Middle Ages had an impact on ecclesiology by giving greater emphasis to the inner life of the individual believer. By the commencement of the Reformation, these traditions also had an effect on the liturgical life of the Church by decoupling the connection between liturgical practices and the Bible. Structurally, much remained the same within the Church of England during Henry’s rule after his break with Rome. Many of the apologists of Henrician reform argued that the breach with Rome was merely the culmination of an always-present uniqueness of the English Church. As Powell Mills Dawley argues

The sturdy resistance offered by the Norman and Angevin kings to the extension of papal temporal sovereignty, and which again intermittently characterized relations with Rome in the fourteenth century, could easily be read in the new age as providing a basis for the assertion of the “imperial” character of the English Crown. Maitland’s remark about those who liked to regard the Church of England as “Anglican” before the Reformation and “Catholic” afterwards is, however, meaningless unless there is some truth of which it is an exaggeration.21

By the time of the English Reformation, many Anglican divines saw the separation and independence from Rome, both politically and ecclesially, as an inheritance and continuation of the rights that were afforded England in the past. In the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533, Henry argued that the King was the “Supreme Head” of the Church because England was not a mere subject of the Pope, but an “empire — or as we should

that emerged out of a phenomenon of Henrician and Elizabethan realpolitik does not accurately take into account the theological dimension and scriptural vision of major thinkers in the Church of England. Dewey Wallace’s reassessment of the so-called Anglican via media in Dewey D. Wallace, Jr, “Via Media?: A Paradigm Shift,” Anglican and Episcopal History 72, no. 1 (2003) makes the salient point that later Anglicanism, following thinkers like the Caroline Divines, might rightly be thought in its later development as a via media, but not in its early form under Elizabeth and its culmination in the work of Richard Hooker.

21Powel Mills Dawley, John Whitgift and the Reformation, The Hale Lectures (London: Black, 1954), 13. Two central fourteenth-century anti-papal legislations were the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire which acted to prohibit papal power over the Crown. These, however, were “political” statutes in the sense that the injunctions were with respect to “earthly” authority but did not intend to suggest that the Pope lacked spiritual authority over England, including the Crown. Oddly, and as an interesting aside, Praemunire was not officially revoked until 1967.
say today, a nation-state, fully self-sufficient in its single sovereignty. In this nation state
the King . . . is furnished by the goodness of Almighty God with plenary and entire
authority and jurisdiction.”

Thomas Cranmer, King Henry VIII’s Archbishop of Canterbury, began the
process of developing the Anglican scriptural vision. Numerous writings of Roman
Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran perspectives were disseminated and the new Church of
England had to find a way of navigating them. The radical element succeeded in
despoiling shrines, removing monasteries, and stripping away numerous aspects of the
liturgy. During the brief reign of Henry’s son, Edward VI, an increased permissiveness
for reform allowed Cranmer to bring about changes. The first Prayer Book, written by
Cranmer, had numerous Lutheranizing elements, such as the refusal to raise the Host, and
was part of the Act of Uniformity in 1549, permitting the use of only one liturgy. For the
first time, Mass was also said in English, rather than Latin.

The theological ancestors of the Puritans borrowed theological ideas from Zwingli
and Calvin and regarded Cranmer’s Prayer Book as timid, falling short of removing the
ceremonies they saw as superstitious practices unwarranted by Scripture. Two central
Puritan biblical perspectives vis-à-vis ceremonies and practices can be generally
described: (1) practices that were commanded or described in Scripture (e.g., baptism),
are to be “repristinated” in a form that is the least “papist.” This approach usually urged a

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Dawley, *John Whitgift and the Reformation*, 11. For the importance of the rise of the modern
nation-state, which influenced religious thinking, rather than the other way around, see William T.
contention regarding changes in Christian thought that emerge internally to the Church, I contend that the
idea of the nation-state, like spiritualism and humanism, arose within the bounds of Christian discourse and
eventually became an option over-against the “earthly” power of the Church. I also would argue that
Cavanaugh, in his attempt to argue against a reified “religious” violence, minimizes the reality of ecclesial
division that allowed the nation-state to be an alternative *polis* and “false soteriology” to that of the Church.
Why did the Church, or at least those who professed to be Christians, so readily accept the incursion of the
nation-state other than as a result of the perceived failure of ecclesial cohesiveness?
reduction or elimination of liturgical action and a more spiritualist interpretation of the practice; and (2) that all ceremonies not so explicitly outlined in the Bible are considered as superstitious and therefore proscribed.

In response to such looming challenges to the ecclesial form of life formulated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1547, Cranmer, along with other notable thinkers such as Thomas Becon and possibly Nicholas Ridley, issued a set of sermons. In the first of these so-called Edwardine Homilies, Cranmer’s “A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture,” we can readily obtain an understanding of his view of Scripture. For Cranmer, a personal familiarity with Scripture is important and he affirms the importance of duty and right behaviour. However, while countenancing the vernacular can appear to suggest a perspective that encourages a purely individualist reading of Scripture for moral formation, Cranmer’s vision is directed toward the common good, and as such his sermon describes a vision of Scripture that differs from his opponents’ who offered other perspectives of the Bible.

23 The low level of education of the average priest and the extent to which Reformed theology had yet to permeate all of England necessitated a common set of sermons to be preached in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime. See J. Barrett Miller, “The First Book of Homilies and the Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” Anglican and Episcopal History 66, no. 4 (1997). Thomas Becon (c.1511-67) was arrested for Protestant preaching under King Henry VIII but was eventually restored by Thomas Cranmer upon the accession of Edward VI. He survived the Marian persecutions, having moved to the Continent, and returned when Elizabeth I came to power. Nicholas Ridley (c.1500-55) was one of the three “Oxford Martyrs,” the other two being Cranmer and Hugh Latimer. Ridley is known inter alia for his debate with John Hooper over the vestment controversy, which ultimately was a debate over the relationship between Scripture and the practices of the Church. He contributed to discerning “things indifferent” in matters of the faith.

24 I use the version printed in John H. Leith, ed., “A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture,” in Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine, from the Bible to the Present (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982). These are reprinted from Certain Sermons appointed by the Queen’s Majesty to be declared and read by all Parsons, Vicars, and Curates every Sunday and Holy Day in their Churches (1623). I make the not entirely proven assumption that Cranmer was the author of this homily, which has only been agreed to by a consensus opinion. Given that Cranmer was a part of the group responsible for the promulgation of the Book of Homilies, there is little doubt of its “Cranmerian” character, if not his hand.
For instance, Scripture, says Cranmer, is more than that which must be read; it is the very Word of God, and “there is . . . abundantly enough, both for men to eat, and children to sucke. There is, whatsoever is meet for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men.”25 We can hear hints of Cranmer’s collect for the second Sunday in Advent, where it says of Scripture, “Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.” Scripture is food, it is constitutive not only of the individual, but also the commonwealth: reading the Bible in the Church is like sitting down to a family meal. As the Word of God, Scripture has its own power to transform all who read it: “he that is most turned into [the Bible], that is most inspired with the Holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into that thing which he readeth.”26 The use of the term “Word of God” with respect to Scripture is notable, for “holy scripture is the ‘true word of God;’ the phrases, ‘word of God,’ ‘God’s word,’ ‘scripture,’ and ‘holy Scripture,’ are, in fact, interchangeable in the homily.”27

Part of the purpose of reading Scripture by everyone in the realm, and the implicit aim of this sermon, is that the people are to be steeped in this word of God, fully engaged not only in terms of reading, but participating in habitual, even repetitive, practice. There is to be a “continual reading of God’s word”28 “where holy scripture’s use is characterized as reading, hearing, searching and studying”29 since, as the word of God,


27Miller, “The First Book of Homilies,” 446 There is indeed a tension, more acute in modern times, between Scripture being God’s Word and containing God’s word. It seems that, during Cranmer’s time, the preponderance of evidence points to the latter. This is not, however, without nuance.


Scripture is the source of all theology. Cranmer’s sermon cannot be seen as an injunction to an individualist, private reading of the text:

The fact that [this sermon] appears in an approved, sanctioned homily of the institutional hierarchy of the church belies such a notion. Rather, what is contended [by the homilist] is that because the Bible is God’s word to his people and his church, it warrants direct use by all its people.30

Most importantly, any individualistic tenor of A Fruitful Exhortation must be understood in the light of the Prayer Book, the central participative element of this early Anglican hermeneutic. The Prayer Book is Cranmer’s legacy, as its structure points to his ecclesiology and his understanding of the role of Scripture.

There is more to Cranmer’s formulation of the Prayer Book than a borrowing, for instance, from the Sarum Rite. The evidence shows that he appreciates the dangers posed by spiritualist traditions, which err by focusing too much on individualistic interiority. Cranmer aims for a reformation in England that “is less a triumphant embrace of the individual’s private and invisible self than a concerted effort to shape the otherwise uncontrollable and unreliable internal sphere through common acts of devotion.”31

Despite the influences of Continental reformers on Cranmer, his vision of the relationship between the Bible and the Church, as the Prayer Book demonstrates, offers a significantly different perspective from theirs. Ramie Targoff makes the rather startling and counterintuitive claim that Cranmer’s support for an English service and a Bible available to all was to counter the danger of Roman Catholic interiority. Roman Catholic opposition to common liturgical practices in the “vulgar” tongue engenders a greater push

for Roman Catholics to engage in individualist piety. “For sixteenth-century Catholics, the challenge of public devotion was not to promote a shared and collective liturgical language, but instead to encourage the worshippers to perform their own private devotions during the priest’s service.” There was in Catholic practice a sharp dichotomy between the bodily actions of ordained ministers and the interior devotional life of the laity in which it was expected that non-ordained worshippers would find their own means to engage in devotional acts. Targoff’s contention therefore is that Catholic worship for the laity was more individualistic than that suggested by Roman Catholic polemicists themselves.

It is not that Cranmer is unconcerned about personal piety and the inner life; like any reformer, Cranmer believes ultimately in the importance of personal faith for salvation. His construal of this faith, however, is not so neatly described as the inner disposition of the individual, and here Cranmer significantly diverges from using feeling and experience as “proof” of the certainty of a person’s faith. The state of an individual’s inner life, in fact, is unknowable (“uncontrollable and unreliable”), and therefore bodily practices of common liturgical acts tame the chaotic feelings and emotions of priest and laity alike. It is for this reason that Cranmer focuses on the idea of common prayer and for conformity. While the idea of conformity can be cast in political terms, where the king issues laws and statutes to ensure that everyone in the realm adheres to a set of dictated forms of behaviour, I argue that Cranmer has specific theological concerns with respect to the idea of a shared common devotional language.

32 Targoff, Common Prayer, 14.

33 See Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer’s Theology of the Heart,” Anvil 23, no. 3 (2006), in which Null outlines Cranmer’s use of the term “heart” in the Prayer Book. In my view, Null attempts too strongly to cast Cranmer in Evangelical (and rather anodyne) terms, thus zeroing in on the language of the “heart.” I would argue that it was Cranmer’s biblically informed language that was the impetus of such terminology rather than the more anachronistic Evangelical (and proto-Evangelical Puritan) use of “heart” language in an affective mode.
We can see Cranmer’s move toward common prayer in the versicles and responses for Morning Prayer. In the 1549 Prayer Book, the text, like Psalm 51 from which it is taken, is in the first person. The priest says “O Lord, open thou my lips,” to which the people respond, “And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.” By the time of the 1552 Prayer Book, however, the singular “my” is altered to “our.” Moreover, while Cranmer accepts that people who are “grieved in conscience” may wish to speak to a priest and make a confession “and there fetch of him comfort,” Cranmer urges a common (or “general”) confession during which all members of the congregation pray together.

Gone is all attention to the relationship between the individual and his conscience: the focus falls instead on the harmony of social relations. What had become a personal, confidential confession from the worshipper to the priest becomes a public admission made before the entire congregation. . . . The “satisfaction” of the collective group, not the “quietness” of the inner self, renders the aspiring communicant worthy of admission.

The modern discomfort with “conformity” conceived in terms of bland homogeneity would be unintelligible to Cranmer whose liturgical aims were “to restructure corporate worship so that it is entirely compatible with, as well as conducive to, the practice of personal devotion.” This approach to prayer is linked to the shape of the Prayer Book and thus to the reading of Scripture; while people can most certainly read it on their own, when they are gathered for worship, reading the Bible together is the primary task.

In Cranmer’s Prayer Book is a nascent Anglican approach to Scripture and its place within the Church as the shaper of religious life, steeped in the narratives and prayers of Scripture. The Prayer Book has structures by which people habitually engage Scripture: prayer, worship and a lectionary. The call to uniformity therefore should not

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34See Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 29–35, in which she gives more detail regarding Cranmerian changes that use more corporate language in the Prayer Book.


be seen only in political terms, but as a call to commonality and community in which the words and language of Scripture shape and inform each liturgical act. The role of the Church, under the authority of Scripture alone, is to be the teacher of Scripture. As I show below, one of these ways can be preaching, but this is not the sole mode by which people learn the faith.

There is also an incarnational motif in Cranmer’s view of Scripture. As the Church is shaped by the power of Scripture, it conforms to the incarnated Word. Rather than having an undue concern for personal, individualist piety, Cranmer, like Luther, sees the inherent pridefulness of a will turned inward. The Continental Reformers were highly influential on Cranmer.\(^{37}\) His more Zwinglian understanding of the Eucharist later in life, as well as his equally Zwinglian iconoclastic fervour\(^{38}\) under his archbishopric, indicate some affinities with a Swiss version of reform thought. However, Cranmer’s distinguishing characteristic is the use of corporate language and the development of the Prayer Book as the constitutive element of this corporality. And, as history has shown, the Prayer Book itself was generative of debates and controversies in subsequent centuries. Cranmer, therefore, cannot be seen as the “inventor” of the Anglican vision of

\(^{37}\)Therefore, though highly speculative, and with significant caveats, I would argue that Cranmer would have had some sympathy with some of the aims of the Puritans who eventually came to prominence after Queen Mary.

\(^{38}\)Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer, Theologian* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1956), 69–70. It is strange that Bromiley’s capable assessment of Cranmer is stained by his suggestion that Cranmer’s strength was not in “creative theology.” (Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer, Theologian*, 97). It seems to me that such a perspective has been shaped via 400 years of post-Reformation, post-Enlightenment ideas that no longer see creativity in ideas that were seen as radical enough to deserve capital punishment. Part of the reason for this opinion stems from his observation that Cranmer’s output was not as prolific as that of Calvin and Luther. This does not seem to be a reasonable judgment of the theological impact of a particular thinker. Moreover, Calvin and Luther’s readings of Scripture were heavily influenced by certain theological systems of thought (e.g., for Luther it was justification by faith alone) that governed their exegesis. I suggest that Cranmer’s reticence in carrying out a full “systematic theology” is an awareness of various tensions within Scripture that make such systemization problematic. In other words, liturgy, worship and the common life are simply governed by *all* of Scripture, and lived out in ecclesial life.
Scripture, but his vision is an important step along the way and given greater detail by the more systematic work of Whitgift and Hooker. Moreover, what is suggested by the shaping of the Church by the power of Scripture is that the Church is *under the judgment of Scripture*. That is to say, the Church does not necessarily always faithfully say what the Bible says, but that this is the calling of the Church. And when it fails, the Bible as the Word of God is the judge. This is what pre-eminently makes the Church of England a “Protestant” Church right from its inception.

When Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne of her Roman Catholic half-sister Mary, she once again brought the country into firm Protestant territory. Out of the terrors of Queen Mary arose a new group (or, rather, groups) of individuals who were eventually called “Puritans,” but who went under other names such as “Vestiarians” and “Disciplinarians.” These groups shared many ideas that challenged the Anglican establishment. The newly emerging Puritan party tended to view the sufficiency and perspicacity of Scripture in a way that vitiated against “externals,” such as the use of the Prayer Book and the episcopacy. They regarded these not only as unnecessary but as indicative of remaining latent “papist” tendencies within the Church of England. Queen Elizabeth and the theologians of her time had to find a way to navigate between a more Cranmerian approach and the challenges of the Puritans.

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39 There is some indication that she wanted to work out a positive arrangement with the Pope, but “strengthened by the example of the Protestant martyrs under Mary, the pro-Lutheran and pro-Calvinist parties were even more clamant than under Edward VI” (Nichols, *The Panther and the Hind*, 17). Many reformed-minded people fled England during her reign, some finding a brief home in places like Calvinist-influenced Geneva. Unlike England, Continental Europe by this time did not have only one officially sanctioned form of Christianity, and therefore it was a hotbed of radical groups and new ideas, both theologically and politically.

40 Eamon Duffy’s recent work on Queen Mary should be noted here for its reassessment of the fervour with which she attempted to bring England under the auspices of the Catholic Counter-Reformation (Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009]).
The rather standard account of the so-called “Elizabethan settlement” of 1559, however, is problematic. It is usually seen as a “middle way” which encouraged comprehensiveness and moderation. Rather, I suggest that the aim was for a true *Ecclesia Anglicana*, formulated to meet the unique character of the English people and political situation. This is the more accurate version of the so-called *via media*: a path of careful navigation between what Elizabeth and her advisors viewed as *Protestant* extremes. Whereas the old enemies were Continental Protestants and Roman Catholics, the new battle was between Puritans and the Established Church of England. Thus the correct view of the *via media* is a much more narrow negotiation between numerous options, none of which was Roman Catholic, despite the fact that there are certain shared liturgical practices.

In terms of a strict accounting of theological propositions, “‘Puritans’ and ‘Anglicans’ appeared difficult to distinguish theologically.” After all, Puritans were not

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41 This is the view of many. E.g., Dawley argues that “the unique and creative feature of the Elizabethan settlement proved to be its comprehensiveness” (Dawley, *John Whitgift and the Reformation*, 47–48). In a sense, this is true if the political aspect of the settlement can be detached from the theological. The mistake, in other words, is to assume that the church is equally “comprehensive” and that such a description is a “unique feature,” which is a simplistic definition of the Church of England.

42 An Act of Uniformity (1559) introduced a new Prayer Book. This, along with the Act of Supremacy that named the Monarch as Supreme Governor (rather than Head) of the Church of England, is what is often referred to as the “Elizabethan Settlement.”

43 The view that Anglicanism is best regarded in terms of a *via media* between extremes is ably challenged by Dewey D. Wallace, Jr.’s reassessment of the so-called Anglican *via media* from Wallace, “Via Media?” He makes the salient point that later Anglicanism might rightly be thought in its later development as a *via media*, but not in its early form under Elizabeth and its culmination in the work of Richard Hooker, which was much more Calvinist and in close *theological* agreement with Puritans, but differed with regard to ecclesial governance. And, as Lake suggests, “Ultimately these divergent interpretations were grounded on fundamentally different premises about the nature of church government, premises which were presented as different readings of scripture” (Peter Lake and Maria Dowling, eds., “Presbyterianism, the Idea of a National Church and the Argument from Divine Right,” Peter Lake, in *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England* [London: Croom Helm, 1987], 209). Later Anglicans who urged a *via media* would likely be uncomfortable with how “Calvinist” thinkers like Whitgift and Hooker were.

44 Wallace, “Via Media?” 4. Like Wallace, I use the term “Calvinist” as shorthand for those who
originally a separatist sect in England but were full members of the Church of England. Peter Lake shows that the “struggle [between established Anglicans and the Puritan party] was conducted within what amounted to a formal doctrinal consensus between the two sides.” It was not Calvin as a thinker who threatened the Church under Elizabeth but the political and ecclesial agitations for reform that some of his followers so strongly urged. And all of these emerged out of competing visions of reading Scripture.

In order to give an account of Puritan thought and Whitgift’s response to it, I consider the two *Admonitions*, written by John Field and Thomas Wilcox (first *Admonition*) and the great Puritan Thomas Cartwright (*A Second Admonition to Parliament*), to which is also attached *A View of Popishe Abuses*, also written by Field. I

“wanted to take reform further than the Lutherans had” (Wallace, “Via Media?” 4; Wallace, “Via Media?” 4). They also, as will be mentioned below, urged a presbyterian form of church government that had sole authority over the Church, even over the monarch.

Many bishops themselves were sympathetic to Puritan practices, even Archbishop Grindal, to the fury of the Queen. See Dawley, *John Whitgift and the Reformation*, 147–54 with regard to the attempt by the Queen to suppress Puritan “prophesying” through Archbishop Grindal, which he eventually refused. This scenario indicates that even as centrally “Anglican” a person as the Archbishop of Canterbury, by no means a Puritan as such, was influenced by and supportive of Puritan causes. And Calvin was a highly respected figure by even the most “Anglican” of thinkers; for instance, Richard Hooker says of Calvin that he was “incomparably the wisest man that euer the French Church did enioy, since the houre it enioyed him” (Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 1–4 [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977–82], I.i.12, 3).

focus only on those which pertain to these Puritans’ reading of Scripture and some secondary concerns that arise from such a reading.

The central Puritan argument is that the Church must follow Scripture in such a way that any practice not directly supported by reference to the Bible must be ipso facto eschewed. The options, for them, are very clear: “Either must we have right ministerie of God, & a right government of his church, according to the scriptures sette up (bothe whiche we lack [in the Church of England] or else there can be no right religion.”

Either the Church of England is the true Church or it is not, and the only judge is Scripture; of course, this means that Puritan judgment is also shaped by a particular vision of Scripture and of ecclesiology. The true church is an invisible one, the Church of the elect of God, whose assurance of salvation leads to the practice of good works. Or, to put it another way and in terms that are in accord with spiritualist traditions, the true Church is “spiritual.” Thus, there is not one visible Church in the realm, but a series of small communities of believing churches of the elect, or even sub-groups within such local churches. Already worked into their ecclesiology is a theology of a visibly divided Church. Oneness or catholicity is imperceptible by any external, physical signifiers. For Puritans concerned about the “papist” threat to England, such external practices are often themselves indicative of a false church.

Establishment theologians rejected such a form of ecclesiology that saw no inherent worth in the visible, external practices of the episcopal system. For Whitgift, these external practices, along with word and sacrament, draw the elect to God. In other words, the Church is, in Augustinian parlance, a corpus permixtum, a mixed body of the

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elect and reprobate. While one cannot fully know who is elect, the practices of the common life of the Church, shaped by the Prayer Book, work toward bringing the elect to God. Politically, this means no formal distinction between the Church and the commonwealth, but the theological impetus for this is an ecclesiology that conceives of the commonality of church life. Peter Lake points out that part of the reason for this is Whitgift’s “dour Calvinism,” which is “riven with sin to cast doubt on the effectiveness of any popular government.” Cartwright’s suggestion that the “good men” of the congregation can democratically comprise ecclesial governance goes against this view.

In the *Admonitions*, Field, Wilcox, and Cartwright have essentially two complaints that relate to the topic at hand, both of which are closely linked to their anti-Catholicism. First, their view is that the Church of England, while having made some motions toward becoming a truly reformed church, falls short as a result of “popish remnants both in ceremonies and regiment.” The second concern has to do with the “reading ministry” of Scripture, to which I attend later. The prime motivator for their worries, perhaps rightly in light of their recent history with Queen Mary, is fear of a return to romanist heresy, the “religion of the Anti-Christ.” The authors consider the use of vestments and other such shared practices with Roman Catholics as those which “come from the Pope, as oute of the Troian horses bellye, to the destruction of God’s kingdome.” At fault, and the central aim of their criticism, is the Prayer Book, some of which they admit is an improvement on Catholicism, but ultimately “an imperfecte book, culled & picked out of that popishe dunghill the Masse booke full of all

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abominations.” They reject the continuation of such liturgical movements as celebrating saints’ days, the “jewish” practice of the churching of women, and kneeling during communion. This relates to Scripture for the simple reason, in the eyes of the Puritans, that none of these practices are to be found in the Bible’s literal depiction of the early Christian Church. The Puritan form of primitivism and repristination seeks to return the Church to a form that is explicitly endorsed by Scriptural injunction, or at least one that can be discerned from the New Testament Church. Anything else is the false Church of Antichrist.

John Whitgift, who eventually Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583, responded to the charges made in the Admonitions. He made not only one reply, but two, as Cartwright very quickly published his own rejoinder to Whitgift, to which Whitgift also responded. While not a systematic theologian in the mode of Richard Hooker, “perhaps more than any other he made possible the growth of the distinctive ethos of Anglicanism.” In Whitgift’s view, “the scripture is most untolerably abused, and unlearnedly applied” by the writers of the Admonitions. A defining matter for Whitgift is that of ecclesial (and, to a lesser extent, social) order, and he quotes Continental reformers such as Zwingi to show that the discord Puritans were sowing threatens the

53Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, 21.


56Dawley, John Whitgift and the Reformation, 165.

57Whitgift, Works, v1, 58.
peace of the Church. He in turn shows that Puritans risk betraying Anabaptist tendencies. There are for Whitgift numerous ecclesial practices that contribute to the edification of the people and are things indifferent, devised for the sake of the peace and good order of the commonwealth and of the Church. In his view, it is absurd to oppose something based on the absence of express endorsement in Scripture:

Such and such things were not in the apostles’ time; ergo, they ought not to be now. Which kind of argument is very deceitful, and the mother and well-spring of many old and new schisms; of old, as of them that called themselves Apostolicos, and of the Aërians; of new, as of the anabaptists, who, considering neither the diversity of times concerning the external ecclesiastical policy, nor the true liberty of the christian religion in extern rites . . . have boldly enterprised to stir up many and heinous errors.

The Bible, therefore, is a rule book for a single ecclesiastical system. The vicissitudes of history provide new contexts in which the Church must live out the gospel, and to live incarnationally in the world. The fact that certain practices resemble those of Roman Catholicism does not immediately disqualify them from their use. Whitgift, with great rhetorical flourish, suggests that the Puritans, in arguing against anything remotely “popish,” err in a manner similar to that of the Arians of the fourth century:

The self-same reasons moved the Aërians to forsake the order of the church and to command their disciples to do the contrary of that that the church did. We borrow good laws of the gentiles; and we use the churches, bells, pulpits, and many other things used of papists, &c.

There is in Whitgift’s construal a clear respect for tradition, not for its own sake, but for the purpose of maintaining the order of service that a radical liturgical transformation would disrupt, insofar as Scripture is not opposed. He also does not want to conceive of a

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59 Whitgift, *Works*, v1, 60–61. At this point Whitgift argues for the appropriateness, but not the necessity, of the episcopal system. It was not until Hooker that it becomes seen as *de iure divino*, which Lake argues was an innovation (Lake and Dowling, “Presbyterianism,” 207). This project does not suggest that all aspects of the Anglican structure are ecclesially ideal, and I suggest that the pressures of the divisive climate pushed Whitgift into a more rigid stance on this matter.

Church unconnected with its history as the people and community of God. If there are aspects of the Church that have existed for centuries, then barring any scriptural injunction against them, they are *a fortiori* to be commended. In his view, the aims of the Puritans are to usurp the authority of the monarch. For instance, Whitgift sees their “prophesyings,” which were small groups who studied Scripture on their own, and frequently critiqued the way the Church was run, as essentially seditious behaviour.

Whitgift writes in a highly charged atmosphere in which his rhetorical skill and incisive turns of phrase, alongside his highly effectual administrative abilities, essentially result in him “winning” the battle, according to Dawley. But Whitgift is seldom discussed today in reference to the development of Anglican thought, important as he is. His considerable contribution to an Anglican biblical hermeneutic is the continuity and extension of Cranmer’s notion of the Church as a community in which the Bible is read together. Reading Scripture as individuals is not to be considered in opposition to the claims of the Church (as these “prophesyings” were), but as a reflection on Church teaching. He construes the liturgical shape of Church practice not only as a means to maintain order and minimize such individualist thinking: it is also these liturgical, external practices within the *corpus permixtum* that draw the elect to God. The Bible is not read in a vacuum but recited within a normative series of habits that discipline the laity. The attempt to repristinate the Church based on ideas of what the early Church did generates an unstable state of affairs since the shape of this “primitive” community is unclear.

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62 This is notwithstanding the fact that an ecclesial reading includes the subjection of the Church under the judgment of the Word of God. This is admittedly complicated, for the prophesying groups clearly thought they were emulating the prophets in their attitude toward the Established Church of England. Who adjudicates the difference between an “individualist” reading and a truly prophetic word to the Church?
Whitgift’s contributions to an Anglican vision of Scripture are not always explicitly laid out in his writings. Peter Lake argues that it is Richard Hooker who is the grand synthesizer of the numerous and disparate ideas of Cranmer, Whitgift and others. Lake makes the controversial claim that Hooker virtually invented Anglicanism in his Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.63 The magnitude and scope of Hooker’s Laws preclude anything other than a brief examination of his innovative approach, which resolves various conflicts and contradictions that remain in Cranmer and Whitgift. I briefly outline how Hooker addresses the problem of ritual prescribed by the Church of England, particularly those not explicitly described in Scripture. I illustrate his continuity with Whitgift and Cranmer’s vision of reading the Bible, and that engaging in common liturgical practices forms and shapes the inner life of believers.64

63Lake, Anglicans and Puritans? 227. It is important to keep in mind that the contemporary scene was such that it was necessary to formulate a definitive view of the Elizabethan settlement. It certainly was a political document (not least of which had to do with the fact that a major theme was “the polity”), but it was most eminently a theological one as well. In Robert R. Eccleshal, “Richard Hooker’s Synthesis and the Problem of Allegiance,” Journal of the History of Ideas 37, no. 1 (January-March 1976): 111–24, we find an instance whereby Hooker’s concern for the Church is incidental, presenting him merely as a defender of the Crown. I would rather see Hooker in a less Machiavellian light.

64It is inaccurate to describe Hooker as a prime representative of the via media. As has already been mentioned, “the Church of England [had] much more in continuity with the continental Reformation than distinct from it” (Wallace, “Via Media?” 10). Wallace sees a more significant alteration during the reign of Charles I and Archbishop William Laud in the next century when sacramental Arminianism was introduced. I am more in agreement with Wallace’s later statement that as “the anglocatholic offspring of the Oxford Movement came to dominate English academic life, they rewrote the history of the Church of England, providing for themselves the usable past of a via media from which Puritans and Calvinists were excluded” (Wallace, “Via Media?” 20). To view Hooker as a kind of moderating (and, hence, uninteresting) defender of Elizabethan comprehensiveness disregards his strong Calvinism and his continuity with Cranmer and Whitgift. Describing the problems in the Elizabethan Church as one between Geneva and Rome is to miss the more central theological loci at issue. The Puritans (not to be confused with the later Separatists) “focused above all on experiencing, preaching, and cultivating a godly and edifying piety, enshrined in and formulated as a Reformed or Calvinist theology of grace. However, radiating out from that piety was discontent with matters of ritual and structure that seemed to impede it” (Wallace, “Via Media?” 12). Puritans were concerned with a greater emphasis on personal piety and the inner life – reflecting the influence of spiritualist traditions – whereas Establishment thinkers urged common liturgical modes that shaped the people in the faith via external practices. If there is a “middle way” that shaped early Anglican thought, it was a carefully thought-out course between various forms of English Protestantism, not between the stark choice of Geneva and Rome.
There are several practices loathed by the authors of the Admonitions that are not explicitly outlined in the Bible, such as kneeling, the use of the cross, and vestments. Hooker takes a measured and careful advance in favour of conformity. It is noteworthy that Hooker rejects the inherently antagonistic argument that requires the Church to define itself over-against the practices of Rome:

That extreme dissimilitude which they urge upon us, is now commended as our best and safest policie. . . . The ground of which politique position is, that Evils must be cured by their contraries, and therefore the cure of the Church infected with the poyson of Antichristianitie must be done by that which is therunto as contrary as may be.  

Hooker is aware that there is more than a mere strict biblicism occurring here — Puritans surely knew that the Bible said nothing of numerous practices in which both the Church of England and the non-Conformists engaged. Hooker’s opponents, rather, reject the notion that external practices common to the Established Church and the Roman Catholic Church have any efficacy on the inner spiritual life of the individual. This is a denial of the importance of a communal participation of ecclesial activities.

I would prefer to ameliorate the image of Hooker as one who merely reasons his way through a defence of the Church, by appending the concept of wisdom. Order in the Church is achieved only by a wise recourse to a careful discernment of those practices that are not directly laid out in Scripture, so as to decide what is of benefit to the whole, not merely to the individual. With respect to any good law, says Hooker, “A law therefore generally taken, is a directive rule unto goodness of operation. The rule of divine operation outward, is the definitive appointment of God’s owne wisedom set down within himself. The rule of naturall agents that worke by simple necessity, is the

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65Hooker, Laws, IV.vii.viii, 298. This is not to say that Hooker is not antagonistic toward Roman Catholic Church, only that for Hooker to merely take the opposite position of one’s enemies is neither rational nor wise.
determination of the wisedom of God.”66 When searching the Scriptures, then, it is
wisdom that directs the reader:

Whereas they allege the wisedom doth teach every good way; and have thereupon
inferred, that no way is good in any kind of action, unless wisedom do by scripture
leade unto it: see they not plainely how they restraine the maifold wayes which
wisedom hath to teach men by, unto one only way of teaching, which is by
scripture? The bounds of wisedom are large, and within them much is contayned.
Wisdom was Adams instructor in Paradise: wisdom indued the fathers, who lived
before the law . . . by the wisedome of the law of God, David attayned to excell
others in understanding; and Salomon likewise to excell David by the selfe same
wisedom of God.67

There is more than a concept of reasoned prudence in Hooker’s use of wisdom, but a trust
that, just as the Holy Spirit (which I suggest is linked to his use of wisdom in this
passage) guides biblical characters, he also guides those who read the Bible. This is not
to deny Hooker’s appeal to the “light of reason” given to people, but I suggest that this
rationality has not yet been through the grist of Cartesian epistemological doubt, which
searches for certainty along the lines of a geometric proof. Hooker urges a reasoned
reading of Scripture that is to be led by the wisdom of God.

Hooker contends that the carefully preserved ancient practices in the Church are
not suffused with superstition. Maintaining an awareness of the distinction between the
inward and outward dichotomy emerging from the Puritan preference for the former, he
argues that

There is an inward reasonable, and there is a sollemne outward serviceable
worship belonginge unto God. Of the former kind are all manner of vertuous
duties that each man in reason and conscience to Godward oweth. . . . It is the
later of these two whereupon our present question groweth.68

The principle that guides Hooker’s acceptance of certain practices is their “conveniencie

66Hooker, Laws, I.i.viii, 84.

67Hooker, Laws, II.i.iv, 147.

68Hooker, Laws, V.iv.iii, 31.
and fittnes, in regarde of the use for which they should serve.”

Hooker avers that, “that which inwardlie each man should be, the Church outwardlie ought to testifie. And therefore the duties of our religion which are seene must be such as that affection which is unseen ought to be.” By “conforming” to these outward acts, the inner life of the believer comes to take on the shape of this outward behaviour, a concept that coheres with Targoff’s thesis regarding the common life of the Church. More than mere adiaphora to be decided by the Queen, outward ceremony “was essential to the worship of God because it held so much significance for the Christian in his [outward] devotion.”

Starting with Cranmer, developed by Whitgift, and synthesized by Hooker, this concept of an ecclesial reading of Scripture therefore sheds light on an Anglican hermeneutic of the Bible. The extent to which the Bible was translated into English illustrates the belief that all should have access to Holy Scripture. Yet, from the beginning, Anglican thinkers worked against an individualistic view of the faith in which Scripture has to do with the inner life and personal edification. Rather, with an ecclesiology that argues for a corpus permixtum rather than for the invisible Church of the elect, the entire body of the Church is to be shaped by the language of the Bible. This was the intent of the Prayer Book as a kind of guide to this spiritual formation.

4 The Canon of Scripture

It is a traditional doctrine that both the Old and the New Testament comprise the

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69Hooker, Laws, V.vi.i, 33. The term “convenience” should perhaps be aligned with the Latin convenientia, which pertains to the “appropriateness,” or, as he says next, the “fitness” of a thing for the end to which it is directed.

70Hooker, Laws, V.i.ii, 33.

one word of God. In other words, while there is indeed diversity in the biblical texts, they are constitutive of God’s revelation to the Church. What I describe here is the ramification of this fact for Anglican practice, which has to do not just with the canonicity of the specific books, but with the sufficiency of these books in themselves as the word of God to effect salvation.

A central tenet bearing on the reading of Scripture in the Prayer Book, and repeated in various forms, is Article 6 of the Articles of Religion:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation. . . . In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.  

It is not the Church nor its traditions that comprise faith, but the Scriptures, which, it should be noted, are explicitly defined as “those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament.” The Article continues to name precisely which books are canonical. Cranmer’s vision of Anglicanism is therefore profoundly influenced by a new appreciation of Scripture.

The new Anglican piety was thoroughly Biblical. In this context offices, sacrament, and the sermon all embodied the living Word of God. The unique feature of the English Reformation at this point, moreover, is that Bible and Church were not set one against the other. . . . This firm grasp upon the centrality of the Scriptures within the life of the Church brought to Anglicanism its precious freedom from the restraints of sixteenth-century confessional dogma.

Because the Bible, comprising equally the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God, and given its concomitance with the Church, the Bible cannot be decoupled from ecclesial offices and sacraments, nor especially from preaching. It is this latter concept that particularly illustrates the canonicity of Scripture in a uniquely Anglican light.  

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72 The second sentence is thought to have been added by Archbishop Parker (1504–1575), who can also be seen, with Cranmer, as a co-founder of certain peculiarities in the Church of England. My intent in this chapter is to use Cranmer, Whitgift, and Hooker as “signposts” toward an Anglican hermeneutic, to which are associated numerous “Cranmerian” figures such as Parker. The Prayer Book is the embodiment of this scriptural vision.

73 Dawley, John Whitgift and the Reformation, 118.
major agitation of Puritans was the form and frequency of preaching (or lack of it) prescribed in the Church of England. In the Puritan view, the Prayer Book errs by encouraging a liturgical service that merely urges a “bare reading” of Scripture without need for explication. There is more to the meaning of the term “word of God,” for “by the word of God, it is an office of preaching, they [the supporters of the Established Church] make it an office of reading. . . . [But] reading is not feeding, but it is an evil as playing upon a stage, and worse too.”

What then is meant by the “word of God,” therefore, is in dispute. Unlike Cranmer’s image of ingesting Scripture by reading, no longer is this sufficient for the believer to be “fed.”

A defining aspect of Puritan worship is to have rigorous explication of Scripture, influenced by Ramism, as handed down by the French philosopher-logician Pierre de la Ramée. The basic concept of Ramism was “arranging concepts in such a fashion as to make them understandable and memorable.” With respect to preaching, the effect is the division and subdivision of concepts related to the appointed text, and breaking it down into essential logical units. In this way, a sermon is a very close reading of the passage, out of which is extracted the essential principles, laid out in an easily organized way. More than merely a highly methodical approach to the Biblical text, the aim is to so explicate it that each individual fully understands the text’s meaning. For the Puritans, the “bare” reading of Scripture was entirely insufficient. This Ramist approach to preaching “provided the theoretical framework by which the preacher could impart

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74Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, 22.


information as well as instruct and correct the lives of the hearers.”77 The bare reading was thus insufficient in allowing the text to be effective without a preacher.

Linked to this concern is the use of Scripture in the Anglican liturgy as the basis of personal and corporate prayer, a matter that also has to do with the Prayer Book. For instance, the Admonition refers to the churching of women after childbirth when the mother recites Psalm 116 as if it is her own prayer. For the Puritan, this is “abusing the psalm to her,”78 as if what was said by the psalmist thousands of years earlier can somehow be also said by a woman after having given birth. Numerous prayers in the Book of Common Prayer work in a similar fashion: the Nunc Dimittis comes from Luke 2, and the entire Book of Psalms is placed in the Prayer Book, organized for daily reading. In addition, there are also prayers that Cranmer wrote, each of which uses language saturated with scriptural imagery.79 For the Puritans, this saying of the Psalms, often antiphonally, is a misrepresentation of the text in which “they tosse the Psalms in most places like tennis balles.”80 If a biblical prayer were to be used verbatim, the Lord’s Prayer would be acceptable since it’s form was explicitly endorsed by Jesus.81 Scripture must be properly located in its historical context and not used in such a way that the congregation takes on the hypocritical “role” of the biblical character. Puritan prayer

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77Donald K. McKim, “Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology,” 511–12. McKim speaks here of Perkins’ preaching, but Perkins’ preaching style is an ideal example of the Puritan approach in general.

78Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, 21.

79Cranmer’s arrangement of the Psalms in this manner moved the task of performing the daily offices by priests to the common layperson. The Book of Common Prayer was to be “‘common,’ but only in the sense that the priest and people attended to the same aspects of the liturgy together” (Judith Maltby, Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History [Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 41).

80Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, 29.

81The Lord’s Prayer was (as is), of course, a prescribed prayer of the Church of England. Even this prayer fell out of use by many Calvinist-influenced churches, but remained a significant part of Prayer Book liturgy.
urges spontaneity, and utterances that are “from the heart.” For Puritan sympathizers like Milton much later,

the ‘perfect Gift’ of God lies in the unpremeditated devotional voice, the ‘freedom of speech’ that each individual ought by right to posses. To worship according to the ‘outward dictates of men’ instead of the inward ‘sanctifying spirit’ means to prefer humanly authored texts to divine ordination — to commit the act of idolatry.⁸²

Whitgift defends this concept of a “reading ministry,” or the “bare reading” of Scripture with little or no sermon. The theological principles that underlie this aspect of Anglicanism reveal a radical discontinuity between Puritan and Conformist perspectives on the Bible. For Whitgift, Cartwright’s argument that a reading ministry is insufficient itself belies a “popish” inclination, for it implies that there is an obscurity to the reading of Scripture that must be removed by preaching:

What is this else but together with the papists to condemn the scriptures of obscurity, as though all things necessary to salvation were not plainly and clearly expressed in them? . . . I grant you that every man understandeth them not; for it is the Spirit of God that openeth the heart of man both to understand the scriptures read and preached.⁸³

By no means does Whitgift deny the importance of preaching but rather considers it as ancillary to the hearing of Scripture. At stake for him was the very power of the words of Scripture themselves to convert. In other words, the reading of Scripture is itself an act of preaching. He uses the example of the reading of the law in Deuteronomy 31:12–13, in which God commands Moses to “Gather the people together, men and women, and children . . . that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God.” And, in the time of King Josiah, when the book of the law was found (2 Kings 22), Whitgift asks, “Why did Josiah, after he had found this book, cause it to be read before all the people, if reading had not been effectual, and of as great force to persuade as

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⁸²Targoff, Common Prayer, 37.

⁸³Whitgift, Works, v3, 37.
preaching, that is, if reading in effect had not been preaching? Puritan demands for textual explication as part of the reading of the Word of God in order to guarantee biblical effectiveness denigrates Scripture’s own inherent canonical power as the Word of God. To make preaching the *sine qua non* of the proper use of the Bible is to add to the bare power of God’s word, as the papist does:

> Do you think that there cometh no more knowledge or profit by reading the scriptures than doth by “ beholding of God’s creatures?” Then let us have images again, that they may be laymen’s books, as the papists call them; no doubt attributing as much to the external and visible creatures as they did to the reading of the eternal word of God; wherein you join with them, for anything that I yet see.

Whitgift’s theological point indicates a unique position that begins to solidify in Anglicanism, which is that God’s Spirit is the one on whom the Church relies to speak through the words of Scripture as given to the Church. This can no doubt also occur with the sermon, but to demand that the sermon serve as the singular medium of the Spirit’s power is to denigrate the power of God’s word.

Part of what contributes to Whitgift’s rather “passive” view of God’s work in the reading of the Bible is his Calvinism. Whatever means God uses are God’s prerogative. Quoting 1 Corinthians 3:6, Whitgift avers that

> St. Paul saith: “I have planted: Apollos watered; but God gave the increase;” *ergo*, “there is no salvation without preaching;” is not this good stuff and a strong argument to build a matter of salvation upon? St. Paul there declareth that the preaching of the word is not effectual, except God give the increase, that we ought not to attribute our salvation to the ministers of the word, but only to God. He makes no comparison betwixt reading and preaching; neither is there anything there spoken . . . which may not be applied to attentive and diligent reading. . . .

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84 Whitgift, *Works*, v3, 44.


86 Peter Lake refers to Whitgift’s “fatalist” theological approach, which is a rather negatively construed term. Whitgift is relying on the power of God through word and sacrament to convert, not the persuasive words of a preacher.
may be that God doth not only work faith by reading; but it is commonly so . . . for God worketh by both.\footnote{Whitgift, \textit{Works}, v3, 35.}

As regards the charge that praying the Scriptures is artificial, Whitgift mistrusts the centrality of the preacher to utter spontaneous prayers to which the people were expected to say “amen.” In other words, Puritans are “insisting that the minister ought to serve as ‘the mouth of the people’ . . . [which] Cranmer and his fellow liturgists sought to avoid.”\footnote{Targoff, \textit{Common Prayer}, 40.} This is counter to Cranmer’s aim for a communal reading of Scripture and of praying in which there is no distinction between the people and the priest. In Whitgift’s view, this rendering of the minister as the focus of preaching and praying is not in line with a reformed church but is a reversion to “papist” sensibilities in which the priest is made distinct from public worship. Like the Roman Catholics, the words of the preacher, in Whitgift’s construal of Puritanism, take on equal footing with the Bible. Instead, the Prayer Book, steeped in biblical language, and using set prayers, ensures that the worship of the congregation is independent of the whims of the preacher. Thus, the words of the Bible are eminently more trustworthy for the use of prayers than human spontaneity.

Hooker’s writings agree with Whitgift on this point: “The Church as a witnesse preacheth his meere revealed truth by \textit{reading} publiquely the sacred scripture. So that a seconde kind of preaching is the readinge of holie writ.”\footnote{Hooker, \textit{Laws}, V.xix.i, 67.} Hooker uses the example of the Jews, who read Scripture in the midst of the community, arguing that there is no Old Testament evidence for sermons. In Hooker’s view, the Puritans only consider the reading of Scripture as a mere prelude to the sermon:

\begin{quote}
For with us the readinge of scripture in the Church is a parte of our Church litourgie, a speciall portion of the service which we doe to God, and not an exercise to spend the time, when one doth waite for an others comminge, till the assemblie of them that shall afterwardes worship him be complete. Wherefore the
\end{quote}
forme of our public service is not voluntarie, so neither are the partes thereof left uncertaine, but they are all set down in such order . . . as hath in the wisdome of the Church seemed best to concurre . . . with the generall purpose which we have to glorifie God.\textsuperscript{90}

Clearly, for Hooker, “we therefore have no word of God but the Scripture.”\textsuperscript{91} Hooker disregards Ramist categories, but considers Scripture in terms of the “end” to which it is oriented, that is salvation.\textsuperscript{92} But, despite his opposition to Puritan Calvinism, Hooker firmly maintains a Reformed outlook with respect to Scripture, namely, that the Bible is essential to knowledge of God apart from mere reason. Moreover, the Church is under its authority, and the Bible does not receive its authentication from the Church; the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to saving faith, and there is a place for reason aided by grace.\textsuperscript{93} Where Hooker differs from many of his Puritan opponents is that he does not regard Scripture as self-authenticating merely in terms of the text, apart from the Holy Spirit. While Scripture is sufficient with regard to the end for which it was devised, “when of things necessarie the verie chiefest is to know what booke wee are bound to esteeme holie, which poynt is confest impossible for the scripture it selfe to teach.”\textsuperscript{94} Voak argues that Hooker, without explicitly saying so, sees Scripture’s authentication “by a demonstrable rational argument,” though Voak’s use of the terms “probably” and “likely” indicate doubt as to whether Hooker would move so far from Reformed orthodoxy to suggest the primacy of human ratiocination.\textsuperscript{95} Rather than

\textsuperscript{90}Hooker, \textit{Laws}, V.xix.v, 71. Note again his use of the term “wisdom.”

\textsuperscript{91}Hooker, \textit{Laws}, V.xxi.ii, 84.

\textsuperscript{92}Lake, \textit{Anglicans and Puritans?} 227.


\textsuperscript{95}Voak, “Richard Hooker and the Principle of Sola Scriptura,” 131.
arguing for some first principle by which Scripture can be judged, Hooker affirms the mystery of the faith:

> Wee are not therefore ashamed of the gospell of our Lord Jesus Christ because miscarreants in scorne have upbraided us, that the highest point of our wisdome is Believe. That which is true and neither can be discerned by sense, nor concluded by meere naturall principles, must have principles of revealed truth whereupon to build it selfe, and an habit of faith in us wherewith principles of that kind are apprehended. The mysteries of our religion are above the reach of our understanding, above discourse of mans reason, above all that any creature can comprehend. Therefore the first thinge required of him which standeth for admission into Christes familie is beliefe.\(^96\)

He does not regard it necessary via a logical system to reduce Scripture to a book of moral and dogmatic propositions; rather, he is a careful thinker:

> Hooker realized clearly and yet critically that our understanding of even basic principles is subject to change. As a biblical scholar deeply versed in Renaissance humanism, he knew at first hand that the study of Scripture is an ongoing process. His own attempts to understand biblical revelation are informed by sympathetic acquaintance with previous efforts in many periods, including his own. Some of his harshest words are for those who would throw away centuries of devout and learned hermeneutics in order to insist arrogantly on the exclusive and obvious truth of their own party’s reading.\(^97\)

In his own way, Hooker rejects the search for absolute certainty, the quest that ends in the *crise pyrrhonienne*. Instead he argues for “habits of faith” that alone can give those “principles” of belief, which are not really principles at all, but are shared practices in which Scripture shapes the life of the community. There is no infallible evidence for Scripture’s veracity, apart from those reasons given in the context of belief, “the highest point of our wisdome.” On this point, it could be said that Hooker is less Thomistic than he is Anselmic, that is, that it is by faith that one seeks understanding. Thus, *pace* Voak, Hooker is not “denying Sola Scriptura,” but is in fact affirming it no less than his opponents; each does so with competing claims to what this means.\(^98\) What makes

\(^{96}\)Hooker, *Laws*, V.lxiii.i, 290.

\(^{97}\)A. S. McGrade, “Richard Hooker on Anglican Integrity,” *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 423.

Hooker different is that his “intent was to be a faithful interpreter of the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* in a historical and polemical context very different from the early sixteenth-century arguments between Protestant reformers and Roman Catholic apologists.”

When Hooker speaks of reason, the term is often perceived in categories that accord with Enlightenment perspectives that see reason as a purely human faculty. However, if instead “Hooker refused to see the internal testimony of the Spirit in opposition to reason,” then we can discern a much grander synthesis in his unique description of Anglicanism. A bifurcation between rationalism and affective modes of thought (which are often made equivalent to “the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit”) is a false dichotomy in Hooker’s mind.

Therefore, regarding the theme of the canon of Scripture, I present Whitgift and Hooker not just as proponents of the unity of the two testaments, but as arguing that all the words of Scripture have their own power that work through a “reading ministry” in which preaching is not seen as the only way for the elucidation of the Bible. Rather, faith as the summit of wisdom calls the reader to remain in the text without seeking for external modes of authentication. Puritan opponents, in the view of Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker, see the Word of God in need of supplementary apparatus that curtail the power of a reading ministry, and thus also that of the Bible as canon. Scripture, as the sufficient Word of God, provides the prayers that the Church can also use, as opposed to spontaneous utterances that rely too strongly on the rhetorical skill of the preacher.

5 A Christological Reading of Scripture

As with a canonical reading of the Bible, the concept of a christologically

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100 Ingalls, “Richard Hooker as Interpreter of the Reformed Doctrine of Sola Scriptura,” 365.
permeated text is not in itself innovative nor particularly unique. In comparing various exegetical stances, a distinction between conformists and Puritans in terms of one being “christological” and the other “christocentric” does not apply in this case, though it does between Anglicans and Anabaptists.\textsuperscript{101} The differences between the two groups are not always hard and fast, for, contrary to later exegesis, neither movements found problematic, for instance, the interpretation of Isaiah 53 christologically. My intent in this section is to bring together the notion of an ecclesial reading of the Bible with the fact that both the Old and New Testaments comprise the one Word of God because of a christological hermeneutic of Scripture.

Worship has a shape, which itself moulds the worshipper into the image of Christ; there is very little in early Anglicanism that is governed specifically by anything overtly confessional: “Other churches may be anchored in confessional documents, or doctrinal formularies, or a systematically articulated theology, or the pronouncements of magisterial authorities. . . . The Anglican anchor is worship, whereby worship is meant the Book of Common Prayer.”\textsuperscript{102} Whereas Lutherans have the Augsburg Confession, or Puritans the Heidelberg Catechism, Cranmer assembled the Prayer Book under the governance of Scripture, which itself shapes the Church to the form of Christ. There is

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\item \textsuperscript{101}See, e.g., Alan J. Hauser & Duane F. Watson, eds, \textit{A History of Biblical Interpretation. Vol. 2, The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods}, ed. Alan J. Hauser & Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 69. Muller argues convincingly the futility of distinguishing who is or is not “christocentric” in Richard A. Muller, “A Note on ‘Christocentrism’ and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology,” \textit{Westminster Theological Journal} 68, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 254 that “the terms ‘christocentrism’ and ‘christocentric,’ . . . float at the same level of mythological distance from the historical materials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the notion of central dogmas and whole theologies logically deduced from divine decrees—and such usage is far more subversive of genuine historical analysis than these other shibboleths, given its seemingly unimpeachable religious and theological value. What Christian theologian, after all, would want to be anything other than christocentric?” We must remember that the Puritan hermeneutical framework was virtually indistinguishable from that of Anglicans, namely, for instance, with the use of figuralism. The question is to what refers the christological figures point.

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no centrally formulated creed unique to the Anglican Church, notwithstanding the Thirty-Nine Articles, which do not comprise a creed as such. This does not suggest an absence of central doctrines; Anglicanism can be regarded in its uniqueness not by specific doctrinal propositions, but by an ethos: since Christ is everywhere in Scripture, then all prayers and practices are shaped by the same Scripture. The specific impact this vision has can be seen implicitly. If Christ’s work in the Church has more than a merely interior effect on an individual believer, then Christ must especially impact external worship.

As an example, I turn to a sermon by a contemporary of Whigft and Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626) called “A Summary View of the Government both of the Old and New Testament.” Andrewes focuses on various Old Testament figures as being theologically descriptive of proper Church polity. Seeing Israel, perhaps anachronistically, as a “commonwealth,” Andrewes traces the pattern of religious and civil government in Israel from the time of Moses and Aaron to that of the kings of Israel to the time of captivity under Nehemiah. Thus, for example, he can list the hierarchical form of the “Church” of Israel under Aaron as follows:

103 It is important to note that historic creeds such as the Apostles’ Creed do function quite crucially in the liturgy.

104 Peter Lake outlines this ethos with respect to the contentious doctrine of the Eucharist: “For Hooker . . . the sacrament was not a subject for debate so much as an object for devotional contemplation. As such it provided the center-piece for his vision of the church; here the visible and invisible churches met, as Christ’s presence in his mystical body the church was made manifest. . . . It was Hooker’s vision of ‘God in Christ’ as ‘the medicine that doth cure the world’ and of ‘Christ in us’ as the means by which that medicine was applied to a wounded human nature, which underlay his account of the sacrament. For through Christ’s presence in the sacrament, God’s causative presence in the world was transformed into his saving presence in the Church” (Lake, Anglicans and Puritans? 175–76). I employ this concept of “causative” agent, christologically oriented, to other ecclesial practices such as the liturgy, though they are certainly in Hooker’s mind of a third order nature.

α. Aaron was the high priest
β. under him Eleazar; who, as he had his peculiar charge to look unto, so he was generally to rule both Ithamar’s jurisdiction and his own;
γ. under him Ithamar, over two families;
δ. under him three prelates;
ε. under each of them, their several chief fathers, אברת ראׂשי, as they were termed Exod. vi. 25; under Elizaphan four, under Eliasaph two, under Zuriel two, Numb. iii. 18 &c.;
ζ. under these, the several persons of their kindreds.

There is worth here noting that albeit it be granted that Aaron was the type of Christ, and so we forbear to take any argument from him; yet Eleazar, who was no type, nor ever so deemed by any writer, will serve sufficiently to shew such superiority as is pleaded for; that is, a personal jurisdiction in one man resilient over the heads or rulers of divers charges.106

Andrewes views the Israelite theological/political structure as an exemplary form of Church government that the Church of England is to continue. While he acknowledges that historical pressures may call for changes in naming the various heads and positions, the pattern is to be continued, and it is rooted in Aaron as a “type” of Christ. He shows that the New Testament does not deviate from this pattern, calling for the office of Apostle, prophet, evangelist, bishop, doctor, and diaconus.107 Emerging from the Puritan demand to see the Old Testament as merely typifying Christ in a spiritual (meaning non-material or external) manner, is an appeal to the episcopal structure of the Church by the Established Church. Similarly, Puritans saw their presbyterian or congregationalist model equally biblical.108 Both ecclesial perspectives arise out of how the Bible was read, and therefore it is essential to show the above distinctions between these competing hermeneutical options.

108This is one point of difference between Whitgift and Hooker that contributes to Lake’s argument that the latter “invented” Anglicanism, which is that matters of ecclesiastical government moved from being an issue of adiaphora to iure divino.
In addition, however, and central to this christological hermeneutic, is an account of the dual referent for the term “word of God,” which is also part of the liturgical phraseology with respect to Scripture in the Prayer Book. The Word, the \( \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \omega \zeta \), or *verbum* from John 1, is a central christological theme, closely connected to Scripture since at least the time of Origen. That is, the Incarnation of the Word, the second person of the Trinity, funds a view of the Bible as God’s “speech” to humanity as a recapitulation of what Mihai Niculescu calls the “sojourn” of the Logos:

Unlike modern hermeneutics, Origen does not construe the advent of the biblical Logos according to the existential historicity of the human receptor, but rather according to the immemorial historicity of the Logos Himself. The Logos claims or elects the receptor by biblically addressing him or rather, He is the advent of a biblical address, which claims the receptor as an immemorially called addressee. . . Biblical figures and images speak to the reader morally and physically (prophetically) only insofar as the Logos spells them out historically to us or, insofar as the Logos addresses us figuratively and iconically in the Bible as the Bible. \(^{109}\)

Thus, Christ, as the Word, “speaks” the Scripture, not only in a wooden “dictation” model but as a constant presence within the text. The Logos is therefore mediated textually, but he also shapes and governs this mediation. As Francis Watson writes, “for Christian faith, and therefore for Christian theology, truth is textually mediated.” \(^{110}\) Given Cranmer’s similitude of reading as eating, the Anglican perspective on the Bible suggests a kind of sacramentality in the engagement of Scripture. Christ, the Logos himself, is participative of this mediation. It is therefore important to consider, in my analysis of the exegesis of Isaiah in the following chapters, to what extent this christological hermeneutic is connected to the Incarnation of the Son in history who

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continually speaks anew to the Church. In other words, to what extent is the word, or text, related to or participates in the “Word,” the Logos?

6 The Old Testament and Isaiah in the Prayer Book

I end this chapter by turning again to the Prayer Book to briefly illustrate some theological uses of the Old Testament and then to focus on Isaiah, not only to show the christological hermeneutic that funds an Anglican vision of Scripture, but also to show its place within liturgical practice. Given what has been outlined thus far, it goes without saying that the Prayer Book enjoins reading the Old Testament as frequently as the New. The Psalms, most of all, are such an important part of the Prayer Book that Coverdale’s translation of them appears as a separate section of the text, and in fact the Psalms remain in that format in all English updated forms of the Prayer Book to this day. Their arrangement is such that the reader prays a Psalm or a portion of a Psalm in the morning and evening. Just as the Psalms serve as the “prayer book” of Israel, so too are they for the Church. This is not only for ecclesial reasons, namely, that the Church has been grafted to Israel, but because the Psalms contain the figure of Christ within them. They do not serve a merely predictive function of, for instance, Christ’s cry of dereliction (Psalm 22). Rather, Christ functions as the agent who participates in the act of prayer, and therefore all who are members of his body are to pray this way.

It is also significant that the Table of Lessons for daily prayer always includes a reading from each of the Old and New Testaments. The intent of the lectionary is to

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111 This is not so for the various books of “alternative services” in England, Canada, and elsewhere, which use updated translations of the Psalms. Nor is the Coverdale version used by the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church of the USA. It is interesting to note, however, that the King James Bible’s version of Psalm 23 (a Psalm that was never read in public) remains the most popular one. My thanks to Professor David Neelands of Trinity College, Toronto, for pointing out this fact, which indicates the importance of domestic reading.

112 For purposes of brevity, only 29 of the Old Testament books are read in their entirety. Very little of Ezekiel and Leviticus are part of the lectionary. 1 and 2 Chronicles and The Song of Solomon are entirely omitted.
set up a schedule by which all of the Old Testament is read once a year and the New twice a year. A lectionary also minimizes the risk of the text being subjected to the personal preferences of the priest to dictate the meaning of the passage on which the sermon is based. It is more than an issue of an “ordered” approach to the Bible, but an aim to submit the Church to a scriptural pattern, which is itself shaped by Christ as the incarnated Word of God. I first briefly look at the organization of this lectionary in terms of a christologically shaped pattern, including Isaiah’s place within this pattern. I then examine the use of Isaiah in the liturgy proper.

Isaiah plays a particularly important role in holy days. There is, of course, the traditional use of Isaiah 9 on Christmas day, and of Isaiah 52:13–53 at the beginning of Passion Week (Palm Sunday), as well as for the evening prayer of Good Friday. From the first Sunday in Advent and for three Sundays after Epiphany, a chapter from Isaiah is appointed to be read both at Matins and Evensong. The first Sunday of Advent has a reading from Isaiah 1, which says, “Heare the worde of the LORDE ye tyrauntes of Sodom: and herken vnto the lawe of oure God, thou people of Gomorra,” which is hardly a proclamation of Christmas cheer. Yet, further in the chapter is written, “Though youre synnes be as read [sic] as scarlet, shal they not be whyter then snowe? And though they were like purple, shall they not be like whyte woll?” (v. 18), which connotes the cleansing of sin by Christ’s true sacrifice, rather than the false festivals decried in this chapter. On Trinity Sunday, the lectionary appoints Isaiah 6, in which there is the thrice-chanted prayer of “holy, holy, holy” by the creatures before the throne. On Whitsunday, Isaiah 11 points not just to a fulfillment that “Then shal the Gentiles enquere after the rote of lesse (which shalbe set vp for a token vnto the Gentiles) for his dwellinge shalbe glorious,” but also to the mission and hope of the Church.

113 For the sake of historical accuracy, I refer here to Coverdale’s translation, the most common version during Cranmer’s time.
In addition to these readings of Isaiah for use on Sundays and holy days, the liturgy itself uses Isaiah as part of the prayers and exhortations read in and by the Church. See, for instance, the *Te Deum* (which is also found in the Roman Catholic office), “To thee all Angels cry aloud . . . Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth,” which refers to Isaiah 6.114 In the Monday before Easter, the liturgy lists Isaiah 63, that speaks on the one hand of the vengeance of God, who comes to “tread down the people in mine anger,” and yet “in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.” It is a mixture of both God as judge to a people who have forgotten him, yet also as a saviour who redeems.

As with all readings, the liturgy appoints other corresponding passages from the New Testament: a portion of Isaiah 50 on the Tuesday before Easter, Isaiah 7:10 on Annunciation day, and Isaiah 40 (“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”) for St. John the Baptist day.

Isaiah does not boast of a particularly more central position in the Prayer Book, but, rather, it is woven into the liturgy as an important part of the canon as the one word of God and bears witness to Christ in numerous ways. Such a hermeneutic does not merely rely upon a concept of prediction, but also of figuration and allusive images that evoke christological concepts. For this reason, Isaiah does not stand on its own but participates in a grand vision of Scripture in which not only Isaiah, but all of the Old Testament and the Bible speak in some way of Christ.

7 Conclusion

This discussion shows that the uniquely Anglican biblical hermeneutic, which

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114It is also, of course, in Revelation 4:8, which cannot itself be read apart from its Isaianic roots, neither theologically nor literally.
describe in terms developed by Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker, can be articulated by using the three categories of ecclesiology, canon and christology. I show how, while these terms also inform other ecclesial traditions, they describe the landscape of an Anglican vision of Scripture and evoke its uniqueness. With respect to the Church, a liturgically shaped community reads the Bible for the purpose of a form of “laicization” in which all are called to read the Bible as a visible ecclesial community marked by equally visible practices. This vision seeks, therefore, to oppose the centrality of individual interpretation, without discouraging personal use. Regarding the canon, while preaching serves an important part of this liturgical shape, it is not the sine qua non of proper reading of the Bible, for if the entire Bible comprises the one Word of God, then even the “bare” reading is sufficient to enact the words in which the Word, the Logos, recapitulates the Incarnation. Finally, regarding the christological shape of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments are both central in the reading ministry precisely because Christ is the telos of the text, governing and upholding it. Just as the Incarnation was a concrete, physical event, the interpretation of the Old Testament is not always to be regarded only in “spiritual” terms. As we see exemplified in Andrewes’ sermon, it can contribute to an understanding of, for instance, of Church polity because the visible Church participates in the visible people of Israel.

The primary intent of outlining a peculiarly Anglican way of reading Scripture is to maintain a consistent focus on the historic basis of biblical hermeneutics in the Church of England. The categories provide an analytic heuristic for the purpose of comparing nineteenth-century Anglican exegetes with one another and with this biblical vision. Moreover, despite the tectonic shift in exegetical approaches to the Bible by nineteenth century, this uniquely Anglican vision never entirely loses its hold.
CHAPTER 3

THE BREAKDOWN OF UNIFORMITY: SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMPETING INTRA-ANGLICAN SCRIPTURAL VISIONS

1 New Challenges to the Anglican Hermeneutic

The hermeneutical legacy of Cranmer, Whitgift, and Hooker, out of which emerges a uniquely Anglican way of reading Scripture, did not succeed in placating the complaints of Puritans or those of the growing number of breakaway groups that formed, particularly during and after the English Civil War(s). It is questionable whether the imposition of uniformity was ever successful in England; perhaps its ultimate failure as government policy was the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689. The execution of Charles I, the Interregnum, and the Glorious Revolution precipitated a renegotiation of the relationship between the Bible, a fractious Church, the canon, and Christ’s incarnational presence within the text. This re-evaluation brought the Church of England under the influence of competing hermeneutical visions. Yet the unique Anglican approach to the Bible was not a mere chimera; it continued to exert a pressure, albeit often muted.

1Still a defining work on the time from the perspective of a growing number of new religious movements is Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, Pelican Books (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972).

2I employ the term “uniformity” since this was the name of the various Acts passed into English law. In modern parlance, this is a rather negative epithet, and I by no means intend to suggest that the Anglican hermeneutical vision that I have sketched out would result in bland monotony. The view of the Anglican Church’s comprehensiveness is a popular one, which I have to some extent aimed at minimizing in this dissertation. Nonetheless, there was a wide degree of latitude in the Elizabethan era, Anglicanism’s most defining period. Moreover, the Act of Toleration was by no means equivalent to twenty-first-century perspectives on “tolerance;” no toleration was granted, for instance, to Roman Catholics.
This chapter considers several scriptural exegetes who represent new visions arising out of the crucible of ecclesial division. What was once a close connection between the Church, theology, liturgy and the life of the faithful becomes fractured into desacralized modes of reading scripture. I call these “irenic” readings of the Bible, which are approaches to the text that, in an effort to avoid and minimize division, concomitantly minimize theological exegesis, or change the nature of the “religion” to which this theology points. I define emerging exegetical approaches in terms of “theological minimization,” whereby technique, methodology, and the textualization of Scripture become dominant at the expense of deeper theological themes of Church and christology. The early seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries bear witness to the failure of a cohesive vision of Scripture, as a consequence of a fractured Church. However, this failure was by no means total. John Rogerson argues that the influence of German scholarship on England was slow for geographical and cultural reasons. I suggest, on the other hand, that one of the factors impeding the rise of critical exegesis was the “pressure” of the Book of Common Prayer, and not merely a fear of the German “rationalism” Rogerson argues for, though this was a very real fear. The Cranmerian vision of Scripture

3Michael C. Legaspi, The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) offers a very similar argument to that of this project with respect to a rise in an “irenic” reading of Scripture that attempts to treat the Bible as something other than what it is, namely “Scripture,” in favour of what Legaspi calls “academic,” “moral,” or “literary” biblical alternatives. Whereas his treatment primarily focuses on Germany and Michaelis, the parallels between aspects of my argument and his are close. In part, my argument suggests that what happens with more vigour in Germany is a mere extension of a process already initiated in England. Legaspi is nonetheless influential on this project as I apply his term — an “irenic” reading of Scripture — in the context of England, rather than Germany. For this reason, there are inevitable differences; I see the term as one that connotes a putative attempt to be “irenic,” an aim to “move beyond” differences and disputes. My claim is that it is an inevitable capitulation of a deeply theological reading of Scripture in favour of “something else.” It is to this latter that I attend.

4I employ the term “critical” here to denote any mode of reading the text to which is appended “at the expense of,” “in distinction from,” or “separate from” a theological reading of the text. For instance, as I show, philological methods came to be used in a mode independent of theological exegesis. With regard to the “fear” of German thinkers, M. A. Crowther writes, “because the most famous freethinkers in England encouraged the spread of German literature, the Anglican Church became increasingly suspicious of it” (M.
continued to exert its power, mitigated as it was, and it continues to do so today.⁵

This chapter, in part, attends to the movement known variously as the Enlightenment, die Aufklärung, and le Siècle des Lumières. It would be foolish to suggest, however, that I can sufficiently articulate all historical dimensions of this movement and remain within the scope of the present project. I aim to focus on England (i.e., not, for instance, on the Scottish Enlightenment) and hermeneutical changes concomitant with the Enlightenment and its particular relation to ecclesial division, using Isaiah as the focal point. There are numerous historical strands that account for the emergence of this new “age.” I give prominence to that of the struggle to make sense of Scripture in the midst of religious conflict. In this sense, I construe the Enlightenment as a response to the turmoil and violence of the Thirty Years War and the English Civil War, out of which derive competing theological visions.

Before attending directly to commentators on Isaiah itself, I first describe the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century with respect to the nature of Scripture and its relation to the Church. I consider the writing of William Chillingworth (1602–44) as emblematic of a broad tendency toward doctrinal “minimization.” This tendency is, I argue, the direct result of the violent upheavals of seventeenth-century England, many of which were the result of theological conflict. This was the era out of which emerged deism and latitudinarianism. Chillingworth and his colleagues at the Great Tew initiated a new perspective on religion that produced exegetes like Richard Stafford and William

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⁶ Rogerson is right to note the important influence of German Old Testament scholarship. But he also acknowledges that the critical method in fact derived from the English deists, who in turn impacted German innovators such as Reimarus (J.W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985], 10).
Day, whom I consider below, in this minimization of theological exegesis. The rise of what is often called latitudinarianism corresponds to the idea of natural religion in a strong form, whose purpose was to avoid the perceived problems of theological or “dogmatic” readings that constrain the individual appropriation of Scripture. With the success of Newtonian science, for instance, religion came to be cast in a new way. There was a minimization of the importance of dogmatic claims in favour of setting up a simple set of moral laws that were as easy to apprehend and predict as those of gravity. Each person has the lights of reason and of Scripture for guidance — yet “one begins to suspect . . . that the two lights were not entirely equal.”

“Reason” assumes a reified quality such that Scripture is viewed as being incapable of opposing reason, newly defined. In other words, this unequal sense of reason’s privilege makes Scripture subject to it.

Chillingworth is best known for his work *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation*, written in 1637 during the reign of Charles I. It is no mere theological treatise, but a direct argument against Roman Catholics — particularly the Jesuits — for

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6The Great Tew was an estate near Oxford and at which many faculty met informally. The group associated with Chillingworth came to be called the Great Tew Circle, out of which his ideas and others with him “served as a centrepiece of Latitudinarian thought” (Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke [1675–1729]: Context, Sources, and Controversy*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, vol. 75 [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997], 43). Pfizenmaier regards Chillingworth’s ideas with respect to epistemology a “rationalization of divinity” (Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Samuel Clarke*, 44). Other thinkers who are considered part of the Great Tew circle were the poet Abraham Cowley, dramatist and playwright Ben Jonson, and poet/politician Edmund Waller. It is interesting to note that thinkers at the Great Tew tended toward Royalism, despite the fact that their innovations influenced later “Whig” proponents.

7I am not straying here from one of my central claims, which is that external influences, such as Newtonian science, were not the cause of radical changes to theological exegesis. Rather, many such theories emerged in the midst of and as a consequence of division. More importantly, however, the enormous success of Newtonian science in the midst of the failure of the Church provided the means of newly apprehending the world that dogmatic theology apparently failed to provide.


the purpose of showing, first, that Scripture is the only necessary sacred document for salvation and, second, that each individual can and should have the right to interpret it. It was written directly against *Charity Maintained by Catholics* by the Jesuit Edward Knott.\(^\text{10}\)

Some themes in *The Religion of Protestants* resemble Puritan thinking, particularly with respect to the idea of the repristination of Christianity that I describe in Chapter 2. Moreover, despite his putative acceptance of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Chillingworth clearly moves away from a uniquely Anglican biblical hermeneutic in that he is suspicious of any ecclesial presence in biblical interpretation. This arises out of his dislike for Roman Catholicism. Rejecting the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, Chillingworth’s view is that

> the Church of Rome, to establish her tyranny over men’s consciences, needed not either to abolish or corrupt Holy Scriptures, the pillars and supporters of Christian liberty. . . . But the more expedite way . . . was to gain the opinions and esteem of the public and authorised interpreter of them, and the authority of adding to them what doctrines she pleased, under the title of traditions.\(^\text{11}\)

His emphasis on “conscience,” the belief of the individual, and a strong eschewing of the “traditions” of the Roman Catholic Church impact his understanding of the Church. He regards “tradition” as having been added in a dictatorial and conspiratorial manner that suffocated the primitive Church. In language that aims to avoid even the more minimal “tradition” of Protestantism, he proclaims in perhaps his most well-known passage:

> by the “religion of Protestants”, I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, of Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the confession of Augusta, or Geneva . . . nor the Articles of the Church of England. . . . But that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule for their faith and

\(^{10}\)Edward Knott, “Christianity Maintained,” in *Christianity Maintained. Or a Discovery of Sundry Doctrines Tending to the Ouerthrowe of Christian Religion: Contayned in the Answere to a Booke Entituled, Mercy and Truth, or, Charity Maintayned by Catholiques* (Saint-Omer: English College Press, Permissu superiorum, 1638).

\(^{11}\)Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants*, 90.
actions, that is the BIBLE. The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the religion of Protestants!\textsuperscript{12}

Superficially, this statement is rather innocuous, mirroring a traditional Protestant \textit{sola scriptura} perspective. But the theological hermeneutic of “the BIBLE” must be considered in the context of how it attests to ever-widening cracks in the sway of a uniquely Anglican reading of Scripture. First, his assertion is the consequence of seeing “that there are popes against popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves.”\textsuperscript{13} Such a combative, divisive atmosphere leads him to seek a kind of “textual” repristination of Christianity — nothing need be sought elsewhere than this one text, and no authority can dictate otherwise. Despite Chillingworth’s Anglicanism, it is clear that by this time, various spiritualist and humanist traditions entered into the minds of the religious elite in the face of religious division.\textsuperscript{14} Whereas the Roman Catholic Church claimed infallibility in the magisterium, Chillingworth formulates what appears to be a strict form of \textit{sola scriptura} to bypass these claims to an infallible human authority. As Reventlow argues, “in its polemical aim, \textit{The Religion of Protestants} is directed against precisely this claim to infallibility.”\textsuperscript{15}

Second, Chillingworth speaks to what it means to be an \textit{agent} of interpretation. While the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants, it is under the interpretive agency of rational credibility. But it is a certain form of rationality, for Chillingworth rejected the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12}Chillingworth, \textit{The Religion of Protestants}, 463.
\item \textsuperscript{13}Chillingworth, \textit{The Religion of Protestants}, 463.
\item \textsuperscript{14}The fact cannot be inconsequential that Chillingworth’s views were most certainly forged by his own vacillation between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, finally choosing the latter. What is important to note is that a constant thread running through his religious struggles, as suggested by Robert Orr, is his search for flexibility and “intellectual speculation” rather than a simplistic quest for an infallible authority. See Robert R. Orr, \textit{Reason and Authority: The Thought of William Chillingworth} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 14–20.
\end{itemize}
notion that the aim of religion is to provide certainty of salvation by means of dogmatic systems, often embedded within ecclesial structures. Rather,

upon men of temper and moderation, such [men] will oppose nothing because you maintain it, but will draw as near to you, that they may draw you to them, as the truth will suffer them; such as require of Christians to believe only in Christ.\(^{16}\)

For Chillingworth, what is important for “men of temper and moderation” is to believe only the simplest of things. *Now it is perhaps more apt to speak of Anglicanism being pushed toward a middle-of-the-road form of via media.* Against doctrine, Chillingworth directs his attention much more to the moral and ethical aspects of religion, since, without the form of certainty inherent within strict Puritan predestinarian theology, Christianity has only a *moral certainty.*\(^{17}\) Therefore, “the strength of faith required of a Christian for salvation was meagre.”\(^{18}\) The rational credibility of the Bible is then defined in the context of conceiving of Scripture not as a book that provides the tools for building dogmatic structures, for these are mere human constructs repugnant to true faith. Rather, “God is not defective in things necessary; neither will he leave himself without witness, nor the world without means of knowing his will and doing it.”\(^{19}\) The conscience of the individual adjudicates the meaning of Scripture: “every man is to judge and choose; *and the rule whereby he is to guide his choice, if he be a natural man, is reason.*”\(^{20}\) There is, then, an “authority” parallel with Scripture — “natural reason” — that determines what Scripture is to mean, and it may be different for each person.


\(^{17}\)Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 80.

\(^{18}\)Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 81.

\(^{19}\)Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants*, 124.

It warrants repeating that out of the crucible of division comes this search for common rationality, as the bonds of ecclesial communion have shattered. This “common reason” is not just a faculty of the interpreter, but is determinative of biblical interpretation. For instance, a distinction is made in Chillingworth’s account between those texts which are problematic and those which are “so plain and evident, that no man of ordinary sense can mistake the sense of them.”\textsuperscript{21} The latter are therefore to be preferred. Because God is good and requires little of his people to believe, the Bible is not to be read coercively; thus, the religion of Protestants is “safe.”\textsuperscript{22} The individual interpreter is free from the pressures of external coercion, as a dogmatic tradition is a “restraining of the word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from that liberty, wherein Christ and his apostles left them; is and hath been the only fountain of all the schisms of the church.”\textsuperscript{23} It is schism, therefore, that compels someone like Chillingworth to minimize the doctrinal centrality of Scripture and concomitantly to magnify the indispensability of reason in private interpretation.

This latitudinarian perspective was that the Bible confirms what humanity can already know by reason. With the Bible placed, at most, at equal parity with autonomous reason, the perceived violent dogmatism of earlier years can be avoided. While Chillingworth does not directly speak to the issue of prophecy and Isaiah, we can make some observations on his thought and that of others who came to think similarly. First, this theological minimization subjects the reading of Scripture to a “simplified” approach. This is in opposition not to textual difficulty or opacity, but its complexity, or as I call it, its theological \textit{fecundity}, a web of interconnected referents, tied together christologically.

\textsuperscript{21}Chillingworth, \textit{The Religion of Protestants}, 183.
\textsuperscript{22}Orr, \textit{Reason and Authority}, 91.
\textsuperscript{23}Chillingworth, \textit{The Religion of Protestants}, 250.
Furthermore, the place of the Old Testament is implicitly canonically relegated to a secondary status. Many latitudinarian thinkers tended to favour the New Testament, particularly in the moral teachings of Jesus, that is, in a christocentric mode of thought. This is in distinction to a *christological* hermeneutic that assumes the presence of Christ, the Word, within *all* of Scripture, rather than regarding the biblical centre to be the moral precepts of Christ’s earthly teaching. The natural religion espoused by Scripture is clear and simple: the Bible is a book of moral instruction that conforms to universal principles of reason.

Chillingworth, however, only sets the scene. It was not until the eighteenth century that Anthony Collins (1676–1729) challenged the belief that the Old Testament predicted the coming of Christ. Collins is representative of the culmination of latitudinarianism, which is deism. He argues that predictive prophecy is a misreading of the text. In 1727, he published *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*, in which he opposes the notion of an expected Messiah in Jewish thought at the time of Jesus; rather, it is reasonable to believe, that as the Jews, during the existence of their . . . monarchy, and for a long while after the captivity, were all *Letter Men*; so it is no less reasonable to imagine, that when they began to Hellenize, and to allegorize their Scriptures, they had a constant opposition from some *Letter Men* among them, to that scheme and way of thinking.24

Collins’ heroes, the “letter men,” were those who read the Scriptures “literally.” It was the contamination of Hellenist allegorization that caused a breakdown in reading the Old Testament — such a breakdown being defined as a Christian reading that regarded Isaiah in messianic terms. Collins maintains that traditionally christological texts, such as the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14, or the vicarious suffering of Christ in Isaiah 53, do not refer to anything other than local, historical events in the life of Israel.25 Collins’ hermeneutic

was a historical one, whereby he examined Jewish texts such as the *Targum* to conclude
that the use of “allegory,” by which he means reading Scripture in any other way than
according to a literal meaning, was essentially a category error that smothered the original
meaning of the text.

New critical exegetical approaches to Scripture began in England in two primary
modes. The first arises using new philological (humanist) tools already employed by
Erasmus, which question biblical interpretations favouring trinitarian doctrine, among
others. 26 This opens the door to a host of Protestants (primarily) who initiate a
repristination project to recover the “lost” Christian faith. Stephen Nye (c.1648–1719),
for instance, a clergyman of the Church of England, challenged the traditional doctrine of
the Trinity and contributed to the rise of Unitarianism in England. He bases his views of
the Trinity on his interpretation of the Bible, in which “the Doctrines of the Trinity and
Incarnation have no solid or good Foundation in *Revelation*, or Holy Scripture.”27 He
argues that the entire structure of Christian doctrine was one of spurious additions and
traditions based on ideas that are “of suspected Authority and Credit in the Original.”28
Thus, just as with the Trinity, Nye dispenses with the doctrine of Mary as *theotokos*, the
use of images, and the reliance on authoritative statements of ecumenical councils. As
Nye argues, “these Doctrines are not Traditions from the Ancients, but Novelties, and

references are made to Collins in comparison with Robert Payne Smith in Chapter 4.

26The most famous of these is especially relevant for my discussion below of Stephen Nye.
Erasmus omitted the *Comma Johanneum* in his 1517 edition of the Greek New Testament, based on textual-
critical grounds that it was a spurious addition (though he put it back in his third edition, putatively because
of an unguarded claim that he would re-insert it if a Greek manuscript containing the passage could be
found). See Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission,

27Stephen Nye, *A Letter of Resolution Concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation*
(London: S.n., 1691), 1.

Corruptions, and Depravations of genuine Christianity.”

Any early texts that do support the doctrine of the Trinity are “certainly spurious or forged.”

Nye, and others like him, worked with a kind of Puritan sentiment that regarded tradition, hierarchy and ecclesial political power to be so deeply ingrained in the historical development of Christianity that the “true” faith had for centuries been eclipsed by forgeries and the misguided assertion of a fitness between tradition and the Bible. This parallels Chillingworth’s philosophical form of theological minimization. Nye even goes so far as to suggest that Islam is closer to the truth regarding the oneness of God than historical Christianity.

This project was therefore one which aimed to clear away these heretical accretions.

The second mode of new critical approaches to the text, also shared with antitrinitarians such as Nye, speaks more to motive than method, which is to likewise strip away various accretions precisely because they are the cause of division. In Nye’s view, the problem is the existence of such “fundamental doctrines” as the Trinity:

> the Doctrines under Consideration, have so divided the Churches after the Name of Christ; that there is no Agreement but among those Professors, who believe that there is but one GOD, or but one who is God. The Orthodox (as they call themselves) are so multifariously divided that they are not (perhaps) ten of them

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29 Nye, A Letter of Resolution, 11.

30 Nye, A Letter of Resolution, 11.

31 Nye, A Letter of Resolution, 18.

32 Another Church of England clergyman who engaged in a similar repristination project was Arthur Bury (1623–1713) who wrote The Naked Gospel, which also critiqued the doctrine of the Trinity. See Arthur Bury, The Naked Gospel (London: S.n., 1690). This idea of re-reading Scripture apart from tradition and with a critical eye toward textual infelicities was not confined to clergymen. The famous scientist, Isaac Newton, also challenged the Trinity based on textual-critical grounds in Sir Isaac Newton, An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture: In a Letter to a Friend (London: J. Green, 1841). For a detailed account of this antitrinitarianism based on textual matters, see Stephen D. Snobelen, “‘To Us There is but One God, the Father’: Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England,” in Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England, ed. Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 116–36 as well as Rob Illife, “Friendly Criticism: Richard Simon, John Locke, Isaac Newton and the Johannine Comma,” in Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England, ed. Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 137–57.
in a Party. . . . And the Dissent among them is so bitter and unreconcilable, that
the Anathema’s [sic] fly as thick and fast at one another as at the Unitarians.\(^{33}\)

Nye’s view, therefore, is that the cause of division is doctrine itself, and its close tethering
to Scripture.

Whether “mood” or hermeneutical mode, this negative view toward doctrine led
others, such as the deists, to construe the phenomenon of “religion” anew. It was not
done in a consistent or methodological way; thinkers like Herbert of Cherbury, Anthony
Collins, and Matthew Tindal sought for a form of religion that eschewed what they saw
as irrational interpretations of the text.\(^{34}\) The driving force was “toleration,” within a
milieu of humanism, which maintained “a basic form of Christianity that could be
accepted in private, without the tyranny of a State Church.”\(^{35,36}\) John Rogerson, in accord
with Reventlow, notes that “there was also a Puritan element among certain liberal
thinkers, which attacked the clericalism and ritual of the Church of England by attacking
those parts of the Old Testament devoted to priesthood and ritual.”\(^{37,38}\) Thus, despite the
aim of “toleration,” the root of much radical thinking in the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries was a divisive reading of Scripture that challenged the Anglican view of the
ecclisially constitutive aspect of theological exegesis. Moreover, as Marcus Walsh notes,

\(^{33}\)Nye, \textit{A Letter of Resolution}, 7–8.

\(^{34}\)Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648) and Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) were, with Collins,
representatives of deist beliefs. Tindal is particularly well known for his pressing of the point regarding
“natural religion” in Matthew Tindal, \textit{Christianity as Old as the Creation, or, The Gospel, a Republication
of the Religion of Nature} (London, 1730).

\(^{35}\)Rogerson, \textit{Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century}, 147.


\(^{38}\)Rogerson, \textit{Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century}, 147.
within the milieu of Roman Catholic and Protestant conflicts over scriptural authority,
Anglican divines eventually came to see themselves as “professional interpreters”:

For these Anglican divines valid interpretation of the Bible, as of other books, was substantially dependent on the bringing to bear of relevant knowledges, linguistic, cultural, and historical. Because scriptural interpretation is therefore necessarily knowledge-based, the clergy must be the best interpreters because of their scripture-directed professional training.  

This is consonant with Legaspi’s characterization of a theological change in how Scripture was read in Germany — though this also applies to England:

By the middle of the eighteenth century, masters of text — philologists, classicists, and orientalists — emerged as leaders in the new academic biblical sciences. As scholars focused on textual disorder, the authority of the Bible as an obligatory touchstone for contemporary life also weakened. The Bible became, instead, an exotic “resource”. . . . Instead of looking through the Bible in order to understand the truth about the world, eighteenth-century scholars looked directly at the text, endeavoring to find new, ever more satisfactory frames of cultural and historical reference by which to understand the meaning of the text. . . . It would not be enough for them simply to rehabilitate and unify the Christian church.

In other words, rather than permitting the Church to serve in some way as constitutively necessary for interpretation (and as the subject of interpretation), an impossible task when the Church was unable to present itself as a unified entity, interpreters began to consider the Bible in terms of a textual problem.

I intend for this discussion of Chillingworth, latitudinarianism and deism to give the background exegetical contours of general hermeneutical/theological challenges to a cohesive vision of the Bible. It also serves to show the clear and significant force of ecclesial division in the turbulent atmosphere of the seventeenth century that inserted wedges into the cohesive Anglican hermeneutical touchstone of Chapter 2.


40 Legaspi, The Death of Scripture, 26.
2 Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Commentaries on Isaiah

This section considers several exegetes of Isaiah and the way in which they represent an evolving hermeneutic. I present them thematically, with the intent to illustrate that there is a move away from the uniquely Anglican biblical vision to a bifurcation between the theological referents of Scripture. The consequence is a reading of Isaiah almost exclusively in terms of its poetic force that reveals the primitive "Hebrew" poetic impulse, whose aesthetic power speaks to the affective dimension of human religion. Each exegete is helpful as he represents some exegetical facet that comes into full bloom in the nineteenth-century Isaiah commentators I examine in subsequent chapters.

Most of the commentaries I examine have little direct impact on exegesis today (Robert Lowth is an obvious exception). However, they serve as helpful signposts on the way to the exegetical state of affairs in nineteenth-century England, often beyond the purview of general public perception. One interesting source for discovering what kinds of commentaries influenced people in the seventeenth century — at any rate, those who were reading for the purpose of preaching — was John Wilkins’ *Ecclesiastes, or, a Discourse concerning the gift of Preaching*, a kind of “handbook” for preachers that also lists several commentaries in use at the time.\(^{41}\) Aside from mentioning Hugo Grotius as an important commentator in general, and Cornelius à Lapide for Isaiah, Wilkins offers few contemporary references. Nonetheless, it is important to note that for Isaiah, he refers to such standard figures as Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Luther, and less-known

\(^{41}\)John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes, or, a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching as It Falls Under the Rules of Art* (London: M.F. for Samuel Gellibrand, 1646). Wilkins’ grandfather was the noted Puritan John Dod, and while Wilkins remained within the Church of England even during the Interregnum, this Puritan influence can be seen in this preaching handbook. It is organized into numerous categories and sub-categories, something that appears to suggest a Ramist influence. Given Wilkins’ interest in natural science, the “art” of preaching, notwithstanding his pious intent, comes across as downright "scientific."
commentators, such as Andreas Musculus.\textsuperscript{42} Interestingly, Wilkins list does not refer to a specifically \textit{English} commentary, which shows how little such exegesis was being done.

Brevard Childs makes a helpful distinction between two Continental Isaiah commentators who had an influence on English exegesis: Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and Abraham Calov (1612–86.) Childs uses these exegeses as representative of two kinds of exegesis, both of which he is critical; I categorize my exegetes more narrowly.\textsuperscript{43} Grotius read Isaiah philologically, assembling all available Hebrew and Greek texts. He did so while being highly critical of the Vulgate’s translation, and it is to this extent that his exegesis was performed in distinction from that of Roman Catholics. Moreover, he functioned in a way that untethered theology from exegesis and his analysis tended to lead him to historical conclusions in which he down-played any reading of the Old Testament informed by the New Testament. He aimed to “treat the biblical text purely as a scientific object to be critically analyzed.”\textsuperscript{44} Childs argues that it was only as a concession to his readers that he acknowledged some form of “mystical” reading, once all historical meaning has been extracted from the text, hovering abstractly above Isaiah’s words.\textsuperscript{45} On the other hand, Abraham Calov, as an orthodox Lutheran, strongly opposed and was appalled by Grotius’s approach to Isaiah. The result, as is often the case in reading the Bible in a divisive context, was “a dogmatic hardening never present either

\textsuperscript{42}Andreas Musculus (1514–1581) was a German Lutheran theologian and one of the co-authors of the \textit{Formula of Concord}. See Donald K. McKim, ed., \textit{Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), s.v.

\textsuperscript{43}These two modes are outlined by Brevard S. Childs, \textit{The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 230–35.

\textsuperscript{44}Childs, \textit{The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture}, 231.

\textsuperscript{45}This kind of modern exegesis in which all critical tools come to bear, yet attempt to maintain some “remainder,” is seen in T. K. Cheyne’s exegesis in Chapter 6.
with Luther or Calvin.” Calov accused his opponents of being “Judaizers,” which he defines as any Christian who reads the Old Testament seeking only proximal, historical referents. The impact of the divisive exegesis of Grotius and Calov is that “a profoundly Christian exegetical tradition present in both the Church Fathers and Reformers is missing in both protagonists.” The exegetes whom I analyze below broadly fall under these two categories: the first, that of Grotius, I suggest is indicative of an irenic mode of exegesis, which avoids dogmatic biblical claims in favour of other exegetical strategies. The latter, in its apologetic stance, is more antagonistic in that Scripture is used as a buttress for the truth of Christianity against the claims of those who present new challenges, whether from textual/historical critics, Roman Catholics or the Jews.

I arrange various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century exegetes under five exegetical modes or categories, though there are of course overlaps and the risk of simplification. My contention is that Nehemiah Rogers (1593–1660) stands as the best representative of an interpretation of Isaiah that corresponds with my construal of the Anglican hermeneutical touchstone. All subsequent interpreters I present as participating in theological minimization in various ways. William Day (1605–84) exemplifies a stark

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46 Childs, The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture, 232.

47 Childs, The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture, 235. Other commentators on Isaiah on the Continent can in some way be placed in a continuum between Grotius and Calov. Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669), though quite idiosyncratic, was closer to Calov than Grotius. Campegius Vitrinia (1659–1722) was a student of Cocceius but aimed at using both philological and historical tools to determine the referents of the text by finding agreement between the text and the closest chronological historical fulfillment, rather than those of the distant future. The result, however, tended toward a traditional interpretation of Scripture, only sporadically suggesting multiple interpretations or merely local fulfillments. What is important to note, however, is that it had already become de rigeur to use historical tools to prove the veracity of various texts. As Childs argues, “Vitrinia has translated the biblical category of prophecy and fulfillment into a very different genre of complex historical speculations” (Childs, The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture, 248). Another way to put this is that, despite claiming that he was engaging in theological exegesis, the nature of such a task had been radically changed. Childs also comments that Vitrinia’s “massive apologetic defense of the literal coherence between biblical text and historical reference became widespread by the early eighteenth century, especially in England, Scotland and North America” (Childs, The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture, 249), which is why it is important to mention these non-English interpreters.
departure from Rogers’ reading in a rhetorical textual analysis that pushes the theological referents of Isaiah to a secondary level of exegesis. I show how Day is an early, but by no means unique, exemplar of this kind of exegesis, which began to become commonplace in the seventeenth century. I also show that the exegesis of Samuel White (c.1677–1716), in his debate with William Whiston (1667-1752) in the eighteenth century, is an extension of Day’s interpretive strategy. I subsequently categorize Richard Stafford’s (bap. 1663–1703) attempt to speak to English dissenters as one of privatization of belief, unconnected with any concrete ecclesial body, despite his aim to bring dissenters back into the Church of England. That is, there is no christological shape to common worship; the text speaks to individual believers and necessary theological commitments are minimal. Richard Kidder (1633–1703) functions in a mode akin to that of Calov, highly apologetic, and anti-Jewish. I also briefly consider the commentary on Isaiah by William Lowth (1660–1732) in Simon Patrick’s *Critical Commentary* as representative of this exegetical mode. Finally, I end with Robert Lowth (1710–87), the son of William, as heralding a new synthesis of many of the above modes in a proto-romantic exegetical style in which he “discovers” the structures of “Hebrew” poetry. He construes Isaiah in terms of its aesthetic style and in terms of its power to elicit the affective capacity of the religious person.

2.1 Nehemiah Rogers: The Song of the Vineyard

I begin with Nehemiah Rogers’ 1632 work, *The Wild Vine*, as indicative of a richly theological reading of Isaiah and one that most closely corresponds to an Anglican reading. Rogers was a strong Royalist when being so was still relatively safe.

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Archbishop Laud viewed him with favour, referring to Rogers as “a man of good note.”

It can be assumed, therefore, that Rogers did not have particular sympathy for the Puritans. It would be a mistake, however, to view Rogers as parroting a bland Establishment perspective of Scripture.

What is striking about *The Wild Vine* is that it is an exposition only of Isaiah 5:1-7, the “song of the vineyard,” and yet this is a work that is almost 320 pages long. However, more than Rogers’ prolixity is of note; the breadth of theological discourse that imbues his reading of merely seven verses indicates how closely Rogers sees the connection between theology and the entire canon of Scripture centred on Christ. And the presence of the Church is never far off. For instance, in his discussion of verse 1, “my wellbeloued hath a vineyard,” he says,

> And by *vineyard* he meaneth the Church visible, as in the application of verse 7 we may see. By which similitude the nature and condition of the Church is usually set forth in Scripture, and by none more: For indeed there is no earthly thing that doth better resemble it, than a *vineyard* doth.

This is typical of his approach to the text. Even though he notes that verse 7 interprets

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51It is ironic that at the time of my writing this, his work is published only by Tentmaker Publications, who specifically state that their theological position is that of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and would therefore identify strongly with the Puritan cause. This is actually indicative that, despite his Royalist sympathies, Rogers was an intensely “biblical” reader whose approach could engage the scriptural commitments of a wide range of ecclesiological and political perspectives.

52Note that this is an “exposition,” as opposed to a commentary. The latter term tends to imply a reading that contains more exhortation than a strict analysis of the text. The distinction between the two at the time of Rogers, however, was rarely so obvious. Indeed, part of the “breakdown” this chapter describes is the rise of methods of textual commentary at the expense of paraenetic exposition. Another distinction that should be made is between an “academic” and more popular “exposition.” In this case, too, the difference is much less stark in the seventeenth century than the more solidified distinction in the nineteenth century and beyond. My choice to focus primarily on “academic” commentaries in the nineteenth century is not only to highlight this difference, but also because the former tends to eventually “trickle down” to the latter.

the parable as referring to Israel and Judah, the passage is yet in theological continuity with the Church of the New Testament. Rogers makes no distinction between the two and does not get caught up in seeking out a singular referent for the text. The Church is a figure of Israel and vice versa. Note also in the above quotation that he is keen to indicate the visibility of the Church.

As discussed in Chapter 2 with respect to Peter Lake’s characterization of Anglicanism’s conception of the Church as a *corpus permixtum*, Rogers has a keen sense of the Church as not only divided, but as a *suffering* Church. Maintaining the image of the Church as a vine, he notes that “there are many branches in the root, yet all make but one Vine: so all the faithful in the congregation, and all the congregations of the faithfull in the whole world make but only one Church.” Rogers recognizes the unavoidable truth that the Church has become fractured, and he attempts to account for this:

All the branches of a Vine . . . are not alike fruitful, neither doe they all draw sap and moisture from the root; for as some are fruitfull and flourish, so some againe are barren and wither, which are cut off and cast into the fire: Thus is it in the Church visible; all the members thereof are not alike incorporated into the root, through the invisible bonds of the Spirit, neither doe they *bring forth fruit in him*. Some there are who are only *externally grafted*; others there are who are also *internally*. The former sort are such members of the Church visible, who by externall baptisme haue given their names to Christ, and so entered into the profession; yet indeed are not Christs, because they haue not the Spirit of Christ.

Rogers reserves judgment on the ecclesial worth of the various Protestant sects, though it is important to note that although he wrote in the midst of the Thirty Years War, a similar level of religious violence (relatively speaking) had yet to be seen in England. For him,

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54 Rogers, *The Wild Vine*, 76.


56 This reserve of judgment is notwithstanding a forthright assessment of the state of the Roman Catholic Church, of which he proclaims, “the Church of Rome doth wilfully and obstinately destroy the foundation itselfe, and therefore may be concluded for no Church of God” (Rogers, *The Wild Vine*, 98). On this, Rogers was consistent with virtually all Protestant thinkers: if one could not presume to judge the
“albeit a Church bee corrupted with error and idolatry, yet it is still to be accounted Gods Church, till he haue diuorced and forsaken her.”

The divisiveness and tendency of many Protestants in England to dissent concerned him: “Those therefore that condemne the Church of England for a No-church, and make a separation from it in regard of the errours and corruptions that are in it, are farre from the Spirit of Christ, and the Prophets and Apostles, who neuer made any schismaticall and bodily separation from any true Church.”

Rogers, despite being an “establishment man” (or could be construed as such, given that Laud was a patron), was not unaware of the numerous corruptions in the Church of England, but “the beholding of tares and weeds in the field, may instruct us of the state and condition of the Church militant.” It is precisely because the Isaiah passage interprets itself as being about Israel and Judah that he can use this image to speak of the nature of the Church. Just as Israel experiences the suffering and the judgment of God, so too does the Church. This is particularly evident as he explores verses 5-6, which say, “I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall bee eaten up . . . and I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briers and thornes: I will also command the clouds, that they raine no raine upon it.” The history of Israel illustrates what results from God’s judgment, which is the removal of “Gods diuine protection, which was as a hedge or wall about them, and whereof they should be now depriued.” Rogers rather arbitrarily moves back and forth in his discussion of God’s removal of protection between Israel as the “original” historical.

nature of the “true” Church, one could be reasonably certain it was Protestant. This more obvious form of divisive exegesis, the “antagonistic” mode, is present from the very beginning of the Reformation, but becomes the basis for the “irenic” reading of Scripture, the second form of divisive exegesis.

57 Rogers, The Wild Vine, 95.


59 Rogers, The Wild Vine, 84.

60 Rogers, The Wild Vine, 206.
referent to a theological interpretation of this as a warning to the Church. Rogers asks, “why then are wee smitten, plagued, punished?” in connection with this same discussion. The reasons for such a judgment of God tend toward “puritan” concerns such as Sabbath-breaking rather than the sin of a divided Church — in other words, he does not extend the image of a divided Israel. Nonetheless, his ecclesiology is deeply connected to the view that, while there may be a “false” Church, as embodied in the Roman Church, there is no ideal or perfect Church but rather one that is embedded in the historical contingencies of God’s providential rule.

It is also notable that Rogers exemplifies a very rare kind of ecclesial reading, though he more closely embodies a “Protestant” interpretation, in his understanding of the Bible as a presiding judge over the Church. An “ecclesial” reading is not merely an assertion that the Bible is read in and by the Church, nor that the Church is the only interpreter of Scripture. Rather, in this passage, Rogers sees Scripture referring to the fire of God who purifies an imperfect Church. Like Israel, the Church has fallen away from God’s ordering. This is an image to which I return in Chapter 8, but it is worth noting that, despite this being a necessary aspect of Sola Scriptura, and can be perceived incipiently in early Anglican theologians, no other exegete I consider exegesizes Isaiah in this way. Moreover, while not in itself uniquely “Anglican,” the way in which the Church and Israel are theologically tethered speaks to the concrete reality of the Church. In other words, just as Scripture speaks to corporate, or corporeal Israel, Israel as a people are a referent of more than a merely spiritual, invisible Church.

It is of further interest that Rogers reads this image of the vine christologically via its theological connection to John 15. This, among many other statements he makes, maintains both the canonical and christological unity of scripture in his reading, one

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61 Rogers, The Wild Vine, 211.
which is disdained by later interpreters. And this is by no means the only biblical connection that Rogers makes to the rest of Scripture; he links his discussion to a wide variety of biblical passages, both from the Old and New Testaments, always with a view that within Isaiah, Christ and the Church inherently participate in the text’s meaning. For instance, he observes the horrors of the war on the Continent: “Our brethren in France and Germany are whirled about in these bloudie tumults; there heare the dismall cries of cruell aduersaries, crying *kill, kill*; the shrikes of women and infants; the thundering of those murdering peeces in their eares,” and uses the words of Amos 6:4–6 to indicate the relative safety of the English from such tumult.

I employ Rogers as representative of a reading of Isaiah, and of Scripture in general, which continues to maintain a deep sense of the Anglican way of reading Scripture a century after its formation.

2.2 William Day and Samuel White: Heralds of a new Protestant Poetics

Only a few decades after Rogers’ work, in 1654 William Day penned *An Exposition of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.* He was a king’s scholar at Eton and

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63 I say relative safety, as there were by that time considerable factions within the Church of England; the Puritans were still a significant force, as well as the Arminians (whom I would prefer to call proto-High Church or, more unwieldingly, “non-predestinarians.”) The fateful reign of Charles I had also begun seven years before the publication of *The Wild Vine.* I therefore do not want to imply that Rogers’ exegesis was made during a time of theological ease. Indeed, as will be seen with his contemporary Chillingworth, his approach to the Bible emerges out of his struggle with the division between Catholics and Protestants, as well as between the Established Church and dissenters.

64 This is not to say that his exegesis is free of antagonism, as he is very clear, for instance, that the Roman Catholic Church is not a viable Church. And he is aware that the Church is in a time of suffering, and for all that he attributes this to sin, there is a nascent sense that the Church struggles with its crumbling identity.

received his M.A. in 1632. While it is dangerous to use an individual as representative of an entire genre of exegesis, I nonetheless use Day’s exegesis, and its distinct difference from Rogers’, as a herald of a host of new exegetical strategies that characterize the era. I begin by giving an analysis of Day’s commentary on Isaiah. I then locate him within the exegetical milieu as participative of exegetical tools that emerge from an irenic approach to Scripture. That is, despite William Day’s traditional faith commitments, the primary mode of exegesis becomes transposed from one that I describe in the Anglican vision of Chapter 2 to a methodological analysis of rhetorical tropes, from which the “spiritual” is seen as exegetically distinct. Finally, I end by giving an account of Samuel White’s engagement with William Whiston and how, by the next century, Day’s rather novel approach to Isaiah became the standard exegetical orientation.

Day’s rhetorical/textual methodology and his theological commitments reveal a discontinuity between them right from the preface to his work. This new perspective (as I describe below) on reading the Bible becomes important for my analysis of both Robert Payne Smith in Chapter 4 and Thomas Kelly Cheyne in Chapter 6. Day’s preface suggests a view that does not appear to be innovative. He gives a summary of the intent of Isaiah, “the most Evangelical of the prophets.” It is, in his view, exemplary in its ability to foretell Christ, for Isaiah “hath many excellent prophecies of Christ.” The central theme of the book is the calling of the Gentiles. The Jews were unable to understand the predictions of Christ in Isaiah, because prophets like Isaiah

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66 Interestingly, given the issues I raise in the analysis that follows, his work on Isaiah was “a scholarly commentary on the text intended for family use, with questions and answers to assist learning, and a glossary of technical vocabulary” (Elizabeth Allen, “Day, William (bap. 1605, d. 1684),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/7374 [accessed December 9, 2011]). Not only his writing style, but also the textual issues to which he attends, make it difficult to conceive of this work as suitable for family devotional literature given that his vocabulary is not only technical, but monotonous.

67 Day, An Exposition of Isaiah, i. The preface was not issued page numbers, so I supply them.
did either speak of it in Parables, and dark Speeches, and Allegories, or because they spoke of it under the Types and shadows of other things: And under [these] doth our prophet speak of the Gospel. . . . For he prophesieth first of things to come in times nearer to his own times. . . . Many places of the holy Writers of the Old Testament, and especially of the Prophets, carry with them a double sense; One concerning terrene and corporall things, and things to come to passe before the days of the Meššiah: another concerning spiritual and heavenly things. . . . The first sense I may call, the First, or Literal, or Historical, or meaner Sense: The second sense I may call the Second, or the Mystical, or Sublime Sense.68

Such a hermeneutical construal is rather orthodox at a superficial level. Numerous exegetes attest to a “double sense” of the text whereby the historical sense mediates a meaning that accords with a christological referent. But Day’s exegesis is compartmentalized: there are two different ways of reading the text in such a way that the “first” sense enjoys exegetical privilege. Thus,

Now by what has been spoken, it is easie to conjecture, which of the two . . . is the Thorow-sense, that is, which of the two senses . . . is that, which is continued and carried word by word through an whole History or Prophecie. . . . Certainly it is the First, Literal, Historical or Meaner sense; and for the marriage through of this. . . . I have bent my poor labours in this work. . . . But (you will say) to take paines about [this first sense] is to favour Judaisme; and to make the heart of the Jew (which is obstinate enough) yet more obstinate towards the Gospel and Christianity. . . . I answer, That to take paines for the finding out of the Literal sense is no whit to favour Judaisme, but to seek out the Truth; and if the seeking of the Truth, makes the Jew obstinate towards the Gospel . . . it doth but occasionally, and the very best things may be an occasion of the worst of evils.69

This reveals much of what Day seeks “in a place of much difficulty and controversie,”70 where the search for this historical, “first,” sense is in terms of a primary meaning that reveals the “truth.” In such a quest for the ultimate meaning of the text, however, there can no longer be any appeal to a constitutive theological dimension that funds this

68Day, An Exposition of Isaiah, iii.

69Day, An Exposition of Isaiah, x Day’s distinction here between senses should not be seen as analogous to the more ancient debate between the “Antiochene” and “Alexandrian,” in which the latter is seen as less “literal” than the former. Rather, I am placing Day within a larger context of a nascent “Protestant poetics” (see below) that sees the scopus of the text as a literal kernel, at the expense of a theological superstructure. In Day’s case, there is as yet no denial of a spiritual interpretation, but merely the first step toward a process of theological minimization.

70Day, An Exposition of Isaiah, viii.
This secondary, “spiritual,” meaning is by no means unimportant to Day, but functions at an ahistorical, allusive level.

It is remarkable how Day’s exegetical orientation forms his categorization of the literary tropes present in Isaiah. This is his explicit intent, given that between the preface and main body of An Exposition of the Book of Isaiah, he has a section that gives “An Explanation of those Termes of Art, and Rhetorickall Tropes and Figures Which most frequently occurre in this Book”71 namely, such terms as anthropopathia, enallage, hypallage, synechdoche, and various types of metonymy. A significant portion of Day’s exegesis categorizes the text in terms of Isaiah’s use of such literary-rhetorical forms. For instance, Isaiah 30:27 says “Behold the Name of the Lord cometh.” Day avers, “The Prophets puts [sic] the Name of the Lord for the Lord himself, after the Hebrew manner per Metonymiam Adjuncti: q.d. The Lord cometh.”72 A significant allotment of his commentary is dedicated to both indicating such literary forms, as well as paraphrasing or restating what the verse means, rather than a commentary (or even an exposition) as such along the lines of that of Rogers.

Although I reserve detailed analysis of Isaiah commentaries for my nineteenth-century figures, I would like to consider some important passages in Day’s work to indicate how he differs from Nehemiah Rogers. Consider Isaiah 5, the Song of the Beloved. As usual, his commentary begins with textual analysis. For instance, verse 7, which was so central to Rogers (“For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel”), Day says

72 Day, An Exposition of Isaiah, ii, 90. Day’s point here is not remarkable in itself, in distinction to the tradition. We can note, however, that he has appropriated a more systematic set of rhetorical analysis. It is interesting to note that Day divides Isaiah into three books, the first book comprising Isaiah 1–19 and the second Ending at Isaiah 39. No reason is given for this.
This Conjunction *For*, if it be a *Causal*, and so taken, sheweth that there is an ἔλειψις here, and that something is to be understood: That therefore which is to be understood here, is this, or the like, *q. d. Now therefore the Lord will forsake his People, the house of Israel and the men of Judah and will leave them to be spoiled by their enemies and will not help them*, for *that which is meant by the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is the house of Israel.*

This analysis, which explores the meanings of words and the rhetorical categorization of phrases, is a common exegetical approach for Day. When it comes to any kind of theological interpretation of this passage of Isaiah, he says

> This verse telleth us, that what the Prophet sang of the Vineyard in the former verses, was a *Parable*: Now although it be not necessary that whatsoever is conteined in a *Parable*, should have its application (because many things are spoken to make up the narration, and many things are added to adorne it). And although it might seem enough to make this *Parable* and the *Apodosis* thereof to meet to say, that, as this Vineyard had all things requisite to make it fruitfull: So had the *Jewes* whatsoever was needful to make them good: And yet for all that, as the Vineyard prooved naught: so did the *Jewes*.

Day does not make any references to deeper theological issues in the text. There is certainly no connection to or intimation of the Church.

Since Isaiah 5 is not traditionally considered as christologically central as other texts in the book, it is helpful to investigate Isaiah 7, as it is a classic key christological passage that speaks of the *almah* and Emmanuel. Day commences by giving a historical overview of King Ahaz’s fear of the army of Rezin of Syria. He continues paraphrasing the chapter until he reaches the verse “Behold a virgin,” which Day interprets as meaning “Behold one who is now a Virgin. . . . To speak of this place in its first sense is most probably thought to be that Prophetesse, which our Prophet took to wife.” As for the appellation *Immanuel* of this child, he suggests,

> This name *Immanuel* signifieth *God with us*. *Matth. 1. v. 23*. And it was given unto this Child, to signifie, that God would be with the *Jewes*. . . . Probable it is (as I said) that this *Immanuel* was the Sonne of the Prophetesse, which is

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He continues, however, by adding,

Yet in a second and more sublime sense, the Virgin Mary is here signified, who was a Virgin and a Mother both in sensu Composito (as the Schoole speakes) that is, a Virgin even when she was a Mother. . . . For he was true God, who being made Man, dwelt with us, and among us, Matth. 1. 23. and was our Salvation, of which Immanuel, Immanuel the Sonne of Isaiah was but a type.\textsuperscript{75}

It is unclear how Day’s invocation of Abelard’s distinction between in sensu composito and in sensu diviso contributes to his argument. It is clear, however, that his interpretation does not emerge out of an explicitly theological context (though an implicit one is certainly present). For instance, given the deeply christological history of Isaiah’s theological reception, Day’s connections to Jesus are sparse, “secondary,” and are certainly not central to his analysis. Rather, his exposition hinges on a semantic analysis in order to justify the dual meaning of Mary and the Prophetess as textual referents. In other words, new, less-dogmatic tools come into play in Day’s analysis that, however conservative their conclusions, eschew a basis in a theological history.

Even in his consideration of Isaiah 53, which he accepts is fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth, the issues that are relevant to exegesis have less to do with theology, the Church or a conception of Scripture’s christological coherence. Rather, he argues in philological categories:

Note that whereas many passages of this book have a twofold sense. . . . And this Prophecy relateth both to Jeremy as the Type, and to Christ as the Antitype: And whereas the words in the Hebrew Text are so ordered and chosen, as that they do significie both these senses, which cannot so well be expressed in any other language as this: The Translators of our Bible aymed more at that sense which immediately concerned Christ (as being more sublime, and as it were the kernel, whereas the other is but as it were the shell) then at the other. Wherefore they not having words to significie both senses, so fit as they are significied in the Hebrew, chose words which significed what is immediately prophecyed of Christ the Antitype, rather than what is prophecyed of the Type.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75}Day, \textit{An Exposition of Isaiah}, 1, 60–61.

\textsuperscript{76}Day, \textit{An Exposition of Isaiah}, iii, 111.
I argue that this is representative of a minimization of the theological dimension of the
text, looking for the intent of the author on the one hand, while maintaining a “sublime”
or “second” sense that justifies the preservation of theological meaning on the other.
Again, there is nothing new in taking recourse to philology to resolve theological issues;
what I am highlighting is that it has become the primary recourse to theological conundra
within the biblical text. For Day, despite the fact that he is not heterodox in his
theological commitments, Christ is not of central concern to his exegesis of Isaiah 7, nor
of 53. He maintains that the Holy Spirit is the “author” of the Bible and does not
question the historical accuracy of the text. Yet what Day exemplifies, in comparison
with Rogers, is a new meaning of exegesis. In the practice of exegesis in Origen’s era, for
instance, a practice which continued into the medieval era and influenced that of early
Anglicanism, the Bible was not merely a text with only one referent. Rather, the object to
which the text points can have several levels of meaning. In other words, “[m]ultiple
meanings emerge from allegorical readings of texts because the things to which the words
literally refer have themselves further multiple references.”

77Because people like Day
saw the exegesis of Scripture as a textual effort, such older theological schemata were
avoided so that the world of signs in which the Bible participates was flattened into a
theory of textual correspondence. Once this becomes the method, when theology
functions as a merely “secondary” mode of reading Scripture, it can be dispensed with, or
treated at a level that is more residual than secondary.

There is therefore a stark difference between the exegesis of William Day and that
of Nehemiah Rogers. Rogers’ interpretive approach, I suggest, most closely corresponds
to the Anglican touchstone of Chapter 2. That is, the Church as a corporate body is a

77Peter Harrison, The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 28. Harrison, it should be noted, argues that it is the Protestant approach to Scripture that permits the emergence of modern science; this is an important aspect of my project, though I focus on the rise of new critical exegetical tools emerging out of ecclesial division.
central textual referent, just as much as Christ is, who is corporeally present in the text. As such, the text speaks to the Church as the people of God, just as it once spoke to Israel. What is of central concern for Rogers is pushed to a “secondary” or spiritual mode of reading the text in Day’s exegetical approach, overtaken by an interest in philological, rhetorical and textual analysis. For Day, interpretation has become methodical, not theological.\(^78\)

It is important to explain the differences between Rogers’ and Day’s exegetical orientations. Rogers affirms a polysemous quality of the text that is funded by a deep appreciation of typological signs and figural allusions, whereas for Day, there are, at most, two textual/theological referents. Yet, despite the stark exegetical differences between the two, both would ascribe to similar, if not identical, theological propositions. Their dissimilarity is especially interesting given the short span between the times during which the two thinkers wrote. I suggest there are two reasons for these almost opposing exegetical methods: first is the intervening English Civil War (and, of less impact, the Thirty Years War on the Continent), which heightened the fear that theological debate is generative of violent hostility. The result is to seek out non-theological textual methodologies, which I denote as an irenic mode of exegesis, that is, a mode of reading that is shaped by a desire to avoid the perceived violence that attends theology. Second, and somewhat related to the first in that it pertains to ecclesial division, is that during the seventeenth century, there emerged a form of “Protestant poetics,” as Barbara Lewalski calls it,\(^79\) that I describe in exegetically antagonistic terms by its characteristic as an

\(^78\)I appreciate the fact that most of the interpreters with whom I engage, from Day on, think that what they are doing is “theological exegesis.” Despite this, I argue that Cranmer, Whitgift, and Hooker would find the exegetical approaches of these later figures to be unrecognizable, not merely because of new technical terms, but because of a difference in theological commitments regarding the nature of Scripture itself. Thus, all the exegetes in this project engage, broadly speaking, in “theological exegesis,” in that an analysis of their interpretation reveals the theological commitments of the interpreter.

interpretation that shuns what was seen as excessive allegorization by Roman Catholics. Both of these important facets offer a coherent account of the difference between two exegetes like Rogers and Day, even though neither of them as individual exegetes explicitly invoke either reason.

In terms of irenic exegesis, part of the central claim of this project is that the context of a fissiparous Church brings about a new exegetical state of affairs to the process of reading the Bible. In the mid-seventeenth century, people in England witnessed two major wars — the Civil War and the Thirty Years War — each of which precipitated a great deal of violence. More importantly, they were regarded as conflicts that came about because of opposition between religious parties. Like Richard Popkin, Stephen Toulmin invokes the concept of certainty to support his thesis. He shows how the result of the Thirty Years War was this: “[t]he longer fighting continued, the less plausible it was that Protestants would admit the ‘certainty’ of Catholic doctrines, let alone that devout Catholics would concede the ‘certainty’ of Protestant heresies.”

While theological arguments had to do with such issues as justification by faith and the intercession of the saints, their orbital centre was the interpretation of Scripture, how it

80 With Toulmin, therefore, I claim that my account of the exegetical differences between Rogers and Day parallel his distinction, in philosophical terms, between the humanist philosophy of Michel de Montaigne and the rationalist one of Descartes and Newton. While my argument parallels Toulmin in terms of how he gives an account of these changes, I differ somewhat from his description of “humanism” as merely “a cool, nonjudgmental tone that makes them congenial to us, and to put a distance between their religious affiliation and their philosophical or literary reflections on experience” (Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* [New York, NY: Free Press, 1990], 37), which is exemplified in Henry IV of France’s “modest skepticism.” (Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 50). I already describe in Chapter 2 how humanism is a tool that contributes in its own way to ecclesial division, and Toulmin’s description is a proto-irenic approach to religion of some so-called rationalists. Neither of these thinkers are meant, for Toulmin, to be definitive markers as much as heuristic indicators of his point, and the same applies with regard to my use of Rogers and Day. There is no direct “evidence” as such in Day’s writing that he makes use of his rhetorical textual analysis for irenic purposes. Using Toulmin, I therefore offer evidence that is more circumstantial, but no more so than that of Toulmin’s comparison of the difference between Montaigne and Descartes.

81 Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 55.
was to be done, and who could do it. As Peter Harrison argues, “the Reformation stood as a challenge to authority as such, replacing the authority of the institution with that of scripture, or in the case of the more radical reformers, with that of the individual.”82 If certainty could no longer be achieved by theological and scriptural discourse, then “the only other thing thinking people could do was to look for a new way of establishing their central truths and ideas; one that was independent of, and neutral between, particular religious loyalties.”83

I argue that there is a similar process here in which new approaches to the Bible parallel, and are connected to, shifts in philosophical discourse. Exegesis moves toward methodological edifices that seek to be non-theological. The Bible comes to be read in the context of a Quest for Methodology, independent of “priestcraft” and perceived institutional oppression. In the context of the Enlightenment University in eighteenth-century Germany, Legaspi suggests

this approach to the Bible, which relied heavily upon empirical models of linguistic and historical study borrowed from classic philology, lent shape and support to the larger project of recovering a scholarly, nonconfessional Bible. The ideal of an academic ecumenism, by which scholars of various religious persuasions could work cooperatively to produce interpretations of the Bible in accord with the canons of modern rationality, became modern criticism’s leading light.84

My invocation of Legaspi’s argument perhaps deserves the charge of anachronism and geographical irrelevance, yet Day’s exegesis gives evidence that, in seventeenth-century England, this kind of approach is in its nascent stage. In fact, I am pushing back Legaspi’s argument, arguing that this methodological transformation happened in


83Toulmin, Cosmopolis, 70. This led someone like Descartes to begin what is now referred to as the “Quest for Certainty,” which sought non-theological methods for obtaining the certainty that theology could not provide (Toulmin, Cosmopolis, 55–56).

84Legaspi, The Death of Scripture, 33.
England, albeit less robustly, before it did in Germany. Day is not the first, but he is one of the first to transform Scripture into the “literary Bible,” a consequence of this irenic “academic ecumenism.” In the case of Day and his exegetical successors, I suggest that the Thirty Years War had less of an impact on English divines than the more immediate catastrophic events of the English Civil War. At the level of lay scriptural interpretation, the result is a highly antagonistic atmosphere in which the English despise the previously “papist” king (i.e., Charles I), from whom they are freed. For Establishment theologians such as Day, the tendency is to distance themselves from the former Anglican vision of Scripture. I argue that Day marks the beginning of a process

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85In 1632, Charles I had been king for seven years, and there was plenty of unrest fomented by his various political machinations. Nonetheless, while frustrations were mounting, there was a policy of non-enforcement of laws against recusants, and a flowering of High Church activity by the so-called Caroline Divines, which raised the suspicions of Puritan thinkers regarding Charles’ intentions. By the time of Day’s commentary in 1654, he wrote after events of such calamity that many saw it not only as the end of an era, but of time itself. Charles had been dead for five years, and the monarchy was abolished, replaced by a republic. With almost apocalyptic zeal for the ushering in of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Puritan Oliver Cromwell was placed as Lord Protector over England. But this was no “glorious revolution,” for “the soldiers may have cheered when Charles’s head rolled from the block, but upon the country as a whole there settles a sense of horror, of guilt, of shame” (John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* [London: Adam & C. Black, 1976], 243). The developing pietistic Puritanism that took hold did not impose a single form of church governance, *per se*, although it did abolish the episcopacy. For them, the conscience was more important, and therefore no formal creed was imposed on English subjects – except that they confess faith in Jesus Christ. Whereas in one sense this was a toleration, it may be more accurate to call it “enforced minimalism,” and this minimalist view of Christianity and the Bible can be seen in the less religiously robust forms of latitudinarianism and deism. Furthermore, as Paul Boyer observes, “[w]ith the defeat of Charles I in 1646 and his beheading in 1649, apocalyptic speculation surged among English radicals, largely drawn from society's lower ranks, who saw an egalitarian new order on the horizon” (Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Studies in Cultural History [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992], 65). And this apocalyptic thought spawned many independent groups, such as the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Society of Friends, among numerous sects and groups that found themselves free to take on new theological commitments. With respect to the former group, it is remarkable the extent to which Isaiah plays a central role in the highly antagonistic exegesis of one of its key spiritual leaders, Mary Cary. See, e.g., Mary Cary, *A New and More Exact Mappe or Description of New Ierusalems Glory When Jesus Christ and His Saints with Him Shall Reign on Earth a Thousand Years, and Possess All the Kingdoms* (London: W.H., 1651) and Mary Cary, *The Resurrection of the Witnesses and Englands Fall from the Mystical Babylon Rome Clearly Demonstrated to Be Accomplished* (London: H. Hills for R.C., 1653), which, although primarily focussed on Daniel and Revelation, make generous connections to Isaiah. One aspect not present in the exegesis of Establishment thinkers is this apocalyptic reading of Isaiah. It may be suggested that it was avoided precisely because of the fervour with which it was done by such dissenting groups.
whereby exegesis means something other than it had once been, and that this is the result of a divided (and often violent) Church. This process treats of deeply held theological commitments such that they are less influential on the task of exegesis.86

Second, in more general hermeneutical terms, a uniquely Protestant mode of exegesis flowered in the seventeenth century, precisely because it aimed to distance itself from its medieval roots. Such roots were often conflated with Roman Catholicism. Briefly, pre-Reformation exegesis advocated for the four-fold reading of Scripture — literal/historical, allegorical, tropological and analogical — which was a systemization of many exegetical strategies that began with the Church Fathers to Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, and was more or less given its final structure by Thomas Aquinas.87 For Protestants, “the literal meaning of scripture is often conveyed through figurative language and so can be properly apprehended through rhetorical and poetic analysis.” It was a rejection, primarily given impetus by Puritan concerns, of the “ecclesiastic ‘scenery’ of the medieval Church.”88 The emphasis on Sola Scriptura implies that no

86Also, with respect to the division between Protestants and Catholics, there were increased challenges to the reliability of the Vulgate. This was encouraged by the discovery of new collections of texts that made their way into England. For instance, England was able to convince the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, the quasi-Calvinist Cyrillos Lucaris (1570–1638), to relinquish what came to be called the Codex Alexandrinus. Protestants began to prefer more ancient Hebrew codices and devised new critical tools to compare various manuscripts in order to determine the most probable “original” words. This preference was dual in nature: it reflected the humanist desire to reclaim the work of the “ancients,” but it also was polemical in that it challenged Roman Catholic views of the “fixed” and reliable text of the Vulgate. Many, such as Richard Bentley (1662–1742), Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, aimed at producing an edition of the New Testament that would most closely approach that of the Council of Nicaea (David S. Katz, God’s Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004], 189–91). As I discuss above, one consequence was a rejection of the so-called Trinity “proof-text” of 1 John 5:7, which Bentley rejected as spurious. See also Scott Mandelbrote, “English Scholarship and the Greek Text of the Old Testament, 1620–1720: The Impact of Codex Alexandrinus,” in Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England, ed. Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 76.

87Donald R. Dickson, “The Complexities of Biblical Typology in the Seventeenth Century,” Renaissance and Reformation 23, no. 3 (1987): 257. The actual deployment of all four senses discretely was rare. Many, like Aquinas, tended to speak of a literal sense and a spiritual or mystical sense.

88Lewalski, Protestant Poetics, 72.
external exegetical structures (meaning the Church) were permissible. The key to biblical interpretation, therefore, must be inherent within the Scriptures. Moreover, since the Bible is a *text*, then only textual strategies are sufficient for determining biblical meaning: “Tropes are now perceived as God’s chosen formulations of his revealed truths, which man must strive to understand rightly, in themselves, and not as a stimulus to a higher vision.”[89] This is a shift away from the allegorical and toward the “literal,” meaning the textual *form* of the passage itself: “Once the text was freed from the interpretive constraints of its context, there seemed to be no way of governing how the texts could signify; and they attributed the excesses of patristic allegory to just such privatistic readings.”[90] This led to a situation in which “Protestants intensified and systematized the study of the rhetorical tropes and schemes in scripture. . . . This emphasis urged the skills of the literary critic upon the reader of the Bible.”[91] This was a uniquely Protestant move that “promoted in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England a specifically biblical poetics . . . under the influence of Protestant theology and the new literary and philological interests of the period.”[92] This is not to suggest that the poetic form of Scripture inhibited exegesis *per se*, but that this process of systemization and rather rigid

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[90] Dickson, “The Complexities of Biblical Typology,” 266. It is my view that Dickson’s use of “privatistic” here does not accurately depict the general Protestant dislike for excessive allegory. Rather, that lack of constraint, I suggest, gives leave to the *Church* to give allegorical interpretations that not only appear frivolous, but contrary to the literal meaning. What Dickson does rightly point out, however, is that, while the seventeenth century brought about a new kind of Protestant typological/rhetorical rigidity, this is not to suggest that there was an absence of deep exegesis whose exegetical layering has affinities with medieval approaches. Dickson’s poignant example of Donne’s “Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse” is exemplary (Dickson, “The Complexities of Biblical Typology,” 267). However, despite the complexity in Protestant exegesis (and Nehemiah Rogers also proves Dickson’s point), the fact is that it is *different*, and becomes more so, in that it *tended* to avoid allegorical modes (or, to put it perhaps another way, used allegory differently than Catholics did) and directed their attention to rhetorical tropes as an antagonistic response to Catholic categories.


categorization delimited its fecundity. This new textual focus produced a series of handbooks that listed the numerous literary tropes of Scripture to help decipher its “code.” Examples include John Smith’s *The Mystery of Rhetorique Unvail’d* and the English sourcebook for typology, Benjamin Keach’s *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*. In the Protestant view, the focus was on *types* versus what they regarded as ahistorical allegories: “the mistake of the Gothic monkish allegorists . . . had been to remove the sign from its historical context in the literal narrative of Scripture, which had led to unlimited semiosis: any sign could have any number of referents, unless there was a way to predict or control the process of signification. The historicity of types gave an evidentiary value to Protestant hermeneutics that allegory did not have.”

I would argue that William Day’s exegesis reflects this ever-more predominate tendency in the seventeenth century and beyond. Even though the original intent of Protestant biblical poetics was to reveal Scripture’s deep typological and theological meaning, Day’s constant attention to the task of categorization already moves away from a close connection between the task of identifying literary tropes and that of theological signification (beyond a secondary level). He mirrors the Protestant aim to disdain the allegorical in favour of the literal, yet functions at a highly systematic level, essentially cataloguing literary tropes and assuming that, in doing so, the greater part of exegesis is complete. Moreover, implicitly, this developing Protestant poetics places Scripture on the road to becoming another kind of text than *Scripture*. Robert Lowth’s thought (see below) is representative of the culmination of (Old Testament) Scripture as a kind of

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94 Dickson, “The Complexities of Biblical Typology,” 259. This evidentiary aspect is especially important for someone like Robert Payne Smith in Chapter 4.
primitive Hebrew poesy. The central relevant point for this project, however, is that the roots of this development is that it is a uniquely Protestant form of exegesis that carries out this textual analysis in opposition to earlier Roman Catholic exegetical practices.

I now turn to the exegesis of Samuel White whose work bears a close resemblance to that of William Day. White states that his influence is Hugo Grotius, so it is unsurprising that, given my above summary of Continental exegetes, his approach bears a similarity to Grotius’ in its concern, broadly speaking, with philological matters. I present him in the context of his debate with the Arian William Whiston, who was one of White’s main interlocutors. White wrote A Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, wherein the literal sense of the prophecy is briefly explained in 1709, and which I regard as a continuation of the “textualization” process that William Day initiates.

William Whiston’s Boyle Lectures, entitled The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies, spurred White to give an account of prophecy in Scripture. Whiston and White were contemporaries, in conflict over the nature of prophetic interpretation. However, the contours of their discourse are entirely “modern,” in which debates concerning the nature of prophetic referents and textual analyses eclipse the Anglican vision of reading the Bible. There is no longer a comprehensive theological vision of how Scripture functions. Like Newton, Whiston was keenly interested in prophecy and

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96 William Whiston, The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies, Being Eight Sermons Preach’d at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul’s in the Year MDCCVII at the Lecture Founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle, ESQ. (Cambridge: Printed at the University Press, 1708).

97 Whiston was a Newtonian, a natural scientist, a lover of mathematics, the Lucasian professor at Oxford, and, like Newton, an Arian. It is interesting to note that Whiston’s Arianism was precisely his own attempt at seeking out “primitive” theology. See e.g., Nicholas Keene, “John Ernest Grabe, Biblical Learning and Religious Controversy in Early Eighteenth-Century England,” Journal of Ecclesiastical
his Boyle lectures were an attempt to show with the clarity of mathematical exactitude:

(1) the certainty of the Spirit of Prophecy from the beginning of the World; (2) the Divine Authority of those sacred writings, which have all along contain’d the Predictions of future Events, no way within the reach of natural Foresight; (3) the certain truth of the Christian Religion, as it is confirm’d from those ancient Prophecies, fulfilled in our blessed Saviour; and (4) the just reasons we have thence to expect the completion of those other Prophecies, which are not a few, whose Periods are yet to come.  

With respect to prophecy, Whiston argued that prophecies in the Old Testament could only have a single meaning: either they referred to later events in the Old Testament itself, or they predicted something that would occur only at the time of Jesus. The notion of typology was unacceptable to him: a prophecy could not refer simultaneously to two different events.  

Samuel White argues against Whiston’s view, as he believes that it leads to numerous confusing readings; for instance, two consecutive verses could refer to two different events in time.  

Whiston and White can be placed in the same “free-thinker” category as that of Matthew Collins (see above), notwithstanding the fact that they were not as controversial in their writings. I argue this because Whiston’s freedom from theological history led him to his anti-Trinitarian thought and White, more subtly, moved to a mode of exegesis akin to Day’s in which figuralism, textual fecundity, and the presence of the Word within the text become acutely minimized. For White is critical of not only Whiston, but also of St. Jerome and “a Jesuit” (Cornelius à Lapide) who interprets Moab as the Devil. Even more troublesome, is the interpretation of “the mountain of the Lord’s House” as the

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99 Katz, *God’s Last Words*, 144.  
100 White gives the example of Whiston using the first four verses of Isaiah 29 to refer to Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem and to the next four that of the Turks in the final apocalyptic battle of Armageddon (Samuel White, *A Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, Wherein the Literal Sense of the Prophecy is Briefly Explained* [London: Printed by J.B. for Arthur Collins, 1709], xxv).
Church. For “the generality of Commentators overlook the genuine signification of single Words and make them like so many Puppets [to] just speak as they please.”

Thus, like many of his academic contemporaries, White disdains the received tradition of the Church in favour of a reassessment of the “real” meaning of the text and a desire to find the most original sources. White is a “free-thinker” as his view is that “the spectacular lack of agreement by religious authorities should alone convince us that each individual believer should approach the text armed with reason rather than prejudice.”

He has his own set of non-dogmatic rules for interpretation which, true to the intent of irenicism, directs the interpretive efforts toward conclusions that avoid controversy.

In contrast to Whiston, White often does not accept a unitary textual referent, because doing so errs by falsely forcing a pastiche of confusing indicators within a single passage; in such a model, one text is regarded as referring to a historically proximate event, while the next to a future one. There is the potential for dual textual referents. What makes this a distinctly modern approach is that there is a significant narrowing of which texts can refer to more than one event, and the fact that meaning is reduced to (at most) two referents.

With regard to the former, White states that only in such Places as are quoted in the New Testament a double Sense is to be allow’d; and have for that very Reason gone out of the common Road of Interpreters, because I found that the greatest part of them more sollicitous about fast’ning their own Sense on his Words, than giving the Sense he design’d by them.

The idea of dual textual referents in Scripture is not new; the theological concept of

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102 Katz, *God’s Last Words*, 144. Katz defines “free-thinking” here in the context of Collins, whom I raise above, but this moniker is applicable to many others in kind, if not degree.

103 In other words, it is “modern” in that this model rejects or ignores the broad history of textual fecundity.

typology is a means of understanding how Christ is the centre of all of Scripture. Therefore, typological and figural interpretation affirm the specificity of narrated events while at the same time act as pointers to a providentially ordered history. They do not function merely as evidential bases for the truth of dogmatic claims. However, in his attempt to avoid spurious interpretations, White retreats from the Anglican hermeneutic that holds up Scripture as a fecund web of interconnected meanings, represented, for instance, by the arrangement of the lectionary, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Returning to White’s exegesis of Isaiah, consider such a central passage as chapter 53. He dissents from Grotius’ interpretation that this is about the suffering of Jeremiah and says “this Chapter is to be understood solely of Christ, as all interpreters agree,”\(^{105}\) himself abstaining from applying his own rule of dual interpretation. For White, “the Application of this to our Saviour is so obvious that every Christian Reader cannot fail to make it, as soon as he reads the Words.”\(^{106}\) Two points are of note, however. The first is his assertion of the clarity of a singular textual referent. It is “obvious” to anyone who is a Christian. Yet, by this time there were numerous thinkers — Grotius being a prime example — who by no means considered this an obvious interpretation of the Suffering Servant. Secondly, White does not as such appeal to the tradition of the Church, or any particularly theological understanding of Scripture; in fact, he argues that “any one who has any knowledge of the Hebrew Language will at first sight discover, what violence is offer’d to the Original Expressions by this Interpretation of Grotius, and how exactly every Character here agrees with the circumstances of our Saviour’s Death and Passion, in the first literal allow’d Sense of the Words.”\(^{107}\) The appeal is not directed toward or

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\(^{106}\)White, *A Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, 373.

\(^{107}\)White, *A Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, 381.
within a theological/hermeneutical structure, but to a proper knowledge of Hebrew and the “original” meaning of the text, that is, by an appeal to philology.

White, however, is less univocal in his interpretation of one of the most central prophetic passages in Christian theological history, Isaiah 9. For each chapter, White offers a small preface, in this case entitled “The Argument of Chapter IX,” comprising a précis of the central concerns of the passage. It was from that of Isaiah 53, quoted above, in which he argues that Christ is the only referent for the chapter. Not so, however, in his outline of the argument of Isaiah 9. There is no mention of Christ, but a mere summary of the historical events that gave rise to a need for the comfort that Isaiah 9 offers. Thus “the people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light” refers to “the Jews shut up in Jerusalem, surrounded by a Great Army, and by the Light . . . their marvellous deliverance from an Enemy.” Once White, however, reaches that most central passage, verse 6, he is more in agreement with Grotius that this

must be understood in the first literal sense as Hezekiah . . . Whereas the Birth of Christ so many Hundred Years after could have no influence on the Time of their present Distress . . . but the Words are so chosen that in their utmost and full Import they are more applicable to our Saviour than to Hezekiah, of whom the Jews are not to be blam’d for interpreting these Two Verses, since the Connexion necessarily requires it; but their Fault is . . . that they will not allow any one else to be design’d by the Prophet, tho’ the Words plainly shew he had a greater Person in his Eye.  

White intends to show that “every sentence is capable of a double Interpretation.” I do not go into the detail of his argument but only summarize his methodology, which is an analysis of the words in terms of Hebrew idioms, the proper connection of one word to another (e.g., whether to name the child “Counsellor, Mighty God” or “Counsellor of the Mighty God”). In other words, he indeed does maintain the “literal” sense of the text, but now in a mode in which theology has no bearing on interpretation.
Also in contrast to his interpretation of Isaiah 53, which White interprets christologically, he is similarly univocal in his interpretation of Isaiah 11 (“a rod out of the stem of Jesse”), by almost completely avoiding any sense of a christological referent. His preface begins with the rather harsh claim that “This Chapter is by the Jews understood of the Messiah, as they vainly fancy, yet to come, and with these fatally blind Wretches I find Mr. Whiston concurs.”\(^{110}\) He is resolute to interpret Isaiah 11 in terms of Israel’s need for a just ruler over them at the time of the Assyrian invasion. White does acknowledge St. Paul’s use in Romans 15:12 of Isaiah 11:10, and therefore it would appear that the New Testament regards this as a christological passage. His response to this in the preface to the chapter is rather enigmatic:

*The Christian Interpreters understand the Prophet of the Messiah already come, finding the 10th Verse apply’d by St. Paul to our Saviour, and therefore, says Zach. Ursin. [Zacharias Ursinus], the rest of this Chapter must be apply’d to Christ and the calling of the Gentiles: and I would very willingly allow the Consequence, were it possible to make Sense of the Prophet without straining his Words.*\(^{111}\)

However, once he arrives at the point of commenting on Isaiah 11:10, he neglects to mention any Christian interpretation. His antipathy for Whiston’s interpretation trumps his dual referent rule, even though the New Testament provides justification for another meaning to prophecies. What stirs him to such opposition is Whiston’s interpretation of verse 12, which suggests there would be a future restoration of the Jews to their own land. Not only does his interpretation of the text become clouded by his dislike of Whiston, but his problem with such an interpretation is that to read Isaiah in this way would no longer be *historical.*\(^{112}\) Rather, it would mean there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Whatever


\(^{111}\)White, *A Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, 86.

\(^{112}\)There is surely an element of anti-Semitism here; if there is to be any fulfillment of a “positive” prophecy, only the Church can be the referent, not the Jews, the people rejected by God (in the common view of the time).
the case, White is neither consistent in his interpretive methodology nor is he free from the influence of the numerous controversies that had arisen during his time.

Of equal importance, however, is that White presumptively maintains a thin form of typology and predictive value to Isaiah. But his more pressing concerns for historical and philological reconstructions of the world of the Prophet eclipse the rich textual-theological landscape that informs the early Anglican hermeneutic, of which Nehemiah Rogers is representative. Through Samuel White, the irenic exegesis of Day has now flowered into a more robust form of critical reading that conspicuously minimizes a correspondence between Scripture and the proclamation of the Church.

2.3 Richard Stafford: Ecumenical Minimalism and Religious Privatization

Richard Stafford (bap. 1663–1703) is an interesting figure in that he is a committed member of the Church of England who wants to see dissenters come back into the fold. I show that, while he is an apparent proponent of the Church of England, Stafford continues the process of theological minimization. I begin with some of his more general works, which address the problem of the many dissenting Churches in England, followed by a series of sermons that speak on Isaiah 38:2, 3. Stafford stands on the cusp of the eighteenth century, when critical exegesis, in opposition to the unique vision of early Anglicanism, began its ascendancy. Stafford is, however, a transitional figure, by no means challenging the historicity of the Bible. Rather, Stafford functions on the other side of the coin forged by Day, whereby he speaks to the kinds of belief that one should hold. For instance, in 1695 Stafford wrote An Exhortation to all Dissenters to Return to the Church of England, and in 1699 he issued the tract The Cause and Cure of Divisions. His sermons on Isaiah 38:2, 3 also show his use of the Bible and Isaiah to

113 Richard Stafford, An Exhortation to All Dissenters to Return to the Church of England (London: Licensed by D. Poplar, 1695); Richard Stafford, The Cause and Cure of Divisions or, The Way and Means for All Christians (However They Are Distinguished or Named) to Come to Unity (London:
support his arguments.\textsuperscript{114} One could suppose that a work with the former title would be a plea that the Church of England is the “true” Church and that all dissenters must turn toward her for salvation. This is not the case; rather, he is highly critical of the Church of England, saying “what is called the National Church, or the Church of England, hath truly Ordinances or Ceremonies of Divine Service, and a Worldly kind of Religion, modelled after the fashion of and according to the Course of this World.”\textsuperscript{115} He bemoans the fact that “the Pure, Primitive Christianity, and that Way of Worship which was used in the Days of the Apostles, and First Christians, is now in a manner lost from among us. . . . If ever God had a true Church in the World (as he hath always) most certainly he had at that time.”\textsuperscript{116} Despite Stafford’s call to remain in the Church, he, Puritan-like, urges the Church of England back to a repristinated form. Indeed, in \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, the “cause” is that this pure form has been sullied by the dross of superstitious invention:

\begin{quote}
But Alas! Herein Man hath found out many Inventions. \textit{In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their Post by my Posts,} Ezek. 43:8. He hath intermingled and added many things into the Worship of God, which \textit{God never Commanded, nor came they into his mind,} as himself saith by his Prophet \textit{Jeremiah}.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

What, then, is his view of the “cure” for all the divisions in the Church?

There should yet be a further Reformation even in our Reformed Churches, that is, to bring them up or back again into a Greater Degree of Spirituality and Truth; And to do all things according to the Pattern shewed to us in the Gospel. For then

\textsuperscript{114}Richard Stafford, \textit{The Exceeding Great Comfort and Benefit of Having Walked Before God in Truth and with a Perfect Heart and of Having Done That Which is Good in His Sight Set Forth in Several Discourses on Isaiah 38:2,3} (London: Ralph Simpson, 1699).

\textsuperscript{115}Stafford, \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, 6.

\textsuperscript{116}Stafford, \textit{An Exhortation}, 6.

\textsuperscript{117}Stafford, \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, 3–4.
only Primitive times would return.\textsuperscript{118}

It is a subtle but significant point that he refers to the gospels, rather than all of Scripture, as the source of the pattern. As I show in the previous chapter, earlier Anglican divines argued that the Aaronic priesthood prefigures the priestly and episcopal structure of the Church of England, but only because of the christological centre of the text. There is a kind of “gospel within the gospel” for Stafford, exemplified in John 4:23, where Jesus proclaims that believers would worship “in the Spirit and in truth.” His aim is “spiritualization” of the faith that minimizes “Liturgies, Rites, Ceremonies, Traditions and Institutions of our own. . . . So that is not the worship of the true God, which is the Circumcision made with hands.”\textsuperscript{119} He aims for a more inward faith: “nor yet doth the true worship of God stand or consist so much in Divers Bowings and Cringings, or Gestures, but it is an inward thing; for what is Spiritual or in Spirit, is inward.”\textsuperscript{120}

Turning to matters more directly pertaining to Isaiah, we find similar themes that reject the “cunning corrupt Romish priests”\textsuperscript{121} and even commend dissenting ministers who, “commonly are more faithful herein then [sic] those of the Church Ministry.”\textsuperscript{122} The emphasis is on an individual’s moral duty. Therefore, in matters related to various Church practices, he states:

\begin{quote}
Notwithstanding all controversies, Disputes and different Congregations which are now in the Nation and throughout Christendom; yet as to this the Rule is safe, herein to do as Moses did, who was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see (saith he) that thou make all Things according to the Pattern shewed to thee in the Mount. And now that the Old Dispensation is abolished we are to see that we Order all Things in our Worship according to the pattern shewed to us in the Gospel. . . . I do believe and speak after my Judgment,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{118}Stafford, \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, 8.

\textsuperscript{119}Stafford, \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, 11.

\textsuperscript{120}Stafford, \textit{The Cause and Cure of Divisions}, 12.

\textsuperscript{121}Stafford, \textit{Comfort and Benefit}, 12.

\textsuperscript{122}Stafford, \textit{Comfort and Benefit}, 14.
that there is not a way of Worship now in this nation, nor yet on the Earth which is exactly according to the Scriptures of Truth in all things, and in all things according to the Pattern shewed in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{123}

I suggest that, in fact, it is not "notwithstanding" the disputes of groups with numerous creedal commitments that emerged out of the Civil War and its aftermath, but precisely because of them that thinkers from Day to Stafford, and beyond, brought to completion a project to compartmentalize theology, personal faith commitment, and liturgical practice from the biblical exegesis. Note that this is concurrent with a devaluation of the Old Testament as the abolished "Old Dispensation," by which Stafford means the structure of external rites and practices.

Even while defending the Church of England, Stafford betrays its hermeneutical vision of the Bible, opting to reject the view of common worship held by Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker, replacing it with a now-familiar private faith. Day’s approach is a change in methodology, and Stafford’s is that of general religious disposition.

2.4 Richard Kidder and William Lowth: Defending Scripture

In all ages, the perceived fulfillment of the Bible’s prophetic claims has been used to justify the truth of Christianity. Yet, with the rise of rhetorical, philological, and historical tools in the process of exegesis, this apologetic orientation toward Scripture becomes particularly dominant. The Bible has value in terms of its apologetic effectiveness on the basis of its probative validation of Christianity. I employ William Lowth and Richard Kidder as exemplars of this perspective, and as intellectual precursors to Robert Payne Smith’s exegetical orientation of Chapter 4.

William Lowth, father of the more-famous Robert Lowth, criticizes Samuel White in the Isaiah portion of Simon Patrick’s \textit{Critical Commentary and Paraphrase of the Old and New Testament}, a highly popular volume that was originally published in the early

\textsuperscript{123}Stafford, \textit{Comfort and Benefit}, 48–49.
eighteenth century. In it, Patrick et al. give a running commentary on the entire Scriptures (not unlike that of Christopher Wordsworth in Chapter 5). However, it is clear that by the eighteenth century, the authors perceive a need to “vindicate [the prophetical texts] from some novel expositions, which tend to deprive Christian religion of the benefit of so considerable a testimony.”¹²⁴ Lowth reacts against Samuel White’s interpretation, which “supposes that the far greatest part of this prophecy relates only to the times in which the prophet lived.”¹²⁵ This raises a perennial question about prophecy in general as the “critical” era begins: to what extent is Isaiah predictive of events beyond his immediate historical horizon?

Many have analyzed Isaiah for its ability — or lack of it — to have correctly, sufficiently, and clearly predicted the coming of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. An interesting case in point is the 1699 writing of Richard Kidder, entitled A Demonstration of the Messias, In which the Truth of the Christian Religion is defended, especially against the Jews.¹²⁶ This work gives a clear picture of such apologetic exegesis, whereas Lowth’s work, aside from some comments I mention above, is directed toward more textual concerns.

Given the title, one would justly wonder why Kidder would write a work so directed toward Jewish arguments against Christianity, since the Jewish presence in England was not particularly significant. While Kidder mostly concentrates on Jewish arguments about the meaning of Scripture, his worry is that the rising popularity of critical readings of the Bible were ones with parallels to those historically offered by

¹²⁴Patrick and Lowth, A Critical Commentary, iii, 223. One of those whom these editors have in mind was Anthony Collins.

¹²⁵Patrick and Lowth, A Critical Commentary, iii, 225.

Jewish thinkers. A gifted Hebrew scholar, Kidder claims to “take all possible Care to inform my self what it is that the Jews have to object against Christianity.” And yet, he also complains that

Atheism and Contempt of all Revealed Religion have prevailed of late Years. We have lived to see Moses derided, and his History ridiculed and exposed; and the Writings of the New Testament made the Matter of Drollery and profane Contempt. . . . I have to do with the Jews in the following Papers, who impugn Christianity, and object against the Writers of the New Testament. Some among us use the same Objections.  

Who does Kidder have in mind as his interlocutors, aside from the Jews? Perhaps he is referring to, as one of those “deriding” Moses, the philosopher (and Jew, albeit an excommunicated one) Baruch Spinoza, whose Theologico-Political Treatise was so critical of the traditional perspective of the Old Testament that it was banned for many years. Yet Kidder does not explicitly name any of his Jewish interlocutors, so one can only speculate.  

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127Kidder, A Demonstration of the Messias, iv. Page numbers of this preface to Kidder’s work are not in the original work and are provided by me. Kidder’s apologetic approach, while not particularly novel nor foundational for similar apologetic endeavours that succeed him, can nonetheless be seen as representative of a similar intellectual project in Germany as outlined by Legaspi. He describes the work of Mosheim and Michaelis at Georgia Augusta in the eighteenth century, and how they “made the most of their freedom to investigate the historical dimensions of the Christian tradition without correlating their results to specific theological positions” (Legaspi, The Death of Scripture, 49). As with Day, this is a rather more abstract approach to Scripture, which supports a kind of Christianity-in-general, or “religion,” without the difficulty of being embroiled in confessional disputes. Note also that these latter theologians are working in the eighteenth century, whereas Kidder, et. al., are already engaging in such intellectual activities. Thus, as we shall see even more with Lowth, England began a project on which Germany only subsequently expanded and perfected. Finally, to invoke Childs’ categories, which I set up below, Kidder’s approach is akin to that of Abraham Calov.

128Many of the Jews were considered foreigners, even though during Cromwell’s time there was a kind of tolerance for Jews, and they were readmitted into England. However, Amsterdam was a key enclave of European Jewry, and seen as an economic foreign threat to England. Jews like Spinoza, however, were also regarded as presenting various “intellectual” threats from the Continent. James II offered the Jews what Katz refers to as “what amounted to a Declaration of Indulgence” (David S. Katz, The Jews in the History of England, 1485–1850 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 151). Also politically connected to Holland, these Dutch Jews were “heavily involved” in William of Orange’s accession to the throne during the Glorious Revolution (Katz, The Jews in the History of England, 157), whereas the English Jews were rather passive recipients of the new regime. In terms of population, however, there simply was no real threat beyond that which was illusory: the population of Jews in the late seventeenth century was about 550–660 (Katz, The Jews in the History of England, 162). These disproportionate attacks, I contend,
Isaiah is foundational to Kidder’s argument. For instance, the unbelief of the Jews is fulfilled by Isaiah 6:9 (and supported by Matthew 13:14,15), and Jesus is the obvious referent for the “root of Jesse” in Isaiah 11:1 and, of course, he stands as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Kidder’s arguments also include those that support the use of typology of a sort, but usually in a rather wooden manner whereby types properly fulfill their role as argumentative buttresses that support predictive prophecy, rather than as participants in a comprehensive theological vision of how Scripture relates to the world, or indeed, as the interpreter of the world to the Church.

For such exegetes, I argue that this apologetic reading is problematic. Thinkers like Kidder believe that engaging with Scripture is a theological task, whereas I argue this is merely a continuation of theological minimization. The reason for this minimization is that the perceived attack on Scripture results in an equally antagonistic response in the context of “proving” the Bible’s truth instead of its theological content.

2.5 Robert Lowth and Proto-Romanticism

Theological minimization culminates with Robert Lowth, and, via a transformation of philology into poetics, and religious apologetics into affective aesthetics, his critical work on Isaiah and the Bible is the fruition of an irenic reading of the Bible. Lowth adds to the philological and historical modes of reading Scripture with an affective, aesthetic hermeneutic that speaks to the religious faculty of the reader.

are because the Jews “continued to be used as an extreme [negative] example when the question of religious toleration came up” (Katz, The Jews in the History of England, 175). The Jews represent a foreign threat not only economically and politically, but also intellectually, as they are seen to instigate new critical engagements with the Bible, even though the arguments of the Jews themselves were very old. Rhetorically, to associate the arguments of various negative critics with those of the Jews is very effective at disarming their power, given the negative view toward Jewish people in general.

Kidder, A Demonstration of the Messias, 72, 172, 173.
Robert Lowth published his work on Isaiah in 1778, and it became the standard for Isaiah scholarship in England arguably until that of S. R. Driver. Lowth’s book is not merely a commentary, but a new translation of Isaiah, and for the most part he limits his remarks to issues pertaining to philology. When John Rogerson speaks of how England lagged behind Germany’s exegetical advances (despite being that country’s inspiration for it), he argues that this lag is because people such as Lowth accept the traditional reading that Jesus is the referent of many of Isaiah’s prophecies. For instance, in his comments on Isaiah 53, he quotes the Hutchinsonian Benjamin Kennicott’s analysis of Origen’s debate with Jews on this passage. The point of contention is whether Isaiah 53:8, rendered in the LXX as “εις θανατον, unto death” was part of the original text. The adjudication of this depended on the fact that Origen, as the author of the Hexapla, must know the “original” better, and is therefore more trustworthy. Kennicott and many others of his time represent a perspective in England that Katz calls the “apotheosis of the author,” a view that leads Lowth and others to seek various methods of “textual repristination.” One result is “cutting the Jews out of the inheritance of Scripture by claiming to have discovered a method of textual criticism which would reveal God’s message in its pristine Sinaitic glory. . . . Kennicott wanted to restore the original text of a divine author.” The vaguaries of historical turbulence that muddy the urtext of the original authorial genius must be sifted by a process of textual archaeology.


131 Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation; with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory* (London: Printed by J. Nichols for J. Dodsley, 1778), 241–42. More on Hutchinsonianism is detailed in Chapter 5, but it is interesting to note that Lowth calls Kennicott “my learned friend” (Lowth, *Isaiah*, 240). Briefly, Hutchinsonianism was a rather eccentric approach to the Old Testament that influenced many of those with High Church proclivities. It was a response to Newtonian science, which sought a cosmology, or “natural science,” within Scripture.

132 I explore the concept of the apotheosis of the author in more detail in Chapter 4.

But Lowth’s primary concern, and his greatest influence on biblical criticism, was to bring to light the aesthetic of Hebrew literature and “modern understandings of prophecy as literature.” While Lowth’s initial work had a greater effect in Germany than in England, it continued to be widely published for over a century. His ideas were built on those established in his earlier and more famous work *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, in which he notes the similarity between the writing style in the Psalms and that of Isaiah and other prophets. Lowth was also strict about providing an accurate translation “upon just principles of criticism, in a rational method of interpretation.” Otherwise, the results would be flights of fancy for which he chides the Church Fathers: “such strange and absurd deductions of notions and ideas . . . was the case of the generality of the Fathers of the Christian Church, who wrote comments on the Old Testament: and it is no wonder, that we find them of little service in leading us into the true meaning and the deep sense of the prophetical writings.” Lowth bemoans the dearth of Hebrew knowledge (he is suspicious of much of the vowel pointing by the Jews as that of “late ages”), and he explicitly rejects the Council of Trent declaration.

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139 Lowth, *Isaiah*, xliv This is a classic Hutchinsonian position, which “was based on the notion that only the consonants in the Hebrew Bible were divinely ordained, and that the vowels were a Jewish invention designed to pervert the original meaning of Scripture” (Katz, *God’s Last Words*, 159).
enshrining the authenticity of the Vulgate.  He also implicitly criticizes his own Church of England and other traditions for not maintaining an accurate translation of the Scripture. Lowth in principle does not let the Church or any doctrinal perspective determine textual meaning; only critical translation, presumably one which he (as Bishop and one who was “professionally trained,” to use Marcus Walsh’s term from above) can properly expound, determines meaning.

Lowth consulted scholars mostly from the Continent, and particularly Michaelis’ commentary on the Old Testament, “an illustrious monument to the learning, judgment, and indefatigable industry of that excellent person” (and Michaelis himself made use of Lowth’s ideas of biblical poetry in his work). He also refers to Vitringa, “to whom the world is greatly indebted for his learned labours on the Prophet.” Walsh argues that Lowth exemplifies the professional scholar, who, in his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, produced “a work essentially secular in method, deliberately avoiding theological issues, based on formal, stylistic, and metrical analysis and historical scholarship.” Or, as Ian Balfour suggests, Lowth engages in “a procedure that from the

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141 Lowth, *Isaiah*, Lvi and J.C. O’Neill, *The Bible’s Authority: A Portrait Gallery of Thinkers from Lessing to Bultmann* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 29. In Chapter 5 of Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, Legaspi indicates the indebtedness of Lowth and Michaelis on each other. Each had their own peculiar effect on their respective academic cultures; but both, in Legaspi’s account, “invent” the idea of biblical poetry. These must be seen in the context of a divided Church, as even theological categories shift in their meaning; thus, “in an irenic move, Michaelis leaps over centuries of confessional debate and seeks to establish a new meaning of grace.” (Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture*, 118).


143 Walsh, “Profession and Authority,” 393. This is not an entirely fair assessment of Lowth, for there is by no means an absence of theological concern and there is a danger in setting up Lowth as a caricature. Prickett is more careful, noting, as I have, Lowth’s conservatism: “The Bible was still regarded by Lowth as having ‘one common author’ – in the person of the Holy Spirit. . . . We are still a long way from the world of Eichhorn, Lessing, and Herder” (Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics, and Biblical Interpretation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 111).
start places the psalmist, the prophet and the pagan poet all on the same level.\textsuperscript{144} Thus, as poetry, and as a \textit{literary} text, a book like Isaiah has evidence of certain literary modes of speech, such as prosopopoeia, in which the human author has merely “attributed” certain words to God.\textsuperscript{145} In the end, Lowth’s impact was such that

\begin{quote}

The Bible became, to a significant extent, one text among others. . . . The path Lowth charted led in two directions: his historical criticism helped unsettle the status of the literal sense of the Bible as an index of actual history, while his elucidation of the aesthetics of Scripture helped open the sacred text to the powerful revisionary readings undertaken by the Romantic poets.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

Lowth’s work and his proto-Romantic criticism herald a change in the meaning of \textit{prophecy}. Even the Hebrew word “Nabi” is recast in this aesthetic context as having a broad meaning, referring to “a Prophet, a Poet, or a Musician, under the influence of divine inspiration.”\textsuperscript{147} There is thus a shift away from a theological notion of prophet toward ideas consonant with concepts in neoclassical literature. Lowth also makes great use of the concept of the biblical text’s \textit{sublimity} as a category describing the affective, mysterious power of prophetic utterance, arising from a mind possessed by the genius of enthusiasm. Thus, says Stephen Prickett, “through Lowth’s influence the Bible was to become for the Romantics not merely the model of sublimity, but also a source of style and a touchstone of true feeling.”\textsuperscript{148}

\begin{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Balfour, \textit{The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy}, 64–65.
\item Balfour, \textit{The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy}, 77.
\item Lowth, \textit{Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews}, ii, 12.
\item Prickett, \textit{Words and the Word}, 109. The concept of biblical sublimity is not a new one. But what is new is the emphasis upon the non-pneumatically defined characteristic of its affective impact on the reader by virtue of its textual (albeit divinely inspired) structure. This can be distinguished by the concept of the sublime as described in Radner’s account of the Jansenist Jacques-Joseph Duguet (1649–1733) in which “the sublime” is “about a divine exposure to divine presence, literally, through the instrumentality of an ordered text” (Ephraim Radner, \textit{Hope Among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement of Scripture} [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004], 96). Sublimity in this account is linked to the belief that Christ is present within the entire canon of Scripture.
\end{enumerate}
\end{quote}
I would suggest that Lowth’s critical impact was somewhat halted in England because of the strength of the peculiarly Anglican hermeneutic that made “non-theological” reading of the Bible difficult. Yet Lowth’s contributions remained dormant and took form on the Continent.\textsuperscript{149} Thus this “invention of biblical poetry” accomplished by Lowth is, as I construe it, not a development arising spontaneously or in a vacuum, as if Lowth were imbued with his own Isaiah-like genius. Rather, following in the tradition of Day and White, he seeks new hermeneutical, non-dogmatic approaches to unlock the text that the divided Church was unable to do. However, \emph{none of these figures see themselves as doing anything other than theological exegesis}, for each considers that there was within the Bible the means for Christianity’s vindication (Kidder) or by which religious feeling can be evoked (Lowth). Nor are they particularly damaging in and of themselves with respect to, for instance, revisioning Isaianic authorship. However, Lowth’s work (and his impact on Michaelis, who in turn influenced those whose thought wended its way back to England) stands as a marker in a tradition which was to offer a radically new frame of reference. . . . The idea of biblical poetry emerged precisely when theological definitions were receding to the margins of exegetical discourse. The concept allowed interpreters direct access to the Bible, independent of the ‘grand narratives’ of the ‘canonical tradition.’ As a result, the point of contact . . . was not identity in a community of faith united by canon but rather faculties of aesthetic judgment.\textsuperscript{150}

Legaspi’s description of the canon and the community as constitutive elements of Scripture are analogous to my more specific account of early Anglican formulations of biblical hermeneutics. And, given the fact that all of those with whom I have engaged were devoted Christians (Lowth was no less than the Bishop of London), another point made by Legaspi must be emphasized: none of these figures by any means repudiate the importance of the Bible but in fact \emph{are attempting to reclaim it and make it relevant}. If

\textsuperscript{149}Prickett, \textit{Words and the Word}, 115.

\textsuperscript{150}Legaspi, \textit{The Death of Scripture}, 127–28.
the Bible can be rescued from the impotent and divisive clutches of a divided Church via a project of cultural and academic revivification, then they saw themselves as participating in a very religious project indeed. Lowth and his successors — Broad Church and Evangelical alike — essentially abandoned the Cranmerian vision of Scripture and followed a path that, albeit in a more attenuated form, was also practised with more enthusiasm in Germany, as sketched out by Legaspi:

The harsh and violent realities of religious division in the centuries following the Reformation featured sharp criticisms of traditional belief, on the one hand, and intensification of confessional interpretation and polemical theology on the other. What developed in the mid-eighteenth century was . . . the realization that the Bible was no longer intelligible as scripture. . . . If the Bible was to find a place in a new political order committed to the unifying power of the state, it would have to do so as a common cultural inheritance.151

This is part of the vision of the “romantic university” that includes the Bible as an essential aspect of culture, and as a “classic” text, but not necessarily as Scripture.152

It is worth noting here, with respect to the christological aspect of the Anglican biblical hermeneutic of Chapter 2, that Lowth does not connect his textual/aesthetic approach to the Christ who, as Logos, “speaks” the text to the Church. By the seventeenth century, new engagements with models of what “writing” is as a human enterprise arose, in which Lowth participated. In his exegesis of the text, Lowth “confined himself to a strictly formal analysis, studiously avoiding questions of theology.”153 Yet, the new way of conceiving the nature of a text was even deeper in the general milieu of the time, as John Milbank shows in his comparison between Lowth and another bishop, William Warburton.154 The latter came to regard historical writing (in

151Legaspi, The Death of Scripture, 5.


general) as a process of mystification and the distancing of the author from the textual referent, like the occult mystery of the newly discovered Egyptian hieroglyphs. Warburton took this approach particularly to criticize pagan religions, but by arguing for the myth-making tendency of writing (spurred by the urge for political power), he opened up the Hebrew Scriptures to the same critique. And, as Milbank notes, Waburton “has no real answer” to this problem and has to resort to “taking a quite monstrously fideist view of revelation.”  

155 Lowth, although Warburton’s opponent, also seeks a “theory” for categorizing Hebrew writing, choosing that of “poetry.” Yet what Milbank sees as “the consistency of Lowth’s figurative usage through pleonastic variation,” 156 while true in regard to Lowth’s own internal consistency, is by no means congruent with the Anglican vision of Scripture. This is true for both Warburton and Lowth; the connection between the incarnated Logos who “speaks” the Word and the text itself is enervated and replaced by various methodological *topoi*.

### 3 Conclusion and an Outline of Anglican Parties

Radical Protestant exegesis aims to avoid the perceived pitfalls of the allegorical exegesis of someone like Nehemiah Rogers, who I argue epitomizes the Anglican vision of scriptural exegesis. This results in a movement toward a more literal reading of the text and, as outlined by Peter Harrison, leads to the close connection between “the identification of the meaning of a text with its author’s intention, and the privileged status of scientific discourse.” 157 It emerges out of the Protestant anti-“romish” views of Scripture that appears to too freely engage in allegorical readings that justified the entire

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“romish” system. Note, too, that the centrality of authorial intent is also problematic to Protestantism's own biblicism, as it risk disallowing the power of the inspired Word to operate at a level that may surpass that of the original author.

Most Protestants in the nineteenth century engage in this more “antagonistic” form of reading. But the more subtle, “irenic” hermeneutic is personified in William Day, who is markedly different from Rogers. The religious violence of the English Civil War (and the more distant Thirty Years War) urge a reading of the Bible that avoids the divisiveness and even violence of dogmatic interpretation. Basic Christian tenets are not necessarily denied, but theology is no longer closely tethered to the text of Scripture.

During this time, exegetes seek a method of reading the text, first in the “rationalist” approach involving philology and textual repristination, which I describe as “Protestant poetics.” Secondly, the new conceptual framework of Robert Lowth “rescues” the Bible both from a theological and a purely rationalist approach to identify within the text a distinctly “Hebrew” poetic impulse whose aesthetic impact on the reader is so important for how religion is conceived in Romanticism.

The purpose of this exercise is to sketch out the contours of the various competing parties in the Church of England of the nineteenth century. That is, each party stands as the culmination of various aspects of these types of biblical approaches. In the following, I briefly outline these parties to define the terms I employ. In 1855, William Conybeare wrote Essays Ecclesiastical and Social in which he describes three forms of church “parties” within the Anglican Church: the Low Church, the High Church and the Broad Church.\footnote{W. J. Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855), 57–164. Conybeare reveals his affinity with the Broad Church party, as he suggests that “good exists in all the great parties of the Church” (Conybeare, Essays, 57) and concludes that only “by acknowledging a substantial unity of faith, and an absolute identity of holiness, in the midst of diversity of opinion” (Conybeare, Essays, 164) can the Church continue. In other words, there is somehow unity – which he does not define except that all ascribe to some form of “Anglicanism” – amidst the conflictual reality of the divided Church. For Conybeare, as for many of the Broad Church party, as I am using the}
“normal” and the “Tractarian” types), it is helpful to briefly define here how I use each term in subsequent chapters, though there is a general congruence between my use and that of Conybeare’s. Like Conybeare, I use the term “Low Church” to represent the Evangelical party within the Church of England. By the time of the nineteenth century, this was one of the most influential parties in England, but its antecedents are present in the ideas of the Puritans. Its most defining moment came in the eighteenth century with the work of the Wesley brothers and the revivalist movements that swept through England, having an enormous impact on English piety that remains to this day. As with the Puritans, there is a deep suspicion of external practices that appear to be “popish,” and there is a focus on inner piety and individual experience. Many of the revivalist movements split from the Church of England; I focus only on those Evangelicals of the Church of England. Of the four types I consider, the Low Church party are most concerned with the Bible as the source of faith, practice, moral, and ecclesial life and are nervous of any challenges to the emerging scholarly findings which, for instance, questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch or the historical veracity of biblical events.

As Tod Jones expresses it, the Broad Church is “‘not a party,’ ‘not a group,’ ‘not a faction,’ and ‘not an organised alliance,’ . . . By parts consisting of rational and emotional elements, by description as comprehensive, radical, and conservative.”


Like Conybeare, I would generally (with exceptions) conceive them as rather less sophisticated as a rule than the Puritans. Contrary to Conybeare’s assertion, they do not usually represent a Calvinist stream of thought (though there were undoubtedly avowedly Calvinist adherents), as they inherit their thought from the Arminian thinking of the Methodists.

Tod E. Jones, The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement (Oxford: Lexington Books,
may be that Jones’ description renders definition impossible, but I more narrowly attend to the Broad Church as a movement whereby historical-critical study of the Bible as a primary means of exegesis is seen as not only acceptable, but even necessary, and often an end in itself. In other words, they are the “liberal” wing of the Church of England, who seek a “progressive” application of Scripture to the life of the Church and by far the most influential party in the current state of the Anglican Church in the West. For many of the Broad Church, this new approach to Scripture enables one to rise above the perceived repressive power of church dogma. It would be inaccurate to argue that they tout court accept the critical stance toward Scripture already well-defined by a majority of biblical scholars in Germany in the nineteenth century — far from it. Broad Church members shared with Low Church Evangelicals a strong dislike for anything “romish,” but they did not accept the Bible as the only source for dogma (if such a thing as dogma were permitted). Therefore, they were in a sense fighting on two fronts — the perceived Roman Catholic threat of the Tractarians, and the “enthusiasm” of the Evangelical wing. Yet, by the end of the century, the Broad Church became a significant aspect of the Church of England.

If the Evangelicals have their roots in the Puritans and the Wesleys, and the Broad Churchmen in the latitudinarians, the High Church/Tractarian party descends in some part from the decapitated reign of Charles I and his Archbishop William Laud. While I focus on nineteenth century thinkers, I claim that the major difference between the High Church party and the Tractarians is a political one, and I expand on this in more detail in Chapter 5. Tractarians reject personal and private interpretation of Scripture more strongly than the older High Church party does, and they also reject the intense focus of Evangelicals on the principle of “Bible alone.” But the exegetical practices of High Church adherents
in the nineteenth century (as opposed to the twentieth, with the emergence of liberal catholicism in the works of the Lux Mundi authors) have some similarities. I focus, however, on the more parochial, political interpretation of the old High Church wing. Their history is a rich one, having two definitive golden ages: those of the Caroline Divines and the Tractarians.

Finally, I attend to English Roman Catholic biblical perspectives in the nineteenth century. They are, of course, the perennial catalysts for numerous upheavals in English history, even disregarding the reign of “bloody” Mary, but their history is too complex to treat with as much detail as that of the Church of England. They comprised an entire social community unto themselves for centuries, at times triumphant, and at others powerless at the hands of Anglican persecutions. But once Protestants had a firm grip on political power, Catholics had to flee (like the Puritans, many went to France) or to live in isolated communities. For this reason, many of these communities functioned in a “sectarian” manner. At various times, the threat of Protestantism was both real and imagined, depending on the efforts of the Regnum. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, some continued to give their allegiance to Rome and they were called recusants. They tended to be viewed with deep suspicion by the Anglican Establishment. Roman Catholics too had their own vigorous responses to the Protestant claim on all sides of sola scriptura, as they saw this as being the same thing as “private interpretation.” They were always ready to point out that the same Bible that was used by all parties resulted in numerous heretical developments. While the Roman Catholic “threat” would not emerge in the nineteenth century as it did during the reign of James II, the antagonistic

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perspective of the other parties resulted in no emancipation for Roman Catholics until 1829. The Union with Ireland Act of 1800 did not help in allaying fears, as many Roman Catholic moved from Ireland to England, and, eventually, having Roman Catholic members of parliament became a reality.  

Roman Catholic biblical exegesis in the nineteenth century is generally impacted by the Counter-Reformation, which produced the Council of Trent. The Council rejects the idea of *sola scriptura*, seeing it as equivalent to private interpretation — a view that was not usually denied by Protestants. Since *sola scriptura* was conceived within the antagonistic matrix of Protestant-Catholic animosity, it was viewed as a negatively construed term. For Protestants, “Bible alone” was not, in other words, merely a positive statement on the power of Scripture alone for salvation (though in many ways Hooker’s view of Scripture can be aligned with this more theologically constructive approach), but a doctrine that negated the power of any mediatory figure, such as a priest, or the Church in general. *Sola scriptura*, therefore, was for the most part a doctrine that developed as a direct fallout of the divisive context of sixteenth-century Europe. Several Council of Trent decrees made it difficult for Roman Catholics to engage in

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163In Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Hibbard notes the lack of study (in the twentieth century) by historians with respect to the strength and tenacity of the fears of popery in the English psyche. It has often been assumed that the numerically weak representation by English Catholics posed a proportional influence on Catholic anxieties, but, in fact, there was more than mere fears of popery, but the impression of a very real papal “cabal” that aimed at taking over England. Charles I’s behaviour did little to allay M.P.’s fears.

164See Guy Bedouelle, “Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation, Vol. 2, The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, ed. Alan J. Hauser & Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 428–49. Bedouelle makes an important distinction between the Catholic Counter-Reformation and a Catholic Reformation; the former is a direct (antagonistic) response to Protestant arguments and the latter, as most councils attempt to do, is a series of changes – not always directly doctrinal – to bring about needed reform the Church.

165This is not to say that it was not inherent within other movements prior to the Reformation, and, in fact, the antecedents must not be ignored. Wycliffe lived during the upheavals of the Avignon Papacy and the Black Death. The world seemed to be falling apart and the apparent weakness of the Church with its Popes and antipopes would have made Wycliffe and his followers want to turn elsewhere for a source of authority, or, in line with Popkin, a source for “certainty.”
biblical exegesis in the same manner as Protestants. Individual, personal reading of Scripture was not strictly proscribed, but was virtually impossible, as vernacular translations were rarely made available. When the Douay-Reims version was finally published (the full version in 1610), few could afford it. And the work of Protestant translation was viewed with intense suspicion, as they (rightly) noted that even from the time of Tyndale, these translations were developed with Protestant biases and, in the view of Catholics, resulted in changing the very words of God. Such a task could only be done by the institution in which the Holy Spirits works.\textsuperscript{166}

This theologically minimalist field of discourse is the context in which exegetical debates of the nineteenth century occur. Thus, Evangelicals like Robert Payne Smith (Chapter 4) do not offer a markedly different methodology from that of a Broad Churchman like T.K. Cheyne (Chapter 6). Even a High Church thinker like Christopher

\textsuperscript{166}One important Catholic thinker must at least be mentioned, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, and that is Antoine Augustin Calmet (1672–1757). Although he resided in France, this French Benedictine wrote \textit{Commentaire Littéral sur tous Les Livres L'Ancien} in 8 volumes from 1707–16 (Augustin Calmet, \textit{Commentaire Littéral sur Tous les Livres de l'Ancien et Nouveau Testament} [Paris: Chez Pierre Emery, 1707–22].) This was a work that, like that of Simon Patrick, commented on the entire Bible and was admired by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike. In many ways it was a rather traditional approach by a Roman Catholic (and for a Protestant as well). It should be noted, however, that there were some divergences from typical Roman Catholic exegesis. First, Calmet tends to move away from single proof-texts – the traditional messianic texts, for instance – and “argues that one cannot understand the figure of the Messiah from a single passage . . . but the interpreter must take into consideration the whole range of passages within the larger narrative context that together encompass a true profile” (Childs, \textit{The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture}, 257). Second, Calmet is fully willing to concede to a proximate, historical referent to a passage like that of Isaiah 7:14, but he also argues that there is a “spiritual” sense of the text beyond the merely historical, and the two have a very close connection to each other. This single verse is part of a greater temporal sequence that participates in the grand hope of Israel for redemption, and hence that same hope for all of humanity. In other words, Calmet did not read these texts in two discrete ways, but allowed the historical and the spiritual senses of the text to flow into each other. I mention Calmet — a non-English theologian — because of his influence on Roman Catholics in England, which extended across educational and professional lines. His work was translated quickly into English and he was consulted well into the nineteenth century by Roman Catholics. He also, regrettably, represents one of the rare occurrences of Roman Catholic exegesis that had any impact on English Roman Catholics. As will be seen in Chapter 7, there was a significant entrenchment in Roman Catholic exegesis and they continued to use Calmet without producing any further commentaries of note. Despite the wide impact of Calmet’s work, this is not to suggest that the lack of further engagement with Scripture suggests a consistent grasp of theological exegesis, but a deliberate rejection of Protestant exegesis.
Wordsworth (Chapter 5) employs certain exegetical categories that have been developed by those who attempt to “relate” the Bible to the problems of human existence, or the negotiation between the Church and the state. As the subsequent chapters show, all these latter exegetes are deeply interested in “theological” matters, defined in various ways, but the theological quality of the text is an optional mode of discourse and not constitutive of the Bible as the word of God.167

167 It should be mentioned as I conclude that thus far I have indicated how Isaiah played a part in academic circles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However it is surely of no small significance that Isaiah also figured prominently in the devotional life of England, and it would be an omission to disdain a brief mention of the German-British Baroque composer George Friedrich Handel’s masterpiece Messiah (1742) as an example of this. The first act comprises “The Annunciation” and is made up of several pieces that rely heavily on Isaiah, such as the “Comfort Ye” (Isaiah 40:1-3), “Every Valley” (Isaiah 40:4), “And the Glory of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:5), “Behold a Virgin Shall Conceive” (Isaiah 7:14), “O Thou that Tellest Good Tidings to Zion” (Isaiah 40:9), “For Behold, Darkness Covered the Earth” (Isaiah 60:2,3), “The People Walked in Darkness” (Isaiah 9:2) and “For Unto Us a Child is Born” (Isaiah 9:6). Other pieces in the work rely on Isaiah and interweave New and Old Testament passages that traditionally are seen in Christianity to speak of Christ. In a piece such as this, there is as yet a strong view in terms of a devotional perspective that Isaiah figures prominently in the story of the coming of Christ. I should note also that, as far as the arrangement of the text of Messiah is concerned, the non-juror Charles Jennens (1700–1773) was the essential textual composer of the work. He was himself influenced by Kidder, and although on its own Messiah can be seen as more representative of a grand Anglican hermeneutic of Scripture, within the context of Kidder’s employment of Scripture as a proof text for doctrine, it is cast in a more divisive light. See Unknown, “Mr. Charles Jennens: The Compiler of Handel’s ‘Messiah’,” The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular 43, no. 717 (November 1902): 726–27; Ruth Smith, “The Achievements of Charles Jennens (1700–1773),” Music and Letters 70, no. 2 (May 1989): 161–90. Especially in the latter article, Smith notes that “the texts Jennens uses in his Messiah are the bases of attack and defence in scores of contemporary publications about the nature and mission of Christ. For example, the library at Gopsall contained the Demonstration of the Messias, In which the Truth of the Christian Religion is Proved, by Richard Kidder . . . a key work in the debate and one whose list of contents reads like a blueprint for the libretto of Messiah. Kidder cites 41 of the 80 verses that make up Jennens’s libretto” (Ruth Smith, “The Achievements of Charles Jennens [1700–1773],” 182). Thus at a popular level, Messiah stands as a good representative of the Anglican hermeneutic of Chapter 2, but the background of its development reveals the divisive atmosphere of discourse in which it was formed.
CHAPTER 4

ROBERT PAYNE SMITH: RESCUING ISAIAH FROM ITS OPPONENTS

1 Introduction

I select Robert Payne Smith (1819–95) as a representative of scholarly Evangelicalism and also one of the few Anglican Evangelicals engaging in debates surrounding Isaiah. In this chapter I show that Smith embodies a highly individualistic methodology, which \textit{ipso facto} leaves little space for an ecclesially and christologically embodied hermeneutic. Instead, Smith opts for a “modern” reading that eschews, for instance, the concrete reality of Israel in favour of a “spiritual” interpretation.

The theme of division and antagonism in the case of Robert Payne Smith appears in two ways.\footnote{As I am about to engage directly with an exegete here, it should be noted that the danger is that I am implying that ecclesial division is the singular cause of various biblical “burdens.” It is not necessarily an “either-or” case, in which the Church would not experience confusion if the Reformation had not occurred. At the same time, it is important to probe the depth to which division has impacted exegesis. In Chapter 8, I suggest that the state of exegesis is “bleak,” and that division is an often unrecognised factor. This project is as much about ecclesiology as it is about exegesis.} First, there is an active, antagonistic mode, which in Smith’s case is governed by a rigorous apologetic such that the text is read and interpreted against the interpretations of others. While I consider those of his writings that were intended for an academic audience, and could perhaps be conceived of as being mere “scholarly debate,” Smith’s denotation of these writings as “interpretations” and “sermons” is suggestive of the nature of all theological discourse of the time. The act of engaging in these activities appears, for him, to require a reading of the text in opposition to those who challenge an Evangelical perspective.

Second, in Smith’s commentary, his approach arises out of the irenic mode of exegesis of Chapter 3, which seeks to rely on textual methodologies that are independent of ecclesial and doctrinal interference. While Smith’s writings are often directed against
his opponents, the divisive context of the historical-critical method and the need for “facts,” “objective” interpretation, and “proof” compel his readings to be shaped by such terminology. Indeed, while Smith’s exegesis is directed toward certain doctrinal matters, he seeks to use these putatively non-theological tools to uncover doctrinal truth. Such tools, however, seldom differ from those of his opponents. In other words, the erosion of the uniquely Anglican reading of Scripture that I outline in Chapter 2 resulted in thinkers like Smith to read Scripture in ways that are not fundamentally different than those of his opponents. I organize my analysis with respect to this Anglican hermeneutical “touchstone” of Chapter 2 to compare and contrast Smith’s exegesis and that of early Anglicanism to bring into relief these two aspects of division with respect to theological exegesis.

Smith was one of the founders of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in 1877, and of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, in 1881, both schools with a strong Evangelical perspective. He was assistant master at Edinburgh Academy (1847–53), headmaster of Kensington Proprietary School (1853–57), sub-Librarian at the Bodleian (1857–65), Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford (1865–71), and dean of Canterbury (1871–95.) He is best known in a scholarly context for his monumental work on the Thesaurus Syriacus (eventually translated into English as A Compendious Syriac Dictionary), though he published on numerous issues, arguing on behalf of an Evangelical, conservative position. This included Daniel I–VI: An Exposition of the Historical Portion of the Writings of the Prophet Daniel and a translation from Syriac of The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus.² He also penned prefaces for various popular pamphlets that defend an

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Evangelical perspective. For instance, he wrote an approving one to Modern Infidelity and the Best Methods of Counteracting It. The pamphlet argues that

the most effectual method of combating unbelief in individuals is the moral isagogic, i.e., that by which the conscience is touched, the religious need awakened, and salvation in Christ heartily and lovingly testified, from personal experience. . . . In combating systems of unbelief, success is only to be hoped for from a really scientific method of defence [and] . . . a constant employment of the ever-improving apparatus of modern investigation.  

While Smith did not write the above quote, his moral imprimatur of this work in the preface suggests that his approach to combating “modern” readings is similar, which this chapter, in part, attempts to show. Broadly, I highlight these two modes of approach to the text: an affective mode of engagement with the text, and an aim to be scientific and objective.

As an orientalist, Smith knew Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac and was interested in matters related to the Old Testament. However, he also wrote on numerous other topics, such as clerical education, and was committed to setting up schools for boys and girls, aligned along Evangelical convictions. Although originally influenced by the Oxford Movement, he eventually moved toward an Evangelical position, sympathetic to non-conformists, though he remained an Anglican.  

With respect to Isaiah, Smith did not write a commentary on the book, as such. He did, however, write two works that are relevant to the present discussion and represent a typically Evangelical perspective within the Anglican Church. The first is a series of nine sermons that he preached at Oxford entitled The Authenticity and Messianic


Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah Vindicated in a Course of Sermons. While the title implies that they were sermons, it is clear that, at least in the published version, they are most accurately to be regarded as lectures designed to make a scholarly case for the prophetic (“messianic”) character of Isaiah. Smith also gave the Bampton Lectures in 1870, entitled Prophecy: a Preparation for Christ, which also were “preached” at Oxford. The subject of this latter work is not Isaiah as such, but the prophet figures rather prominently in the preface, as he summarizes (and rejects) the newest scholarship on the book. Although my analysis will focus more closely on The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation, Smith’s discussion of Isaiah in his Bampton Lectures helpfully complements my own. Both publications are part of his larger project with respect to how the Old Testament is to be read as Christian Scripture and how theology is related to the Bible. His shorter and earlier work, The Mosaic Authorship and Credibility of the Pentateuch (1838) also contributes to his rather polemical endeavour to argue against new scholarship with respect to authorship and in favour of the “credibility” of the Old Testament (particularly the Pentateuch.) This latter work, however, figures rather tangentially in this present work.

My analysis first gives an overview of his method of reading Isaiah in The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah Vindicated and Prophecy: a Preparation for Christ. I follow this by discussing the theological ramifications of his work and his attempts to read Isaiah “theologically.” I order my

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analysis with respect to the categories from Chapter 2, which describe a uniquely Anglican vision of reading Scripture. Thus, I consider Smith’s reading in terms of ecclesiology and individuality, the wholeness of Scripture, and how christology functions to hold the two Testaments together, such as figuration and his construal of the meaning of prophecy. Before this, however, I briefly describe Isaiah scholarship in the nineteenth century.

2 The State of Isaiah Scholarship in the Nineteenth Century

This section briefly outlines the exegetical context of Smith’s contribution to work on Isaiah. Commentaries and new research on Isaiah abounded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the most part, however, aside from Robert Lowth’s (1710–87) commentary on Isaiah (see Chapter 3), much of the work was done by Continental scholars, most notably Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722), Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) and Bernhard Duhm (1847–1928.) These earlier scholars approached Isaiah in the form of critical philological studies, not unlike that of seventeenth-century interpreter William Day in Chapter 3, though Day’s exegetical method was less formalized. Whereas Isaiah had become throughout the centuries a highly “christianized” book, “the new concern to get back to what the original Hebrew meant . . . was especially challenging in the case of Isaiah” and it became one of the central books that functioned as a “test case” for the historical-critical method.

Though these Continental authors’ work on Isaiah was well known in England, there were also some English-language commentaries that were popular in Smith’s day. In England, new textual- and historical-critical work on the Old Testament in general was

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8 For a more detailed account of Isaiah scholarship in England during the eighteenth century, see Chapter 3.

taken up in earnest by the late nineteenth century, though typically greater attention was
given to other Old Testament books than Isaiah. In fact, aside from Christopher
Wordsworth and Thomas Kelly Cheyne (Chapters 5 and 6), there is a notable absence of
scholarly work in the form of a proper commentary on Isaiah during the nineteenth
century, and the few existing discussions and intellectual studies tended to revolve around
textual “problems,” such as authorship, dating, and the verifiability of the recounted
historical events.10 Of course, at a more public level, pastors continued to preach from
Isaiah and there were numerous commentaries with which preachers consulted, such as
Rawlinson’s work on Isaiah in the *Pulpit Commentary*, though this was a late nineteenth-
century contribution.11 There was marginally more interest in Isaiah from nonconformist
thinkers, such as Joseph Addison Alexander, who wrote a commentary in 1851, George
Adam Smith in Scotland in two volumes (1888, 1890), and Ebenezer Henderson.12 All
were aware of the work that was done in Germany to question, for instance, a single
author of the book and in many of their commentaries attended to these issues.

By the nineteenth century, and following upon work by the aforementioned
Continental thinkers, a new “critical” approach to the Bible and the Old Testament in
particular arose. For instance, many scholars used Thomas Hartwell Horne’s popular
three-volume *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy

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10 The “battles,” while not insignificant with respect to Isaiah, tended to be waged over Daniel
regarding dating and authorship. The Tractarian E.B. Pusey (of Chapter 5) was especially engaged in this
controversy.

11 George Rawlinson, *Isaiah*, exposition and homiletics by George Rawlinson, homilies by various

12 George Adam Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, The Expositor’s Bible, 2nd Series. 3rd Series
Expositor’s Bible (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893–95); Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on
the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot: James Thin, 1865); Ebenezer Henderson, *The Book of
With respect to doctrinal propositions, Horne’s text has a very conservative orientation to the Bible. At the same time, his rather modern notions can at times be perceived, such as when he argues that in interpretation, “the only way by which to understand the meaning of the sacred writers, and to distinguish between true and false doctrines, is, to lay aside all preconceived modern notions and systems. . . . Only an unbiased mind can attain the true and genuine sense of Scripture.”

Regarding prophecy, Horne defines it as “the highest evidence that can be given, of supernatural communion with the Deity.” This idea of “proof” figures prominently in his Introduction, and all miracles recorded in Scripture are proofs of the text’s divine origin, which has echoes of Kidder’s reading of Isaiah described of Chapter 3. Horne regards prophecy as an event, as a subcategory of miracle. Horne also agrees with Lowth that in terms of genre, and Isaiah’s characteristic as a “text,” it follows a certain “poesy.” Horne’s analysis of Isaiah relies heavily on Lowth’s work, as well as that of Vitringa. Other less-known people who wrote pamphlets on Isaiah are also referenced, as well as another Bible handbook by Robert Gray. However, Horne does not address issues of authorship and considers it unquestionable that Christ is clearly predicted in the book.

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16 See Horne, Introduction, V.1, 231–495, in which the concepts of “proof” and “evidence” figure strongly. This is the environment in which Smith and others engage the Scriptures.

17 Horne, Introduction, V.4, 147.


19 Horne, Introduction, V.4, 159.
The similarity of Horne’s *Introduction* with respect to the probative value of prophecy to that of Robert Payne Smith is made clear further in this chapter. I mention Horne for the purpose of indicating the kind of intellectual language that had become common in the nineteenth century defence of prophecy.

3 Smith’s Exegetical Methodology

Before describing Smith’s work on Isaiah in terms of its relation to the hermeneutic of early Anglicanism, a brief note on Smith’s overall methodology is in order. His approach to Scripture is governed by an active need to argue against other readings, and how his own exegetical method is shaped by a history of division. This is particularly evident in his argument for a preservation of the miraculous quality of the text, which can be revealed by philological and textual analysis. Moreover, I show that Smith’s view of the task of exegesis and the place of the Bible does not ring true with the Anglican touchstone that I describe in Chapter 2, and in fact works against it.

A simple examination of the titles of Smith’s works reveals the highly apologetic force of his writings. Even a cursory reading quickly indicates that Smith’s purpose is to defend Isaiah against those who attempt to read the book in ways that deny the evidentiary power of prophecy as proof of the truth of the Christian faith. For the most part, his interlocutors are those of the “new scholarship,” primarily German, whose work on Isaiah and much of the Old Testament, in Smith’s view, brought the book into question in terms of its predictive power, its unitary authorship, and its cohesion. Therefore, it is certainly the case that Smith’s approach is funded by an inter-ecclesial divisive context: he is not reading Isaiah for the purpose of exegeting it on its own terms, but is reading in a defensive mode that sees the Bible as an embattled text, under siege by approaches that were beginning to gain currency in the nineteenth century.
The preface to Prophecy: a Preparation for Christ is a good example of the form of Smith’s apologetic method. He focuses particularly on Isaiah and shows what he sees as laughable inconsistencies between biblical scholars. For example, Smith says

The book is a mere collection of fragments, of all dates, written by a confused horde of nameless personages, many of them mere imitators, whose effusions have been patched together upon no other principle than that of filling up the skins of parchment. And yet this olla podrida, this hotch-potch, in which are jumbled together the fragments of writers . . . is the book in which Hebrew genius reaches the summit alike of strength and beauty.²⁰

The German scholars whom Smith references, from Ewald to Gesenius, from Augusti to Koppe, all appear to argue for an Isaiah that comprises a patchwork of unrelated textual fragments, yet it is illogically their claim that it is simultaneously a work of Hebrew literary genius (certainly impacted by Lowth’s work.) This disingenuous argument is not sustainable for Smith on logical grounds. He continues to show how one scholar such as Movers argues that Isaiah 23 was written by Jeremiah, while Ewald meanwhile makes the case that it was written by a disciple of Isaiah. Yet, according to Bleek, Isaiah was composed by the time of Jeremiah.²¹ This cacophonous and disparate list of scholars reveals, to Smith, a contradictory, and hence unreliable, state of affairs that renders any of their findings suspect.

The findings of these “negative critics,” as he calls them, are problematic above all because of their presuppositions in approaching the book, namely, that “prophecy has no supernatural element.”²² This category of the “supernatural,” so crucial to Smith’s argumentation, is fundamental to a correct reading of Isaiah and any other book of the Bible. For Smith, “prophecy is a miracle; the very thing for which we argue is a supernatural presence of God in the words and actions of certain persons who claimed to


speak in God’s name.”23 The negative critics “start with the denial of the possibility of God speaking to man at all. . . . They are bound to affirm that every precise prophecy is either an imposture or an artifice.”24 While these critics may have come to contradictory conclusions regarding the date or authorship of Isaiah, the primary problem is that they all agree that such a “supernatural” element in Scripture cannot exist and therefore they must find a way to explain it away via a “natural” explanation.

Smith’s perspective on the Old Testament in general, and Isaiah in particular, conceives of it as a book in which the predictions contained in it were “so marvellously fulfilled in Christianity,” and their value to prove the truth of the Christian faith must be employed to their fullest extent.25 A book as important as Isaiah must be regarded in terms of its evidentiary value.26 That is, the Old Testament in general functions as a “preparation” for the coming of Christ, and as such, must bear evidence of “proof.” The purpose of the “preparatory dispensation” of the Old Testament was to prepare humanity for “true religion,” the contours of which is

the bestowal of sufficient aid to enable us to fulfil our obligations to God, and of some means for the purification of the conscience from the stain of sin, and for the raising of the soul from its present degradation to a fitness for the reception of God’s mercies. We assert that Christianity is the sole religion upon earth which fulfils these necessary conditions; and, farther, that God has given us the sole satisfactory proof that it is the true religion.27

This perspective is the governing motif of Smith’s exegesis of Isaiah. As such, his view of the Old Testament is that it serves a rather minimal function, which is defined in terms

23 R. Payne Smith, A Preparation for Christ, xii.

24 R. Payne Smith, A Preparation for Christ, xii.


26 As with Horne, prophecy, being a species of the genus “miracles,” serves the purpose of miracles, which is to prove the truth of Scripture. This also follows the kind of reading in which Richard Kidder (Chapter 2) engaged almost 200 years earlier.

of its apologetic and evidentiary force via its narration of supernatural events proving its miraculous predictive power. If Isaiah were not to have this quality, if it were merely a collection of disconnected texts by anonymous sources, then it no longer can be relied upon to provide evidence of God’s communication to humanity and preparation for Christianity — that is, true religion.

Smith’s methodology reveals that he is as much a scholar of the nineteenth century and an inheritor of new readings of Scripture as those against whom he writes. Indeed, while it is clear that his presuppositions with respect to the “supernatural” character of Scripture differ from his opponents’, he engages in the debate in terms defined by his own interlocutors. Moreover, following on the developments of the previous century, the analysis of the Bible is a textual matter that calls for the application of whatever scientific, historical and philological apparatus that can uncover its meaning. This has implications with respect to the Bible as the “word of God,” spoken and incarnated into history.

There are two central points that indicate the way in which Smith’s exegesis is a deeply “modern” one. First, the very use of the term “supernatural” as a category that implies an explicit opposition to the “natural realm” is a relatively recent theological category, especially in the way that Smith uses it. Historically, there have been instances where theological language makes dualistic distinctions between that which is “natural” and a further “realm” or state of being that stands above the natural world, to which is attributed aspects of the divine. Yet, the use of “supernatural” as a term meant to stake out the realm of divine causation was almost unused until the thirteenth century.28

28Robert Bartlett, The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages: The Wiles Lecture Given at the Queen’s University of Belfast, 2006, The Wiles Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15. See also Watkins’ discussion of the supernatural in a specifically English context in which miracle, for instance, is shown in the Middle Ages not to be described in terms that accept such a strong dichotomy. William of Malmesbury, for instance “wrote freely about the many ‘miracles’ of the Italian countryside, none of which were interruptions of nature’s customary course. Free and easy use of this term
However, this discourse of the work of God as “supernatural” became particularly ascendant after the Reformation. The “natural” world came to be seen as that region in which the world could be described in terms of immanent material causation. I regard the ascendancy of this perspective after the Reformation, in broad terms, as a theological process precisely because it is also parallels the hermeneutical shifting of biblical textual referents in strictly material terms. The rejection of the supernatural, thus defined, was not because of an atheistic impulse per se but because the supernatural was the source of disorder to a naturally ordered world, viewed as a kind of theurgic act, which was theologically unacceptable for those who yet maintained belief in a perfect and immutable God, or simply inaccessible. Thus, exegetes could in principle accept “supernatural” occurrences, but, as we saw with William Day in Chapter 3, most regarded them as separate interpretations of a natural occurrence. For Smith, this supernatural interruption of the natural realm, far from producing disorder — despite the unpredictability of such disruptions — was the proof of this other “realm” of being who (or which) oversaw its shaping. These miraculous events provide clues to — and certainty of — this other realm. However, the fact that Smith employs the category of “supernatural” suggests that he buys into a quasi-Manichean dualist perspective that would have been rather foreign to earlier readers of Scripture. In the twentieth century, Henri de Lubac, for instance, aimed to recover a sense of the supernatural, which “is the whole order of realities that are related to our final end in the beatific vision. Thus he could affirm that the supernatural designates the divine order of things in its

followed from the conviction that God’s hand was to be seen in both the regularities of nature and their aberrations” (C.S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, vol. 66 [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 45).
contradistinction from, but in union with, the human order.”

Proofs of the veracity of the Bible serve as “data,” which build a case in a quasi-judicial form. Charles Taylor, using Max Weber’s well-known categories, describes the process whereby the “sacred” and “secular” are divided along materialist/spiritual lines in terms of a change from an “enchanted” to a “disenchanted” world:

. . . the enchanted world, in which nature and social life were interwoven with higher times, left little room for unbelief. Theologians distinguished between the natural and the supernatural level, but it was not possible to live experientially with one’s awareness confined to the first. Spirit, forces, powers, higher times were always obtruding . . . With the disenchantment of the world . . . this kind of extrusion of the higher became in principle possible.

Taylor argues also that this distinction between the natural and supernatural during the early modern period was made precisely for the purposes for which Smith uses the term, namely “to establish the sovereign power of God, whose judgments made right and wrong, and could not be chained by the bent of ‘nature.’”

Therefore, this separation of God’s providential ordering of the world from the realm of “natural” or material causes (which is also the very basis of the scientific method) was, to make the point I highlight in Chapter 2, not an idea imposed by malicious forces outside of ecclesial boundaries,

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29Raymond Moloney, “De Lubac and Lonergan on the Supernatural,” Theological Studies 69, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 514. Milbank also credits Kant with this ontological bifurcation: “orthodoxy requires that we understand the universe in vitalist and panpsychic terms . . . precisely because the natural is ontologically inseparable from the lure of the supernatural. Ockham’s theology, . . . within whose lineage Kant’s philosophy still falls, . . . by requiring a sharp separation of reason from will, as of reason from faith, . . . ensured the coralling of nature and reason in the sterile hall of mirrors which is the epistemological universe of representation” (John Milbank, “Hume Versus Kant: Faith, Reason and Feeling,” Modern Theology 27, no. 2 [April 2011]: 289). Milbank’s critique of certain modern tendencies with respect to the relation between “words” and the Word or Logos of God, are important. For example, Milbank asserts that “to know God is to worship God: to risk words and actions into which God descends, in participatory recollection of his absolute descent in the Incarnation” (John Milbank, “The New Divide: Romantic Versus Classical Orthodoxy,” Modern Theology 26, no. 1 [January 2010]: 30). It is striking, however, to note the dearth of biblical engagement by many of the so-called “Radical Orthodoxy” movement.


31Taylor, A Secular Age, 542.
but a theological category (given force by nominalist argumentation against Thomistic “realism”\(^{32}\)) that Smith unconsciously, but wholeheartedly, adopts and uses.\(^{33}\)

Second, while on the surface Smith views the Bible as *sui generis*, his methodology is strikingly “modern,” which is to say it employs categories developed in the modern period and that have little to do with an Anglican vision of Scripture. This parallels the work being done by other Evangelicals at the time. For instance, there was the “Christian Evidence Society,” which was started by Anglicans, and was presided over by various Archbishops (the first being Tait.) This organization was dedicated to providing, as would be expected, various proofs for the veracity of the Christian faith in the face of perceived attacks:

For a defence they appealed to the “evidences” of Christianity, the long-standing apologetic tool of both Anglicans and Nonconformists, derived from Locke, Butler, Paley and others within the empirical tradition of English theology. In this tradition biblical miracles and the fulfilment of biblical prophecy in Jesus had provided objective support for the claim that Christianity has a supernatural origin. . . . This emphasis found links later in the century with an Evangelical tradition which despite its emphasis on the experience of the heart had also seen the need to defend the authenticity of the Bible and Christian truth in an objectively certain way.\(^{34}\)

Since this Society was formed by Anglicans and Nonconformists, one can see even within its Evangelical commitments a microcosm of the ease toward which the irenic reading of Scripture obtains, for “although based on a Trinitarian understanding, it would studiously

\(^{32}\)Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 542.

\(^{33}\) See also Raymond Moloney’s discussion of Henri de Lubac’s criticism of the “complete severance” between the supernatural and natural (Moloney, “De Lubac and Lonergan,” 510).

\(^{34}\)Dale A. Johnson, “Popular Apologetics in Late Victorian England: The Work of the Christian Evidence Society,” *Journal of Religious History* 11, no. 4 (December 1981): 560. I have found no evidence that Smith was a member of this society, only that there are very strong parallels between it and his apologetic approach to the Bible. I should also mention the recent work, Myron Bradley Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), which is a trenchant critique of the whole apologetic process’ deeply modern cast. My only critique of Penner on this score is his acceptance of the common narrative of modernity as extrinsically related to the Church, rather than the Church’s significant participation in modernity’s development.
avoid all discussions of distinctive doctrines and not commit itself to any particular view of inspiration.”

35 The uniquely Anglican mode of reading the Bible could not hold sway; rather, a new hermeneutic had to emerge in the face of competing visions such that while there were both internal and external evidences for Christianity, the internal took a distinctly secondary position in the argument with unbelief to the “facts” provided by the external: the person and character of Jesus Christ, the realities of fulfilled prophecy and miracles, the evidences provided in the history and spread of Christianity of its supernatural origins, and its adaptation to human nature.

36 Smith’s orientation vis-à-vis Isaiah differs very little from this approach. He and his opponents share a common language and philosophical-theological commitments. Smith is willing to “play by their rules” in terms of what is acceptable evidence and proper mode of argumentation and he avers that the negative critics must fully prove their point. And judging by the inconsistencies of the above arguments, they have failed to do so. In other words, despite their incorrect assumptions regarding the supernatural, he accepts that it is in theory possible to make the case for specious Old Testament predictions:

Let the critics, then, disprove the real inner unity between the two Testaments; let them show that the Christian Church does not answer to, and complete . . . the earlier dispensation. Till they do this, it is in vain to put forward the negative criticisms as fairly commensurate with the greatness of the thesis which it undertakes to prove. The Bible, it says, is an ordinary book; its miracles are contrary to science; its prophecies the record of facts that have already happened. But they assume all this; they do not attempt to prove it.

37 Smith’s discourse is such that all matters of Scripture are valid objects of logical disputation irrespective of ecclesial location and theological commitment. He attempts to argue that the most “natural” explanation for the prophecies in the Old Testament is their miraculous fulfillment in Jesus. The meaning of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is “clearly” Jesus because it is the best explanation of the literal meaning of the text; those


36 Johnson, “Popular Apologetics,” 568.

who cannot see this are deliberately ignoring it because they are blinded by their anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions. However, by using terms that imply a certain inherent clarity of the literal meaning of the text, Smith accepts that, while he and his opponents do not share certain fundamental conclusions, they share enough common language and philosophical assumptions with respect to the use of “evidence” that they can succeed in disassembling the texts of the Old Testament. The only difference is that he considers his own arguments to be more persuasive.

Smith’s family resemblance to the negative critics whom he opposes is in sharp distinction to the hermeneutical vision of early Anglicanism as defined in Chapter 2. Indeed, it is not at all clear how Smith’s hermeneutic and theology of Scripture is “Anglican” in any way; it can really be said to be Evangelical-in-general, as there is no reference to the Anglican Church. Like his contemporaries, Smith aims to read Scripture in a way that is commensurate with the critical tools that were developed in the midst of controversy. Therefore, his particular apologetic form, and hence divisive mode of reading Isaiah, requires that he enter into a debate that is already shaped by those whom he opposes. As strident and combative as Smith attempts to be in his lectures, what is pertinent to the present matter is that there is no distinctive vision of the Bible that Smith presents in his defensive position. Instead, he is a sign of the reality of a divided Church, and hence of the minimization of the much deeper vision of the Bible inscribed by Cranmer, Whitgift and Hooker.

By employing the categories introduced in Chapter 2, in what follows I expand on the differences between Smith and this Anglican hermeneutical vision, as well as how this accords with my contention that his exegesis is shaped by divisiveness. In each case, aside from the instances where Smith is directly opposing certain readings, because of his apologetic approach, he takes on the various assumptions of his modern audience and is only different from them in degree, but not in kind.
4 The Church and the Individual

The following describes how Smith conceives of the relation between the task of exegesis and the place of the Church in such a practice. Smith, I argue, like many of his Evangelical contemporaries and predecessors, urged a reading of Scripture that was non-mediatory, that is, one in which the individual can have a direct relationship with God via the Scriptures and their personal experiences, usually expressed in terms of the affectations of the “heart.” I contend that this reveals the effect of a divisive reading because such an exegetical perspective avoids the problem of giving the Church — a divided and fractious institution — any pride of place in the exegetical process since its lack of unifying integrity cannot provide certainty of its historical hermeneutic. By Smith’s time, a reading tethered to the particularity of an ecclesial community would be a “denominational” one, rather than personal. Evangelicals regarded the union of Church and State in terms of an Old Testament biblical model, but ecclesial structures were no more than the mere bene esse of the Church, since the “real” Church was that of the invisible elect. The primacy was given to Scripture and, moreover, its reading by

38 The High Church party took the precisely opposite view in light of the so-called “Western Schism” in which a whole section of Evangelically-minded West Country Anglicans seceded from the Established Church, based on their reading of Scripture with respect to the Trinity. The High Church Party saw this as “the predictable outcome of the rejection of episcopal authority, and a dangerous distortion of the right of private judgement” (Grayson Carter, “Anglican Evangelicals,” in Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c.1800–1850, Oxford Theological Monographs [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 149). See also Alexander Zabriskie, ed., Anglican Evangelicals (Philadelphia, PA: The Church Historical Society, 1943), 83–86 and Elisabeth Jay, ed., The Evangelical and Oxford Movements, Cambridge English Prose Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5. Carter describes the “primacy of the individual experience” in the Evangelical movement. Many Establishment Evangelicals did not explicitly argue that the Church plays no role in the exegesis of Scripture and they were as a rule positive toward the Prayer Book (see, e.g., Carter, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 2). Their interpretation of the Prayer Book (and Cranmer) would be an Evangelical one, of which Ashley Null’s would be a good modern-day example (Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer’s Theology of the Heart,” Anvil 23, no. 3 [2006]; Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way of Reading Scripture,” Anglican and Episcopal History 75, no. 4 [2006]).

individuals was encouraged and the power of its “bare reading” within the Church was attenuated. The result was, as with Puritanism, a greater focus on preaching, which produced giants like Charles Simeon, but there was also an associated diminution of interest in the communal nature of faith. While this concern for individual faith was already a particular point of distinction between Protestants and Roman Catholics, it also became a position that was defined in distinction to the High Church and is seen with much greater clarity in the case of Smith.

In Chapter 2, the Anglican “touchstone” describes how the Church plays a central role in theological exegesis; attendant to the rise of ecclesial division since the time of Hooker was the detachment of the Church from such a reading. The following examines how Smith’s hermeneutic is emblematic of this highly individualist reality that virtually ignores any concrete role for the Church as a particular, visible reality. I contend that this approach to Scripture parallels that of thinkers such as Chillingworth, whose exegetical approach arose out of an equivalence made between a dogmatic and an ecclesial reading. And an ecclesial reading is problematic because of the perception that it leads not only to division and controversy, but also violence. This gives way to the irenic approach of Chapter 3, in which early modern exegetes moved away from this corporate understanding of Scripture in favour of common, agreed-upon notions of rationality and the affections of the individual, in addition to finding new, non-theological methodologies to fund their reading of the text. The attempt itself to move away from division generated this new latitudinarian disposition that was, in effect, another party from whom many thinkers borrowed (often unconsciously) numerous exegetical strategies that read Scripture against the Church. Thus, while Smith’s approach often indicates disinterest in the Church and a preference for an individualist reading, I am not arguing as such that this is evidence of “antagonistic” exegesis, but that his exegesis is formed by ideas that themselves were shaped by division.
The working out of these ideas can be seen in Smith’s exegesis of Isaiah. The centrality of personal faith in the reading of Scripture indicates a strong affinity between Smith and his interlocutors. Despite the need for certain fundamental assumptions regarding the “supernatural” aspect of the Bible, the reader can come to a correct understanding of the text if he or she can, with more or less objectivity, read the text aright. As Smith argues, “a fair judgment can be arrived at only by an examination of the evidence which [the Bible] offers in support of its claims, and this inquiry should be arrived on in a judicial frame of mind.”

The negative critics do not possess this “judicial frame of mind” in their examination of the evidence, and thus their arguments fail. This is not to say that Smith rejects any element of prior antecedent faith, for he argues that “if the Bible be the Word of God, our duty is to bow our wills humbly and obediently before it” — and yet, he adds, “but a being made in God’s image has no right to abandon his self-mastery except upon the clearest evidence.”

In the preface to his Bampton Lectures, Smith says, “there are prophecies which refer simply to our Lord, and which no straightforward criticism can interpret otherwise. . . . The balance of evidence is so entirely in favour of the Messianic interpretation.” This reveals that Smith’s loyalties reside in two camps: he maintains a certain veneer of reformational language with respect to Scripture, but firmly accepts that the individual must be convinced by “clear evidence” before he or she can submit to its words.

A corollary to this need for clear evidence and an impartial mind in the reader’s approach to Scripture is a very clear individualist tendency, so central to modern

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interpretative approaches. There is very little place for the role of the Church as a corporate body in Smith’s exegesis: the individual reader approaches the text to mine it for its evidentiary value in order to find proof for “true religion” and self-certainty. In his first sermon on *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah*, he attempts to argue against a “Roman” view of Scripture as opposed to the right of “private judgment.” Smith states that “[Protestant] theologians have been apt to speak chiefly of the ‘right’ of private judgment; and those who have taken less controversial ground have described it as a ‘duty.’ Truly it is neither one nor the other, but a necessity: men must choose.” The importance of free will is discussed further in this chapter, but for now I merely indicate that it also functions as a central theological motif in Smith’s exegesis of Scripture. The implications of an approach to Scripture that argues for clear evidence and personal free will are that individuals must apprehend and make their own judgment about whether to accept it or not.

Smith also appeals to another aspect of the individual that is equally important in the nineteenth century, that of the affections and emotional disposition. I raise this notion above briefly in regards to the Christian Evidence Society, but it is also the fruit of the

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43 Much has been written on the importance of the individual self as attendant with the rise of modernity. For a classic treatment, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). For a more recent study, see Zubin Meer, ed., *Individualism: The Cultural Logic of Modernity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Roman & Littlefield, 2011).


45 The mode of debate, of course, is not only a nineteenth-century phenomenon, which is partly the point of this dissertation — to show that much has not changed. Part of the central issue is the basic assumptions of what “reason” means, which tends to be common across ideological spectra in the West. Thus, notes Slavoj Žižek, a debate between atheist Richard Dawkins and theologian Alister McGrath may “look genuine, and is certainly successful in terms of selling a great many books, [but] it nevertheless is only a limited and not very intellectually significant debate. It is more an exercise in ideological (mis)interpretation of the same premises than a real debate” John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* ed. Creston Davis, *Short Circuits* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 10. It is not clear, however, what form a “real” debate would or should take.
new methodology inherited from many in the previous century — of which Robert Lowth is emblematic (see Chapter 3). Though the affective aspect of exegesis is more muted in the works I examine here, Smith does appeal to the “heart,” a term often used by both Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen alike.\textsuperscript{46} Smith says

\begin{quote}
    in [the Bible] . . . men find what they need, — it supplies a want, a craving in their own natures . . . Call it, if you will, fanaticism, but as a matter of fact it is this internal conviction which supports and upholds the true Christian. It is man’s own heart at last, taught by the Holy Ghost, which convinces him that he needs a Saviour, and that Jesus of Nazareth both can and will save him.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

Christianity ever has claimed, and still claims, the heart, and demands of those who profess it, that they should submit even their inmost wills to the pure and holy will of God.\textsuperscript{48}

This language is classically Evangelical, with its appeal to the “heart,” and an aim to convince people of their need of, and “craving” for, something missing in life, a craving which only Jesus can fulfill. But the language of the heart and of the affections are not the sole province of Evangelical piety, but also of more liberal thinkers like S. T. Coleridge for whom the experiential dimension of religion is key.\textsuperscript{49}

For Smith, therefore, the exegesis of Scripture is best accomplished by the exercise of the individual believer, where the Church serves a secondary role. While the Church is a referent for various prophecies in terms of its prefiguration by the nation of Israel, it does not appear to exercise any function with respect to the exegetical process.

\textsuperscript{46}In the case of Broad Church perspectives, as I argue in Chapter 6, there is considerably less interest in dogma than there is in notions of “religion” as a human phenomenon. Smith’s appeal to the emotions is therefore delimited by important dogmatic categories, not the least of which is the fact that faith is christologically centred. For Broad Churchmen, there is more of an appeal to the sense of human religious “sensibilities,” which do not necessarily have any external referents.

\textsuperscript{47}R. Payne Smith, \textit{A Preparation for Christ}, 46–47.

\textsuperscript{48}R. Payne Smith, \textit{The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah}, 240.

\textsuperscript{49}See, e.g, Jeffrey W. Barbeau, “Coleridge, Christology, and the Language of Redemption,” \textit{Anglican Theological Review} 93, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 263–82, where we can see how Coleridge is deeply interested in the language of theology for its evocative power.
itself. It serves as a kind of extradiegetic point, without any connection to the biblical story. While his opponents often read Scripture against the tradition of the Church as a sign of the victory of the individual against the dominance of Church authority, Smith’s more subtle version of this (both often formulated in the context of opposing Roman Catholic interpretive practices) places him in closer affinity with them than he may wish to explicitly affirm. While most of his conclusions are in agreement with historical Christianity and the Creeds, his exegetical method, which favours the personal judgment of the individual reader of the text, by no means guarantees that such conclusions ensue.

A theologically central concept to Smith’s individualist construal is “free will.” Free will is a gift given by God and is inherent within each person. In Smith’s understanding of prophecy, he is therefore careful to avoid a rigorous form of necessary fulfillment and even argues that some deliberately added confusion has been inserted in the text to elicit curiosity.

There may be, perhaps, in his words some slight degree of ambiguity, some slight veiling of his meaning, for such was usually the case with the answers of the prophets as to their outer form, yet so as only to arouse the curiosity of the people to penetrate into their inner meaning.\(^{50}\) This arousal of curiosity works within the individual and influences the exercise of the will to continue to move beyond the possible ambiguities in the text toward faith in its core message. At the same time, because of the way that Smith emphasizes the importance of free will, when prophecies were given, they were not necessarily going to be carried out: “the declarations of the prophets might fail of their accomplishment if men truly repented, and thereby obtained mercy of the Lord.”\(^{51}\) Prophetic speech has an aspect of “foretelling,” but so “as not to interfere with [people’s] free will.”\(^{52}\) The driving force

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\(^{51}\) R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 256.

\(^{52}\) R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 256.
of history, therefore, cannot be seen primarily in terms of God’s providential ordering of history — and certainly not in terms of earlier Anglicanism acceptance of predestination — but as driven by the aggregate of individuals exercising free will over time. Smith is by no means the only one for whom free will was an important category; the centrality of free choice and the exercise of the conscience of the individual is a hallmark of modern thought. What this shows, however, is that Smith is as much a part of this mode of thinking whereby the individual is given precedence over the Church. If, instead of viewing history as driven by the aggregate of human free choice, the Church was conceived as the locus of God’s providential shaping of history, then Smith would have to grant more to a corporate understanding of authority and how Scripture itself is read in such a corporate body.

However, given Robert Payne Smith’s modern sensibilities, which shy away from perceived Romanism (though such anti-Roman sentiment is not explicit in the texts I outline here), Smith’s exegetical practice must move away from the ecclesially defined hermeneutic that was so central for Hooker, Cranmer, and Whitgift. This leaves the Church ill-defined, its divided existence accepted as an unproblematic fact.

5 The Canon of Scripture

Along with the close relationship between the Church and the reading of Scripture is the early Anglican vision of the Bible in which the Old and New Testaments comprise the one word of God given to the Church. Each book is to be read as part of the greater canon. In this section, I show that while it is doubtful that Smith would disagree in principle with this idea, his approach is, once again, emblematic of a modern reading in several ways.

Recall that my overall claim is that Smith’s thought is a product of, and deeply indebted to, the previous two centuries of exegetical changes that emerged as a result of violence and division. The most overt form of Smith’s exegesis that indicates the depth
to which it is shaped by division is its antipathy toward “liberal” scholars. However, the more subtle, yet also more powerful influence, is that of the tools developed by those who shy away from “dogma” and move toward supposedly less contentious themes of history and philology. The theological dimension, as I call it in Chapter 3, becomes minimalized by the burden of these new techniques. In the case of Smith, I suggest that he attempts to retain these tools, while re-injecting some form of theological method into the text via his apologetic approach.

The modern quality of Smith’s exegesis, still resisted by many, such as his High Church contemporaries, shows itself in two (of many other) ways that speak to how he regards Scripture as a part of the one Word of God. First, he reads the prophet as a unique “genius” figure of sorts. Rather than a view of Isaiah as a prophet who was elected by God to speak to Israel, Smith considers him as an admirable individual, a kind of “holy hero” uniquely gifted to speak of spiritual things. Since Smith is concerned with Isaiah as an individual, the exegesis of the book requires an attendant search for the inner mind of the prophet himself. The subject of the book is formally God but is often materially the prophet. Second, the relationship between the Old and New Testament is one of abrogation; there is little beyond its merely predictive “messianic” function that has continued bearing on the Church. As with the previous section, Smith’s apologetic and divisively-informed reading places him in a position that seeks the “spiritual” sense of the Old Testament devoid of Israel’s particularity and “Jewishness.” I attend more closely to this spiritual hermeneutic in the next section. For now, it will suffice to say that the corollary to an abrogative reading of the Old Testament for Smith is a rendering of its meaning in less concrete terms. The function of the events within the providential ordering of history becomes problematic. As Ephraim Radner argues, “the all-too-neat division of law and abrogation has, not surprisingly, left much of the Old Testament . . .
to the realm of historical curiosity.” Therefore, in canonical terms, I am not suggesting that Smith rejects a connection between the two Testaments; indeed, a central part of his project is to defend it. But by allowing himself to be drawn into modern concerns with the prophet as an individual and by viewing the relationship between the Testaments as merely one of abrogation and prediction, much is lost in Smith’s exegesis.

In terms of Smith’s view of the prophet as a kind of religious hero, he follows a relatively new approach to reading the prophets. This is not new to anyone in his era (nor our own), but such goals were not carried out nearly as methodically before nineteenth-century scholarship in Evangelical Anglican exegesis. This approach is a kind of reconstruction in which Smith claims to be able to describe the character and thoughts of the prophet, that is, the intention of the author. While this aspect of his work can also speak to his methodology, it illustrates theologically his understanding of the nature of a prophetic document. This focus on the prophet qua historical figure is a subtle but important exegetical move that differs from the early Anglican approach to exegesis of Chapter 2. The prophet comes to be seen in terms of a heroic figure, an individual with preternatural abilities who stood apart from the people to whom he spoke. Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel thus came to be studied as people whose uniqueness meant that they did not need to be read in continuity or context with the levitical ceremonies, for instance, nor in terms of the age that came after them. This is where the loss of a canonical approach is most acutely felt, for if Isaiah is connected, for instance, to the Torah as a part of a greater whole, then there is inherently more cohesiveness to the faith of which it

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54 I did not note this in my account of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century exegetes of Isaiah in Chapter 3, but there is very little reference to the connection between the prophets and the Torah. Rather, they were always read either in terms of their immediate historical referents or as foretelling future events.
speaks. As Christopher Seitz says, “arguments portraying all the non-Mosaic books as
diverse and wide ranging misunderstand the achievement of the Prophets and the
relationship of this achievement to the Law as a single and foundational grammar.”
This “misunderstanding” was dominant in nineteenth-century hermeneutical practice and
is (perhaps) only recently changing.

Interpretation that is impacted by a focus on the prophet as a figure of individual
genius generated numerous exegetical consequences. For Smith, Isaiah must be
interpreted with Christ in mind, and there is therefore an important link to the New
Testament. Yet for other scholars, as I show with T. K. Cheyne in Chapter 6, the book of
Isaiah must be read only in historical terms, as a text produced from a certain culture,
which is therefore indicative of that culture’s form of “religion,” and only perhaps
obliquely our own. Smith does not read Isaiah as only a mere product of Israelite
religion; however, his focus on the character and mind of the prophet serves to bolster his
points, and in so doing, he is happy to engage — at however minimal a level — in the
same practices as his opponents.

On the one hand, Smith accepts that Isaiah (and any other prophet) is bound by his
historical context — that is, language and forms of thought can only be borrowed from
the surrounding culture. This speaks to his understanding of the use of language that a
prophet may use, whether it be allegorical or literal. Yet, in order to protect Isaiah (and

55Christopher R. Seitz, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in
Canon Formation, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 129.

56Seitz, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, 41–42 refers to a steady increase in recent times
in reading the prophets as a collection, but also notes that there is a “time lag” between this new (but in
many ways, old) approach to the Old Testament as a canonical collection and an incorporation of this view
into published literature. Whether this is a mere “lag,” or whether the brakes will be applied in full within
the guild of biblical studies remains to be seen. This argument in respect to the centrality of the author is
also a major focus of Katz’ work in Chapter 6 in David S. Katz, God’s Last Words: Reading the English
Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 178–211.

57R. Payne Smith, The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah, 250.
his book) from being read in an all-too-human way, Smith surmises a kind of mechanism by which the Holy Spirit works through the prophet.

[Isaiah] felt himself, indeed, borne along by an irresistible influence, and was conscious that what he spake came from God; and subsequently, as he recalled his words to mind, he must have known that much that he had spoken referred really to the Messiah’s advent; but probably he would altogether have been unable to distinguish between what was temporary and what eternal, or to tell what mysteries of redemption lay concealed under the veil of allusions to contemporaneous events.  

What convinces Smith that, however unsure the prophet may have been vis-à-vis present and eternal time, what Isaiah wrote “referred really to the Messiah’s advent.” To suppose that Isaiah had a “conscious” knowledge of the coming of the Messiah, for Smith, is necessary to contest arguments proposing that Isaiah meant his prophecies to refer only to chronologically proximal events. True, Smith concedes, “the prophet was often thinking of some minor event, and his words have a true reference to it;” however, “they also pass beyond.” The prophet is more than a mere person but a necessary “infallible authority” in order to provide for Israel an “increase of knowledge . . . [and] more truth and greater illumination” that allows them to reach “fresh stages” of revealed truth. The prophet as well as the text was for Smith an infallible guide, albeit a temporary one.

I do not claim Smith is being simplistic on this point, as he admits that “they probably did not themselves fully understand all they said.” But Smith does not want to suggest that, for instance, in Isaiah’s prophecy of 7:14 (“a virgin shall conceive and bear a son”) there was a contemporaneous event that he had in mind, overshadowing the spiritual referent: “the fervour of inspiration often carried them onwards into future


60R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, xix. This concept of a kind of progressive revelation is discussed in more detail below.

times.”⁶² Smith attempts to prove that in such a passage, the intended meaning of Isaiah was the Messiah. First, he situates the historical context of the prophet as a time of imminent danger of invasion by a foreign power. Second, Smith surmises that his audience was the “common people.”⁶³ His role was to be their comforter in such a time, since King Ahaz was beginning to seek help from Assyria. According to Smith’s logic, since the text speaks of a virgin who will give birth to a son who would be called “the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6), then it could not be possible that his prophecy referred only to the son of just any young woman. Smith insists, as part of his argument for the “established grammatical rule which prevails throughout all the prophetic books”⁶⁴ that his translation of the Hebrew word *almah* as “virgin” is a necessary one, despite Jewish (and “rationalist”) interpretations otherwise. For Smith, his reading is the most “obvious” one, “a translation which would naturally suggest itself to every reader at first sight, and which only an elaborate criticism, bent upon the overthrow of all ancient landmarks, would venture to dispute.”⁶⁵ The prophet’s intended meaning, therefore, is clearly accessible to any reader.

I do not attend to the current hermeneutical problematic of surmising “authorial intent,” but rather seek to point out that this method is akin to Smith’s contemporary liberal interpreters with respect to the “literal” meaning of such Old Testament passages, yet whose conclusions are nonetheless contrary to his. For instance, a century earlier, Matthew Collins, the famous Anglican eighteenth-century deist, published *The Scheme of

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Literal Prophecy Considered\textsuperscript{66} in which he argues in minute detail that nowhere in the Old Testament was a future messiah predicted. Collins does so with the same approach as Smith wherein his reading is “obvious” and that he can penetrate into the mind of the prophet. As Hans Frei says, Collins’s approach meant proceeding “first, by taking into account of the human author’s intention as an independent factor.”\textsuperscript{67} With respect to Isaiah and many other prophetic books, Collins quotes biblical passages, alongside of which he provides a “paraphrase” that gives his view of what the prophet “literally” meant. This is, in Collins’ view, the plain sense of the text. He cannot accept that Jesus was the one predicted in Isaiah in a literal sense; he rejects Men’s endeavours to find that [interpretation] in them, which the Prophets themselves had no imagination of; and which is manifestly without the least foundation in the literal sense. It is necessary to confound the Prophets, and to reduce their prophecies to nothing, or to an unintelligible state, before an interpretation remote from the sense of the Prophets can be introduced.\textsuperscript{68}

With respect to the specific prophecy of Isaiah 7 and of the \textit{almah} conceiving a son, Collins concludes that the true meaning of the prophecy was that “the immediate \textit{conception} of a \textit{male child} is promised as a \textit{sign} to Ahaz, as the conception of a male child 800 years after was improper.”\textsuperscript{69} It is “improper” because, since Ahaz wanted a sign from Isaiah (and note here that the audience is no longer Smith’s “common people,” but only the King), it would be a matter of little import to King Ahaz to receive a promise so far in the future. His conclusion, therefore, is that Isaiah was referring to his own son, Shear-jashub and that Isaiah’s wife was the \textit{almah}.


\textsuperscript{68}Collins, \textit{The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered}, 270–71.

\textsuperscript{69}Collins, \textit{The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered}, 308. Italics in the original.
What we have, therefore, are two interpreters who essentially argue using similar historical methods and approaches, claiming knowledge of the intention of the prophet Isaiah and who reconstruct a historical situation that serves their respective polemical interests. Both appeal to the “clear” and “obvious” meaning of the text. Yet they each come to radically different conclusions. Thinkers like Collins and a great majority of people after him were faced with a common set of rules of engagement with Scripture, despite the level of orthodoxy they may or may not possess. As Frei notes

Collins has placed his opponents in a most unenviable quandary by putting before them two, and only two, alternatives. One either admits the applicability of rules for literal interpretation . . . in which case the New Testament claims concerning the meaning of Old Testament passages . . . are demonstrably false; or one says that the rules . . . are those for nonliteral [i.e., typological, mystical or figural] interpretation, which is equivalent to saying that the interpretation is meaningless because it has nothing to do with the words of the text of the prophecies. Literal and false, or typological and meaningless; those were his alternatives.  

Smith by no means rejects a typological interpretive method, but such an approach is only warranted once the “proof” of the literal meaning of the text has been assured. And the means by which this proof is obtained is via “subsuming literal meaning under the dominance of independent criterion.” For exegetes like Smith, the figure of the prophet was as a character whose “intention” can be discerned using hermeneutical rules external to the Bible and alien to earlier Anglican readings of Scripture in which authorship was indissolubly linked to God as the agent of textual development. By accepting such rules, those in continuity with thinkers in Collins’ tradition could find Smith’s “proofs” entirely unconvincing.

70 Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, 70. Frei continues to show that this dual choice was by no means accepted by all (his description of Sherlock’s rejoinder to Collins is a fine example), but he does make clear that this was the governing approach in general. The die had already been cast in the eighteenth century. “Collins’s view was the earnest of the future. If anyone wished to link in a connected series passages so far apart in time and evidently so different in their respective reference, the only way he could do so was by demonstrating the identity between the predictive description and the features of the later event to which it was (later) claimed the description referred” Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, 72.

71 Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, 76.
It is important to note again how this separation of Isaiah within its canonical context is relevant to my assertion regarding a divided Church and the impact of such division on exegesis, in addition to providing greater detail to Hans Frei’s hermeneutical account. It must be repeated that there is little similarity between Smith’s approach and that of the early Anglican vision of the Bible. In the latter perspective, the canon of Scripture views the entire corpus as the word of God, funded by a conviction that the theological substrate of the Bible is an interconnected web of theological links and polysemous referents; this is seen paradigmatically in the exegesis of Nehemiah Rogers in Chapter 3. Yet Smith’s exegesis moves beyond (or behind) the text in order to determine the historical context and the mind of the author as the means of interpretation. This is the product of division in the sense that we can regard Smith as standing on the shoulders of exegetes like William Day and Richard Kidder, who prescind from a close theological connection within the word of God in terms of the former and toward an apologetic analysis with respect to the latter.

I have mentioned that the role of the Church in reading Scripture is virtually non-existent in Smith’s account. However, the function of prophecy in predicting the Church plays a role as central as that of the Suffering Servant and the vicarious suffering of Christ. This is one of the most detailed accounts of Smith’s figural mode of reading the Old Testament. It therefore serves well here as an exemplar of how figuralism functions in his exegesis, and also reveals much about Smith’s theology of the Church and the Old Testament, which is relevant to a discussion of the canonical connection between the two Testaments.

Smith’s view of the Old Testament, which he often calls the “Jewish Scriptures,”72 is governed by a theology of abrogation; the coming of Jesus Christ has

72 The use of this term, while perhaps common in the nineteenth century, belies a certain view of the Old Testament that also subtly reflects his theology of Scripture. It is even more common today in
superseded the Jewish ceremonies prescribed in the levitical ceremonies. Sermons VIII
and IX of The Authenticity of the Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah are
dedicated exclusively to Isaiah 65:17: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and
the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” Whereas the traditional
interpretation of this verse is an eschatological one that speaks of the future
consummation of the Church and all of history, Smith takes a quasi-preterist perspective
of this text. He applies it to the age of the Church which has surpassed that of old
(Jewish) dispensation. His exegesis of the Old Testament orients and defines it in
functional terms whereby Jewish particularity is abrogated in favour of its “spiritual”
core.73 In doing so, Smith avoids, to some extent, the problem of the non-linearity and
historically problematic stories of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is to be read
primarily in terms of its central spiritual message.74 But the means by which thinkers like
Smith attempt to avoid divisiveness by this argument — which is often raised only at
convenient moments — results in moving the exegesis out of textual particularity into the

scholarly circles to refer to the Old Testament as “Jewish Scriptures” or “the Hebrew Scriptures.” While
Smith is rather inconsistent in his case, it does raise the question as to what extent he sees the Old
Testament as Christian Scripture by implying that the New Testament is Christian and the Old is Christian
only to the extent of its predictive and moral capacity. Thus, Isaiah tends to receive greater attention for its
ability to “prove” Christianity, while Christians in the nineteenth century (and today) pay little heed, for
example, to the Song of Songs or Leviticus due to the perceived irrelevance of such books to Christianity.

7373I should mention that many of the quotations that follow are redolent with what twenty-first
century eyes would view as patently anti-Semitic. I do not dispute this, and accept the importance of
acknowledging it. I also will not be critiquing his anti-Semitism per se, but only his theology with respect
to the Old Testament, of which his harsh words are to some extent merely epiphenomenal. However, it was
not uncommon to avoid reading the Scripture in the same way that Jews do. We also see this in the
previous chapter with Kidder, who attempts to refute numerous “Jewish” arguments against Christianity.
By the time of Smith, as with Kidder, not only were these arguments also employed by his liberal
opponents, but I would suggest that arguments in favour of Jewish particularity, aside from the problem of
the culture’s general repugnance to Semitic people, were too “physical” and “embodied” and thus not
“spiritual” enough. Another way of saying this is that the twofold problem of Jewish praxis was the
historical challenge to prophecy that led to their perfidy in addition to their “Rome-like” use of ritual.

7474This therefore parallels some of the spiritualist traditions that I outline in Chapter 2 in which
physical concreteness is shorn in favour of a non-material spiritual core.
realm of general ideas.

I do not suggest that Smith consciously conceives of the Old Testament as somehow less a part of Scripture, for he says in *Prophecy: a Preparation for Christ* that

> The difference . . . between revelation in Christ and in the prophets is not that the words of the one are more God’s words than those of the others. . . . We must not, then, draw distinctions between the Old Testament and the New, as though they differed in authority, or in the nature and extent of their authority.

Yet, in the very next sentence, Smith says

> The distinction which the Apostle [in Hebrews 1:1,2] draws is in the manner of the revelation, the different way in which it was given, not in the degree of it. In the Old Testament it was partial, gradual, progressive; in the New, it is full, perfect, final, complete.  

Aside from a potential contradiction between Smith’s aim to make no distinction between the Testaments and his approval of the Apostle doing so, it is also not obvious how the incompleteness of the Old Testament is not overshadowed by the perfection of the New. I aim to show that what makes the Old Testament “incomplete” for Smith are the carnal elements of Jewish practice that hide its spiritual message.

Smith argues that the meaning of Isaiah 65:17 is “the substitution of the Christian in the place of the Jewish Church.” The prophet Isaiah’s “intention” was to speak against any national desires and in favour of a universal religion ushered in by the coming of the Messiah. This is a historical process of development whereby the latter supersedes the former: “as the Jewish and Christian Churches represent the same one divine institution in different stages of its development, they naturally are closely interwoven in the Prophet’s mind.” Judaism (which to Smith is equivalent to the Jewish nation, Israel) is a merely transient phenomenon that was to be replaced by the Church, the

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permanent institution of God’s people. Jewish practice was a mere placeholder for something greater and more permanent. In the end “the lineal Israel shall be rejected”78 as a result of Jewish moral failure in following God’s law. This rejection of Israel means that “she must abandon all that was local, and temporary, and distinctively Jewish in her law; that she must adapt herself to a wider and nobler sphere, and cast off the trammels and imperfections of a mere preparatory stage.”79 The function of the Old Testament for Smith, and the theological principle behind reading it, is to portray “merely preparatory” events, and to give the history of a kind of pedagogical age that advances the human race to a point of readiness for the coming of a new religion. The loss of particularity (of Israel, of various cultic practices, etc.) in the move toward a universal religion corresponds to the idea of a religion that is less concerned about external actions; but “at the most holy rite of our religion we recite its moral precepts; and its truths, separated from all temporary and local admixture, are the subject of our creeds and articles.”80 These moral precepts, the dictates of the inner life, are what maintain the unity between the first “Church” of the Jews and the final Church of the Christians. Smith claims that “ever has the Church retained all that was essential to Judaism.”81 Christ ushers in a new age from which the external husk of a primitive, nationalist religion has been removed in favour of a universally enlightened humanity who have achieved (to be sure, as a result of God’s grace) the light of advanced morality. While the Church continues to read the Scriptures and maintain the Sabbath, says Smith, “no longer is it a bondage, but . . . subservient to our moral and spiritual good.”82

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My claim, therefore, is that Smith’s theological view of Scripture is one such that it does not comprise a dual witness of Old and New Testaments; instead, the former merely points functionally to the latter for its legitimization. Smith conceives of the solution to the “problem” of the Old and New Testament portions of Scripture by taking “the live option of understanding the canon’s constitutively twofold character as development.”\(^83\) Smith, however, is not representative only of the Evangelical Movement on this point, but of the theological shape of much nineteenth-century Anglican thought with respect to Scripture. Development was a congenial concept to the modern idea of a movement of humanity to a more enlightened stage and a universal religion. This development via Christianity is proven by the fact that “the principles which [Christianity] enunciates have directed the whole course of modern thought and progress. Even erroneous views of the doctrines of Christianity have retained something of the vigour of the parent stock.”\(^84\) In other words, Christianity — even Christianity-in-general as a kind of ideological movement that may or may not be orthodox — bears a positive moral force in the life of all cultures throughout the world, enabling the successes of human advancement. If there is any rigorous typology taking place, it could be said that the abrogation of primitive, superstitious, and idolatrous Judaism is a figure of the power of Christianity to do away with the superstition of (presumably) medieval Roman Catholicism and its suppression of the scientific spirit.\(^85\)


\(^84\)R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 240.

\(^85\)I am engaging here in speculation to some extent. Smith does not mention Roman Catholicism, but the idea of human “achievement,” and growth is often set over against an earlier, more “superstitious” era, which was given its legitimization by an equally superstitious Roman Catholicism.
The rejection of Jesus of Nazareth by the Jewish Sanhedrin in the gospels, and their concomitant rejection of him as the Messiah was predicted in their own Scriptures and led to God’s rejection of the Jewish nation. The “remnant” of which Isaiah speaks in such passages as Isaiah 10:20–21 and Paul in Romans 9–11 is about the small selection of believing Jews out of whom the Church of Christ was called by God’s election. Even more, in Smith’s view, “God saw fit to remove a danger out of the Church’s path by the complete obliteration of the Jewish polity and priesthood,” and in order to “clear the way,” as it were, God destroyed the Jewish nation in A.D. 70. The only solution for remaining Jews was to accept the new dispensation, “a spiritual religion, from which all the gross and material elements of their old faith have been purged away.” The Jewish dispensation is “carnal,” whereas the Christian Church heralds a spiritual age, “embracing . . . both Jew and Gentile within her fold, upon equal terms, and with all distinction and disparity removed. . . . The Jew retains no right by reason of his lineage.”

The concepts of typology and figuration also illustrate this older dispensation for Smith: “For to the Jew truth was given in shadow, and outline, and prophecy; to the Christian it has been given in substance.” Once again, the Christian Church’s existence

86 R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 244.

87 R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 244. This writing was prior to the rise of a form of dispensationalism that viewed the return of “carnal” Israel to the Holy Land as part of God’s prophetic plan, which would culminate in the eschaton. It would be interesting to consider Smith’s ideas with respect to the current existence of the nation of Israel. It should be noted that one aspect of Smith’s argument in Sermons VIII and IX, to which I am not attending, is his disagreement with those Evangelicals who view the coming of a millennial dispensation (he does not mention Darbyism, but I suspect he has it in mind, though it was an eschatological claim that had been in existence since at least the seventeenth century); for Smith, the Church is the full and final fulfillment of prophecy, whereas for others there is yet to come another age of even greater perfection. For Smith, “a millennium would be but an intermediate purgatory” (R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 266), and would void the perfection of what was brought about by the coming of the Messiah.


as the full perfection of Jewish hopes and desires means that there is no longer a need for the ongoing use of figuration for exegeting the text beyond its participation as a historical tool for textual clarification and apologets. I argue that what remains is a rather static view of typology and prophecy whereby once the tools of prediction and/or figuration have done their job, they are no longer germane to theological exegesis of the present reality of the Church but have given way to historical modes of reconstruction. There is an ostensive attempt to preserve the original Anglican view of the one canon of Scripture by using a rather wooden mode of spiritual figuration. At the same time, I argue that Smith’s exegesis indicates a clear inequality between the two Testaments. The Old Testament serves a function of pointing chronologically to a distant referent, Jesus of Nazareth, and renders the events in terms of codified, non-concrete referents that serve their purpose once uncovered.

Despite the fact that Smith is adamant that the Church is the perfection of Jewish Scripture, there is little that can be gleaned from his writings with respect to what he means when he refers to the entity he calls “Church.” A great deal of what he says tends to argue that the Church has gained what the Jews have lost, but only in its “spiritual” essence, which all Jewish practices were meant to “mean.” Smith’s view of the Church is not a sectarian one; he is not arguing that he can distinguish between a “true” and a “visible” Church. Rather, he agrees with earlier Anglicanism that “the Church visible has possession of the promises because it contains the Church invisible” and prefers “leaving the separation between the true and the false to the unerring Judge above.” But his ecclesial perspective is rather stunted beyond this point; the remainder of his limited discussion on the Church is directed toward the role of individuals in “working out their probation.”

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the institution of the Church, the Christian life marks a time in which individuals live out
their lives in preparation for the next life.

The promises of the New Testament are not earthly blessings and bodily
enjoyment, but earthly trial and the subjection of the body, and unceasing labour,
and patient waiting, by which the soul is prepared for heavenly blessedness. . . .
Christian men find their solace, not in being allowed to combine earthly success
with the discipline which hits them for heaven, but in the foretaste of spiritual joys
even here; “for the kingdom of heaven is within you.”92

The earthly life is the life of the individual, in the Church no doubt, but the Church
defined by Smith in broad terms merely indicates a “spiritual” age for which the Jewish
“Church” was a preparation.

There is a concept of continual movement and progression of humanity in Smith’s
view of Scripture. The Old Testament is an account of God’s preparation of the Jewish
people for the coming of the Messiah, who brings an age of “spiritual” preparation of the
individual for heaven. This idea of the earthly life as purgation is not new, but Smith
lends a greater emphasis to the individual within such a life, rather than using purgation
to be one (rather popular) way of accounting for earthly existence.

6 Smith’s Christological and Spiritual Hermeneutic of Scripture

In this final section, I consider Robert Payne Smith’s exegesis of Isaiah in light of
the christological shape of the uniquely Anglican vision of the Bible that I describe in
Chapter 2. I argue that the extent to which Smith conceives of Isaiah christologically is
matched only to the extent that it can function predictively. This is a corollary of his
functionalist use of the Old Testament in general. I also show how his reading of the
book speaks to his theological account of the relationship between the two testaments; in
this case, a christological reading is directly connected to one that is “spiritual,” shorn of

91R. Payne Smith, The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah, 255.
textual carnal particularity in favour of abstract spiritual/moral principles. Finally, I assess how he relates “the word and the Word,” the incarnated Logos, to the text. I aim to locate all of the above within my argument regarding ecclesial division.

Smith’s reading of Isaiah is intensely centred on proving that the book’s prophecies accurately predicted the coming of Jesus; he calls the nature of these prophecies “messianic.” Yet, it is important for Smith that the relationship between the Old and New Testaments be a “spiritual” one, which was shown above with respect to the Church. Smith’s apologetic stance demands that he work in the mode of his opponents, which leads him to use his own form of textual criticism to reconstruct the historical events surrounding various texts. At other times, he moves to a “spiritual” interpretation, bypassing the “historical.” This results in a bifurcated exegesis, in which a christological hermeneutic is unclear. In order to provide evidence and proof against his opponents, therefore, Smith’s reading of Isaiah is a rather wooden one. It is the attempt to prove the truth of the book — that is, his engagement in a divisive reading — that drives his mode of theological exegesis.

While much of what Smith writes in *Prophecy: a Preparation for Christ* and *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation* indicates a strong belief in prophecy as a foretelling, that is, a literal description and prediction of figures and events that were to occur in the future at the coming of Jesus, Smith describes Old Testament prophecy in more subtle terms. The prophets, he says, “were God’s representatives on earth, and the mediators between Him and man.” As such, they were people who did not merely speak of the future but were “to appear for God whenever any step was to be taken forward in the accomplishment of God’s purpose.”

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God and participate in God’s plan to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. The means by which God communicated himself to the prophets was through the Spirit, who “was with [the prophets] in a higher way than in His ordinary and natural workings,” and what they taught “was revealed to them directly by God and not attained to by the unaided workings of their mental powers.” Since this communication was so direct and, by all accounts unmediated, the inspiration of the Bible is such that it cannot be treated like any other book. He putatively disallows any attempt to subject the Bible to the level of textual scrutiny that is afforded other classic texts, for the subject and genre of the Bible are “question[s] upon which we have years ago come, upon sufficient evidence, to a definite conclusion.” Nonetheless, when it suits his purposes, Smith does deign to employ a low-level form criticism of Isaiah. For this reason, Smith’s hermeneutic is not a consistent one, particularly since his interpretation is driven not by theological exegesis in the mode of a particularly Anglican way of reading the Bible, but by an apologetic urge to prove that the Evangelical position is the right one.

Despite Smith’s attempts to add subtlety to his definition of prophecy as being more than mere prediction, his apologetic approach to reading Isaiah rarely goes beyond the fitness between certain prophecies and the person of Jesus of Nazareth. One of the key arguments that “vindicates” the book of Isaiah is its support for the central tenets of the Christian faith, hence “proving” it is the true religion, and it is this idea that drives his reading. In order to succeed, Smith sees it as his task to construct the historical context of

95R. Payne Smith, A Preparation for Christ, x.

96R. Payne Smith, A Preparation for Christ, x. It is likely here that Smith is indirectly arguing against Benjamin Jowett’s comments in Essays and Reviews (1860) that Scripture should be “interpreted like other books” (Benjamin Jowett, “On The Interpretation of Scripture,” in Essays and Reviews, ed. J. Parker [London: John W. Parker, 1860], 404). Despite the uproar that Jowett’s comments generated, this was actually not a novel idea, even in more-conservative England.

97R. Payne Smith, A Preparation for Christ, xi.
Isaiah’s prophetic utterances and to show that Isaiah’s predictions were fulfilled only in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. His exegesis is done in a rather bifurcated manner, in which he can apply all the rules of a low-level of historical criticism on the one hand, yet on the other hand make exegetical moves toward a typological mode when he deems it necessary (and convenient) to support his argument. Smith’s exegetical approach is in marked distinction not only to the ancient Fathers who read the Bible, but also to more restrained Protestants like John Calvin, who did not consider the Old Testament as a mere “history of Israel,” but saw the events that the Bible describes as “figural history under God’s providential disposition and thinking.”

Each word, phrase, and event has an inherent theological fecundity, which cannot be exhausted by the mere extraction of historical data. This latter method was the means by which early Anglicans read Scripture (see Chapter 2), a part of which included figuration, typology, and, indeed, real historical events. This “pre-critical” method was constructed in an entirely different theological understanding of what the Bible is, which is a text permeated by the presence of the Logos in a recapitulation of the Incarnation via textual mediation.

There was rarely a sharp distinction between history and figuration because the entire text is the “Word of God.” This Word providentially shaped the text (and the history it recounts), which must be understood within a grander scriptural vision, an economy in which the Church participates. This did not discount prophetic prediction, nor figuration or typology, but each was a part of correct scriptural reading. This exegetical fecundity is

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98 See Chris Seitz, “History, Figural History, and Providence in the Dual Witness of Prophet and Apostle” in Walters, Go Figure! 1.

99 I employ the term “pre-critical” with caution, as it often denotes an exegetical approach that is naïve and simplistic. What it implicitly suggests is that the methods employed do not take into account new modern historical and textual discoveries.

100 The distinction between figuration, typology, and allegory are notoriously difficult. I define figuration as the theological principle whereby the shape of events described in the text participate in a common ontological framework and pattern whereby God’s providential lordship in history can be
Robert Payne Smith’s worry is that the “negative critics” reject any predictive or typological value to the Old Testament. It is of utmost theological importance that it be demonstrated that Isaiah’s prophecies refer to Jesus of Nazareth:

No slight matter is at stake; for if the virgin’s child is a son of Ahaz or a son of Isaiah . . . what the Church loses is not merely the confirmation of prophecy to the Messiah’s advent, but the doctrines connected with His being the Virgin-born . . . .

It is the same in the interpretation of the fifty-third chapter [of Isaiah] . . . . If it be proved that the chapter does not refer to our Lord . . . the belief of all Christian men from the earliest ages to the present day in the efficacy of our Saviour’s death ceases to have a foundation.

These stakes, which he has set for himself, fund Smith’s urgency to “vindicate” the prophet from his detractors, and are what drives his exegesis. While he is astute enough to note prior to the passage quoted above that faith does not rest on any single verse, the material shape of his argumentation is to narrow in on certain texts to show that their necessary referent is Jesus of Nazareth. We can see how Smith’s reading comports with Frei’s description of the “Supernaturalist” position in which

[the text’s] explicative meaning is the historian’s reconstruction of the historical occurrence to which they refer, and that reconstructed fact either is or is closely related to their abiding meaningfulness.

Typology refers to *figures*, that is, unique people or things whose character and identity foreshadow a greater figure or event. Typology almost always refers in some way to Christ in Scripture; e.g., in John 3:14, Jesus indicates a link between the serpent lifted up by Moses and himself. In both figuration and typology, events and figures that occur centuries apart participate in a “time” that is not the same as “historical time.” Finally, allegory tends to refer to other “spiritual” interpretations that may be moral or anagogical. Yet, for so-called “pre-critical” readers, such conceptions are not always articulated with such categorical detail; all ways of reading Scripture contribute to its “literal” sense if one attends to the theological *res* of the text.


While Smith regards Christ as central to the connection between the two Testaments, the textual referent is not intrinsic to the text, nor funded by a consideration of the utterance of the Logos within it.

Smith concludes that the scholars whom he opposes come to contradictory conclusions because they mistakenly misread the text in the same way that Jewish readers had throughout history: they read it too literally. Both the rationalist and the Jew twist the text in such a way that its “natural” reading is suppressed: “as the Jew grants the necessity of every prophecy being fulfilled, he is often reduced to the most puerile shifts by difficulties which the rationalist, who denies the supernatural element of prophecy, escapes.” For instance, Smith mocks the Jewish view that the prophecy of Isaiah 11:7 (“the lion shall eat straw like the ox”) means that “the physical conformation of that animal shall undergo a reconstruction.” It is clear to him that such a passage is allegorical, that the coming of the Messiah will result in peace between people.

Smith grants that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 may indeed “allude” to a child that was to be born in Israel. But the proximate event is merely a contingent one that serves the greater purpose of moving “from the temporary to the universal; from the fortunes of the carnal Israel to the Christian Church.” At first glance, this can perhaps be seen as a traditional argument for a typological interpretation, but what funds Smith’s approach is

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103 I address Smith’s view of the Church and the abrogation of Israel theologically, but it is interesting to note his often scathing attacks against the Jews as being primitive and “narrow-minded, prejudiced against foreigners, devoid of all cosmopolitan tendencies [!], not versatile enough to win any general favour” (R. Payne Smith, *A Preparation for Christ*, 81). While perhaps this is merely a reflection of British disfavour towards Jews, I would also argue that it is the result of his frustration that his opponents often appeared to employ “Jewish” arguments with which the Church had already dealt in the first few centuries.


105 R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 14. Here, Smith is referring to an interpretation by a “Rabbi Isak.”

an acceptance of the historical method that “proves” that the prophecy’s meaning could not have been merely local.

That the prophecy was not finally fulfilled in contemporaneous events we may, I think, infer from the consideration that plainly it was committed to writing long after its temporary use had passed away . . . the form in which [such prophecies] have come down to us is evidently the work of a later period.\(^\text{107}\)

Here we have Smith engaging in his own mode of “form criticism” of a sort. The “plain” and “evident” nature of the text indicates that the event anticipated by Jewish interpretation was to have occurred only as a sign to Ahaz and would have already taken place when Isaiah was compiled. For if it was “plainly” written after the fact, then for what reason was the prophecy written? In this case, he accepts an attenuated form of textual criticism and historical reconstruction, using them for apologetic purposes when it suits him.

Smith’s exegesis of the song of the Suffering Servant, beginning at Isaiah 52:13, is also an important consideration as it figures so centrally, not only in the history of exegesis, but as the subject of Sermons VI and VII in *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*. For Smith, this prophecy contains sufficient detail that it can speak of no other figure than Jesus of Nazareth and his Passion. Moreover, he contends that it is such a central text for the Christian Church that “if this passage be taken from us, we have lost the strongest bulwark and defence of the argument from prophecy as a whole.”\(^\text{108}\)

Doctrinally, Isaiah is central to Christian teaching:

The prophecy [of Isaiah 53] is the foundation therefore upon which the doctrine of the Atonement is built; and as it thus becomes the chief and most important of all the prophetic writings, we may well rejoice that it is also the most plain.\(^\text{109}\)

He rejects “modern critics” for whom “it follows, according to their theory, that the

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\(^{107}\)R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 16.


prophets, as mere poets and preachers, must adhere to the national idea of the Messiah."\textsuperscript{110} Their reading of supposed messianic texts considers the referents to such texts as purely proximal, without remainder. Yet it is the very fact that this figure suffers and is humiliated that Smith finds most convincing, for if the purpose of the messianic writings were written to comfort the people of Israel, how could a suffering king provide this function? Moreover, he finds no evidence of a figure in the history of the Old Testament who fulfills this need, despite Jewish attempts to argue that this figure may be, for instance, King Hezekiah.

Again, Smith’s mode of reading this text is to start with a historical reconstruction of the events that surround the prophecy. Isaiah 52:13 urges Israel to regard her deliverer and is freed from the bonds of slavery; the remnant has returned to Jerusalem and the Babylonian captives are told to depart. Smith reminds his hearers of Isaiah 49:6, in which the Servant of Jehovah will be a “light to the Gentiles,” and then argues that the song of the Suffering Servant begins to speak of the details of the life of this Servant, “from his humble birth to His ignominious death, and in the reference which follows to His Resurrection.”\textsuperscript{111} These details are to be read in their literal, historical sense. Israel was indeed to return to the land, released from their Babylonian captivity. Yet, once the texts have described the suffering of Jehovah’s Servant, Smith says, “plainly, must we not apply these words to a more spiritual deliverance?”\textsuperscript{112} Smith moves from a “historical” to a “spiritual” mode of reading the text, enabling him to bypass the problems presented by his opponents, who incorrectly interpret the prophecy in terms that are too literal. Smith surrounds his argument with other “messianic” texts of the Old Testament, namely

\textsuperscript{110}R. Payne Smith, \textit{The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah}, 164.

\textsuperscript{111}R. Payne Smith, \textit{The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah}, 160.

\textsuperscript{112}R. Payne Smith, \textit{The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah}, 162.
the so-called “proto-gospel” of Genesis 3:15. This “spiritual” interpretation of the text is essential to Smith’s argument, for he says, “Christians are not at liberty to deny the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament. . . . They are not mere facts of history, but lessons, teaching sometimes moral truths, but more frequently the mystery of the Gospel.”

Smith acknowledges that the necessity of a spiritual interpretation not only leads to controversy and debate, but is often the cause of it.

A Church with no commission from God, no authority, no revealed truth, no inspired Word, would be doubtless a very peaceful Church, would stir up no controversies, and occasion no heart-burnings; but she would influence no minds, awake no sympathies, gain no friends, make no enemies, do no good, and be powerless even for evil.

Thus, the very presence of these “negative critics,” who reject the spiritual reading of the text and oppose the traditional reading of books like Isaiah, is not only necessary for the Church; such divisiveness also guarantees the truth of what he propounds. Without divisiveness, Scripture would be shorn of its value and would be no more than an interesting book. Smith, therefore, welcomes the divisive atmosphere that permeates biblical exegesis as being indicative of how important Scripture really is. To some extent, the reality of division in the Church is itself proof of the centrality and truth of the Bible.

Therefore, a spiritual reading of the text is a necessary mode of exegesis to which his rationalist critics refuse to go; they remain at the merely “literal” level and therefore miss the true meaning of what the prophet intends to convey. This, says Smith, was also

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115 It must be recalled that most of Smith’s “negative critics” are Christians, not the Jews and pagans of the early Church, who, from outside the Church, attacked the Bible. This is a significantly different state of affairs than one in which the Bible, the central text of the Church, is the theatre of ecclesial brokenness.
the problem with the history of Jewish interpretation of Isaiah, and he devotes most of Sermon VI to an outline of this history. His purpose for doing so is to show the hopelessness and virtual absurdity of such a task. In Smith’s view, Jewish interpreters have had to invent numerous incredible explanations to account for the humiliation of the Servant figure of Isaiah 53, deliberately avoiding what he sees as the most obvious meaning of the text.

In general, the Jewish theory interprets the figure in the Song of the Suffering Servant as the nation of Israel, who must suffer for a time before she is to enjoy the peace of Jehovah. For Smith, the grammatical meaning of the text, however, does not allow for such an interpretation but rather demands a typological reading.

All these passages are clearly irreconcilable with the theory that He was also the nation, or identical with any select portion of it. . . . There are, indeed, parts of the Messiah’s office which his Church shared with Him: but there are others peculiar to him; as, for instance, that He suffers a vicarious death; that He makes intercession for sinners . . . that He is a covenant of the people; and after His humiliation is worshipped by kings and princes, restores Israel, and is the salvation also of the Gentiles and the whole world. ¹¹⁶

Since the grammar of the text speaks of an individual and distinguishes this person from the people of Israel, then it follows that all of the attributes and actions given to this figure must reside in one person, and therefore must be the Messiah. Since this Messiah can only be Christ, then the text must, where necessary, be read typologically and predictively. We see here a kind of syllogism that leads Smith out of the “merely literal” into a spiritual interpretation, which is the “messianic” or (superficially) the christological reading.

Smith’s theological understanding of typology and prophecy is relatively traditional. The Jewish Scriptures reveal a “material” religion whose spiritual “core” is what remains essential across time. Some practices have ceased to exist. Some, such as

¹¹⁶R. Payne Smith, The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah, 189. For each of these theological points, Smith references a passage from Isaiah as a form of “proof text.”
sacrifice, “typify” Christ, and others are things indifferent. Prophecy often has only one meaning but can in certain instances have a double referent (e.g., he accepts that almah may have a transient, local meaning) whereby the future event is the “fullest” fulfillment of the prophecy. But the existence of the “single meaning” type of prophecy is what funds Smith’s form of argument and exegesis:

The words have a true reference to some occurrence in Jewish or contemporaneous history; but a still truer reference to something Christian and spiritual. Not, indeed, always so; some prophecies seem to have no double meaning; and the higher use of these perhaps is to give us some neutral ground on which to test the reality of prediction.\(^{117}\)

Therefore, while Smith argues strongly for the Bible as a unique book, authored by God, and even agrees that others may view the acceptance of prophecy as “irrational,”\(^{118}\) he nonetheless concurs that there is some form of “neutral ground” that permits a reading that takes prediction, typology and allegory into account.

Smith’s hermeneutic employs the text as a kind of launching pad for his own doctrinal arguments; he uses the argument of an individual, quasi-neutral reader who can then discern the clear meaning of the text. He employs a dual reading of the text: a scientific one that happily participates in all the newly-developed modes of exegesis (e.g., a lion cannot change his biological structures to be able to eat and live on straw) and a spiritual one that applies the text to a meaning that is outside the text — often in reference to Christ (e.g., the lion eating straw must therefore refer to an event of great peace brought about by the coming of the Messiah). Just like Kidder’s approach in the eighteenth century, as I discuss in Chapter 3, Smith maintains a superficial similarity to the Anglican view of a christological reading. Yet it is eviscerated by an attempt to employ a modern historical reconstruction that avoids a reading in which Christ is deeply


\(^{118}\)R. Payne Smith, *The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah*, 269.
present within the very words of the text. There is also a “spiritual” referent that hovers above the text, emerging only when his apologetic methodology is applied. He does not read the text on its own terms but for the purpose of arguing antagonistically against his opponents. And his reading, a descendent of the exegetical tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, follows the same path of divisive exegesis.

7 Conclusion

Robert Payne Smith intends that an interpretation of a biblical book such as Isaiah must be a theological activity. Within Smith’s purview, this meant that Isaiah must be read “messianically” and that it is a text in which such doctrines as the atonement and Christ’s humanity are central. Yet there is little distinction in Smith’s account between a theological and an apologetic exegesis. For the most part, Smith engages in the latter, to show that the Old Testament in general, and Isaiah in particular, can be used to “prove” the truth of Christian doctrine.

Part of theological exegesis, for Smith, is to consider the prophet as a unique, heroic figure, from whom thoughts and intentions can be discerned. Moreover, Smith employs his own mode of historical reconstruction and textual criticism, but only to the extent that they support his apologetic aims. Smith is not unique in this regard. Brevard Childs notes that many conservatives in the nineteenth century often moved in a reactive mode. Non-Anglican J. A. Alexander, for instance, wrote one of the most definitive scholarly works on Isaiah in the English-speaking world at the time. He followed his teacher, the conservative German E. W. Hegstemberg, in his method, which was “largely an apologetic attempt to refute the critical approaches of the preceding two centuries. . . . Using the same tools — philological, historical and literary — he mounts a logical case for the traditional reading of the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah.”

Brevard S. Childs, The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture (Grand Rapids,
similarity to Smith’s project should be clear. Like Alexander, he accepts the validity of the tools used for biblical exegesis to the extent that he can turn them against his opponents, and it is the first of two ways in which I consider Smith’s reading to be in an antagonistic mode. The second, the irenic mode of divisive exegesis, is the way in which his reading is informed and shaped by the history of a divisive environment, out of which arose non-ecclesial, non-dogmatic, individualist readings of Scripture that purport to be objective.

This chapter shows how Smith’s exegesis is relegated to rather foreign territory vis-à-vis a uniquely Anglican biblical hermeneutic and is a symptom of the divisive reality of theological exegesis. Much of Smith’s work is apologetic in nature, and often downright polemical as it aims to argue that modern “negative” critics err in their presuppositions regarding the supernatural nature of Scripture. They end up using “Jewish” arguments that deny any predictive element in biblical prophecy. For the Jews, the aim is to give proximate explanations in order to avoid the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth is the referent. For critical scholars, natural accounts aim similarly to avoid a “messianic” interpretation for the purpose of denying any role for the supernatural. But by entering into an apologetic and argumentative mode, his own theological suppositions and conclusions arise out of the crucible of ecclesial division to avoid any kind of reading that can be discerned as in accordance with anything uniquely Anglican.

Most notable is a stark absence of how the Church as a whole participates in the exegesis of Scripture; Smith is concerned primarily with individual appropriation of Scripture’s spiritual message, apprehended by the “heart.” Second, as Brevard Childs asks more generally, in what sense are Isaiah and the Old Testament constitutive of Christian Scripture? It is at this point that Smith is rather contradictory. On the one
hand, he affirms that all Scripture is inspired and no “distinction” should be made
between the Old and New Testaments. Yet, he is also clear that there is to be a kind of
distinction, as the Old Testament comprises an older dispensation that is abrogated by the
coming of Jesus. Therefore, the Old Testament is theologically valuable less for its
particularity and as a unique witness to God’s work in history, and more for its “spiritual”
message. Little, however, is said with regard to the nature of this spiritual message aside
from its reference to Christ and the Church in general, or something that the individual
must perceive and grasp with the “heart” and the exercise of free will. Witnessing the
loss of “carnal” particularity, Smith engages in the more general movement toward the
“spiritual,” as I describe in Chapter 2 with reference to various spiritualist traditions.

Smith’s exegesis of Isaiah also gives little consideration to the place of Isaiah in
its final form within the canon. His theology of the Old Testament does not permit him to
do this as he regards history as the gradual progression of humanity from being primitive,
unenlightened, “carnal,” and enmeshed in external practices, to a state of enlightened
“spiritual” and inner faith. As such, exegesis is to shed this carnal veil and aim at
highlighting only those aspects of the text that comport with the New Testament. It is for
this reason that so much of what Smith says of Isaiah is with regard to its capacity in
providing “proof” of its relation to Jesus and the New Testament. He only chooses those
texts from Isaiah that allow him to do this.\footnote{I concede that the intent of his sermons at Oxford was to assert the authenticity of a messianic interpretation of the book; but he is also clear about the importance of sustaining this argument to the edifice of Christian doctrine. Therefore, some texts are more important than others. Nonetheless, there are limitations to my argument, since we cannot consider the entire sweep of Smith’s exegesis of Isaiah.} Aside from this probative function, Smith
does not attempt to locate Isaiah with respect to all of Scripture and its specific place
within it. Rather, Smith has opted to choose a second option: “a history-of-religions
approach [that] attempts to reconstruct a history according to the widely accepted
categories of the Enlightenment as a scientifically objective analysis according to the
rules of critical research prescribed by common human experience.”

His brief attempts to state that the Bible is not to be read “like any other book” are not supported by the methods that he employs and reveal a rather conflicted view of Scripture; he wants at once to protect it from the negative critics who seek to devalue it, while employing the same methods these critics use in order to rescue it.

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121 Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 321.
CHAPTER 5
THE POLITICS OF DIVISION: CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH AND THE EXEGESIS OF ISAIAH

This chapter investigates the High Church party of the nineteenth century in terms of its continuity with various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century like-minded thinkers. My analysis is with regard to High Church continuity with previous centuries, rather than that of the more famous nineteenth-century Oxford Movement, though the latter was a definitive moment in the Church of England, altering the shape of many who shared a High Church orientation. Christopher Wordsworth (1807–85, and nephew of the poet, William Wordsworth) is the central subject of this chapter. He was Bishop of Lincoln, a prolific author of books, commentaries, hymns, and poems, and had affinities with the general sweep of High Church opinion. He did not, however, participate in the *Tracts for the Times*, and was not associated with the Tractarians but, rather, the “old” High Church party. While his exegesis of Isaiah is the focus of discussion in this chapter, I also consider the scriptural orientation of some Oxford Movement leaders for purposes of comparison, particularly of John Henry Newman (1801–90) and Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–82).

My central claim is that Wordsworth represents a High Church perspective in which the Establishment Church of England, *qua* Establishment, is an instance of the “ideal” Church to which Scripture points. But this High Church assertion is a response to a divided and dividing Church. This chapter therefore attends to the central political motif of High Church theology, a vision of the English Church, which itself emerges out
of the matrix of ecclesial division. At first glance, Wordsworth’s exegesis maintains much of the uniquely Anglican way of reading Scripture of Chapter 2 in comparison with that of Robert Payne Smith in Chapter 4 and T. K. Cheyne in Chapter 6. Wordworth urges a deeply ecclesial reading of the text and sees Isaiah as intrinsically linked to all of Scripture as the one Word of God. Almost every verse bears witness to the presence of Christ and, by typology and figuration, he connects Isaiah to the New Testament. He also rejects the Evangelical and Broad Church appeal to the right of private interpretation of the text. The means by which division impacts his reading of Isaiah are often exhibited in terms that are by now rather familiar: his exegesis requires a certain kind of entrenchment and selectivity of sources that aim to “prove” that his interpretive conclusions are the only valid ones for Christians, and it is vehemently anti-Roman. In addition, though he reads the text with considerably more sophistication than Robert Payne Smith, they share a similar orientation that does not consider Isaiah in a deeply figurative mode because that is how Scripture is to be read, but as an apologetic tool that provides evidence for its inspiration.

An exploration at a deeper level is required, however, of Wordsworth’s understanding of an ecclesial reading of the text by attending to his theological understanding of the nature of the Church. The greatest impact on his exegesis, and which distinguishes the High Church party over against that of the Oxford Movement, is an ecclesio-political vision of the Established Church of England, not merely in terms of

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1The politics that particularly contribute to this divisive matrix was that of Catholic Emancipation, which was a burning issue for decades prior to the final 1829 Act. High Church divines were the vanguard of those who opposed these Acts and their opposition succeeded every time — until 1829. This was a particularly important catalyst, for if Parliament is, as Hooker describes, a kind of lay synod, and the monarch is the protector of the faith, what does this mean if dissenters and Roman Catholics were members of this Parliament? This inconsistency was not lost on the Tractarians, and for this reason they urged their own form of dissent, which itself was a new ecclesio-political reality.
Establishment for its own sake, but *as a response itself to division*. I consider this in distinction to the general anti-Establishment perspective of the Oxford Movement.

In order to make the case that a particularly pernicious form of ecclesial politics funds Wordsworth’s exegesis, I give a brief historical background to the High Church party of the eighteenth century, ending with the “Hackney Phalanx” with which Wordsworth identifies. This offers a context for describing his reading of Isaiah and also helps identify moments in his exegesis that indicate an impact of this political perspective. In Wordsworth’s exegesis of Isaiah, Scripture abounds in its testimony to Christ, but equally so to the body of the Church as central to the locus of scriptural interpretation. However, within Wordsworth’s view of the prominent place of the Church in Isaiah — which he refers to as the One Universal Church — he appropriates a similar role as that of his heroes, the early Church Fathers, for whom the idea of coexisting, yet divided, “churches” was an extremely rare occurrence. His reading therefore has little consideration of the reality of a Church divided, but rather asserts a studious avoidance of this state of affairs by a perspective that implicitly assumes that the English Church is the only “true” Church, or at least the only true Church within the Kingdom, which accords with High Church ecclesiology.

1 *The Ecclesio-Political Vision of the High Church Party*

As F.C. Mather notes, “however much importance has been assigned to High Churchmanship as a form of political behaviour . . . this has been usually kept quite separate from High Church theology and High Church theory, which have not been allowed to count for much in eighteenth century Church and society.” My aim in this section is to outline the various threads of this political vision and to show how it is

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intrinsic to High Church theology and exegesis. I also employ some exegetical remarks by Oxford Movement divines to indicate similarities and distinctions.

In general, all High Church adherents saw themselves as inheritors of a form of Anglicanism that harkened back to the Caroline divines, the anti-Calvinism of Archbishop Laud, the *iure divino* of the episcopacy and, in general, the more elaborate liturgical practices that parallel or even mimic the form Roman Catholic rites. However, by the time of the eighteenth century, particularly with the accession of George III in 1760, High Church thought emerged as a significant position within the Church of England, for it “enabled High Churchmen for the first time since 1714 to focus their theoretical royalist sentiments once more on the person of a living monarch.”

Additionally, the French Revolution incited jingoistic, monarchical political theories, particularly ones against the idea of a republic. As often as High Churchmen were suspected of being Jacobites, they were suspicious that others were sympathetic with Jacobins: “revision, or at least widespread discussion, of the religious status quo was on the agenda of deists, Arians and others, who were suspicious of ‘priestcraft’ . . . [They] were perceived by High-Churchmen as evidence of ‘the infidel spirit of the times.’”

One of the central verses that gave biblical warrant for High Church royalism, and particularly relevant for my purposes, was Isaiah 49:23: “And Kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers.” Nockles argues that “the text was interpreted to justify an understanding of the Royal Supremacy that was consciously anti-Erastian. Thus, for traditional High Churchmen, the Supremacy was but a reflection of

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3Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 58. George III was the first of the Hanovarian kings who was both born in England and whose first language was English.

the sacral, quasi-religious character of the office of a monarch.”5 I show the importance Wordsworth also places on this passage in my analysis of his exegesis.

It is instructive to briefly mention two influential forms of eighteenth-century High Churchmanship that provide an important context for the Oxford Movement as well as for the exegesis of Wordsworth. The Hutchinsonians were a kind of eighteenth-century High Church “movement,” whose intellectual orientation descends from the rather eccentric writings of John Hutchinson (1674–1737). In response to Newton’s grand system, which redefined the way people perceived the universe, Hutchinson “devised his own system of the world, the first part of which he published in 1724, under the title Moses’s Principia,” a clearly antagonistic attempt to be a challenge to Newton’s own Principia.6 A central aspect to Hutchinson’s thought was a peculiar approach to the Bible: since he considered it as the infallible word of God interpreted in a certain way, he could use it to develop his own theory of knowledge and science, which he believed people like Newton challenged. His exegetical strategy was a focus on Hebrew root words and grammar, and he accomplished his work as an autodidact of the language.7 He ultimately sought to use the Bible — and the Old Testament in particular — as an apologetic device to prove the truth of Christianity, particularly with respect to the Trinity. He considered unpointed Hebrew as the original human language, and his

5Nockles, The Oxford Movement in Context, 57.

6John C. English, “John Hutchinson’s Critique of Newtonian Heterodoxy,” Church History 68, no. 3 (September 1999): 582. One aspect of Newtonian science that particularly agitated thinkers — not just Hutchinson, but those who had to be convinced of gravity’s existence — was how his gravitational model suggested objects can act “at a distance” on others without any direct bodily contact. Hutchinson’s theological problem with this was the suggestion that inert matter can act; this, to him, led to a form of pantheism: “lying behind Hutchinson’s question was the belief that matter was inherently passive. Spirit alone was essentially active. To attribute agency to matter was to ascribe divine attributes to it” (English, “Hutchinson’s Critique of Newtonian Heterodoxy,” 585).

7English, “Hutchinson’s Critique of Newtonian Heterodoxy,” 588–89.
abiding fascination with Hebrew was carried on by many of his followers, who
maintained an interest in the Old Testament.

Hutchinson also “articulated High Church anxieties about the anthropocentric
individualism of much rationalist theology,” as well as a disdain for a priori arguments
for the existence of God, and saw the idea of “natural religion” as an oxymoron, as true
religion can only be based on the revelation of God.8 Equally important is that
“Hutchinsonians were leading exponents in the eighteenth century Church of England of
a revival of the Orthodox political theology associated with the Caroline Divines.”9 They
can therefore be categorized biblically and politically as “anti-Enlightenment,” of a
specifically Newtonian sort, and certainly a reactionary movement.10

8E. A. Varley, The Last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church

9Nockles, The Oxford Movement in Context, 45.

Several important figures were associated with the Hutchinsonians, such as William Jones of
Nayland (1726–1800), Alexander Catcott (1725–79), and George Horne (1730–92), bishops of Norwich.
The latter serves as a good transitional figure between the Hutchinsonians and those of the Hackney
Phalanx. Horne, who became president of Magdalen College in 1768, was in his early life an ardent
Hutchinsonian, espousing the system’s retrieval of “the old ways.” However, for many who studied at
Oxford, such as Horne, Jones, and Catcott, “the combination of a full-blooded system of thought with
uncompromisingly confrontational followers did not help the reputation of Hutchinsonians in its early
stages” (Derya Gurses, “Academic Hutchinsonians and Their Quest for Relevance, 1734–1790,” History of
European Ideas 31 [2005]: 411). Many gave up their strident anti-Newtonian stance as well as
Hutchinson’s idiosyncratic linguistic methods, if not an interest in Hebrew in general. Thus Horne would
moderate with respect to these principles. Yet an abiding theme that remained for these “moderates” was
the political aspect of their thought, which saw the defence of Christian principles and the Established
Church of England as essentially one and the same. Horne was a controversialist whose “polemic was
symptomatic of a reaction in the University against the exponents of a continuing Enlightenment in which
ecclesiastical traditions would count for nothing in comparison with utilitarian morality and an avowedly
rational measurement of faith” (Aston, “Horne and Heterodoxy,” 905).

With respect to exegesis, his Hutchinsonian perspective “confirmed his essentially typological
view of the Bible” (Aston, “Horne and Heterodoxy,” 900). We can see how Horne applies this typological
approach to the Old Testament, in particular the Psalms, in the preface to his Commentary on the Psalms
(1776) (George Horne, A Commentary on the Book of Psalms [London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1776]). If
Isaiah has traditionally been given the appellation of “the Fifth Gospel,” then the Psalter in Horne’s
description functions as a kind of sixth, for he regards it as “the Manual of the Son of God, in the days of
his flesh” because of how often Jesus of Nazareth uses it (George Horne, A Commentary on the Book of
Psalms, iv). He also enumerates every instance in the New Testament in which the Psalms are employed.
The words of the Psalms, because of their close connection to Christ, can be seen as “proceeding from the
While Hutchinsonianism as a distinct movement did not endure, some of its ideas fed into the ecclesio-political outlook of the so-called Hackney Phalanx, also known as the Clapton Sect. This was an important High Church group who, while intellectual inheritors of certain dimensions of Hutchinsonianism, minimized the anti-Newtonian rhetoric and opted for a more conventional approach to Hebrew and Old Testament linguistic studies. Even so, they “were uncompromising in their avowals of anti-Erastianism and on that basis attacked the theories of Warburton and Paley.”

Important for my purpose, in continuity with the Hutchinsonians, the royal office was viewed in a quasi-sacral manner in which it serves the needs of the Established Church.

By the time of Christopher Wordsworth, the dramatic activities of the Oxford Movement had overshadowed the Hackney Phalanx. However, the Hackney Phalanx was a highly influential prelude to the Oxford Movement. The political events of the late 1820’s surrounding Catholic Emancipation gave additional impetus to rethink the nature

mouth of Christ, or of the church, or of both, considered as one mystical person” (George Horne, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ix). As regards signification, interpretation is not merely about an ephemeral “spiritual” referent, but a movement: “on one side Canaan, and a national prosperity; on the other, heaven, and human happiness: on one side, a redemption from Egyptian servitude, and national evils; on the other, a redemption of the whole human race from absolute evil. . . . It is impossible, therefore, that God can say anything to David, under the quality of king of this chosen nation, which he does not speak, at the same time, to Jesus Christ, as King of all the elect” (George Horne, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, xvii). This movement is one from the concrete reality of “national” Israel to the universal. Yet Horne and his High Church affiliates, by seeing a close connection between biblical Israel and the Church, regard the “national” dimension of the English Church as a continual characteristic of the elect.

Hutchinsonians, including Horne, were influenced by one of the last of the Nonjurors, Charles Leslie (1650–1722) whose own theological perspective had some affinities in terms of his high theological regard for the monarchy. It was anti-Erastian, yet the close connection between the Church and the State were by necessity strong — the king-priest image in Old Testament Israel being a biblical model for their perspectives.

11Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 58. These later figures, Warburton and Paley (both Williams), essentially considered the Church of England as part of a larger “civil” entity, without any significant theological (or biblical) articulation.
of the Church in the midst of a nation in which the Church, while formally established, became merely one among many Christian societies. So,

by 1845, the question dividing High Churchmen was whether to oppose the government’s secularising policy by, on the one hand, reasserting the Church of England’s constitutional claims as they were prior to 1828, or, on the other hand, by arguing that the state’s duties to the church were individual and that a restriction of those duties might be a price worth paying for the church’s freedom. The former view was upheld by the Hackney remnant, including the Wordsworths; that latter represented the position of the Tractarian rump.\textsuperscript{12}

It is this latter point that politically distinguishes the old High Church party from the Tractarians.\textsuperscript{13} The Hutchinsonians and the Hackney Phalanx were the vanguard against the perceived attacks by latitudinarians, deists, and, eventually, a secularizing government that proved itself incapable of living up to the idea of the nursing parent of Isaiah 49:23. For the Tractarians, the solution was a relinquishment of a sacrosanct monarchy, while non-Tractarian High Church thinkers just as doggedly maintained the Caroline model. Indeed, its strengthening would be a salve for the encroachment of dissenters. While Wordsworth’s political vision is less self-consciously aimed at maintaining a “party perspective” than that of the Oxford Movement, the High Church wing of the Church of England — Tractarian or otherwise — had to struggle with the meaning of what it meant for the Church to be the Church in a fragmenting and rapidly secularizing society. My focus on the exegesis of Christopher Wordsworth is to show how his ecclesio-political perspective, itself a response to the problem of ecclesial identity, bears upon his reading of Isaiah.

\textsuperscript{12}Nockles, \textit{The Oxford Movement in Context}, 90–91.

\textsuperscript{13} Nockles does note that some important leaders in the Oxford Movement, among them Newman and Pusey, initially held Establishment principles (Nockles, \textit{The Oxford Movement in Context}, 72–79). Eventually, however, the Tractarians consciously distanced themselves from the old High Church party. They derisively refer to them as the “Zs,” and seek to cast the old High Church party as “high and dry,” a dying movement of stiff and staid worshippers who exhibited questionable zeal for the Apostolic faith. To some extent, this became an accepted fiction in the nineteenth-century mind, and carried forward into the twentieth century.
George Horne (1730–92) and Samuel Horsley (1733–1806), two pre-TRACTARIAN
High Church exemplars, illustrate this theo-political dimension and its hermeneutical
impact. Committed High Churchman and moderate Hutchinsonian George Horne
preached a sermon on 1 Peter 2:21 (“Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his
steps”), entitled “The Christian King.” In a figural move that bespeaks of his yearning for
a close connection between King and Church, Horne moves from speaking of the horror
of the suffering of Christ, to numbering Charles I as one of the martyrs who participate in
the Passion of Christ,

from righteous *Abel* to the blessed martyr of this day; upon whose unparalleled
murder though we cannot reflect but with horror and astonishment, yet most
gratefully are we ever bound to commemorate the glories of God’s grace, which
he made the villainy of the most abandoned miscreants an occasion of calling
forth and displaying to mankind in the person of his anointed, who “left him an
example, that he should follow his steps.”

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Acknowledging that such a comparison of the “royal martyr” to Christ could be
unpopular, Horne asks, “why should it be thought a thing incredible, that the character of
a Christian king should bear a resemblance to Christ . . . when we all know that the
characters of some of the kings of *Israel* bore so near a resemblance, that they had the
honour to prefigure him before his coming?”

15 Therefore, Horne shows he is an archetype of
High Church Caroline (literally) opinion by considering Charles I — an unpopular king in
the memory of many in England, but most particularly for dissenters — as a kind of
“postfigural” representative of Christ.

Samuel Horsley, bishop of Rochester, was a significant precursor to the Oxford
Movement in that he “familiarized the Church of his day with the doctrine of apostolical

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Cooke, Oxford; and G. G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster Row; by J. Cundee, 1800), 5. While it is true that
Charles is the only canonized saint of the Church of England, it was predominantly the High Church party
that participated in his veneration.

succession, rescuing it from becoming the exclusive property of the Nonjurors.”

While he died too early to be identified with the Hackney Phalanx, Horsley shares many of their perspectives, particularly vis-à-vis politics. In terms of exegesis, I mention Horsley because his eschatological focus is an important concomitant mode of reading the Bible, which his political commitments fund. Consider his *Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah* (1799). While he agrees that this is “one of the most obscure passages of the ancient Prophets,” he nonetheless does not shy from using it as a point of departure to speak of political events of his time and their relation to the eschaton. The passage refers to a time when God, “immediately before the final gathering of his elect from the four winds of Heaven, will purify his church . . . and . . . strike all nations with religious awe. . . . That purification . . . is not at all inconsistent with the seeming prosperity of the affairs of the atheistical confederacy.” What he means by this latter term is made more explicit later to mean revolutionary France. Horsley is more circumspect in this identification than Jones of Nayland, who did not eschew such claims. Yet the political challenge of radical revolution in France clearly impacts his perspective on reading this chapter in Isaiah in that there was at least a

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16 Mather, *High Church Prophet*, 306.

17 Horsley also represents what Mather sees as a new “split” in the Church of England, no longer between the High Church party and the deists/latitudinarians, but the former and the Evangelicals (Mather, *High Church Prophet*, 308). The reason for this was his remarkable liberality toward Roman Catholic recusants, while remaining doggedly against dissenters, a perspective that was essentially opposite to that of Evangelicals.


19 I do not attend to his interpretation that bespeaks of a proto-Zionism. This emerges from his interpretation of this chapter of Isaiah, which he regards as a prediction of the restoration of the Jews to their land. This tradition, which began with the Puritans, was taken up in the nineteenth century with more rigour by Evangelicals, and, clearly, some members of the High Church party.

20 Horsley, *Critical Disquisitions*, 84.
nascency of Antichrist:

His [Antichrist’s] rise, strictly speaking, the beginning of the monster, was in the apostolic age. For it were easy to trace the pedigree of French Philosophy, Jacobinism, and Bavarian Illumination, up to the first heretics. But it is now we see the adolescence of that man of sin, or rather of lawlessness, who is to throw off all the restraints of religion, morality, and custom, and undo the bands of civil society. . . . That son of perdition who shall neither be a Protestant, nor a Papist; neither Christian, Jew, nor Heathen. 21

Despite the general antipathy of English Protestants toward “papists,” Horsley no longer takes that more common position that the Pope was Antichrist. Rather, it is the irreligious character of this figure that identifies him as the Antichrist. But, more relevant for the present matter is Horsley’s identification of this atheistic system with France. Thus, by “direct denigration of the French the British national cause was enhanced in righteousness.” 22 It is worth mentioning that, in general, this eschatological imminence in exegesis is not generally a hallmark of Tractarian reading. 23 The Oxford Movement

21 Horsley, Critical Disquisitions, 98.

22 Mather, High Church Prophet, 267

23 Although I will not be analyzing Samuel Horsley’s exegesis, it is worth noting in passing that he also wrote several volumes of “biblical criticism,” wherein Volume 2 has a commentary on Isaiah (Samuel Horsley, Biblical Criticism on the First Fourteen Historical Books of the Old Testament: Also on the First Nine Prophetic Books: In Four Volumes [London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, and F.C. & J. Rivington, 1820]). It comprises his Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah for his commentary on Isaiah 18, and is his most sustained “commentary” on a portion of Isaiah as such. The vast majority of the commentary’s remainder is “critical” in the sense that, as with Day, White, and all such predecessors, it consists of matters related to translation. His primary interlocutors are Vitringa, Lowth, and the much less-well-known Father Houbigant. The latter figure is Charles François Houbigant (1686–1783), a French Roman Catholic scholar who spent a great deal of his career on biblical interpretation. Horsley is at times critical of Houbigant, but he is the only Protestant thinker of my project who, with general approval, maintains a sustained conversation with a contemporary Roman Catholic.

Sprinkled throughout Horsley’s commentary on Isaiah are various interpretations that touch on substantial theological issues, some of which have to do with the Church. For instance, he comments on Isaiah 5:17 as follows: “The Christian Church is released from an anxious observance of the letter of the Mosaic law, and has authority to prescribe her own ceremonies” (Horsley, Biblical Criticism [Volume 2], 26). This hinges upon the translation of the key phrase to be “then shall lambs feed after their manner.” The NRSV reads as, “then the lambs shall graze as in their pasture.” Many comments also are apologetic in nature. In a more detailed way than Robert Payne Smith could do in his lectures, Horsley painstakingly translates various passages to accord with his interpretation. Thus, with little argumentation, the almah of Isaiah 7 is to be translated “virgin,” so that “the sign shall be the miraculous birth of that promised seed, who, by the proofs of his own deity, shall overthrow the credit of these imaginary gods” (Horsley, Biblical
tended toward a retrieval of the interpretive practices of the Church Fathers.24

In distinction to the ecclesially-centred monarchical vision of the Church, the later Oxford Movement was equally concerned with the Church, but in a political atmosphere that sought independence from the state. Approaches to exegesis for both parties often overlap, but the biblical models that the Oxford Movement employed shift away from the use of such passages as Isaiah 49:23, or that of the hierarchical priestly form that Andrewes uses (see Chapter 2). The Oxford Movement regarded the breakdown of the Church to “liberal” forces within and without, and fought their battles on these terms rather than protecting the sacerdotal power of the monarchy as part of a political vision of

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24 Note in particular Newman’s Tract 83 on Antichrist (John Henry Newman, “Tract 83: Advent Sermons on Antichrist,” in *Tracts for the Times, Volume V*, Members of the University of Oxford [London: Rivington, 1840], 1–54). In it, there is also no identification of Antichrist with Rome, and Newman is in agreement with Horsley that the coming reign of the Man of Sin would comport with the rise of liberalism; yet, they differ in that Newman no longer connects this interpretation to contemporary political realities. Rather, he identifies it with the very reality of a divided Church: “It is his policy to split us up and divide us, to dislodge us gradually from our rock of strength. And if there is to be a persecution, perhaps it will be then; then, perhaps, when we are all of us in all parts of Christendom so divided, and so reduced, so full of schism, so close upon heresy. When we have cast ourselves upon the world and depend for protection upon it, and have given up our independence and our strength, then he may burst upon us in fury as far as God allows him” (Newman, “Tract 83,” 52.)
the Church. The Church is no less a concrete, embodied reality within the world, but it becomes decoupled from the state. Like many of those who represent the High Church approach to the Church, Newman and Pusey found the ecclesiology of the spiritualist traditions as represented by both Evangelicals and Broad Church thinkers as hopelessly disembodied — and ultimately destructive — notions of the Church and Scripture. While their opponents regarded High Churchmen as espousing “romish ritual,” it was because of the “spiritualizing” of many Evangelical and Broad Churchmen that they aimed at a Church in which there was a concrete realization of the Church’s bodily existence in the world.\(^\text{25}\) Both Newman and Pusey urged a “literal” reading of the text, which included a Church figurally embodied in the people of Israel.\(^\text{26}\)

\(^{25}\)This can be seen in Newman’s discussion on the nature of prophecy in his sermons “The Christian Church a Continuation of the Jewish” (John Henry Newman, “The Christian Church a Continuation of the Jewish,” in *Sermons, Bearing on Subjects of the Day* [New York, NY: Appleton, 1844], 180–98) and “The Principle of Continuity Between the Jewish and Christian Churches” (John Henry Newman, “The Principle of Continuity Between the Jewish and Christian Churches,” in *Sermons, Bearing on Subjects of the Day* [New York, NY: Appleton, 1844], 199–217). Newman makes use of the notion of the “remnant” in Isaiah 37:31 to explore its fulfillment. He explicitly rejects the argument that there is an as yet future fulfillment as argued, for instance, by the Millenarians; but he also opposes a “spiritual” fulfillment, “that the promised reign of Christ upon the earth has been nothing more than the influence of the Gospel over the souls of men, the triumph of Divine Grace, the privileges enjoyed by faith, and the conversion of the elect” (Newman, “The Christian Church a Continuation of the Jewish,” 180–81). Newman calls the latter a “figurative” fulfillment, by which he means only a moral, “religious,” or tropological interpretation. At the same time, Newman does not deny a spiritual interpretation; as he says, “the prophecies in question have in their substance been fulfilled literally, and in the present Dispensation; and, if so, we need no figurative and no future fulfillment. Not that there may not be both a figurative and future accomplishment besides; but these will be over and above, if they take place, and do not interfere with the direct meaning of the sacred text and its literal fulfillment” (Newman, “The Christian Church a Continuation of the Jewish,” 181). Newman opposes these two ways of reading the text, represented (in broad terms) by Evangelicals on the one hand and by the Broad Church on the other, though the latter tends to minimize any future referent beyond certain “spiritual” benefits that may accrue by the steady improvement of humanity. For instance, with Robert Payne Smith in Chapter 4, the Church is a spiritual fulfillment of “carnal” Israel; once the outer shell of the many rituals are removed, the inner spiritual core is embodied (invisibly) by the Church. Rather, Newman wants the Church to be in literal “continuity” with Israel, which is to say that he regards the Church to be a living, embodied people who are marked not only by certain moral leanings or theological propositions, but by liturgically shared practices. Unlike Smith, he does not want to slough off the “carnal” in favour of an immaterial “spiritual” core.

\(^{26}\)With respect to Newman’s understanding of the term “literal,” he intends a more “carnal” understanding of the word. The Church is not to be regarded in merely ideational terms but concretely bound to the order of creation. Much conjecture has abounded regarding Romanticism and its impact on
One area of exegetical overlap between the old High Church party and the Oxford Movement is their appreciation of the exegesis of the Church Fathers. The Tractarians aimed at a more vigorous retrieval of the Fathers’ approach to the Bible as a salve for the caustic impact of encroaching liberalism. Many, particularly liberals, conceptualized the Oxford Movement in terms of the old High Church party, namely, as an attempt at domination and control, a retrieval of the pre-Reformation era of Church tyranny. This was often the result of a misunderstanding between the aims of the Tractarians and the political goals of the old High Church party.27

the Oxford Movement, especially with respect to aesthetics and the imagination. However, the Movement’s rootedness in the world and focus on liturgy and embodied acts is better accounted for on the basis of its understanding of the Incarnation. In an otherwise fine and illuminating essay on Pusey, for instance, David Jasper suggests that in Pusey “it is the imagination which recognizes that the key to the profane is sacred history” (David Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament’,” in Pusey Rediscovered, ed. Perry Buter [London: SPCK, 1983], 60). Yet, the quote from Pusey’s lectures that immediately follows to support his argument makes no mention of the “imagination” and I suspect that Jasper incorrectly attempts to link Pusey to Coleridge’s Romanticism. It would be more accurate to argue that Pusey, in his understanding of typology, approaches history from a theological point of view that urges a kind of analogy of faith where what can be known of sacred history is by the eyes of faith. This is not to say that those same forces that drove Romanticism were not present in the Oxford Movement, but this does not give sufficient explanatory power to many of their theological positions, certainly not in Pusey’s writing. For many in the Oxford Movement, and Newman especially, their view of the world is “centred upon the mystery of the Incarnation, seen as providing the key both to the sacramental understanding of the universe, and to an understanding of the Church wholly centred upon the person and work of Christ, the redeemer” (A.M. Allchin, “The Theological Vision of the Oxford Movement,” in The Rediscovery of Newman: An Oxford Symposium, ed. John Coulson and A.M. Allchin [London: Sheed & Ward, etc., 1967], 54). As Pusey himself says, “the whole system of religion, contemplative and practical, is one of God’s condescension: God cometh down to us, not we mount up to God. Its cornerstone and characteristic is ‘God manifest in the flesh’” (Brian Douglas, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types and Prophecies in the Old Testament’: Implications for Eucharistic Theology,” International Journal of Systematic Theology [2011]: 16). Since Christ came in the body of a human — the One who is himself truly “carnal” — then this affirmation of created reality is to be followed by the Church, which is itself the body of Christ. Therefore, when the Old Testament uses various terms (or “figures” as in “figures of speech,” not implying a mere spiritual figuration), they are to be applied to the Church as the body of Christ. Newman opposes those who see such terms “as if the promised dominion were to be moral, the promised Church invisible, the promised reign of Christ but spiritual” (Newman, “The Principle of Continuity,” 184).

27A representative case of this disconnect between a “liberal” and a Tractarian, is the exchange between Newman and William Robertson Smith (1846–94). It is also a good example of two ways of approaching the relation between Scripture and the Church. Smith wrote a rejoinder to Newman’s claims in his essays (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” in Lectures & Essays of William Robertson Smith, ed. John Sutherland Black and George Chrystal [London: A. and C. Black, 1912]), which has a section entitled “Application of Preceding Statement to Newman’s Theory of Prophecy, Church and
In his Preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*, George Horne’s deeply figural

Kingdom of God, etc.” Smith was not an Anglican and is therefore not a figure of central importance to this discussion. However, given that his views were respected by people such as T.K. Cheyne, Smith’s attack on Newman is pertinent as it illuminates what Newman opposes, which is the typically Protestant (in his view), and hence “liberal,” approach to Scripture. First, Smith charges Newman’s view of prophecy as one which mimics that of the Medieval Church (e.g., W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 272), thereby raising the spectre of an oppressive Roman Catholicism. Since Newman putatively argues for a Medieval form of Church, Smith repeatedly insists that Newman was putting forth a “theocracy,” although this is a term that Newman never employs in his two essays on the continuity between Israel and the Church.

Smith characterizes Newman’s account of prophecy as “scientifically unfortunate and . . . dangerous in the interpretation of prophecy” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 268). Second, Smith does not deny the claim that the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in the New Testament, but his interpretive approach directly opposes that of Newman. Smith says, “just as the Old Testament institutions have disappeared in the New Testament things which contain all their true spiritual meaning without the earthly husk; so in some parts of prophecy the fulfilment, while a real fulfilment of the spiritual idea of the prophecy, may not carry out that idea in the form which was limited by the prophet’s Old Testament standpoint” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 264). Smith regards the importance of temporal and visible properties of the Church in Newman’s scheme as problematic. He argues that they imply a visible and political rule of even “secular” life. Smith also faults Newman for his lack of exegetical neutrality, for “while Mr. Newman supposes himself to be discussing a question purely exegetical, and thence deducing a view as to the relation of the two covenants, this apparently sound argument moves in a vicious circle in so much as the quasi-exegetical canon involves a lemma from the High Church Theology” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 268–69). This is inimical to proper exegesis for Smith, and contrary to the principles of the Reformation. Precisely because Newman’s High Church theology contaminates his exegesis, and is therefore indistinct from Roman Catholicism, Smith must take a position that is contrary; as a member of the High Church party, Newman is *ipso facto* in the wrong.

As regards Smith’s view of the meaning of a “literal” fulfillment and how his theology bears on ecclesiology, he accepts that there is a kind of fulfillment, “which in all fullness corresponds with the principle and details of the prophecy as these appear by a process of literal exegesis; i.e., a literal fulfilment is an exact fulfilment of the prophecy literally interpreted. . . . If in any farther point the fulfilment falls short of the prophecy, it can no longer be proved to be the true fulfilment by mere exegesis, but some theological principle as to the proper relation between prophecy and fulfilment must be applied” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 271). This rather convoluted statement essentially means that when a “literal” fulfillment cannot be discerned by “exegesis,” theology gives the correct spiritual interpretation — as a secondary step in interpretation. Smith’s ecclesiology illustrates his meaning. The universal aspirations of the prophets cannot be interpreted “literally” in the sense of the “theocracy” he accuses Newman of urging. In order to properly account for the prophecies, Smith makes a distinction between the Church and the Kingdom of Christ. For the former, he takes membership in the Church in spiritual and, almost inevitably, individualist terms: “To be a member of the Church implies . . . direct personal union to the Head of the Church. Hence the sign of membership in Christ’s body is not an outward visible mark. . . . It is the invisible bond that binds together the mystic body of Christ . . . an object of faith, not of sight.” He defines the Church in classical Protestant terms that also echo Article 19: “Wherever the word of God is truly preached and the sacraments purely administered, there we must recognise a sign of the presence of the Church” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 275). His interpretation of this statement, however, is that the Church has no government that is any more than spiritual. Smith does not argue that there are formally two Churches — one visible, one invisible — but that there is “one church — visible in respect to its organisation for the administration of the word and sacraments, invisible in respect to the criterion of individual faith in Christ” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 277). The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is distinct from the Church; it is that royal rule of Christ to which the Church and all people are subject. “The organisation of God’s Kingdom is not then
reading (see note above) was, for its time, a revolutionary exegetical move that retrieved the centrality of reading the Bible christologically by the use of typology. It challenged the tendency to connect those passages only to Christ that were placed within a rather wooden predictive “prophetic” framework. This is another point that the leaders of the Oxford Movement had in common with the old High Church party. Consider E. B. Pusey’s view of prophecy and the Old Testament. I attend specifically to his “Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament” of 1836. Unfortunately, these lectures are as yet unpublished, so I rely on Allchin’s article on “The Theological Vision of the Old Testament” and Jasper’s article “Pusey’s Lectures and Types of Prophecies,” as well as Timothy Larsen’s A People of One Book, in which the first chapter is devoted to Pusey.28 For all that later in life Pusey often took a more strident and argumentative stand with respect to Scripture, it would be too strong to suggest that there was a conversion of sorts from the early, German-influenced Pusey to the hard-nosed and sometimes off-putting an outward Church organisation, but a hidden organisation of God’s providence by which every man’s calling in Christ is so ordered that each, while doing his own work for Christ, is doing a harmonious part of the great work that shall yet fill the whole earth” (W. Robertson Smith, “The Fulfilment of Prophecy,” 278). There is in Smith a form of “theocracy,” which is only spiritual and ruled only by Christ. The Church is a special servant of that Kingdom serving a kind of “maintenance” function to further this Kingdom, but it is the responsibility of the individual believer to carry out his or her spiritual journey in service of Christ. In Smith’s opposition to Newman, and indirectly against Roman Catholic ecclesiology, the Church becomes an important but rather secondary and non-essential aspect of prophecy. We see this in Robert Payne Smith (Chapter 4), and in a more radical form in Thomas Kelly Cheyne. In other words, Smith’s theological perspective is informed by his antagonistic perspective, which is additionally given its intellectual shape by the spiritualist traditions that I outline in Chapter 2.

28 Allchin, “The Theological Vision of the Oxford Movement”; Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’”; Timothy Larsen, A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). I should point out that Larsen’s central thesis, that everyone, whether biblicist, High Church or atheist, was steeped in the Bible and thought in biblical categories, is a corollary to my contention that a study of ecclesial division necessitates a consideration of the competing approaches to the Bible. Larsen shows that not only were the Victorians affected by the pervasiveness of Scripture, but the Bible was the battleground of and catalyst for all religious debate.
conservative who was the visible leader of the Oxford Movement. Since, as Larsen puts it so succinctly, “it is important to keep in mind how much E. B. Pusey . . . was hated,” accounts of him must be considered in this context.30

Pusey’s “Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament” are instructive to get a sense of Pusey’s view of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, as well as his views on prophecy. This was a time during which Pusey was working on the Library of the Fathers, so there is a strong sense in which patristic exegesis informs his view of Scripture. Significantly, at this time of his life, Pusey is critical of the way that prophecy is read in the context of what he refers to as “orthodoxism,” which articulates the Christian faith in terms that are simplified into what today would be called a “propositional” orientation to doctrine.31

Regarding biblical exegesis, Pusey’s critique

29Larsen, A People of One Book, 11.

3031For instance, it is often suggested that Pusey’s Daniel the Prophet is a work of an intransigent conservative, fighting a losing battle in favour of the sixth-century authorship of the book of Daniel. Larsen, however, convincingly shows that, on the basis of the depth of scholarship as well as the positive reception of this work, Pusey’s Daniel was, in its time, a work that was unsurpassed for its level of argumentation until S. R. Driver’s commentary in 1900 (Larsen, A People of One Book, 27–39). In his rehabilitation of Pusey’s work, Larsen convincingly shows the extent to which Pusey has been suppressed in the many years since his death. At the same time, the level at which division has played into the Daniel commentary is revealed when he says, “Pusey’s goal in this book ‘is to meet the pseudo-criticism on its own grounds.’ In other words, he will beat them at their own game with their acknowledged weapons; he will advance arguments that are built upon presuppositions or that employ methods which his opponents share” (Larsen, A People of One Book, 27). It is for this reason that, in the end, despite its level of scholarship, Daniel the Prophet is filled with “almost impenetrable rationalism” (Christopher R. Seitz, Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 17). Like Robert Payne Smith, the divisive context had forced Pusey into this rationalistic corner. While Larsen is correct to note that Pusey’s work is under-appreciated for its scholarship, without placing all the blame on Pusey, I would suggest that this scholarship — and the response it generated — was judged for its ability to convince and not to exegete.

31I am alluding here to the language of George Lindbeck from George A. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), in which he distinguishes between cognitive-propositional and experiential-expressive modes of religious discourse. While I am clearly being anachronistic, I would argue that Pusey, as with Lindbeck, engaging in the ecumenically charged situation as a mediator of sorts between Roman Catholics and Protestants, presaged a similar line of thought as that of Lindbeck. I would add that Jasper errs by characterizing Pusey’s rejection of “orthodoxism” in “experiential-expressive” terms and aligns him with Coleridge and (William) Wordsworth. As my discussion regarding the importance of the biblical language below shows,
We are anxious indeed, to trace up fulfilments of prophecy, but in a way wholly distinct; we wish to find predictions clear, apparent and undeniable, which we more sort with the events, and which on the very surface shall indisputably correspond.

As regards the Bible, it is essential that the centre of Scripture is Christ, but also that God uses the natural world in the process of revelation. Like the Fathers, Pusey and many of those of the Oxford Movement are informed by a platonic metaphysic in which the symbol, or “emblem,” as Pusey calls it, ontologically participates in the thing to which it refers:

It is through the medium of these figures that we understand (as far as we do understand) the reality. . . . He who would lay aside these types and typical language, and understand the mysteries of God without them, will be acting contrary to the teaching of Scripture and so very wrongly and foolishly. Men think that they gain in clearness, but they lose in depth; they will employ definite

Pusey’s approach can perhaps be thought of in a “cultural-linguistic” manner avant la lettre.

32Quoted in Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types,’” 52 as p. 10 of the Pusey MS. Here, Pusey is reflecting a concept that is common to the thinkers within the Oxford movement, which is the notion of “reserve,” as expounded by Isaac Williams (1802–65) in Tracts 80 and 87 in Tracts for the Times (Isaac Williams, Tracts 80 and 87, On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge [London, 1838]). He challenges the ease by which Scripture is too often interpreted, which includes the cherished Protestant doctrine of scriptural clarity. As Williams says in Tract 80, “there appears in God’s manifestations of Himself to mankind, in conjunction with an exceeding desire to communicate that knowledge, a tendency to conceal, and throw a veil over it, as if it were injurious to us unless we were of a certain disposition to receive it” (Williams, On Reserve, 2). Whereas Williams urged the notion of reserve in opposition to the ease with which many spoke of sacred doctrine, Pusey applied it with more focus on Scripture. Part of the reason for this apophatic moment of Tractarian theology is the apologetic context in which much of the Bible — especially prophecy — was too often read. As Pusey says, “the notion, and uses of Prophecy have, in these latter days, been much narrowed and obscured by the apologetic character which our Theology has so largely assumed” (quoted in Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’,” 52, from Pusey’s MS, p. 1. Note that this is where one can be correct in arguing that the “early” Pusey contradicts the later by entering into the midst of the apologetic fray). This apologetic urge, which attempted to make more clear what God had revealed under a veil, in fact contributed to an even greater obfuscation of God’s revelation, as it reduced prophecy merely to its predictive function. In Pusey’s view, the ancient Church regarded Scripture as infinitely fecund, full of meaning, at times hidden, but ever-generative in its revelatory power: “The Fathers, instead of following their own predilections, were prepared to ‘follow out the hints which God has given’, and learn from apostolic teaching, putting Christ and not themselves at the centre” (Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’”, 55, quoting from p. 12 of the Pusey MS). This does not mean that Scripture is obscure or opaque, but that the approach to it can only be valid with the eyes of faith and only through those means that God has chosen to reveal himself.
terms, in order to comprehend that which is infinite!\(^{33}\)

In other words, every biblical term, even in its potential obscurity and hiddenness, has been chosen by God to reveal himself. “Reserve” and “veiling” are important theological terms, as they protect the transcendental sacredness of the Bible and theological language from the enervation of simplistic language, external methodologies, and a rendering of such language in all-too-human terms. He illustrates the way the Bible speaks of future things in the Old Testament by using the image of a child. The way a child speaks is constantly “typical” of the future-developed being: “they speak greater truth than they themselves (the outward organ of that truth) know: they speak it in reference to some particular occasion but indefinitely.”\(^{34}\) There is, then, a hidden meaning that is necessarily attaches to the words, which tradition calls the *sensus plenior*. Therefore, to engage in a new rendering of words by either simplifying or reducing them in categories of probative function is to strip off these layers of potential significance. *These* are the terms that God had chosen in order to mediate his revelation. Like Christ himself, they may not always be understood, but also like Christ, it is only these words and no others that God has chosen to participate in the reality of sacred history.

In this claim to hidden meanings within the text, Pusey has his sights aimed at both Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen, which he refers to respectively as the “pseudo-spiritualist” and the “carnal man”:

The pseudo-spiritualist and the carnal man alike see in the water, the bread or the wine nothing but the base element, and thereby each alike deprives himself of the benefit intended for him: the carnal will live on bread alone, the pseudospiritualist without it: the carnal mistakes the clouds and darkness for him who is enshrouded within it, the pseudo-spiritualist would behold Him whom ‘man cannot see and live’, the ‘light inapproachable whom no man hath seen or can see’; the carnal

\(^{33}\)Quoted in Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’,” 58 as Pusey’s MS, p. 24.

\(^{34}\)Quoted in Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’,” 58 as Pusey’s MS p. 14.
neglects the revelation, the pseudo-spiritual will know the unrevealed God.\footnote{35}{Quoted in Jasper, “Pusey’s ‘Lectures on Types’,” 63 from p. 23 of the Pusey MS. Pusey uses the Eucharist here to illustrate his meaning. The “carnal” only sees the material bread and wine as merely incidental to the referent. Similarly, the text is considered only in terms of its surface meaning, usually meaning its scientifically-constructed historical sense. With the “pseudo-spiritual” Evangelicals, the elements of the sacrament are similarly incidental, but the “real” meaning is the spiritual core of the text. For Pusey, in the same way that the elements of the Eucharist participate (though perhaps in a stronger sense) in the body of Christ, the text itself has an ontology in which the words can be distinguished, but not separated from, their referent.}

Neither Pusey nor Newman were merely nostalgic for a so-called “pre-critical” interpretation of Scripture. They were familiar with the newest critical approaches (mainly coming from Germany) of the Bible. They did not ignore such writings, particularly Pusey, who had travelled to Germany in 1825, where he studied many German thinkers with appreciation.\footnote{36}{He studied August Tholuck (1799–1877) and Karl Immanuel Nitzsch (1787–1868) who represented the \textit{Vermittelungstheologie} emerging from Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). That is, they aimed to bring together traditional Christian doctrine with modern scientific thought. However, he was also engaged with more conservative scholars such as Ernst Hengstenberg (1802–69), who participated in apologetic retrievals of the Bible, and, notably, of Isaiah itself, in the face of the scholarship of his German peers. Out of this experience came E. B. Pusey, \textit{An Historical Enquiry Into the Probable Causes of the Rationalist Character Lately Predominant in the Theology of Germany: To Which is Prefixed a Letter from Professor Sack, Upon the Rev. H. J. Rose’s Discourses on German Protestantism; Tr. from the German} (London: Printed for C. & J. Rivington, 1828–30). At this point, he was not yet involved with the Oxford Movement, and in fact the book was written as a response to the High Churchman Hugh James Rose, whose own book (Hugh James Rose, \textit{The State of the Protestant Religion in Germany: In a Series of Discourses Preached Before the University of Cambridge} [Cambridge: Printed by J. Smith; for J. Deighton & Sons. And sold by C. and J. Rivington, and G.B. Whittaker, 1825]) was a rather poor assessment of German theology. (Rose himself is an important High Church figure, who was highly critical of the Tractarians for their views against the Church as Established. See Nockles, \textit{The Oxford Movement in Context}, 86.)}

\footnote{37}{Pusey was then in a state of intellectual transition, and critical of scholastic orthodoxy. Given that his influences at the time were more liberal theologians such as Tholuck, the account was reflective of their mediating theology. However, it is a mistake to view this as the more “free thinking” Pusey, whose perspectives were snuffed out by the conservatism of the Oxford Movement. It is true that, in the end, Pusey wrote rather “incautiously” and would later come to regret some of the conclusions of his work. See Leighton Frappel, “‘Science’ in the Service of Orthodoxy: The Early Intellectual Development of E. B. Pusey,” in \textit{Pusey Rediscovered}, ed. Perry Buter (London: SPCK, 1983), 1–33.}
I contend that, although there are areas of overlap between the Tractarians and the old High Church movement, the former has a stronger project of retrieval of patristic exegesis for the purpose of aiming at a “primitive” form of Christianity. In this, there is a similarity between the Oxford Movement and Evangelicalism, as opposed as they were to each other. For instance, the old High Church party was more amenable to employing more traditional “evidences” for the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{37} Both, however, embarked on a vision of primitivism. The peculiarity of the old High Church movement, is a uniquely English political vision, and I show below how this political vision informs Wordsworth’s approach to Isaiah.

The end of the story of Pusey and Newman is well-known. Newman converted to Rome and Pusey narrowed his perspective on Scripture by entering into the battle arenas in which it fought. As with Cranmer, Whitgift, and Hooker, one can ask whether the deeply holistic scriptural vision of the High Church party was sufficiently stable to survive. Part of my argument is that the existence of such a radically divided Church ineluctably renders such a scriptural vision untenable and forces it to define itself over-against its opponents. This is because the old High Church conception of Scripture is so tied to ecclesial embodiment — yet the specificity of such a body is ill-defined or deeply contested. When divisiveness becomes endemic in the Church, this view of Scripture inevitably devolves into more simplistic categories of, for instance, “ritualism,” “liturgy,” or “pre-critical exegesis.” How can an ecclesially and concretely embodied exegesis exist when such a body is — equally concretely — fragmented?

\textsuperscript{37}This is one major issue on which Newman and Rose differed. See Nockles, The Oxford Movement in Context, 205. This apologetic mode, which has similarities with Robert Payne Smith’s reading of Scripture, which we see in Chapter 4, comes out in Wordsworth’s approach to Isaiah. Newman and Pusey’s disavowal of a systemic or methodological approach to Scripture equally disapproves of this apologetic mode.
2 Wordsworth and His Hermeneutical Orientation

In this section, I outline Wordsworth’s approach to the Bible and Isaiah in general. He was certainly no stranger to controversy. When *Essays and Reviews* came out in 1860, he was one of the respondents, especially to the most notorious of the essays, “On the Interpretation of Scripture” by Benjamin Jowett. His reply, among that of other respondents, was published in *Replies to “Essays and Reviews”* in 1862.\(^{38}\) As Rogerson puts it, his riposte was “polemical, sarcastic and at times unscrupulous;”\(^ {39}\) he argues that the “Evil Spirit which stirred up the first false teachers to corrupt the sense of Scripture”\(^ {40}\) continues to work today to lead people — namely the authors and adherents to *Essays and Reviews* — to the pitfalls of heterodoxy. Indeed, he argues that the very fact of divisions and arguments over Scripture is a “proof of the divine truth of Scripture warning us that it would be so.”\(^ {41}\) Thus arguments and division over Scripture are themselves evidence of the Bible’s truth.

Wordsworth was not known, as were Newman and Pusey, for being too comfortable with Roman Catholic thinking. Unlike Pusey, he did not become branded as a “Romanizer” or a “friend to the Pope.”\(^ {42}\) However, considering only the output of his scholarly work, unlike Pusey and Newman, Wordsworth wrote a commentary on most of


\(^{40}\) Goulburn and et al., *Replies to “Essays and Reviews,”* 412.

\(^{41}\) Goulburn and et al., *Replies to “Essays and Reviews,”* 417.

the books of the Bible, a project that began with the New Testament in 1856 and finished with the Minor Prophets in 1870. He shared certain basic commitments with the Evangelicals, such as with regard to their views on perceived attack on biblical trustworthiness by the emerging liberal Broad Church thinkers, to say nothing of the use of radical German criticism by Unitarians. But Wordsworth remained, as his daughter Elizabeth notes, one with strong High Church affinities.43

As a representative of the old High Church faction, Wordsworth employs Isaiah, partly, as a legitimization of the National Church of England. The Church is the body that sprouted out of the soil of “literal Israel.” Yet there is no particularity to his discussion of the Church to which Isaiah testifies. One can only speculate, therefore, that when he refers to such a Church, he has the Established Church of England in mind. As concrete and embodied as High Church thinkers wanted it to be, it is hard to see in Wordsworth’s exegesis how any aspect of the Church was truly “one” or “catholic.”

43 See John Henry Overton and Elizabeth Wordsworth, Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln (London: Rivington, 1888). It is of interest to note the role that many women played in the Oxford Movement. As Rebecca Idestrom notes, Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840–1933), Christopher’s daughter, played a significant role as his chief assistant in writing the commentaries, but also made suggestions and gave considerable input. This contributed to her own depth of knowledge of the Bible, leading her to lecture to women and publish works on the Bible. See Rebecca Idestrom, “Elizabeth Wordsworth: Nineteenth Century Oxford Principal and Bible Interpreter,” in Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible, ed. Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series, no. 38 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 181–200. On the issue of women in leadership positions in the Oxford Movement, the prominent role of Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823–1901) must also be mentioned. She had a prodigious writing career that was widely appreciated, and was influenced by John Keble’s works. She was regarded by some as “indeed a leader of religion, and that she had a very great share in that movement which we know as the Oxford Movement” (Ethel Romanes, Charlotte Mary Yonge: An Appreciation [London: Mowbray, 1908], 1). Moreover, she did write on the Bible at a devotional level (including Isaiah), but her comments are brief and intended for no more than the edification of a simple — though deeply biblically literate — family life. See Charlotte Mary Yonge, Scripture Readings for Schools and Families, vol. I-VIII (Macmillan and Co., 1871–79).

This is not to suggest that the men in the Oxford Movement had views which were “proto-feminist” in today’s parlance; there was no movement, for instance, to consider women’s ordination, while highly biblicist dissenters such as Catherine Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army, were reconsidering Scripture on the matter. One can only speculate on the attraction of such movements, but it is reasonable to suppose that, just as equally for men, the Oxford Movement provided strong moral leadership that appealed to people in a culture in flux.
With respect to Wordsworth’s overall view of Scripture, his commentary is based on the Authorized Version (AV), though he freely makes comments that suggest better translations of certain words: he does not consider the AV as sacrosanct. It is similar to the form of commentary that we see with Cheyne in that it provides the main text of Isaiah and a running commentary on the text in small print. As with E. B. Pusey, the Bible is of central importance to Wordsworth, and he considers his High Church principles fully congruent with Scripture. For two years in a row (1847, 1848) he gave the Hulsean Lectures at Cambridge, both of which bear on scriptural matters. A rather concise account of his view of Scripture in general can be found in the revised edition of these Hulsean Lectures called *On the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture*. Most of these lectures focus on the “inspiration and authorship” of various parts of the Bible, such as the letters of Paul and the Apocalypse. Not unusual is the strongly apologetic position of these lectures, but, perhaps surprisingly, his first mention of opponents to Scripture (disregarding the brief preface) are not the critics of the Bible, but Roman Catholics and some orthodox Protestants. The Roman Catholic claim is that the Scripture of the Protestants is neither sufficient, for it does not include the Apocrypha, nor was it fully canonized until the fourth century. Using this as his entry point, Wordsworth enters into his discussion on “The Foundation on which the Canon of Scripture Rests.” As an indication that his view of Scripture is perhaps different than that of other Protestants, he explicitly rejects Article V of the Belgic confession, stating that “we believe without a

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45 Perhaps of significance is that this was prior to *Essays and Reviews*, when it was thought that those who were critical of Scripture were generally not Anglican clergy, but somehow external to the Church.

doubt all things contained in [the Scriptures] — not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God.”

Wordsworth faults this part of the confession on two fronts. First, the idea of the Holy Spirit testifying in the heart of the individual is highly subjective and provides insufficient foundation for the truth of Scripture. As he says, “we are forbidden in Scripture to believe every spirit, and are there commended to try the spirits, whether they be of God; and we have no way of trying them, except by the Word of God. We must, therefore, first be sure that we have the Word, before we can ascertain whether we possess the Spirit of God.”

The result in relying on one’s own sense of internal conviction is to ask, “what claims would the Bible have above those of the Koran?” In his view, many of the continental Reformers were “betrayed by an arbitrary abuse of private judgment.”

Second, this statement in the Belgic Confession was formulated (against the claims of the Roman Catholic Church) in order to deny the Church a determinative role in the canon of the Bible; the agency of the Spirit is thus resident in the conviction of the individual rather than that of the Church.

Wordsworth, conversely, aims to affirm that there is a central role for the Church in relation to Scripture. He begins by presenting and rejecting the Roman Catholic view that the Church has affirmed and recognized what the Scriptures are, and, rather tautologically, this recognition is what makes them the Scriptures. This is where we can see how the principle of primitivism of Chapter 2 informs his argument. The problem with Roman Catholic claims to the ancient provenance of their practices is that “they

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confound the present Church of Rome, which is only a part, and a corrupt part, of the Church, with the primitive Church Catholic. . . . We revere the testimony of the primitive Catholic Church, namely, that of CHRIST Himself, that we cannot accept the Canon of the present Church of Rome.”50 This is the typically Protestant aim of repristination that claims a time of ecclesial deterioration from the Middle Ages, necessitating the Reformation to bring the Church back to its primitive roots. The problem, of course, is that the argument becomes almost a purely historical question: what aspects of the early Church are truly “primitive?” When was the end of this era? Who are its representatives?

In the end, however, the Church does not function to validate or make Scripture what it is merely by naming it as such; rather, using the analogy of road sign, Wordsworth asserts that the Church is a sign. Thus,

the sign is more visible than the city, but it does not make the city; and, if it were destroyed, the city would still remain; and when the traveller arrives at the city, the city proves itself to be the place which the sign indicated, and thus proves the credibility of the sign. So, the Christian Church, it is true directs us to Scripture, but she does not make Scripture, nor give authority to it.51

As with Pusey, material signification is important in High Church thought. The Church is more than a mere sign: the believer cannot apprehend Scripture without the direction of the Church. At the same time, the Church does not have priority over Scripture. Since the sign ontologically participates in the thing to which it refers, then the Church is also shaped by the economy of salvation recounted in the Bible.52


52 This is not explicitly stated by Wordsworth; I am extrapolating somewhat based on Pusey’s account of signification, and on the fact that Wordsworth avoids focussing on the individual believer. For Wordsworth, one senses that the analogy of the road sign is much too passive, in terms of the relation between the Church and Scripture. Thus, elsewhere he says, “The Church of England takes us as it were by the hand, and leads us upward by an ascending scale of past generations and places us on the elevated platform of primitive Christianity” (Wordsworth, On the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture, 23).
In order to know if the referent is inspired by the Holy Spirit, Wordsworth does not appeal to anything external to the Church itself:

We reply, it is an indubitable fact that a religious Society, known by the name of the Church, exists, and has existed in this country since the time of the Apostles: and this Society exercises a visible authority, and discharges certain public offices in Prayer, and Preaching, and the Ministry of Sacraments, in public buildings called churches, throughout the Realm. This Society appeals to the eye and to the ear of all. . . . The Church presents us with a Volume, called the HOLY BIBLE, containing writings which she affirms to be inspired by God.  

This is a curious claim: one wonders on the basis of this quotation if Wordsworth really believes that Christianity was present in England during the Apostolic era, if by this he is referring to the first century. Myths of a very early primitive Christianity coming to England were not unheard of, and perhaps Wordsworth had some of them in mind.

Note that there is no sense in which the individual believer gives any justification for the veracity of the Bible in Wordsworth’s account. He regards the Church of England


54During Wordsworth’s time, there was Elizabeth Rundle, The Early Dawn; or, Sketches of Christian Life in England in the Olden Time (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1864). Rundle was associated with the Oxford Movement; the first chapter of The Early Dawn tells of a meeting in England between a Druid, a Jew, and a Christian. While the story is mythical, she presents it as part of an account of the Church in England, leading to Wycliffe. There is also the more popular, and equally unsubstantiated myth, of Joseph of Arimathea coming to England, which eventually becomes mixed with the legend of the Holy Grail. One can only speculate, however, what Wordsworth has in mind. Lest it is supposed that Wordsworth’s claim that there was a Church in England at the time of the Apostles is an aberration, he repeats this claim on p. 29.

It should not be supposed, however, that a political vision fed by a kind of pro-English theology is characteristic only of a High Church, or even of an Anglican position. Two notable examples are worth mentioning. The famous hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674–1748) is well known not only for popular hymns, but for his replacement of references to Israel and Judah with that of “Britain” or “Great Britain” in his Psalms of David (1719) (see John M Hull, “Isaac Watts and the Origins of British Imperial Theology,” International Congregational Journal 4, no. 2 [February 2005]: 59–79). Similarly, there is the well-known poem “Jerusalem” by the artist and poet William Blake (1757–1827), which became a hymn in the Church of England that begins: And did those feet in ancient time/Walk upon Englands mountains green:/And was the holy Lamb of God/On Englands pleasant pastures seen!” Blake’s poem is based on the myth (to which he did not necessarily ascribe) that a young Jesus visited England with Joseph of Arimathea, who apparently is his uncle.

The primary difference between these two and the High Church ecclesio-political vision is that for Blake and Watts, there is no close link between the Church and England’s identity. Both were dissenters who conceived of the Church in more erastian terms.
as the best representative of the primitive Church, which has faithfully presented the 
Bible to the people of the world.

In terms of the role of the Church with respect to Scripture, Wordsworth argues 
that

the primitive Apostolic Church of Christ exercised a fourfold office: first, that of a 
contemporary Witness to its genuineness and authenticity; next, that of a Guardian 
of its integrity; next, that of a Herald, by public reading and interpretation of it in 
her religious assemblies . . . and finally that of a Judge, by vindicating its divine 
character, and by distinguishing it from all supposititious writings claiming to be 
inspired.  

This fourfold office of the Church with respect to Scripture can be articulated, if such a 
term must be invoked, as a unique High Church form of a via media, but vastly different 
than that of the Broad Church. In the case of the latter, the via media is construed as a 
kind of prudent, functional (and emaciated) golden mean, carefully manoeuvring between 
dogmatism and complete unbelief. By invoking the primitive Church, Wordsworth on 
the one hand rejects the assertion that Scripture obtains its credibility by virtue of such a 
claim by the Church, as in Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, he denies the so-
called “right to private judgement” that is the hallmark of Evangelical and liberal 
perspectives. This difference is a source of confusion in the Anglican via media, as it is 
all too often stated as a justification for comprehensiveness, permitting a diversity of 
views.

It is important to highlight that, of all the commentators I consider in this 
dissertation, Wordsworth is the most hostile to Roman Catholics. This is not unusual, for 
it is often those of High Church proclivities that tend to feel the need to defend their 
perspective against those who accuse them of “romanizing” tendencies. At the same 
time, many Protestants regarded Roman Catholics as not truly “English” and unable to 
maintain allegiance to the Crown. They are viewed therefore as a kind of foreign

presence in England, opposing the High Church theo-political scheme. The result is that his exegesis of Isaiah and other texts of Scripture are directly impacted by this state of affairs. While this will be seen more in my analysis of his commentary on Isaiah, the example of his essay on “Union with Rome” is illustrative. In it, he argues ultimately that “now the prophecy became clear, clear as noon-day; and we tremble at the sight, while we read the inscription, emblazoned in large letters, ‘MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,’ written by the hand of St. John, guided by the Holy Spirit of God, on the forehead of the Church of Rome.” While we will see more of this in his Isaiah commentary, it is more subtle.

A word ought to be mentioned with respect to the influences on Wordsworth and those whom he consulted when researching the commentary. It is perhaps surprising that, while Church Fathers such as Origen and their highly figurative mode of interpretation are common in his exegesis, many modern interpreters also impact his reading. He does not shy away from invoking the names of such modern German exegetes as Vitringa, Gesenius, Hitzig, Delitzsch, and Hengstenberg. He considers Delitzsch’s commentary as “excellent” and that of Hengstenberg with approval, since they tend to cohere with his

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56 Christopher Wordsworth, *Union with Rome: “Is not the Church of Rome the Babylon of the Book of Revelation?”*, With a prefatory note by C.J. Casher (London: C.J. Thynne & Jarvis, 1924). Originally published in 1866. Given the timing of the publication, it may be possible that Wordsworth is not only taking the typical defensive position of High Church divines, but also reacting against Pusey’s *Eirenicon* of 1865 in which the latter attempts to find a basis for union between the Churches of England and Rome.


58 Christopher Wordsworth, *The Holy Bible in the Authorized Version. V. 5, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel* (London: Rivingtons, 1871), xxi. With respect to Vitringa and his hermeneutical outlook, see Chapter 3. Heinrich Friedrich Gesenius (1786–1842) produced a volume in 1821 that employed new comparative philological tools on Isaiah. Ferdinand Hitzig (1807–75) engaged in new literary approaches to Isaiah. Franz Delitzsch (1813–90) was a “mediating” theologian, meaning that he attempted to navigate a way between the highly confessional, orthodox positions of someone like Hegstenberg and the more radical attempts to read Isaiah of Gesenius and Hitzig.
point of view. Moreover, when he does cite with approbation those exegetes who take a more critical approach to the text, it tends to be when they, for instance, render a translation that is in his favour. He does not shy away from using modern scholars to make his case for him.

Wordsworth’s introduction to Isaiah almost immediately characterizes the book in terms of its predictive capacity: “Prophets did not work miracles, but (if we may so say) they spoke miracles . . . . Their divine mission was proved by the immediate fulfilment of some of the prophecies which they uttered, and this fulfilment was a pledge and earnest that their other prophecies concerning distant events would be fulfilled also. . . . The Prophets . . . afford additional evidence of God’s presence with them.”

Ultimately, Isaiah “proves that the Gospel holds the first place in the counsels of the Divine Mind.” Wordsworth also maintains the traditional view regarding the unity of authorship of the book of Isaiah. What is most interesting in Wordsworth’s “Introduction,” however, is that, although subtle, he makes a connection between the threat to Israel and the Church of England. Isaiah came

at a time when National Establishments of Religion appear to be threatened, and the condition of some may be, before long, like that of the exiles at Chebar — where every man was thrown on the support of those gifts and graces which he received from spiritual communion with God — it is the duty of all to listen to that prophetic teaching; and while we have the comfort of knowing that the Scriptures will never perish, and the Sacraments will never cease to be administered; and while it is a happy result even of our religious divisions, that there is now no ecclesiastical power on earth which can impair or affect the ancient Creeds, received from a united Christendom.

Wordsworth sees the threat to Israel in terms of a “National Establishment,” surely

59 Wordsworth, Isaiah, vi-vii.

60 Wordsworth, Isaiah, ix.

61 Wordsworth, Isaiah, xvii-xx. He comes back to the issue again on p. 113.

62 Wordsworth, Isaiah, xiii.
anachronistic, commensurate with a High Church political vision that sees a theological correspondence between Israel and England.

I continue by providing an analysis of Wordsworth’s commentary on Isaiah in terms of the categories of Chapter 2.

3 The Church, Text, and Individual

The following outlines how Wordsworth reads Isaiah in such a way that the Church plays a central role in understanding the meaning of the text. His reading closely parallels that of Pusey’s and Newman’s view that the visible Church must be linked to “carnal” Israel. In terms of my thesis, the impact of ecclesial division upon Wordsworth’s exegesis must be traced carefully. Given the strong opposition he has toward Rome as seen above, Wordsworth perhaps has a definition of the Church, but it is couched in rather negative terms and is often abstractly articulated; first, it is not the Church of Rome in the modern era. Neither, however, is the Church to be conceived of as merely a spiritual (meaning invisible) affiliation of individuals. On this latter point, one can only speculate so far, but it is striking how Wordsworth studiously avoids speaking of the individual believer.

The centrality of the Church for Wordsworth in his interpretation of Isaiah becomes obvious very quickly, and given what has been said thus far, ought not be surprising. Examples abound, but I take as emblematic his commentary on Isaiah 30:19 (“For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: Thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee”). Wordsworth simply states that “this promise is fulfilled in the Church.” The commentary on Isaiah 30:20–26 is entitled “Retrospect of the Prophecy (vv. 20–26.) Its Spiritual Sense.” It is helpful to use the somewhat brief comments that Wordsworth

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63 Wordsworth, Isaiah, 88.
makes with respect to Christ and the Church to gain an understanding of his meaning of “spiritual sense,” as it becomes clear that it is quite different than that of Robert Payne Smith. “Spiritual,” as Wordsworth sees it, does not have to do with a moral or abstract concept, but speaks to a direct connection between Christ and the Church. As regards the Isaiah 30 passage, Wordsworth does not argue against interpreting the text in its application to historical Israel: “This prophecy began to be fulfilled on the return of Israel from Babylon, when they put away their idols.” However, he continues to argue that the “larger fulfillment was in the coming of CHRIST. Then the Lord had waited for many generations to be gracious. . . . Then the people saw their TEACHER, and He established a Visible Church, wherein His Word is preached, and His sacraments are administered in the whole world.”64 I use this text from Isaiah as it is not traditionally well known for being a clear reference to Christ or the Church, yet Wordsworth uses it as an occasion to raise the visibility and universality of the Church as well as the sacraments and preaching.65

Wordsworth’s form of interpretation, which brings out the importance of the visible Church, calls for more exploration. There is no doubt that Wordsworth considers the Church of England to be front and centre in his mind when he thinks of the Church, and the intertwining of politics and theology is a hallmark of High Church. For instance, Wordsworth has a rather extended discussion of the importance of a national church in his exegesis of Isaiah 49:23–26. Once again, an apparently innocuous verse such as “kings shall be thy nursing fathers” (v. 23) occasions statements such as “That National Establishments of True Religion are pleasing to Almighty God, and bring down His blessings, spiritual and temporal, upon those who maintain them, is evident from such

64Wordsworth, Isaiah, 89.

65I attend to the christological aspect of his exegesis below; clearly, however, to separate Wordsworth’s view on Christ on the one hand, and the Church on the other, is difficult.
declarations of Holy Scripture such as these . . .” In classic High Church form, Wordsworth argues that

every Country which has a National Religious Establishment ought to endeavour to improve it; and that any country which has such an Establishment, and does not maintain, but destroys it, falls away from God . . . . Temporal jealously of the spiritual attributes of the Church . . . is fatal to the welfare of States and Thrones . . . . If the United Church of England and Ireland were now allowed to expand herself in all the integrity of her Apostolic doctrine and discipline, with faithful Bishops placed in the great towns and cities of the Realm, then the best interests of the English Monarchy would be promoted, and the loyalty and happiness of the people would be placed on a solid and secure foundation of religion and piety, let “Kings be nursing fathers, and Queens be mothers of the Church of Christ;” and He, who is “King of Kings” will give them His blessing in the world and in another.67

This rather extensive quote is revealing in that not until the very end does Wordsworth make a connection to the text. It is also interesting to note the highly political tone of his comments. An Evangelical, for instance, would tend to argue that the problem of the Church is the lack of sincerity in belief and personal conviction. This would tend to allow for more openness to having a diversity of (Protestant) forms of Christianity in England. At the same time, Broad Churchmen urged the need for freedom of thought. Wordsworth avers that the lack of concrete embodiment of the Church in the nation itself contributes to her downfall.

This verse therefore is illustrative of how High Church political theology bears on biblical exegesis. And to this extent it is helpful to address the connection Wordsworth makes between the Church and Israel, since it is often the nation qua nation of Israel in the Old Testament that serves as a model of the Church for many in the High Church. Even more, the High Church’s pro-Establishment perspective, as represented by Wordsworth, contributes to the breakdown of the uniquely Anglican view of Scripture.

66Wordsworth, Isaiah, 145.

67Wordsworth, Isaiah, 146.
By narrowing his focus on the protection of the Monarchy for the sake of the Church, Wordsworth formulates a more robust form of Scriptural interpretation.

It is significant that Wordsworth has a greater appreciation for the close connection between the Church and Israel than can be found in the other exegetes I explore. For instance, he often refers to Jerusalem as “the mother of the Church.” An exemplary case is in his analysis of Isaiah 60:12 (“For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted”). Wordsworth says

It must ever be borne in mind, that the original and well-spring of the Universal Church of Christ was at Jerusalem, — the place where Abraham offered up Isaac in will; the city of David and Solomon; the city of the Temple; the home of Isaiah, and most of the prophets; the place where Christ suffered and rose again from the dead, and where the Holy Ghost came down from heaven. Jerusalem, therefore, ever lives and moves in the whole body of the Church.  

Clearly this speaks to many issues regarding the connection of the Old and New Testaments and the unity of the canon; these will be addressed later, as I will focus only on how Israel relates to the Church. As with many thinkers in the nineteenth century, this relationship was rather ambiguously defined, especially since a distinction arose between “Israel” and “the Jews”, the former being the more ideal form of revealed faith, which had degenerated by the time of Christ. Be that as it may, Wordsworth has a deep theological interest in maintaining the link wherein Jerusalem gives birth to the Church, for Jerusalem is “not a mere maternal city which is represented by Zion, but something animated with divine breath and life, and far more glorious, extensive, and enduring than any earthly Capital.”

In terms of how theology and Scripture are connected for Wordsworth, his deeply canonical approach to the text links the Church to Israel through Jerusalem, as well as that of Jerusalem with the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation. With regard to the identity

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of the Church itself, throughout his commentary, the Apocalypse consistently attempts to present the Church in Christ as centre of God’s plans for the world. That is, Israel was “the Church” of the Old Testament, not yet universalized by the coming of Christ. While Robert Payne Smith also refers to Israel as a “church,” there is in Wordsworth’s analysis a much greater sense of continuity between Israel and its spiritualization. For Wordsworth, this continuity extends to the realm of practice and form. This is not as prominent as it was for Pusey: Wordsworth is less forceful on the issue of “ritual,” but, as we saw above, Wordsworth offers a justification for a nationally established church. In other words, the Church is not only to be a “spiritual” entity. Another example with more historical grounding can be seen in his exegesis of Isaiah 62:8,9 (“Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies . . . . They that have gathered it shall eat it . . . in the courts of my holiness”). Wordsworth finds a felicitous occasion to compose an ode of sorts to the Church and the Eucharist:

The literal Israel were commanded to consecrate their harvests by bringing the first-fruits and third years’ tithes, and dedicating them to the Lord . . . . But the Evangelical Antitype of this is perpetuated and universalized in the Christian Sion, in the courts of the Lord’s holiness, especially in the Holy Eucharist, where the faithful offer themselves, and their substance, as a sacrifice to God.\footnote{Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 180. Of perhaps passing interest here, but not unimportant, is Wordsworth assertion that the Eucharist does have an element of “sacrifice” in it, a notion that is more “romish” than many Protestants would like.}

Note that there is no mention here that one biblical image is only a “spiritual” representation of the other. Indeed, it is true that he implies a distinction between “literal” Israel and a subsequent universalization of it. However, it is often the case in the nineteenth century and earlier to consider the external accoutrements of “carnal” Israel to be merely the husk that hides an inner, spiritual and immutable reality. Part of this was based on a dislike for certain perceived moral lapses of God in the Old Testament, the
herem perhaps an ideal representation of this. They were regarded as incongruent with what were thought of as rationally conceived notions of morality for many of these critics.

Israel, for Wordsworth, serves as more than a mere precursor for the Church but is its mother, which reflects the Apostle Paul’s statement in Galatians 4 that the “Jerusalem above” is the mother of the Church. Israel, with Jerusalem as its synecdoche, was chosen as the locus of God’s economy of salvation: “Palestine was a theatre in which God’s judgments on His own people and on all other Nations were displayed as a spectacle to the eyes of all mankind in successive acts of a great historical drama.”

This is not to say that he avoids anti-Semitic language, for it is almost inevitable that a nineteenth-century theologian would construe Judaism \textit{vis-a-vis} Christianity in terms of Jewish perfidy. For instance, Isaiah 29:11 says, “the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed.” This is justification for Wordsworth’s claim that “the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, which ye Jews hold in your hands, and which ye hear with your ears . . . will be unintelligible to you, who imagine that you alone can see.”

This is a typical chastisement of the Jews for their unbelief — and note also here that the distinction is made between Israel and the Jews in this quote. While this sentiment can be conceived in terms of a form of latent “anti-Semitism,” Wordsworth quotes Acts 13:27 in support of his comment; he is attempting to remain faithful to the biblical witness.

Wordsworth therefore has a strong idea of what the Church is. However, it is also important to note what he says the Church is \textit{not}. It is not exemplified in Rome, and his exegesis of Isaiah bears this out. It is perhaps on this point above all others that an overtly divisive or antagonistic exegesis can be identified. Isaiah 28 is a description of the woes proclaimed against Samaria and Israel. Wordsworth interprets these woes as

\footnote{Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 36.}

\footnote{Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 84.}
signifying the scattering of Israel. When he comes to verses 3–4 (“The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower . . . . In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory . . . unto the residue of his people . . . ”), the image of a crown serves as an occasion to stage a minor assault on Roman Catholicism. His train of thought is as follows: the word crown signifies “purity of religion and worship,” to which Roman Catholicism presents the greatest threat. He says,

You know how busy the emissaries of the Church of Rome have been to take this crown from us; or at least to pick up the diamonds out of it, and to put in false counterfeit ones in their places. They stole away the power of religion, and filled up the room with shadows and fopperies of their own devising. It is the vanity of that Church to think that they adorn the worship of God, when they dress it up with splendour in her service . . . . They dress it up with a multitude of gaudy ceremonies, and make it the smallest part of itself; whereas, its true glory consists, not in pomp, but in purity. . . . There is another Woman [in the Apocalypse], arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones, and having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations.73

I speak below of the connection of Roman Catholicism in Wordsworth’s exegesis to the harlot of the Apocalypse; for now I continue to outline other areas in which his antipathy toward Rome funds his exegesis. The above example is not subtle, but in his exegesis of Isaiah 46 there is some of the strongest language yet. Verse 5 says, “Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: For thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.” With a more obvious pretext by virtue of the use of the term lady, Wordsworth asserts

There is a spiritual power in Europe which makes a similar claim [of Supreme Lord, as did the King of Babylon]. Its Supreme Ruler calls himself also the “King Vicar;” and when he is crowned, is addressed with these words: —“Know that thou art the father of Princes, and of Kings and the Ruler of the World;” . . . And its seat is the mystical Babylon—Rome.74

73Wordsworth, Isaiah, 79. Wordsworth is quoting a sermon by Archbishop Robert Leighton (1611–84), which was about this passage in Isaiah.

74Wordsworth, Isaiah, 138.
As a final example, which also illustrates his view of Zion as the mother of the Church, Wordsworth comments on Isaiah 54:1, which says, “Sing, O barren, that thou didst not bear; . . . Cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.” Wordsworth begins by echoing St. Paul’s allegory in Galatians 4:24–29, that “Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother,” after which follows this same verse from Isaiah. This leads Wordsworth to an excursus on the Church:

This truth,— that Zion is the Mother of all faithful people — is very important to its positive character, and also as a safeguard against errors. By it the unity of the Church of Christ with the Church of the Patriarchs is displayed; and the reader is guarded against the heresy of those (such as Marcion and the Manichaeans), who set the Old Testament against the New . . . By it we are also defended against a more modern heresy, that which is involved in the assumption of the present Church of Rome calling herself “the Mother of all Churches” . . . in defiance of the prophecies of the Old Testament and the history of the New, and in spite of the testimony of Christian Antiquity

Thus the Church does not subsist in Rome, and in fact Rome usurps what does not belong to it, in Wordsworth’s view. And, as usual, he appeals to Christian antiquity to support his argument against perceived Roman Catholic claim as the final authority on theological matters.

The remaining issue to explore is Wordsworth’s conception of what the Church is. There are numerous instances in his commentary where he expounds on the Church and perhaps one of his most poetic descriptions is his comment on Isaiah 60:16 (“Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings”). What he says is rather lengthy, but it illuminates his deep reverence for the Church:

This bright galaxy of splendid imagery serves the purpose of showing that it is not a mere material City which is represented by Zion, but something animated with divine breath and life, and far more glorious, extensive, and enduring than any earthly Capital. The Zion of the Prophet had a local origin in Jerusalem; but she went forth as a living and growing Power, with spiritual vitality and energy, to enfold the World. She is the city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. . . . She is visible to the eyes of all Nations; and all are bound to revere her with humble

75Wordsworth, Isaiah, 158.
homage as an august Queen — the Queen at Christ’s right hand. . . . She is built on Christ, the Rock of Ages, and the gates of Hell cannot prevail against her. . . . All the faithful of every age and nation are lively stones, built into this Holy Temple, — a Temple ever growing in life and light, and culminating in heavenly glory.  

This is a striking description of the Church, but it raises a vital question: what is this entity that is “visible to the eyes of all Nations”? Elsewhere, Wordsworth says,

\begin{quote}
There is One Adam, and one Eve; One Christ and One Church; One Husband and One Bride. Zion becomes the Bride by being universalized in the Catholic Church; but she does not cease to be Zion. . . . Wherever the Church is, there Jerusalem is.
\end{quote}

When commenting on Isaiah 65:16 (“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind”), he states

\begin{quote}
It is always to be borne in mind, in comparing this and other prophecies, that there are not two Churches of Christ, but one Church Universal in two different states — militant here on earth, and to be glorified hereafter in heaven.
\end{quote}

Clearly, there is only one Church for Wordsworth, the “Queen at Christ’s right hand,” and many of his comments regarding the Church often appear to bring the Church militant and triumphant very closely together. While he is not unique in doing so, his focus on the oneness of the Church in the face of a divided reality cannot but render his conception of the Church as a rather abstract concept. It is very rare in this commentary for Wordsworth to consider the Church beyond an undivided reality. One example is when he speaks to Isaiah 7:1, where it says, “In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying . . . let us be called by thy name.” Although it is unusual for Wordsworth to be inconsistent, this is one such case. On the one hand, via Origen, he interprets the verse as follows:

\begin{quote}
Seven is a symbol of universality, see Rev. i.12, where the seven candlesticks represent the Universal Church . . . . They will embrace the Gospel preached by
\end{quote}

76Wordsworth, Isaiah, 175.

77Wordsworth, Isaiah, 179.

78Wordsworth, Isaiah, 188.
Him, and will cling to Christ, as very members of His mystical Body, by faith and obedience.

However, on the other hand, when he comes to the following verse, which says, “in that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious,” Wordsworth is somewhat more circumspect: “though there be many Churches throughout the world, there is but one Man — one Husband to them all — Christ.”\(^79\) It is subtle, but his focus on unity and oneness has now been abandoned for a focus on Christ. In another instance, Wordsworth more directly speaks of intra-ecclesial division in his exegesis of Isaiah 34:5 (“my sword shall be bathed in heaven: Behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment”). He comments,

> **Edom** . . . appears before us in Scripture as the unbrotherly Enemy of the people of God in its needs and distresses . . . and is the representative of those persons and Nations who are not wholly alien from the Church of God, but are connected with it by some ties of affinity or consanguinity . . . and represents Christian adversaries of Christ.\(^80\)

He gives as biblical examples Ishmael, Herod and, Judas. None, of course, are as such Christian examples of enemies, and he does not elaborate on this interpretation. One can speculate that he has the Roman Catholic Church in mind.

His exegesis suggests that he would not accept the Roman Catholic Church to be a part of any singular ecclesial reality. What is less clear, however, is the status of all other ecclesial parties within the Church of England. And indeed, what of the numerous denominations that, by his time, had proliferated throughout England? His solution is not to argue for greater comprehensiveness in the Church of England. But without serious consideration of the reality of a fragmented Church, and despite Wordsworth’s efforts to argue for an embodied ecclesial reality, it is difficult to conceive of his ecclesiology as being anything other than an idealized one. My suggestion is that Wordsworth’s


\(^80\)Wordsworth, *Isaiah*, 100.
conception of the Church is being pulled in various directions. First, he attempts to speak of the Church in the same way the Church Fathers do: as a unified, single Church, outside of which are heretics. At the same time, his nationalistic perspective narrows his options of ecclesial referents, essentially becoming parochial. The consequence of such an idealistic view of the Church is often a conflation of the Church militant and triumphant, lacking a depiction that responds to the reality of the Church in the nineteenth century.

Wordsworth’s ecclesial position characterizes his use of authorities. There are two time periods from which Wordsworth primarily draws support: the relatively recent and the very early. There is little or no wrestling with thinkers from the medieval era, or with great exegetes like Thomas Aquinas or even John Calvin. One can find references to Vitringa, Hengstenberg, or Michaelis on the one hand, and Jerome and Origen on the other. In the case of the former, as mentioned earlier, they tend to be used not as guides to exegesis as the latter are but as buttresses for his case. Why does Wordsworth avoid medieval commentators, and even makes no mention of the several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Isaiah exegetes from England that I summarize in Chapter 3? Even they, perhaps, were too much influenced by Continental thinkers like Calvin (recall his displeasure with the Belgic Confession) and did not argue stridently enough for a national Church. Whatever the case, I suggest that this parochialism renders his exegesis unstable, as modern exegetes only buttress his arguments (and, perhaps, lend him credence), but his ecclesial outlook “pretends” to be that of the Church Fathers.

Even more subtle, but not insignificant, is how Robert Payne Smith and Wordsworth are on opposite ends of the spectrum with respect to the role of the Church and of the individual. Whereas Smith generally considers the Church in a rather

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81 In his *On the Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, Wordsworth does refer to Hooker as an authority, but Hooker does not inform his *exegesis*. 
disembodied “spiritual” manner and favours the individual as the interpreter and audience of the text, there is in Wordsworth almost no mention of what would today be called a “personal application” of the text. While in the introduction to this commentary, he says that “true religion is a practical thing, a thing of the heart and of the life. . . . The Temple in which God most delights to dwell, is the human heart,”82 this is rather an exception that proves the rule. With all that I have discussed regarding the centrality of an ecclesial reading of the text in classical Anglican thinking, Cranmer, Whitgift, and Hooker would not deny the importance of individual appropriation of the Bible, at least for reasons of edification. Public reading and common liturgy are the means of ultimate personal edification; the Church does not merely take on an authoritative interpretive role (at least, not ideally) but it is the space in which the Word (and words) of God are received in the reading of the text and the reception of the Eucharist. I would surmise that this is a studious avoidance of the individual precisely in opposition to such common Evangelical tendencies to hortatory exposition. This was not, in fact, a typical way of reading Scripture for the Fathers.83 While Wordsworth’s sermons undoubtedly have parenetic aspects, and he had his own deeply devotional life, it is all the more surprising that such a lack exists in his exegesis.

4 Isaiah, Christ, and the Canon of Scripture

The interpenetration of themes and the close unity between the Old and New Testaments that Wordsworth affirms should not be surprising. The central figure of all of

82Wordsworth, Isaiah, xii.

83For instance, in his sermon on Ezekiel (and to which I turn in Chapter 8), Origen says, “If I, who believe in Jesus Christ and have entrusted myself to so great a master, should sin, who will be a father to me?” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, ed., Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984], 161). In other words, Origen (who also speaks a great deal of the Church) interprets the text as addressing himself personally, and by implication, his readers and listeners.
Scripture is Christ. The Canon is one because of the person to whom it witnesses. For Robert Payne Smith in the previous chapter and Thomas Kelly Cheyne in the next, making a distinction between the exegetical categories of literary versus spiritual in their analyses of Isaiah was not difficult. For Wordsworth, attempting to do so would be artificial. While I began by discussing the Church, it would be a mistake — a mistake many make in consideration of High Church thinkers — to assume that ecclesial issues were front and centre in his mind. However, it is necessary to highlight the ecclesiology that arises out of Wordsworth’s analysis of Isaiah since my focus is the nature of exegesis in a divided Church. Moreover, the last section is illustrative of the point that one cannot abstractly distinguish themes such as christology and ecclesiology out of Wordsworth’s exegesis; we have already seen numerous instances where Christ and the Church are intimately related.

I begin by discussing some general claims Wordsworth makes with respect to Scripture as a unitary canonical witness. I follow with examples of Wordsworth’s use of typology and figuration, the traditional hermeneutical and theological orientation to questions of Christian Old Testament interpretation. There are many instances, as we saw in the last section, where he reads the text explicitly against the Roman Catholic Church; in this context he finds connection between Isaiah and the Apocalypse. Additionally, like Robert Payne Smith, Wordsworth seems to be intermittently unable to avoid reducing prophecy to the one-dimensional concept of evidentiary proof.

Much of what I outline speaks to Wordsworth’s rather traditional use of typology and figuration. But what is important to note is what is largely absent in his exegesis. As I mentioned, like Smith, his engagement with German critics exhibits an apologetic modality of exegesis and at the same time, there are only two historical periods from which he draws. There is no alternative form of reading the Bible that draws on the entire history of exegesis; he does no more than object to claims of, for instance, multiple
authorship in Isaiah. He essentially discounts what has happened anywhere else, except for what is English — even earlier English readings of Isaiah. The implicit perspective is that little has changed — or should change — in England since an idealized primitive era.

In the Preface to the first volume of his commentary on the Old Testament, Wordsworth outlines his view on how the Bible hangs together. Using Augustine’s famous dictum that “in Vetere Testamento Novum latet, in Novo Vetus patet,” Wordsworth asserts that “both Testaments are from one and the same Divine Hand, and form one harmonious whole; that the New Testament is enfolded in the Old, and that the Old Testament is unfolded in the New.”

Wordsworth sees a parallel intellectual state of affairs in his time as that of Tertullian, whereby there was an eclipse of the importance of the Old Testament. He perceives such threats as originating with the rise of historical criticism — not that he rejects the increased use of biblical criticism as such: he even accepts that “much has been effected by Biblical Criticism for the elucidation of the Sacred Text.” However, the history of the Old Testament is treated in many ways in our own days as if it were a common history. The history of God’s dealing with the Patriarchs and with His chosen People is often classed with the histories of ancient Greece and Rome, and is read and interpreted as such. But wherever it is thus treated, its real meaning is lost; and it is degraded from its true position and dignity, and is exposed to the cavils of Unbelief.

Wordsworth’s desire is to recover a view of history that considers the Old Testament as constitutive of what Scripture is. In his reading of Isaiah, we find Wordsworth attempting to carry out his belief that “in order that we may be able to read the Old Testament with benefit, we must begin with the New. We must firmly be built upon the great doctrines of the Christian Creed, especially of the Godhead of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. . . . We

84Christopher Wordsworth, The Holy Bible in the Authorized Version. V. 1, Genesis and Exodus (London: Rivingtons, 1866), vii.

85Wordsworth, Isaiah, vii.
must listen to the interpretations given [the OT] by Jesus Christ, the Son of God and by his Apostles.”

However, in doing so, it is helpful to consider how the pressure of more critical readings of the text overshadows his reading. In other words, does his aim to maintain canonical unity become tainted by apologetic manoeuvring rather than a christological/ecclesial exegesis? This speaks to the absence of an alternative hermeneutic.

There is no question that, in terms of scriptural cohesion, Wordsworth desires to show a deep connection between Isaiah and the rest of Scripture. As we saw above, he regards Origen as an exegetical exemplar, and a reader of Wordsworth may find his approach particularly “Alexandrian.” For instance, when Isaiah 12:3 says, “with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,” this reminds Wordsworth of

the Feast of Tabernacles, prefiguring the Son of God tabernacling our flesh (see John i.14, and notes on 1 Kings viii. 65; and Ezra iii.4. Neh. viii.16), Water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam, also a type of Christ . . . and was poured on the great altar in the Temple . . . on which burnt-offerings (the figures of Christ’s perfect sacrifice of Himself) were offered. In like manner, now that Christ is come in our flesh, Who sums up all of these types in Himself, we draw near with joy out of the wells of salvation.”

Thus a single phrase can be the cause of a meditation on numerous connections to the New Testament, but all centre on the person and work of Christ. This speaks to the typical view in High Church hermeneutics that regards the *fecundity* of the text. The word “water” elicits numerous concepts for a reader with such a hermeneutic as Wordsworth’s. It is more than a form of intertextuality — it is no mere literary device, but is justified by the fact that Christ, by whom and for whom the world was created, is the ontological basis of Scripture, always generative of a kaleidoscope of new meaning, albeit ordered and delimited by the New Testament use of christological terms.

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Note that the above quotation refers to typology, an important concept for Wordsworth as he works out how to read Isaiah as a genuine constitutive element of Christian Scripture. It would be worthwhile to consider a typical example of Wordsworth’s exegesis that employs this hermeneutic. I then examine how there are other instances in which a defensive approach is taken whereby the text is used for the purpose of argumentation and giving “evidence” for the truth of Scripture. Finally, the most overt case of divisive exegesis is how Wordsworth’s antipathy toward the Roman Catholic Church funds how he connects it to the Apocalypse.

Wordsworth’s exegesis of Isaiah 25–26 is exemplary of a typological interpretation of the text. These chapters are Hezekiah’s songs of praise after victory over his enemy, Sennacherib of Assyria, and his restoration from sickness, a case in which Isaiah was directly involved (2 Kings 19–20). While Wordsworth does not ignore the putative historical context, his interest is in how Hezekiah serves as a type of Christ. The connection between Hezekiah and Christ are obvious to him:

Hezekiah (whose name means “JEHOVAH strengthens”) . . . was a type of CHRIST. . . . In his name, in his faith and obedience, in his tears and strong crying to God . . . and in his wonderful deliverance, and in that of Jerusalem his city, by means of his faith and prayers . . . and also in his personal resurrection, as it were, from the dead, on the third day . . . a resurrection attended by a miracle . . . and in the wonderful extension of his life, at a time when as yet he had no son; and in the springing forth from him and from his wife Hephzi-bah (i.e. my delight is in her), a type of Christ’s spouse the Church . . . of a seed, from which Christ came . . . he prefigured CHRIST, Who came from his loins according to the flesh, and Who is the King of the spiritual Jerusalem.88

The theological connections that Wordsworth makes between Hezekiah and Christ are numerous and the above quote is only a sample. It is actually relatively rare that he

88Wordsworth, Isaiah, 70–71. I would once again point out that one should be careful not to be misled by Wordsworth’s use of the term “spiritual” here, given that in his discourse he does not lose the “carnal” aspect of Christ arising out of the “loins” of Hezekiah. “Spiritual” in this context has a fuller meaning that does not detract from the history in which it is rooted, but is rather the coming to completion of Israel’s history. The distinction is with other thinkers like Cheyne and Smith who regard “spiritual” in rather ethereal terms.
attempts to make such one-to-one connections between events — such as Hezekiah’s three days of illness and subsequent restoration with Christ’s death and resurrection — but it serves as a powerful theme in his exegesis. Even the wife of Hezekiah serves to prefigure the Church by her name (via a figural interpretation of the Song of Songs). What is also noteworthy is that he begins this discussion of these two chapters by stating that “this chapter concerns the Universal Church of God,”\textsuperscript{89} indicating the close relationship between Christ and the Church. Given that he also says that “the Victory achieved by God in Christ, dying and rising from the dead, and conquering Sin and Satan, and redeeming His people, will bring \textit{all nations} to adore Him in the spiritual Zion of His universal Church”\textsuperscript{90} Wordsworth’s soteriology is as closely or even more closely linked to the Church than it is to justification by faith, the jewel of Protestant theology.

The links Wordsworth makes to Christ are much too numerous to list exhaustively. I offer some examples to indicate their breadth and extent. In Isaiah 22, Eliakim, minister of Hezekiah also serves as “a signal type of Christ,”\textsuperscript{91} as does Cyrus in Isaiah 61\textsuperscript{92} and King Josiah in Isaiah 57.\textsuperscript{93} Other words and phrases (such as “water,” as we saw above) serve to bring out christological themes, such as the repetition of the word “precept” in Isaiah 28:10, which leads Wordsworth to the preaching of Jesus,\textsuperscript{94} or the “burden upon Arabia” in Isaiah 21:13 is cause for Wordsworth to speak of the need for

\textsuperscript{89}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 70.
\textsuperscript{90}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 71.
\textsuperscript{91}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 65.
\textsuperscript{92}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 120.
\textsuperscript{93}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 164.
\textsuperscript{94}Wordsworth, \textit{Isaiah}, 80.
the Arabs, the offspring of Abraham, to “return to God, in Him Who is the Promised Seed of Abraham — CHRIST.”

There are moments, however, where these figural interpenetrations are driven neither by a christological nor an ecclesial hermeneutic. Rather, being impacted by the same apologetic mood as Robert Payne Smith of Chapter 4, Wordsworth often presents prophecies in such a mode that the polyvalent quality of the text is stripped away to the point that it only serves a rather minimal functional role of providing proof via predictive prophecy. Unlike Smith, however, these are not as common or central to Wordsworth’s approach to Isaiah. Nonetheless, they are significant enough to negatively impact his commentary by this mode of exegesis, which is influenced by an antagonistic stance toward those who challenge his reading. Moreover, like Smith, Wordsworth is unable to attend to deeper meanings within the text precisely because the level of discourse within the milieu of his time is limited to a framework of the text’s “supernatural,” predictive capacity.

For instance, Wordsworth asks why there is a historical interlude that describes Hezekiah’s deliverance from Sennacherib and from his illness. This story is also told in 2 Kings 19–20, and since there are apparent textual dissimilarities between the two accounts, it has served as a challenge by critics of the Bible. Wordsworth speaks to why such an interlude exists because he wants to argue, against the critics, that Isaiah is a unitary whole, and it is there for a reason and not the result of a textual insertion by a redactor. His answer is that “this history is a proof of the prophetical mission and prophetic gifts of Isaiah. . . .This narrative is part of divinely inspired Scripture, and has been received as such by the Hebrew Church, and by Christ Himself and His Apostles. It is therefore a true history. Hence it was evident that Isaiah was endued by God, in a

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95Wordsworth, Isaiah, 61.
signal manner, with the gift of prophecy.”96 This history is justified by the fact that this narrative, in which Isaiah predicts the victory of Israel over Assyria,

adds new strength to the proof of Isaiah’s prophetic mission, and of the Divine origin of Christianity; and they afford conclusive evidence that the other great prophecies of Isaiah which yet remain to be fulfilled, namely, those which relate to the Universal Resurrection and Judgment to come, and to an Eternity of future Rewards and Punishments, will be fulfilled also.97

In terms of what Wordsworth refers to as “slight textual variations between the narratives,” he directs the reader to the work of the relatively more conservative critics, Vitringa and Delitzsch, without further elucidation.98 There is, of course, no mention of the challenges of other exegetes, and all of this is an example of his selective use of authorities, as I point out above. What is important for Wordsworth is that these accurate predictions are “conclusive evidence” and the means of authentication of the “divine origin” of Christianity. At this point and others like it, Wordsworth begins to sound like Robert Payne Smith and does not heed Pusey’s warning about using prophecy to prove the faith.

As it did for Robert Payne Smith, so also does Isaiah 53 offer significant evidence for Wordsworth for the inspiration of Scripture and the truth of Christianity. His approach, however, is a rather dramatic one, with Christ speaking words of warning and comfort at the beginning of chapter 51, followed by the response of “faithful Israel,” starting at 51:9. Christ then replies to the faithful in 51:17 to 52:12. This culminates in Isaiah 53, though Wordsworth at once loses this dialogical/dramatic reading and moves into a more aggressive stance, beginning with the statement that this prophecy, which affords the strongest argument of the truth of Christianity . . . was written by Isaiah, and that it foretells the sufferings of Christ . . . is certain, from the sure testimony of the HOLY GHOST, speaking in the New Testament,


by the mouth of St. John (xii. 38), of St. Matthew (vii. 17) of St. Luke (xxii. 37. Acts viii. 28–35), and St. Paul (Rom. x. 16).  

It is noteworthy that, contrary to Smith, Wordsworth does not just prove the truth of the predictive element of this prophecy by showing a one-to-one correspondence between prediction and event. Rather, because of his strong canonical perspective, the witness of the New Testament is sufficient to establish the authenticity of the prophecy. However, there is a strident note in his commentary, in which he warns that

the pious meditations of the Christian reader need not be disturbed by the speculations of some in later days, who, adopting the sceptical language of a more recent Judaism (apostatizing from the faith of its fathers, who acknowledge that Isaiah speaks here of the MESSIAH . . .) have endeavoured to wrest this prophecy from the true meaning which has been assigned to it by the Holy Spirit of God, and to apply it to the Hebrew Nation personified (Eichhorn, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Hendewerk, Köster), or to the Order of Hebrew Prophets (De Wette, Gesenius, Schenkel, Umbreit) or (with Bunsen, Ewald and others) to Jeremiah, or some unknown martyr-prophet.

This is a veritable who’s who of primarily German critics of whom Wordsworth disapproves. He subsequently mentions others such as Duthe, Hensler, Michaelis and Stendel as “maintaining the ancient, Scriptural, catholic, and Apostolic interpretation of this prophecy.”

One the one hand, it is Wordsworth’s intent to hold together the two Testaments, the New enlightening the Old; however, it is also necessary for him to marshal his own coterie of authorities who can, via their own modern critical apparatus, give support to the textual relationship between Isaiah 53 and Jesus of Nazareth. They also serve to prove that, prior to Christianity, the Jews historically believed that this text affirmed a suffering Messiah. Once Christ came, there arose an “apostate” Jewish belief that, in fact, this was not the original meaning of the text. Thus, “the unbelief of the Jews

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99 Wordsworth, Isaiah, 153.

100 Wordsworth, Isaiah, 153.

101 Wordsworth, Isaiah, 153.
is an argument in favour of our belief in Christianity.”¹⁰² Here is Wordsworth alluding to and affirming the apologetic practice of proving that the “original” interpretation of Isaiah 53 was that of a suffering Messiah, from which Jews deliberately turned away in response to Christianity. He disapproves of critics whom he accuses of participating in this “Jewish” apostasy. Once such language has been invoked in his commentary, Wordsworth has clearly moved into territory that is less commentary on the text than it is of using the text (1) as “evidence” for its trustworthiness and that of his form of Christianity and (2) in determining the heterodoxy, and indeed, apostasy of his interlocutors.

Finally, it is important to return to the clearest case of Wordsworth’s exegetical antagonism toward Roman Catholics in the context of how it affects the unity of Scripture. It is significant that while he makes several connections between Isaiah and the Apocalypse, one of the more substantial links is that of Babylon (mentioned in both books) and the Roman Catholic Church. Right from the preface, he asserts without reference to any authority that “Babylon typifies another form of Antichristianism — that of Idolatry and Superstition.”¹⁰³ It is not surprising, given his Protestant prejudices against Roman Catholics, that the mention of Babylon would indicate what he sees as an apostate and superstitious institution. It is not something he does with every mention of Babylon or other images that remind him of the book of Revelation, but we saw above, for instance, that the mention of a crown leads him to the harlot of the Apocalypse;¹⁰⁴ and

¹⁰² Wordsworth, *Isaiah*, 154. Pusey, too, in 1876, attempted to make the historically justified argument in a volume of all the Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53 that he commissioned Adolf Neubauer to assemble and translate. In the Preface, Pusey argues that “this volume in no way shakes the evidence from this great prophecy, but rather illustrates it” (S. R. Driver, Adolf Neubauer, and Edward Bouverie Pusey, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters* [New York, NY: KTAV Publ House, Inc, 1969], xxxvii).


¹⁰⁴ See page 219.
we already know from his *Union with Rome* that Rome is the antitype of Babylon.\textsuperscript{105} It is not surprising, then, that in his *Lectures on the Apocalypse* we find more direct references to the Roman Catholic Church as the harlot of the Apocalypse,\textsuperscript{106} which I only briefly mention.\textsuperscript{107} For instance, Lecture X is a discussion of the prophecies of Babylon in Revelation; most of this lecture pertains to matters related to the Roman Catholic Church. In it, Wordsworth states with approval that

> It cannot be doubted that our most eminent Divines have commonly held and taught that the Apocalyptic prophecies, concerning Babylon, were designed by the Holy Spirit to describe the Church of Rome . . . such as Archbishop Cranmer, Bishops Ridley and Jewel, and the Authors of our Homilies, but they also who followed them in the next, the most learned, Age of our Theology. . . . It may suffice to mention the illustrious names of Richard Hooker and Bishop Andrewes. . . . But after them a new generation arose. This was a race of men more endued with more zeal than knowledge; devoid, for the most part, of reverence for Authority and Antiquity.\textsuperscript{108}

In comparison to what I have been quoting of Wordsworth from Isaiah, this is one of his more overtly “High Church” statements. He continues, bemoaning the fact that such thinkers of this latter generation, in their lack of knowledge, hurl anti-popish epithets without being able to make a distinction between what is “Babylonish” and what is of antiquity. Elsewhere, by way of the letters to the Church of Sardis and Laodicea at the beginning of the Apocalypse, Wordsworth determines that

> it was justly concluded by our Divines, that no desire of Unity on our part, nor reluctance on the part of Rome to cast off her errors, could exempt England from the duty of Reformation; and if Rome, instead of *removing* her corruptions, refused to communicate with England, unless England consented to communicate with Rome in her corruptions, then no love of Unity could justify England in

\textsuperscript{105} See page 211.

\textsuperscript{106}Wordsworth did not actually write a commentary on the Apocalypse in the form he did with Isaiah and the gospels.


compliance with this requisition of Rome.\textsuperscript{109}

Therefore, although he rarely makes a direct connection, when Wordsworth is exegeting Isaiah regarding the Babylonian captivity, we can assume that he also has in mind the Roman Catholic Church. At this point I think it is important to make the observation that at such times he is also being the least “christological” in his interpretation; that is, he is aiming at an argument that legitimates the Church of England (in a certain form), but Christ as a key to this interpretation fades into the background in favour of an argument that appeals to the primitive Church.

5 Conclusion

As I have presented it, Christopher Wordsworth’s approach to Scripture is an attempt at mimicking that of the Church Fathers in a desire to urge a “primitive” ecclesial and exegetical form. It succeeds at doing so on some points in that, in comparison with all other nineteenth-century exegetes I consider, his exegetical strategy coheres with a deeply christological reading of Isaiah. Moreover, the centrality of the Church in his exegesis is almost overwhelming — to the point that the Church overshadows any role for the individual. And it is on this ecclesial point that the impact of a divided Church can be discerned. Wordsworth was at a time that was at the waning end of the old High Church Hackney Phalanx. One of this faction’s central theological commitments, as I show exegetically with Samuel Horsley and George Horne, is a concept of the Established Church as the best form of the Apostolic Church. This is in distinction from the Oxford Movement, which became disenchanted with the idea of the state being a part of the ecclesial structure. For Wordsworth, his theo-political vision becomes most clear when he exegetes Isaiah 49:23: he regards “national” Israel as the model of the national Church of England. This political vision pushes Wordsworth in numerous theological

directions, as his ecclesial instability within a pluralizing culture leads Wordsworth to “pretend” as if there were no other challenges to his ecclesial vision. In his exegesis, he borrows from the Fathers as if they are representatives of the same Church that he defends. Or, in order to lend credibility to his apologetic arguments, he selectively employs more recent thinkers.

Wordsworth’s exegesis is on many points distinct from Robert Payne Smith’s exegetical strategy, particularly with regard to the centrality that is given to the Church as well as a greater emphasis on the physical, embodied reality of ecclesial life. There is also a much freer use of allegorical interpretations that moderns such as Smith and Thomas Kelly Cheyne of the next chapter regard as arbitrary or too divergent from the literal meaning of the text. Wordsworth is concerned about the text, about the Church, and about Christ, in whom all theological ideas hold together. His exegesis is deep, and he consistently aims to connect Isaiah to all of Scripture via typology, keywords and the tradition of antiquity. However, to suggest that his exegesis is unmarred by ecclesial division is to be blind to his deep political commitments, which see the Church in English, parochial terms. It is difficult to see, in his construal, what he means when he speaks of the Church as “one” and as “universal” or catholic, unless he is simply ignoring other ecclesial communities. As a corollary to the centrality of the Church, the nonspecific ecclesiology that emerges from the text gives no definition to the role of the individual in its exegesis. While one should not necessarily expect this from a commentary, which is not a sermon (and indeed, in the next chapter, Cheyne also has little to say about personal appropriation of the text), there are numerous instances in his commentary where he provides an “applicative” and exhortative meaning to the text, but almost always in an ecclesial context. This is despite the fact that many of the Church Fathers urged a personal application of the text in their sermons. There appears to be a studious avoidance of the individual in the economy of salvation. His commentary even
suggests a form of soteriology in which Christ’s only purpose in coming was to bring about the Church.

There are also numerous instances in which Wordsworth uses prophecy as “proof” of the truth of the Christian faith. He does so with less tenacity than Smith, but prophecy and typology are often employed in an apologetic mode to disprove those who differ from his exegetical strategy. External sources are then used to show, for instance, that early Jewish exegesis argued for a suffering Messiah and that externally verifiable historical evidence supports the truth of Isaiah’s words. It is at this point that Wordsworth’s interpretation becomes more one-dimensional.

Finally, it is shown that Wordsworth is at his most divisive when he uses Isaiah, and its connection with the Apocalypse via the idea of the harlot and Babylon, to speak against the Roman Catholic Church. When he does this, the christological hermeneutic tends to be attenuated and he directs his reading of the scriptural text primarily toward his high disapproval of Roman Catholic practice. This is not an unusual approach for a Protestant in the nineteenth century, but it displays the reality and intractability of ecclesial division.
CHAPTER 6

SCEPTICISM IS THE “TRUEST PIETY”: THOMAS KELLY CHEYNE AND THE BROAD CHURCH EXEGESIS OF ISAIAH

Introduction: Thomas Kelly Cheyne and his Work

The central exegete of this chapter is Thomas Kelly Cheyne, who published a significant commentary on Isaiah. There are two general arguments in this chapter with regard to the Broad Church perspective on Scripture. First, although Robert Payne Smith made use of various exegetical tools that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a product of division, it is the Broad Churchmen whose exegesis is most defined by philology and historical criticism, an attempt to distance themselves from theological exegesis. I illustrate this by use of Cheyne’s commentary, in addition to that of Matthew Arnold, to a lesser extent. Second, I make use of Arnold for reasons other than merely exegetical, such as to show how he is representative of the general religious outlook of the Broad Church party of the Church of England. I argue that, despite an aim in their exegesis to be free (or “liberalized”) from dogma, they cannot help but generate a new set of theological commitments that speak of a general religious disposition within humanity, of which the Bible is merely one expression.

The following presents such a biblical interpretation in terms of an intentional turn away from a uniquely Anglican view of Scripture. I connect Cheyne to the problem of ecclesial division in the context of his perspective on the role of the Church in the process of exegesis. It is not just the fact they engage in higher criticism of Scripture that identifies them as “divisive,” though their hermeneutical orientation, emerging from a divisive matrix, leads them to indeed do so. Rather, there is no longer any guarantee of
dogmatic certainty in what they saw as a traditional mode of reading Scripture because of the Church’s failure to present a coherent theological identity. The tendency is therefore to be highly suspicious of dogmatic schemes in biblical exegesis. But even more significant is a new representation of the nature of Christianity *sub specie aeternitatis*. The Bible, the Church, and most religious practices are rendered in terms of outward, phenomenological expressions of an inner reality that cannot be described in traditional dogmatic categories.

It needs to be noted, however, that despite the fact that much liberal exegesis is “antagonistic” toward traditional or conservative approaches, Broad Churchmen aim at a *defence* of the Christian faith and its revival. They seek to reinterpret belief and religion itself with an understanding that the world has a new “modern” consciousness and must move beyond the “old” way of engaging with the Bible. But it is also important to note that they are part of a historical process that begins in the mid-seventeenth century and the irenic exegetical approach of William Day, Samuel White, and William Chillingworth, as I describe in Chapter 3. These latter thinkers, despite the theological conservatism of many of them, were innovators in setting out to redefine the process of exegesis, which was to make a distinction between various historical textual referents and the theological/ecclesial structure that lies behind them. By the time of the nineteenth century, the theological dimension had generally become, for exegetes like Cheyne, a superfluous and unnecessary aspect of engaging with the text. Rather, this was replaced by an analysis of the religious sentiment behind the “Israelite” faith.

By the late nineteenth century, England saw a flowering of Old Testament criticism, and there were several key thinkers who contributed to this growth. “Between 1860 and 1900 . . . the new historical knowledge brought widespread agreement in the main study of the Old Testament, so widespread that it began to penetrate the mind of
many educated people.”1 Here Chadwick is referring to the gradual acceptance of 
German historical-critical theories such as Graf-Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis, a 
multiple-source theory of the Pentateuch.2

In terms of the history of Isaiah scholarship in England, the commentaries of both 
S.R. Driver (1846–1914) and of Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915) were seminal, and 
each viewed the other as a respected friend. Both were described by many as “being the 
real Bahnbrecher of our modern British Old Testament research.”3 The Harvard 
Theological Review called Cheyne “one of the most influential English expounders of the 
new critical views” and stated that “it was his commentary on Isaiah . . . that first 
established him as a scholar of importance.”4 Numerous thinkers in England were 
imbibing new textual-critical theories, not only within the Church of England, but also in 
Scotland, including controversial critics such as Robertson Smith.5

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2For the English translation of Wellhausen’s formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis, see 
Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Israel, preface by W. Robertson Smith, foreword by 
Douglas A. Knight [Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels. English], Scholars Press Reprints and Translations 
Series (Edinburgh: A & C.Black, 1885). A more recent overview can be found in Richard Elliott Friedman, 

(1893): 280. Bahnbrecher is the German word for “trailblazer” or “pioneer.”

4Crawford Howell Toy, “Thomas Kelly Cheyne,” The Harvard Theological Review 9, no. 1 

5My intent is to maintain focus on thinkers from within the Church of England and their reading 
and exegesis of Scripture. While Cheyne was a pioneer with respect to biblical criticism in the United 
Kingdom, he was by far not the only one. William Robertson Smith (1846–94) — a member of the Free 
Church of Scotland — was also a significant biblical critic whose influence in England was considerable, 
particularly after his dismissal from Aberdeen Free Church College and his taking up of a position at the 
University of Cambridge. See William Robertson Smith’s engagement with John Henry Newman on the 
concept of prediction in prophecy in Chapter 5.
I focus on Thomas Kelly Cheyne’s work on Isaiah, seen by many as “revolutionary.” Cheyne was a towering intellectual figure, well-versed in Arabic, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages, as well as Jewish commentaries. Even the Qu’ran figures into his commentary. Most of all, Cheyne was steeped in German historical-critical methods and refers to many well-known critics who had been ignored in England for the most part because of their unorthodox “rationalist” conclusions. I construe my presentation of Cheyne and Arnold as indicative of a Broad Church approach to Scripture (appreciating the danger in claiming that they are representative or exemplary of such a loose-knit “movement”). I begin with Matthew Arnold as a figure who represents the nineteenth-century concern for the “religious” capacity of the human self. He also published a commentary on Isaiah 40–66, which I employ as illustrative of this religious disposition. The depth of his commentary, however, does not approach that of Cheyne; I use Arnold to indicate the religious outlook that he and Cheyne share. This perspective is, theologically speaking, no longer Christianity, but a new kind of supra-Christian religion, deeply moral, highly individualistic, and suspicious of authority. T.K. Cheyne is the central exegete of this chapter, but I also argue that the religious outlook that Cheyne and Arnold share is compatible with Cheyne’s ultimate turn toward a kind of

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6 Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, v2, 105.

7 By this I mean such German exegetes and theologians as Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) and Bernard Duhm (1847–1928), each of whom commented on Isaiah. Below, I also speak of Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875) and Wilhelm de Wette (1780–1849). The fear of “rationalism” goes earlier than the nineteenth century as a result of the work of the non-German (but equally suspicious) Continental Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1632–77) and the *Fragments* of Herman Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768).

8 I avoid for the moment describing this in terms of the “Romantic” movement, which was prevalent at the time. While not inaccurate, it is much too broad a phenomenon to be useful in this context, since it includes literature, art and politics, as well as religion. In the following pages, however, I use it as shorthand for the kind of religious sentiment to which Cheyne and Arnold adhere. Robert Payne Smith of Chapter 4 is by no means free of this description, however, as the elevation of the affective dimension of faith is a part of Evangelical identity.
“meta-religion,” the Baha’i faith — an image of the natural culmination of an irenic orientation toward dogma, the Bible, and Christianity.

Within this exploration of divisive exegesis, my argument is that Cheyne’s work is primarily the product of the reality of a divisive context as well as of the historical/theological antecedents leading to the application of new critical tools to the text of Scripture. As such his definition of “exegesis” is almost entirely shorn of any sense of theological or dogmatic concerns, but also rarely takes on an overtly “antagonistic” tone against one particular group or another. While he was an Anglican priest — and remained so even upon his apparent conversion to the Baha’i faith — one searches in vain for more than coincidental affinities to a uniquely Anglican approach to Scripture as outlined in Chapter 3. His brief mention of Robert Payne Smith and E. B. Pusey are respectful, but he clearly sees his reading as superior in light of the new approach to the text and the necessity to move beyond the “older” or “traditional” reading of the Bible in light of modern historical and philological discoveries.

The influence of division can thus be described of as following the tradition of irenic exegesis (see Chapter 3), but in a very strong sense. This tradition of reading Scripture led to the development of modern scientific tools that aimed to objectively discern the meaning of biblical texts. Part of the central theme of this project is to argue that the loss of a cohesive ecclesial identity in the Church in general (not just in Anglicanism), and religious violence between competing sects, initiated a crisis of certainty that raised a generation of scholars who attempted to read Scripture in a way that minimized the theological aspect of exegesis. This also led to a theological understanding of history whereby the text can only be understood aright if it is examined diachronically, which minimized the place of the Church and its understanding of history and time in typological and figurative modes.
Cheyne was a prolific scholar and published not one, but two commentaries on Isaiah. The first, *The Book of Isaiah Chronologically Arranged*,\(^9\) was written in 1870 and was intended for inclusion in a much larger work. His longer commentary, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*,\(^10\) was written in 1884 in two volumes and was a significant contribution to Isaianic scholarship. My primary focus is on the latter, supplemented by the former where necessary. The approach in each tends to be similar, though in *The Prophecies of Isaiah* Cheyne at times corrected and changed his mind from his earlier commentary. In addition to these works on Isaiah, he wrote *The Book of Psalms*, *The Origin and Religious Content of the Psalter, Job and Solomon*, and, in a decisive turn that almost entirely broke away from Anglican orthodoxy, he wrote *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*. In a kind of ode to thinkers who brought criticism to bear on the Old Testament, he penned *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*. He also edited the *Encyclopedia biblica*. His last work was *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions* in 1914, after he became a follower of the Baha’i religion. One note of this final departure from the Church of England in any traditional way was his intense sense of division, the solution to which was a turn away from traditional Christianity. He begins *The Reconciliation of the Races* by noting that,

> In the hour of darkest night it is not for us to lose heart. Never was there greater need for men of faith. To many will come the temptation to deny God, and to turn away with despair from the Christianity which seems to be identified with bloodshed on so gigantic a scale. Christ is crucified afresh today.\(^11\)

Cheyne refers here to the beginning of Word War I, which he saw as a religious conflict.

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Although the violence of religious conflict was a catalyst for new exegetical approaches in the seventeenth century (see Chapter 3), religious violence presses Cheyne even farther from any kind of recognizable Christian faith. The final solution to religious conflict was to move even beyond “liberal” ideas of religion and to see, as expounded in the teachings of the Baha’i faith, that all religions are one, thus fully eschewing and rejecting ecclesiastical dogma. I construe this move to a kind of “supra-religious” mode that he found embodied in the Baha’i faith as less of a turn away from a “liberal” orientation, and more a natural culmination of not only his thought, but also that of Arnold. He eschews the specificity of “dogma” in favour of “certain Oriental conceptions and systems that had been making their way gradually in the Western world. . . . He held that peace among the nations could be secured only through religious union. . . . A common faith would make all men brothers.”\(^\text{12}\)

His earlier work on Isaiah does not indicate such a radical shift, but I argue that his turn to modern critical tools is to aim at similar purposes. To him, previous “theological” readings of Scripture have failed to engender “true” religion. Thus, the approaches taken by Robert Payne Smith and Christopher Wordsworth are outdated and even prone to engendering violence. The analysis undertaken in this chapter, however, does not necessarily reveal Cheyne as being “divisive,” neither in the manner of Smith’s strident attempt to build a bulwark against the encroaching tide of negative exegesis nor in the manner of Wordsworth’s efforts to discover the figure of Christ or the Church embedded in every text for the purpose of proving its provenance. Rather, Cheyne, with his painstaking and methodical analysis of the text and his prodigious intellect, aims at taking a “scientific” approach, and hence one which has little need for ecclesiastical interference. While there is an attempt to affirm what he calls a “Christian” reading of

\(^{12}\)Toy, “Thomas Kelly Cheyne,” 5. There is no indication in the literature that Cheyne gave up the priesthood or regarded himself as no longer expressing the essence of Christianity.
Isaiah, the vast bulk of Cheyne’s commentary on Isaiah indicates a preference for the newest research and methodologies to be brought to bear on the biblical text.

Cheyne was an ordained priest in the Church of England and had spent time studying at the University of Göttingen under Heinrich Ewald, whose influence on his study of Isaiah was considerable. His grandfather was Thomas Hartwell Horne, another famous critic from earlier in the century whose own three-volume *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture* (1818) was a standard work. Cheyne was vice-president of St. Edmund Hall, and he was the first to teach the new critical methods of Old Testament study at Oxford. He was rector of Tending in Essex and was a member of the Old Testament Revision Company. Near the end of his life, he was the Oriel professor of the interpretation of Scripture and canon of Rochester Cathedral.13

**Matthew Arnold and the Broad Church Religious Consciousness**

The Broad Church is such an amorphous and ill-defined group of thinkers that it is necessary to briefly attend to Matthew Arnold (1822–88), who had a rather passing dalliance with Isaiah in order to give greater definition of a “Broad Church” view of the text. Furthermore, my use of Arnold also highlights the role of division in such exegetical positions, in addition to setting up the “religious” background of these exegetes. Matthew Arnold, son of the famous Rugby Headmaster Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) and one of the “founders” of the Broad Church movement,14 continued in his father’s mode of thinking. I use Arnold to show the continuities between him and Cheyne in terms of this religious background, which describes a kind of supra-Christian religious consciousness.

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14 Tod E. Jones, *The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 51–128. This is, of course, an arbitrary choice, as I argue that the Broad Church movement is in deep continuity with several traditions of previous centuries.
Though not a theologian as such, Matthew Arnold was often concerned with religious matters. He was a poet and literary critic, though he was primarily employed as a school inspector. Arnold was a very “religious” person and was initially impressed by the works of his famous godfather, the Oxford Tractarian John Keble, but he eventually came to reject the Oxford Movement. In comparison with Cheyne, one can sense a much stronger “Romantic” quality to his religious views, opting for the more emotional aspect of religion to balance the “rational.”

He saw confusion and instability in Victorian society, and wanted “a transformation of the ‘dominant idea of religion’ through the re-energizing stimuli of culture and poetry.” Like many of the Broad Church movement, he would encourage the use of German thinkers, who “thought the English clergy unlearned and bound by superstitious dogmas, in comparison with the religious freedom allowed to the clergy of Germany.”

Arnold was keen to embrace the modern age and to eschew the bondage of previous ecclesial “superstition,” rejecting the validity of such “unscientific” ideas as miracles, while fully embracing the power of religious feeling.

In 1875, Arnold wrote *Isaiah XL–LXVI with the Shorter Prophecies Allied to It*. This was a work that was, as Arnold claims, “for the benefit of school-children.” It does not consist of a new translation, as he was not proficient in Hebrew, but an attempt to emend the King James Version in order to render the text in a more readable form.

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analysis, consisting only in the examination of the Introduction to this work, serves two purposes. First, as he engages directly with Cheyne, even amidst their different exegetical foci, they make very similar assumptions regarding the nature of Scripture and of religion. Second, Arnold says quite explicitly what I claim is be somewhat more hidden in Cheyne’s work, which is that a turn toward modern critical tools is precisely an attempt to assuage the problems raised by a divided Church. Arnold’s emendation of the text is not an attempt at a wholesale undoing of the translation of the day. As he claims, “it makes no pretensions to be permanent. Persons of weight and of proved qualifications are now engaging in revising the Bible, and their revision must undoubtedly be looked to as that which, it is to be hoped, may obtain general currency.”20 Thus, I do not attend to the quality of his choices, but only the principles that fund his approach to such a task.

It is interesting to note Arnold’s choice to work only on the chapters that biblical critics refer to as “II Isaiah.” With more directness than that of Cheyne’s exegesis, he avers that “whatever may be though of the authorship of the last twenty-seven chapters, every one will allow that there comes a break between them and what goes immediately before them, and they form a whole by themselves.”21 While Arnold does not intend to suggest that certain parts of Isaiah are no longer to be thought of as Scripture, it would be difficult for him to maintain a traditional approach to Scripture.

The most prominent feature of his view of the text is that it must exhibit the proper style, as opposed to fidelity to translation. Here is an issue on which we find Arnold engaging with Cheyne, sometimes quite critically.22 Lowth’s influence is particularly evident, at least in terms of how the text must be viewed as a work of poetry,

20 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 2.

21 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 3.

22 Given the date of Arnold’s work, any reference to Cheyne’s work on Isaiah is directed toward Isaiah Chronologically Arranged, since his later work had yet to be published.
as a particular literary genre, and as a text of emotive force. Like Cheyne, Arnold acknowledges that “the Hebrew language and genius . . . are seen in the Book of Isaiah at their perfection.” Given that Arnold’s aim is to improve the “readability,” as it were, of Isaiah, he notes that “the general reader, who has the bare text of a common Bible and nothing more may perceive that there is something grand in this passage, but he cannot possibly understand it.” The “bare text” is no longer, as the Word of God, sufficient to work in the *ecclesia*, and it is not the clergy who participate in the role of explaining possibly problematic readings, but the cultured and the educated, whose skill is to bring out something “grand” within the passage. I show that Cheyne also sees the professional academic as a kind of priest who is the only one able to properly interpret the text to its readers.

Arnold is influenced by the work of Heinrich Ewald on Isaiah, though he gives greater explicit acknowledgement to Lowth, Vitringa, and “Aben-Ezra” (Abraham Ibn Ezra), who he claims are “the three men who, before the labours of the Germans in our own century, did most to help the study of Isaiah.” He praises Lowth for his skill in poetry and literature, but faults him for not exhibiting the right style in his translation of the text. Arnold turns his attention then to Cheyne. While he is critical of Cheyne’s rendering of some of the passages in Isaiah, it is clear that he is in complete agreement with Cheyne’s overall project of critical engagement with the text. Minor textual issues are called into question, but not for theological reasons, but because of their lack of style:

Mr. Cheyne, who, scientific though his object be, nevertheless talks of governing himself in making changes, by “the affectionate reverence with which the Authorized Version is so justly regarded,” may be rendering [Isaiah 42:4] with more accuracy when he writes: “He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set religion on the earth, and the sea coasts wait for his doctrine.” But he must not


imagine that he is making a slight change in the rhythm of “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law;” for he destroys the balance of the rhythm altogether.  

In short, the argument could be made that Arnold prefers “style over substance,” for his concern is the “sentiments” that the poetic rhythm of certain verses evoke. For instance, in his discussion of the propriety of replacing “the Lord” with “Jehovah” in the Psalms, Arnold notes that

besides the contents which a term carries in itself, we must consider the contents with which men, in long and reverential use, have filled it; and therefore we say that The Lord any literary corrector of the English Bible does well at present to retain, because of the sentiments this expression has created in the English reader’s mind. . . . It is in deference to these pre-established sentiments that we prefer . . . for any famous passage of our chapters which is cited in the New Testament, the New Testament rendering, because this rendering will be to the English reader the more familiar, and touches more chords.

The emendations thus reflect Arnold’s desire to maintain or improve the style and rhythm of the text, giving precedence to the religious affections the texts evince. It is often sentiment that connects the two Testaments together; there is certainly no concept of a scriptural canon as such.

This literary approach to the text does not necessarily preclude any kind of connection to Jesus Christ. Indeed, Arnold accedes, “I admit unreservedly that these prophecies have a scope far beyond their primary historical scope, that they have a secondary, eternal scope, and that this scope is more important.” He continues by stating that the “secondary application” of Isaiah 53 must be to Jesus Christ. However, later Arnold discusses the Servant Passages (which include Isaiah 53) about which he argues that “we all know the secondary application to Jesus Christ, often so striking; but

26 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 18.

27 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 14.

28 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 27.
certainly this was not the primary application.” Since the theological is seen as "secondary," Arnold directs more attention to possible historical referents and the ostensive original purpose of Isaiah. The rather loose use of “primary” and “secondary” was indeed present in theological history. By the time of Arnold, however, the use of “primary” becomes value-laden, the preferred sense. Extended suggests that it is optional. We will also see a similar approach in T.K. Cheyne’s approach.

Given this brief outline of Arnold’s approach to the text, I conclude by indicating the role that division plays, as Arnold speaks to this more overtly than Cheyne. Referring to his notes that accompany the text, his hope is that the reader will be led to “the more,” that luminous something that Scripture has to offer;

that more . . . has the advantage of not offering ground for those religious disputes to which a more extended interpretation of the Bible often gives rise . . . and they are the fewer the more the enquiry is conducted in an unassuming and truly scientific manner; when that only is called certain which is really certain, and that which is conjecture, however plausible, is allowed to be but only conjecture.

This is a retreat from any ecclesial, creedal, or communal understanding of the text, as such commitments lead to disputes and division, in favour of extra-biblically confirmed and authorized techniques that offer “certainty.”

There is more here, however, than a mere turn toward the scientific in order to achieve certainty. Just as we shall see that Cheyne retreats from the contentiousness of dogma toward the Baha’i faith, a religion that embraces all religions, Arnold too takes an approach to religion that is less radical in form, but not in kind. His praise of the poetic sentimentality of the Bible reflects a shift away from Christianity proper into religion of another kind. As Vincent Buckley argues, Arnold

seems also to have the intention of, as it were, redefining religion, so that it is no longer a bond between God and man, a bond of which doctrinal formulations are a necessary illumination and expression, but a state of mind. Religion, that is, has

30 Arnold, Isaiah XL-LXVI, 28.
its own best guarantee in the state of mind which it is capable of inducing. In a sense, it is that state of mind.\textsuperscript{31}

This redefinition of religious meaning leads Cheyne to use language of inclusion and unification, while for Arnold, and \textit{for the same reason}, it leads to the preservation of Christian language, albeit with the theological content of this language evacuated, to be replaced by this “state of mind,” which biblical language merely evokes. Even more, Arnold generally affirmed the moral system that tended to be associated with Christianity; as A. O. J. Cockshut says, “Arnold’s system really was religious, though not, in any acceptable, historical sense, Christian. Arnold himself defined religion as ‘morality touched with emotion.’”\textsuperscript{32} Cockshut’s argument is that Arnold is an “emotional conservative,” who clung to the language of Christianity and even conservative Anglicanism because of a belief in the evocative power of such language.

Thus Arnold constitutes the religious background of my analysis of Cheyne’s commentary. The two thinkers differ on minor textual matters, but they both see the use of scientific tools for exegesis as essential to reveal the meaning of the Bible. Moreover, they both share a Romantic perspective on how Scripture evokes the human phenomenon of religious consciousness. Most importantly, I suggest that the clear connection between certain views and an urge to avoid dogmatic principles because of division, as we have seen with Arnold, is less apparent, but no less powerful, in Cheyne’s exegesis.

\textbf{The Structure, Method, and Influences on Cheyne’s Commentaries}

Cheyne’s many years of work on the prophet Isaiah represent a significant achievement in England in advancing a detailed, scholarly engagement with the text. \textit{The}


\textsuperscript{32}A. O. J. Cockshut, “Matthew Arnold: Conservative Revolutionary” in DeLaura, \textit{Matthew Arnold: A Collection of Critical Essays}, 171. Cockshut does not provide a citation for this quote.
Prophecies of Isaiah comprises his own translation of the text; Isaiah Chronologically Arranged provides emendations of the Authorized Version where he sees fit. Each work provides critical notes and commentary on the text, though the later Prophecies of Isaiah is his more “mature” work. Within the critical notes of the text one would have to look very carefully to find his commentary dwelling significantly on theological issues. This is not to say they are absent, but Cheyne is very explicit that, for the most part, his understanding of what it means to do exegesis is a philological and historical study of the text. For this reason, I use the essays at the end of the commentary, in which he provides more extended discussions on theological matters.

Cheyne’s methodology is a critical approach to the text whereby the most recent discoveries of inscription material, comparative linguistics and extra-biblical sources must by necessity come to bear upon exegesis. Moreover, traditional conceptions of authorship and meaning cannot be predetermined by the weight of ecclesial history. Robert Payne Smith would have considered Cheyne’s approach to Isaiah as a “negative” one, there is very much a sense of “reconstruction” in Cheyne’s work and is in his mind a very positive effort. There is on the one hand a reconstruction of the text as Cheyne aims to correct the translation of the 1611 Authorized Version. On the other hand, Cheyne’s reconstruction is historical, a reconstruction of the events that gave rise to the writing of the book by the author (or authors). Cheyne’s work is emblematic of Hans Frei’s point that modern critical hermeneutics tended toward discovering the “ostensive reference” of the text. In the case of Cheyne, this is primarily a historical one, and secondarily of Israelite “religious” consciousness.33 In other words, the meaning of the text is subsumed

33See, e.g., Hans W. Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 150. Strictly speaking, Isaiah is not a “narrative” and is therefore not eclipsed by new approaches like Cheyne’s. However, in more general terms, there is a “narrative” shape to Isaiah when considered canonically and (to a lesser extent) in terms of its history-of-effects. For instance, its contribution to the shape of the New Testament is part of a “narrative” consideration of Isaiah, in broad terms. See also Seitz’ parallel argument of “The Eclipse of
by philological, historical, and other such critical methods.

Despite its erudition, Cheyne’s commentary requires a close reading and many half-guessed inferences to glean conclusions of significant theological weight, given that so much of his attention is on purely textual matters.\(^{34}\) It is only because of the appended essays that any conclusion about his theological views can be reached. But similar to Robert Payne Smith, Cheyne often works in two “modes.” The primary one in Cheyne’s case is that of a historical and philological critic, which comprises the vast bulk of his commentary. The second mode is what could very loosely be called theological, though I suggest that it is more accurately called “religious.”

Before examining Cheyne’s commentaries, it is helpful to offer a brief summary of his exegetical influences.\(^{35}\) While many were German, a figure that towers over his commentary is that of Robert Lowth. This can be seen by Cheyne’s attention to the text as a special kind of poetic literature.\(^{36}\) The level of textual “style,” as with Arnold, is often determinative of his approach to Isaiah. For instance, Cheyne compares the prophecy against Babylon in Isaiah 13 and the “taunt” of Babylon in Isaiah 14, noting that “the poetical merits of the latter are, however, so far superior to those of the former, that I have been led to the conjecture . . . that the Ode was not originally composed to occupy

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\(^{34}\)While I offer an analysis of his exegesis of key passages, one of Cheyne’s “gifts” is to say a great deal while rarely being entirely clear what his position is with respect to controversial issues. Were his commentary and critical notes be the only source of his ideas, it could be suggested that Cheyne has no interest in theological matters and considers an almost purely “secular” reading to be dominant.

\(^{35}\)Cheyne makes this a rather easy task, as his Essay X, “Isaiah and his Commentators,” is essentially a list of those who had an impact on his own reading of the prophet, though it is interesting how selective he is with respect to the impact of these thinkers. For instance, he notes his indebtedness to St. Jerome, who “laid the foundation of philological exegesis” (Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v2, 269) but says little of Jerome’s more theological contributions.

\(^{36}\)For more on Lowth, and his influence on exegesis, see Chapter 3.
the present position.” Or, in commenting on Isaiah 21, which speaks of Babylon that “cometh from the wilderness,” he observes that “there is no cuneiform evidence that any invasion of Babylon was made from the S.W.; but why should we insist on a literal historical fulfilment? It is a grand poetical symbol which we have before us.” This view of the text as a literary poetical work is parallel to the focus on the prophetic author as “genius,” to which I attend below. Moreover, he observes that Isaiah’s “discourses, at any rate, in the form in which they are now extant, presuppose in their author a high degree of literary cultivation.”

My mention of Lowth is no mere speculation; Cheyne explicitly acknowledges him as the one who “began that aestheticising movement in Biblical criticism which, with all its faults and shallowness and sometimes perhaps irreverence, fulfilled . . . a providential purpose in reviving the popular interest in the letter of the Scriptures.”

Heinrich Ewald, Cheyne’s former professor at Göttingen, also had a significant impact on his commentary. For the most part, Cheyne considers Ewald’s approach to the Bible as exemplary.

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37Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v1, 81. Thus my comment that his *Isaiah Chronologically Arranged* is determined by a historical scheme, must be somewhat amended. The textual style also determines the order of various chapters.


41John Rogerson concludes that Ewald was a thinker who slackened the pace of critical scholarship taken by previous pioneers of higher criticism in Germany such as de Wette and Vatke. Rogerson argues that Ewald “was using an objective historical method, and in the case of de Wette and Vatke, he could justifiably argue that these scholars allowed their philosophical theories of the nature of religion to dictate what must have been the course of Old Testament history. . . . He clearly believed . . . that history objectively reconstructed would show evidence of divine direction and oversight, and would confirm belief in God” (J.W. Rogerson, *The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain: Profiles of F.D. Maurice and William Robertson Smith*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 93). While Rogerson, perhaps correctly argues that “Ewald’s critical results yielded a more traditional view of the history of Israelite religion,” despite what it “yields,” his method diverges distinctly from traditional exegetical perspectives, which I will discuss momentarily (Rogerson, *The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain*, 97).
the “reconstruction” of the diachrony of a text and the people of whom it speaks. With respect to Isaiah, Cheyne perceived Ewald’s project as having “the governing idea of reconstruction.”

Of Ewald, Cheyne says:

As an interpreter of the prophets . . . he reminds us somewhat of his master Eichhorn, whose poetic enthusiasm he fully shares. . . . His translation of the prophets has a rhythmic flow. . . . He totally ignores the New Testament; but it is at any rate free from the anti-dogmatic theories of the rationalists.

His latter point is worth highlighting; even those who in England engaged in critical studies of the Bible did not want to be cast as “rationalist,” an epithet that could evoke considerable controversy. Yet, neither are there in Cheyne’s commentary many references to the New Testament, and they are frequently vague and merely suggestive. It is not until his Essays at the end of Volume 2 when Cheyne makes explicit mention of a “Christian” interpretation of Isaiah.

Closer to home, and only mentioned in a brief bibliography of Essay X, is William Robertson Smith, a man for whom Cheyne had significant admiration, and whose own pioneering foray into the new critical method eventually got him removed from the

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42 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 279.

43 Cheyne perhaps has in mind various deists and latitudinarians such as Spinoza, Toland, and Herbert of Cherbury. None of these thinkers had any particular interest in his “reconstruction” project. There was also the more recent case of the famous atheist, G. Jacob Holyoake, who issued his own “tract” (which he calls a “treatise”) “for the times” in 1845. G. Jacob Holyoake, Rationalism: A Treatise for the Times (London: J. Watson, 1845). He coined the term “secularism” and was put on trial and convicted of blasphemy in 1842. Certainly Cheyne did not want to associate himself with Holyoake, who had no interest in religion.

Even more recently for Cheyne, however, was the publication in 1860 of Essays and Reviews, an event that even occluded, in terms of immediate public impact, the publication of Darwin’s Origin of the Species in the same year. I do not offer an analysis of this work, for although it had a significant impact on the public mind, this Broad Church work, in its challenge to miracles, the questioning of the predictive capacity of Old Testament miracles, and the urging of a free and open study of Scripture, did not offer anything particularly new in academic terms. This impact on the public mind, however, was that these Broad Church positions vis-à-vis Scripture were often equated with “rationalism.” It is likely that Cheyne is here attempting to distance himself from “rationalists,” despite, in my view, agreeing with most of their conclusions. Cheyne differs, however, as do many Broad Church thinkers, in terms of his religious convictions. His is no mere cold “rationalism” in opposition to “religion,” but the former shapes the latter to keep it “relevant.”
Aberdeen Free Church College.\textsuperscript{44} He refers to his work on the prophets as “freshly written, learned, and suggestive, this work stands alone in our highest theological literature.”\textsuperscript{45} His only disagreement is regarding the historical background of some passages, namely the specific historical occasion for the writing of Isaiah’s prophecy.\textsuperscript{46}

Finally, there are numerous other influences that bear upon Cheyne’s commentaries. Most are German, such as Hitzig, Gesenius, and Delitzsch, but also the Dutchmen Vitringa and Grotius.\textsuperscript{47} He speaks with some negativity of Hengstenberg, who, says Cheyne,

had no historical gifts, and never seems to have really assimilated that doctrine of development which, though rejected by Pietists on the one hand and Tridentine Romanists on the other, is so profoundly Christian. . . . He was therefore indisposed to allow the human element of inspiration, denied the limited nature of the Old Testament state of revelation, and . . . made prophecy nothing but the symbolic covering of the eternal truths of Christianity.\textsuperscript{48}

A great deal can be discerned here by his negative view of Hengstenberg’s perspective on Scripture, which was an attempt to read Scripture “confessionally,” that is, “expressed in terms of the Augsburg Confession.”\textsuperscript{49} I suggest above that there is rarely an overtly “divisive” approach to Scripture in Cheyne along the lines of Robert Payne Smith’s

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\textsuperscript{44}I note the influence of William Robertson Smith because of my discussion of the dispute between him and John Henry Newman over the relationship between the Church, Israel, and prophecy in the previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{45}Cheyne, \textit{The Prophecies of Isaiah}, v2, 288.

\textsuperscript{46}Cheyne, \textit{The Prophecies of Isaiah}, v2, 177–86.

\textsuperscript{47}Cheyne notes a point that I discuss in Chapter 8, namely, that commentaries on Isaiah in the English world are not numerous: “Is it not a strange phenomenon that our English and American theologians should be so little awake to the importance of a thorough study of the prophets? . . . calm and candid, self-denying and theory-denying expositions of the sacred texts is still sadly in arrears.” (Cheyne, \textit{The Prophecies of Isaiah}, v2, 283). One can only conclude that “theory-denying” means “non-dogmatic.”

\textsuperscript{48}Cheyne, \textit{The Prophecies of Isaiah}, v2, 281.

strident attempt to oppose the “negative critics” of Isaiah. Yet, given his selection of influences and his relatively respectful, but opposing, opinions of strongly confessional exegetes such as Pusey and Hengstenberg, one cannot deny that Cheyne is wary of readings that he regards as burdened by the entrapments of ecclesial readings that are informed by “dogma.”

His opinion on the commentaries of other is, however, rather selective. That of Jerome has already been mentioned; of Calvin too, Cheyne proclaims,

there is no greater name in the Reformation age (nor perhaps in any subsequent one) than that of Calvin. It is indeed remarkable that one so eminent as a dogmatic theologian should also have shown himself so loyal to the principles of philology. The only apparent effect of his dogmatic speculations upon his Biblical exegesis is to give it a greater depth.50

This indicates a dichotomy between the philological and theological, but how the latter for Calvin enriches the former is not made plain.

The key to understanding Cheyne’s choice of thinkers as his primary interlocutors is the highly “historical” form of exegesis and “reconstruction” of which someone like Ewald is representative. The earlier (or “traditional”) shape of biblical hermeneutics conceives of Scripture as revealing the mystery of the world and the relation of God to it and it to God; this includes history, and exegetical approaches developed over the centuries (e.g., tropological, spiritual, etc.) were tethered to the “literal” or “historical” sense of the text.51 Nonetheless, the historical or grammatical sense does not exhaust the meaning of the text. By the nineteenth century, exegesis enacted a reification of the “historical” sense of the text, for conservatives and critics alike. Christopher Seitz notes that with the move in Germany toward a greater understanding of the religious sense of the Old Testament era, the prophets became a particular focus of attention: “the prophets

50Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 274.
offered the best hope for a solid ground floor in Old Testament religion, on the terms of
the kind of rebuilding project being undertaken and the blueprint it was following."\textsuperscript{52}

The reason for this is that critics determined that many Old Testament texts were written
and/or compiled after the Exile. De Wette was one of the key critics who contributed to
this shift. He believed that “the prophets are the only figures of the Old Testament . . .
whose times we can identify clearly and whose circumstances we are in a position to feel
confident we know.”\textsuperscript{53} The rest of the narratives were “mythical,” by which “de Wette
certainly meant unhistorical. . . . De Wette’s aim was to deny that any firm historical
information could be obtained from most of Genesis–Numbers.”\textsuperscript{54} Only those texts
whose history was verifiable, and hence trustworthy, were given greater attention, and the
prophets often met these criteria. The mode by which such readings were carried out was
also historical, that is, the relation of the text to its immediate historical context and not
its place within the larger biblical canon and theological/providential history. This also
meant, as we saw with Robert Payne Smith, a move toward the prophet as a poetic
“genius” in his own right, and thus studied in terms of the prophet \textit{qua} individual.\textsuperscript{55}

Cheyne’s “reconstruction” project was taken up to describe the historical setting
of the prophet. The result is a re-ordering not only of each prophetic book, but also of
their chapters. For instance, in Cheyne’s \textit{Isaiah Chronologically Arranged}, beyond being
a commentary on the text, each chapter is rearranged in the order of an externally
determined historical sequence. Thus, his version of Isaiah begins with chapters 2–9:7,
but with 9:8 inserted in the middle of Isaiah 5. Cheyne was thus influenced by such

\textsuperscript{52}Seitz, \textit{Prophecy and Hermeneutics}, 86.

\textsuperscript{53}Seitz, \textit{Prophecy and Hermeneutics}, 77.

\textsuperscript{54}Rogerson, \textit{Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century}, 33.

\textsuperscript{55}Seitz, \textit{Prophecy and Hermeneutics}, 82.
historical modes of construing biblical texts, believing that “what really matters is a historical account in which we can track the stages and movement of the prophetic consciousness in its historical particularity and that this is what truly constitutes the achievement of the prophets of Israel.” In Cheyne’s mind, this “scientific” approach to the text was able to employ externally verifiable truths in order to interpret the text and constitutes the process of “criticism.” In terms of the divisiveness of such a reading, it is more complex than merely interpreting “against” those of a “dogmatic” stance, though we see Cheyne at times rejecting using such terminology. De Wette, Ewald, and Cheyne never saw themselves as offering anything other than a Christian reading of the text. In the midst of the reality of a divided Church, many new critical tools were regarded as capable of bypassing the need for any significant ecclesial presence in the process of reading the Bible.

The Church and the Individual

One of the unique theological features of the early Anglican biblical hermeneutic is that it is to be read in the Church, within the communal body of believers who live under its judgment. From the evidence of his commentary on Isaiah, Cheyne, perhaps unsurprisingly, is least open to such a concept. Like Robert Payne Smith, Cheyne aims to provide a commentary free from the strictures of ecclesial dogma. This is what it means to provide a “critical” commentary, whereas Smith fuses together the tools of critical scholarship and Evangelical private interpretation. While Cheyne asks in the Preface “where is [this] commentary entirely free from theological or philosophical bias?” his aim is nevertheless to raise various “critical issues” because “within my own range of observation it has not received much countenance from the authorities. . . . As yet we hear

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56Seitz, Prophecy and Hermeneutics, 90.
57Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, viii.
little said about these things in the organs of Church and University opinion.” His hope is that by introducing these critical tools to the study of Isaiah, “the want of which not only philology, the theology and the Church in general suffer — the application of modern methods to the criticism and exegesis of the Old Testament.”

I consider Cheyne’s exegesis of Isaiah as a deliberate turn away from tradition to a notion that the Church qua Church cannot read Scripture until it has first engaged with a “critical” approach to the Bible. This is where the Church had failed and had done so because of its inordinate stress on dogma. Therefore, his aim is not to edify the Church, but to direct his work toward the “English” student:

The plan which I adopted corresponds to their requirements. Tired of the traditionalism of the older commentators, they seem to ask, not indeed to be kept in complete ignorance of the critical problems and solutions, but to be enabled to study the text in a historical spirit, without . . . being under the dominion of a fixed critical theory. . . . Criticism is the only key to the inner chamber of exegesis.

Cheyne’s definition of “critical,” I contend, is rather indeterminate, given that he follows this with the statement that “there are some writers who seem only to care for ‘the higher criticism;’ I am not one of those. Pure exegesis has a fascination of its own, and is a great liberalizer of the mind.” It is indeterminate as one could conceive of several definitions of “criticism” even within Cheyne’s account. What is clear is that his aim is a “pure exegesis,” which is the “liberalizer of the mind.” From what is the mind freed? This refers back, I suggest, to Cheyne’s above reference to students who are “tired of the traditionalism of the older commentators.” Given the nature of Cheyne’s own exegetical style, this freedom is from the perceived exegetical suppression of the mind by dogma, from which the mind must be freed to explore new theological and historical ideas.

58 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, x-xi.

59 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, vi.
The “higher criticism” to which Cheyne refers is distinct from the “pure exegesis” that he lauds in the commentary, but he is enigmatic about the nature of this distinction. I would suggest that the shape of this “pure” exegesis maintains the priority of the philological mode of interpretation over the “theological,” indirectly muting an ecclesial reading of the text. One case where Cheyne makes this argument most forcefully is in a brief but enlightening engagement with Pusey’s interpretation of a word in Isaiah 52:15, which is translated in the Authorized Version as, “so he will sprinkle many nations.” The key word is יָדַע, which Pusey translates as “sprinkle,” along with the Authorized Version (and so, today, many versions, the NRSV excepted). Cheyne argues that “through an unfortunate failure in this respect, even Dr. Pusey is unable (be it said with all respect) to state the facts of Hebrew usage accurately.”

The christological connotations of this word are obvious, and the translation can be the traditional one, meaning that the nations are passively sprinkled, that is, “besprinkled.” Another translation is that the nations are in the active accusative mode, being themselves sprinkled out. Finally, by an appeal to cognate Arabic terms, the word can be akin to “startle,” suggesting that the disfigurement of the Servant of Jehovah is such that the nations are appalled at his appearance. In his notes on the verse, Cheyne prefers to conclude that there is a corruption in the text, but in the philological notes at the end of the commentary, he suggests that the corruption was a change in the original word, which he submits was יָדַע, “to make tremble” or “to startle.” The point here is that, for Cheyne, “no word in the whole of the Old Testament so forcibly exemplifies the urgent necessity for keeping the philological department in exegesis separate from the theological.”

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60 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 167.

61 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 42.

62 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 166–67. I am not debating the translation of this particular word. It may, in fact, be correct that there is a corruption and “to startle” is the correct
already common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is a move away from what is perceived as the strictures of ecclesial bondage. The purpose was to enable the liberalization of the mind because such readings lead to violence. By placing the theological reading (whatever this may mean) in a separate department, disputes can be adjudicated via academic discourse that refer to non-dogmatic, commonly accepted terms.

It is also important to note that Cheyne focuses so closely on a word that has such significant christological import. Although I speak to the christological aspect of Cheyne’s exegesis below, the theological implications of his treatment of Isaiah 52:15 must be mentioned briefly. Surely the fact that Cheyne so forcefully focuses on this one word as indicative of the need for structural changes in exegetical practices cannot be merely coincidental with its historical christological impact. Cheyne appears to go out of his way to offer speculation that a corruption must be present in the text, which leads him to Arabic cognates. It can only be inferred that Cheyne is not merely “objectively” interpreting the text but enacting an agenda to distance it from its theological and christological referents. The point here is not to critique his philological choices, but the method underpinning his interpretation, which is to eschew the theological history of the text and to reconstruct the linguistic and historical background independent of previous (ecclesial) reception history.

translation. Rather, my purpose is to illustrate the theological underpinnings of Cheyne’s interpretive strategies, and his aim for this separation between doctrine and his view of “pure exegesis.” It is surely of no consequence that his disagreement with Pusey drives his interpretation.

Cheyne is not free from considerable speculative forays. He is well known for his highly questionable North Arabian/Jerahmeelite theory, which postulates that the Jerahmeelites were a North Arabian tribe, part of whom were absorbed into Israel. Cheyne suggests that textual corruptions hide a conflict between Israel and the main body of Jerahmeelites. The result is numerous emendations of the text; an example is his suggestion that “Ephraim” is a corruption of Jerahmeel. See Thomas Kelly Cheyne, Encyclopaedia Biblica: A Dictionary of the Bible. Includes Bibliographical References and Index (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899–1903), passim, esp. s.v. Jerahmeel.
Contrary to Robert Payne Smith, Cheyne does not encourage an individualist reading of the text, and his approach suggests that he would reject such a concept in general. His tendency to read the Bible primarily from the perspective of an academic suggests a “communal” exegesis of a different kind, which is one guided not by the Church, but by the rules of modern critical exegesis. Even more, given the numerous possible corruptions in the text, the difficulty of Hebrew, and the demand to historically orient the text and author, only those who are well-versed in such methods can properly bring out the meaning. Cheyne, Gesenius, Ewald, and others are priests of another kind, whose ecclesiastically unbounded analysis, emerging from a “liberalized mind,” can correctly mediate the meaning of the text, a meaning that the Church had hitherto avoided, and whose dogmatic allegiances precipitated numerous blind spots. The new tools of historical criticism were enormously successful in finding meanings in the text that these critics thought the Church, in its dogmatic intransigence, was unable to find. Cheyne was not against the Church per se (after all, he was an ordained priest) but thought that the reality of a divided Church was such that it could be saved and freed from itself by turning to more “neutral” and “scientific” methods of reading its own texts. This is funded by a reappropriation of the religious self as the undercurrent of the entire exegetical process that distances itself from theological interpretation.

Isaiah and the Canon

From what has already been said, it ought also be clear that in Cheyne’s view, there is very little sense in which Isaiah is in any significant way a part of the one “word of God,” equally subsistent in all parts of the Bible. There is no consistent view of how the Old Testament is to be interpreted in light of the New, nor vice versa, though Cheyne does make a rather feeble attempt at doing so, to which I attend in the next section. If Isaiah is to be understood only via a historical understanding and by considering him as a particular individual on this historically constructed timeline, then connections between
texts can be made only on the basis of very narrow categories. These categories no longer are construed in theological terms and therefore the meaning of *exegesis* is transformed into something new. For Cheyne, the categories for determining connections between books were literary/philological, and historical.

I give attention to three central texts in Isaiah that have traditionally been used as keys to linking the book to the entirety of Scripture and have a close relationship to the New Testament. They are Isaiah 7, especially verse 14, which refers to the birth of Immanuel to the *almah*, Isaiah 9:6–7 (“he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor. . .”), and the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53. The purpose is, on the one hand, to show how *non-canonical* Cheyne’s exegesis is. On the other hand, I also show how through the application of novel categories to the text, new connections are made once they are free from a theological structure. For now, I attend strictly to his commentary without taking into account his subsequent essays, which attempt to give a more “Christian” reading of these passages. This helps describe Cheyne’s direct engagement with the text as well as to what extent these passages are to be connected as part of the dual witness of the Old and New Testaments.

Cheyne commences his analysis of Isaiah 7 with a brief historical background of the text: there was a war between the northern Kingdom of Israel, ruled by King Pekah, and King Rezin of Syria. Cheyne notes that the parallel passages in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles are less original than the narrative in Isaiah, especially that of Chronicles, which many critics go so far as to reject as absolutely unhistorical. Nor are they without excuse, not to say justification, considering the difficulty of discriminating between the traditions embodied by the Chronicler, and the adventitious matter due to his predominating regard for edification.  

Cheyne here shows his agreement with de Wette that “the books of Chronicles are late in

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64Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, V1, 41.
composition, and provide no reliable evidence for the religion of Israel in the pre-exilic period." Rather, it was the “adventitious” attempt by someone to render the story in 2 Chronicles 28 in a manner that aims to “edify.” Thus, Cheyne concludes that Isaiah is more “historically” reliable. He also concludes that an attempt by an author to provide “edification,” or theological commentary to a story (albeit with additional events added to the narrative) render it historically questionable. The passage from Isaiah is preferable for its brevity of factual reporting.

Further to his introduction to this chapter is Cheyne’s comment that it will be observed that chap. vii does not claim to be the work of Isaiah. There is also a looseness in the connection, and an occasional feebleness of style, which make even the editorship of Isaiah difficult to realise. . . . Taken together with the very peculiar introduction to chap vii., and the cumbrousness of vii. 17–25, it makes it a very probable conjecture that the whole section vii. i–ix. 7 only assumed its present form long after the original utterance of the prophecies.

Influenced by an aesthetic perspective of the text, Cheyne doubted Isaianic authorship on the basis of its “feebleness of style.”

It is revealing how Cheyne’s analysis of Isaiah 7 itself argues that the chapter bears evidence of inserted words, scribal errors, and lost passages. Although such claims are not unusual in his commentary, it is notable that they are more frequent here than is typical, for within one chapter — one that is important in Christian usage throughout history — he has questioned the authorship of the text and thrown into question the unity of the chapter itself, suggesting that there was more than one editor. Just as his interpretation of יֶזֶה above had become such a term of philological focus precisely because of, I suggest, its theological importance, Cheyne also gives greater attention to Isaiah 7 because of its place in Christian theological interpretation of the Old Testament. These two instances are somewhat subtle but are nonetheless examples of a more “antagonistic”

65Rogerson, Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century, 34.
66 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, 42.
form of exegesis. Cheyne is not merely employing irenic critical tools in order to avoid theological matters but actively directing such tools against passages that have “traditional” theological import.

Cheyne is careful, however, as he approaches the central (theologically and historically speaking) text of verse 14. He does translate *almah* unequivocally as “young woman,” and here he makes one of his enigmatic attempts to maintain the “canonicity” of the text:

The prophet sees the woman selected by Jehovah with the inner eye. We need not, however, suppose that he had any other reason for mentioning her than to introduce the naming of the child (comp. Luke i. 60).  

This is a strange connection between Luke 1:60 and Isaiah 7:14. It is not a reference to Mary or Jesus, but to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who says, “And his mother answered and said, ‘not so; but he shall be called John.’” While the referent or allusion Cheyne selects is a reference to the naming of a child, his curious choice of this Lukan passage is not clear.

The translation of *almah* as “young woman” is a philologically acceptable one, but it is traditionally argued to be a direct prophecy of the Virgin Mary. Cheyne, however, is less willing to translate based on such theological predispositions; rather,

unless the context determines otherwise, we are precluded from going beyond the strict etymological meaning of the word, which is simply, “a woman of mature age”. . . . As to the details of the interpretation, opinions are and will always be divided. There is no explanation which does not require us to make some assumption not directly sanctioned by the text.  

The infelicitous use of a triple negative notwithstanding, Cheyne is clear that the philological approach and the immediate historical background are determinative of the meaning of the text without recourse to a connection to the New Testament. Cheyne

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67 Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v1, 47.

68 Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v1, 47.
suggests “that the ‘young woman’ is the mother of the Messiah, whose advent, as Ewald has well pointed out, was expected by Isaiah to synchronise with the Assyrian invasion.”

Thus, Cheyne conceives of Isaiah 7 to be “an incomplete summary of Isaianic discourses; or again . . . we may regard this prophecy as the first rough sketch of the Messianic doctrine, to be filled up on subsequent opportunities.”

There is, then, in Cheyne’s interpretation, the idea of a “messianic doctrine.” This continues to function in an important way, theologically, in his commentary. However, as I show, Cheyne is reluctant to connect this “messianic” doctrine directly to the New Testament, but, at best, does so obliquely. In this way, Cheyne is able to be “critical” of the text, while allowing enough room for a “Christian” interpretation. This, however, he does not do until his Essay after the commentary. This is not a part of the task of “exegesis.”

Cheyne perfunctorily interprets the name “Immanuel” to mean “God is on our side.” He does not consider the messianic figure in this text to himself be God but to be a sign that God is on the side of his people. He refers to the subsequent description of this figure (“Milk curd and honey he shall eat, when he shall know how to reject the evil and choose the good”) as “based on incomplete, though authentic notes” and is therefore not entirely clear. His conclusion is “that something . . . has been lost with regard to Immanuel seems highly probable.” There is, however, a more nuanced development to his conception of the “Messianic doctrine,” as he continues his analysis of Isaiah 9, particularly verses 1–7. The introduction to this chapter is quite brief, but he notes there

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70 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, 28.

71 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 49. See also Cheyne, Book of Isaiah, Chronologically Arranged, 31, where he notes the “comparatively slow development in the mind of Isaiah himself” of the doctrine of the Messiah.

72 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, 50.
that it indeed does refer to the Messiah, who “shall appear, and bring the tyranny of
Israel’s foes to an end. Under him the empire of David shall be restored in an
indestructible foundation.”73 The concept of the Messiah is raised in his commentary in
verse 3, which says, “you have enlarged the nation and increased their joy.” Cheyne
notes that “a supernatural increase of the population [is] a common feature in Messianic
descriptions.”74 There is therefore no question that Cheyne regards a “messianic” reading
of Isaiah 9 as the correct one. At the same time, he is strangely ambiguous as to what the
reader should understand by the concept of the “Messiah.” There is a certain detached
aspect in his analysis that often merely renders a summary of what the text says about this
Messiah, rarely moving beyond the confines of Isaiah.

To illustrate, the following lists some of Cheyne’s analysis of Isaiah 9:

A prince of a new “order” has arisen with supernatural qualities and privileges. . .
. The prophet is unrolling a picture of the future, and each part is introduced with
a “factive” perfect tense. He is designedly vague; the word rendered “child” will
serve equally well for a new-born infant . . . and for a youth or young man . . . It
is therefore quite uncertain what interval is to elapse between the birth of the child
and his public manifestation as the Messiah.75

Since Cheyne considers Isaiah as a contemporary of Micah, he connects this passage with
Micah 5:3–5, which speaks directly about a “son” who will “be our peace when the
Assyrians invade.” But there is no “canonical” connection between them. Their link is
only by virtue of the ostensive historical reconstruction that gave rise to the prophecies.
However, there is a religious connection in the sense that if Scripture is not the revelation
of God’s word to the world, then it is, rather, the expression of the religious sentiments of
a people, the Israelites. Therefore, this messianic hope that began to take root in Israel
can also be found in other passages as instances of Israel’s religious hope, not necessarily

73 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, 58.
75 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v1, 60.
as christological referents that underpin a single canon of Scripture. It is a “history-of-religions” approach that is tethered to Cheyne’s own view of religion.

The verses in Isaiah 9 are particularly influential in theological history as they have often been interpreted as witnessing to the consubstantiality of the Father with the Son, given that the reference is to “Mighty God, Everlasting Father.” From the perspective of translation, Cheyne argues (under Ewald’s influence) that “we have here ‘two pairs of compound names united, describing the character of the Messiah first from within and then from without.’” Cheyne’s interpretation of this passage had undergone some subtle changes from his earlier work, but the framework in which he moves is quite consistent. Eighteen years before his larger commentary on Isaiah, in *Isaiah Chronologically Arranged*, he argues that

All these expressions denote that the officers in the theocracy are appointed by, and derive their power from Jehovah. Observe that none of them are ever styled Jehovah; this, to a prophet contending for monotheism, would have seemed a blasphemy. In the later commentary, he elaborates that

It would be uncritical to infer that Isaiah held the metaphysical oneness of the Messiah with Jehovah, but he evidently does conceive of the Messiah, somewhat as the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians regarded their kings, as an earthly representation of Divinity. . . . No doubt this development of the messianic doctrine was accelerated by contact with foreign nations.

Note that he states that the exegetical task is to be “critical,” which, in his case, is equivalent to avoiding theological history (which he deems as “metaphysics”). At the same time, we see how Cheyne prefers an approach in which Scripture is understood as an expression of the shape of the inner religious disposition of Israel (in this case,

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77 Cheyne, *Book of Isaiah, Chronologically Arranged*, 34.

“monotheism”). This is a rather consistent pattern across both of Cheyne’s Isaiah commentaries. This suggests that Isaiah was preaching “monotheism” as a new religious idea. Cheyne’s approach to the text also somewhat paradoxically comes to the same conclusion using two different arguments. The first quote above states with brevity that since such an idea would contradict the religious vision of the prophet, it could not refer to such a “metaphysical oneness.” The later comment, however, contends that the idea was borrowed from the very polytheistic religions that abounded at the time. Yet, in both cases he argues that the text never goes so far as to suggest an equivalency between the deity and the Messiah but is cast is rather mythical terms, a “god-like” creature. Later, Cheyne notes that “Among the titles of Ramses II . . . is this — ‘endowed with life eternal and for ever.’”

This is emblematic of Cheyne’s exegesis of texts that have such historical and theological centrality in the Church’s interpretive tradition. One cannot venture into any kind of canonical interpretation of the text, whether to consider the placement of the prophets as commentary on the Torah or, even less, in their connection to Jesus of Nazareth, without first reading them within a philological and history-of-religions framework. Cheyne does not reject a “Christian” reading of the text, but it does not figure within the purview of a proper commentary. What is rejected, however, is that factor which holds together all of Scripture: that it is constituted by the Word of God, spoken by the Word of John 1:1. What gives the text any integrative quality is simply the thing to which it attests on the surface, such as history or an inner religious dimension.

We finally move to one of the central texts of Isaiah that plays such a crucial role in Christian theology, the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53. It should first be noted that Cheyne, as with most German critical scholars by this period, accepts that this section of

79Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, V1, 62.
Isaiah may not have been written by the same author as that of 1–39. His view is rather ambiguous at times, as Cheyne appears to distance himself from the “higher critics.” In *Isaiah Chronologically Arranged* he presents the case for and against the unity of Isaianic authorship. He appears to be generally more accepting of the conclusion that there was more than one author, and, perhaps strangely, the reason for this is precisely the “Messianic doctrine,” which he regards as

so unlike Isaiah that we can hardly avoid ascribing them to some later prophet. . . . So bold a development of the old Messianic idea cannot possibly have proceeded from Isaiah. It presupposes a spirituality of mind, a sympathy with foreign nations, and an indifference to the claims of the house of David, which can only have arisen during a prolonged separation from the soil of Palestine.80

The “development” that he discerns is not the Messianic doctrine as such, but a move away from the God-like “hero” that he considers the subject of Isaiah 9, toward a suffering Messiah whose bearing is less kingly, but subject to the mockery and the violence that is present in such a chapter as Isaiah 53. Thus, this is a development of religious sensibilities that “cannot possibly have proceeded from Isaiah,” and which indicate a plurality of authorship of the book.

In his later commentary, Cheyne takes a more conciliatory approach to the controversy regarding authorship. In his introduction to Isaiah 40–66, he says,

From the only admissible point of view — the philological, the problem of the date and literary origin still remains unsettled, for until we know under what circumstances a prophecy was written, portions at least of the exegesis cannot but remain vague and obscure. . . . I shall leave it an open question whether the book was composed by Isaiah or by some other author or authors, and whether it falls into two, three, or more parts, but not whether it is in the fullest sense of the words prophetic. . . . The significance of [the prophecies’] presentiments is not bounded by the Exile, but extends to the advent of the historical Christ, and even beyond. . . . Let us now approach with sympathetic minds this Gospel before the Gospel. Though written primarily for the exiles at Babylon, its scope is as wide as that of any part of the New Testament, and New Testament qualifications are required alike in the interpreter and his readers.81


There is a strange conflagration of antithetical approaches to Isaiah in this passage. Whereas he makes a rather predictable comment that the philological perspective is the only “admissible” one, it is here that Cheyne makes one of his rare explicit connections to Christ in the commentary and is the closest he comes to any notion of a canon. In this unusual moment, Cheyne contends that regardless of the historical context of whoever the author is, the text has a meaning that “extends” to the coming of the Messiah. Given, however, that his commentary so rarely touches on its christological aspect, this can hardly be viewed as more than a concession to those who want to have some latent theological potentiality in the text. The next section examines Cheyne’s allowance of a secondary, “religious,” meaning such that this section of Isaiah can be understood as a “Gospel before the Gospel.” Furthermore, despite the fact that Cheyne appears in this passage to leave open the question of the unity of Isaiah, he consistently refers to this section as “II Isaiah;” it is clear that he is convinced that there is no authorial unity.

The Servant passages in Isaiah are of great interest to Cheyne and he continues to offer an interpretation that leaves open the possibility that Jesus of Nazareth can be the fulfillment of the prophecy. In commenting on Isaiah 42, he says, “I am unable to resist the impression that we have a presentiment of an individual, and venture to think that our general view of ‘the Servant’ ought to be ruled by those passages in which the enthusiasm of the author is at its height.” In other words, Cheyne does not define the Servant in terms of other interpretations, such as Hezekiah, or collective Israel. This is shown in his analysis of Isaiah 53, where in some ways, one could view his exegesis as more “traditional,” in that he does not take a more “rationalist” approach to the text. On the other hand, he does see the Servant in a multifaceted way, as we will see.

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82 Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v1, 263.
Since the Servant of Isaiah 53 is an individual, “[he] refers not to the type (the pious kernel of the nation), but to the anti-type (the personal Servant.)” This use of traditional theological language is quite rare in Cheyne’s commentary; he also disagrees with other contemporary thinkers like Lowth, Henderson, and Alexander that the referent of Isaiah 53 is a collective understanding of the Jewish people. One of the reasons for Cheyne’s view that this is a person rather than a symbolic representation of collective Israel is his contention that the book of Job is a key to understanding this section of Isaiah. Indeed, there are few other biblical books in all of Cheyne’s commentary — not just this passage — that have such an influence on his reading of Isaiah as the book of Job. This connection is not the result of such theological concepts as typology or canon, but, as usual, it is the similarity of style and word-use. It can be said that there is a kind of philological, historical, and religious “canonicity” between Isaiah and Job, meaning that because of the historically reconstituted background and the literary connections between the two texts, each can be used to determine the meaning of the other. But any intertextuality is by no means emergent from a reading that is guided by theological commitments. Therefore, in his translation of v. 3 (“Despised and deserted of men”), Cheyne says, “The Book of Job (a fund of parallels for II Isaiah) supplies us with the best justification of this rendering.” Since Job provides such an aid in interpretation, it also funds his conclusion that Isaiah 53 speaks only of one individual: “Job’s troubles are given as those of a historical person; the presumption is that the similar sufferings of the Servant are described with the same intention.” Cheyne considers the arguments supporting the view that the Servant is symbolic of collective Israel as “probably influenced by Jewish objections to the received Christian application.”

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83 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, V2, 43.

84 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 44.
is that while Cheyne eventually takes a relatively more “conservative” stance vis-à-vis the interpretation of the Suffering Servant as a person rather than a symbol of something else, the means by which he comes to this is via the utilization of non-dogmatic critical apparatuses. The question that he asks of the text is to give a sense of the mind of the prophet — what did the prophet mean when he uttered these words? And the means by which this can be discerned are aided by a historical perspective of the text whereby the only relevant biblical material is that which has been determined to have been contemporary to the prophet, by use of these critical tools. There is therefore no sense of reading Isaiah “canonically” in Cheyne’s commentary.

Cheyne also accepts that the meaning of the text indicates that the Suffering Servant undergoes a vicarious suffering on behalf of someone. This is one of the reasons that he argues that the passage refers to an individual only. In his mind, it does not make logical sense that a group of people, such as all of Israel, vicariously suffer. However, despite the fact that Cheyne appears to come to a relatively non-radical conclusion that this is an individual who suffers on behalf of someone, much of his commentary has to do with the typical concern for paraphrasing the text, discussing the fine points of translation, and other such academic matters. For whom the Servant suffers, Cheyne only says, “inasmuch as the Servant, by Jehovah’s will, has made himself the substitute of the Jewish nation, it follows that the punishment of the latter must fall upon him. We have no right . . . to find a reference to the imposition of hands on the Sin-offering.”85 At the same time, contradicting this somewhat, Cheyne later says, “may it not be one object of the prophet to show that in the death of the Servant, various forms of sacrifice find their highest fulfillment?”86 At this point, Cheyne discusses the concept of “satisfaction”

85Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 46.
86Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 50.
within the orbit of Old Testament religion, taking into account current research on the subject. He notes that Isaiah 53 appears to speak of a “guilt offering” rather than a “sin offering.” But the former can refer only to an individual and the latter to a group of people. He asserts that “this can only be met by the hypothesis that the Servant is in some mystic and yet real sense identified with Israel; that he embodies all that is high and noble in the Israelitish character, and yet transcends it.” This rather unimaginative approach to the text, however, is, in my view, not entirely Cheyne’s set views on the matter. In parentheses, following the above statement, Cheyne adds,

(It would be a still simpler solution to suppose that the distinction between sin-offering and guilt-offering was not very clearly drawn when the prophet wrote; but this would require us to adopt the Grafian hypothesis as to the date of the Levitical legislation. It would be unfair to import the huge difficulties which beset this question into the comparatively simple subject of the exegesis of Isaiah)\(^{87}\)

While an apparently innocuous parenthetical comment, given Cheyne’s respect for Wellhausen and William Robertson Smith, it is not hard to imagine that the “simpler solution” is the better one in his mind. However, it is not necessary to merely speculate on the mind of Cheyne: at the very end of the Essays appended to the commentary, Cheyne offers a series of “Last Words,” in which he takes up this very central topic. He comments on Wellhausen’s argument that there is no sense of “guilt-offering,” to which he responds,

> As a commentator on Isaiah I am not called upon to discuss the theory at the root of this bold negation; but I would frankly admit that I agree with Ritschl that it is difficult to say why the word אשם [the word translated as “guilt offering] should be particularly used here, and that the “simpler solution” mentioned at the end of my note on the clause (p. 51) commends itself to my judgment. If we adopt it, however, must we take the Grafian hypothesis as to the Levitical legislation into the bargain? We must either do this, or else suppose that this body of laws, though in existence, was not very widely known.\(^{88}\)

\(^{87}\)Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v2, 51. The “Grafian hypothesis” is what is now called the “Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis,” or simply the “Documentary hypothesis,” which I describe in note 2.

Cheyne is therefore fully willing to accept the Graffian hypothesis, though he does so very indirectly, perhaps out of concern for being criticized.

What is important to note, however, is that the sense in which canonicity figures in his exegesis is simply that it does not. Recall that a canonical approach to the text does not merely assert that the entire Bible is to be read as a whole — as if it were some synchronic literary theory that guarantees a correct reading if such an approach was utilized — but that the Old and New Testaments together are the Word of God and bear witness to Jesus Christ. There is indeed very little in Cheyne’s commentary that considers Isaiah as constitutive of the entire canon of Scripture.

As far as the “inner canonicity” of Isaiah is concerned, that is, the arrangement of the present form of the book, I already indicate above that Cheyne regards it as important to render Isaiah in a form that is governed by the historically reconstituted history (or ostensive textual referent) — at least during the time in which he wrote Isaiah Chronologically Arranged. In his first Essay following the commentary, “The Occasional Prophecies of Isaiah in the Light of History,” in a rather rare moment of direct opposition to a specific thinker, Cheyne directs a comment against Hengstenberg, who proposes “Have we not already in the Book of Isaiah itself an authoritative chronological arrangement?” To this, unsurprisingly, Cheyne disagrees, arguing,

1. that it implies the infallibility of the later Jewish editors of Isaiah, and 2. that it regards the prophecies of Isaiah, or at any rate those in the first part, as if they had been sent out into the world singly, whereas internal evidence strongly favours the view that underlying our present book there are several partial collections.89

I would suggest that the differences between Hengstenberg and Cheyne, however, are with regard to an issue of categorization of the text. For Hengstenberg, the question is whether the current form of the text (and the canon itself) is authoritative. This is a category that someone like Cheyne finds problematic and renders the question in terms of

89Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 178.
whether the text or its editors are “infallible” or whether there is enough literary evidence to render the present form of the text subject to his criticism. Within the context of divisive exegesis, Cheyne is wary of terms such as “authority,” as it would imply a lack of freedom granted to him as a scholar. For the Church or dogma to determine the meaning of the text is problematic as there are numerous churches who make competing claims to the text. Therefore, he chooses to turn to a standard set of rules to govern his exegesis, namely, historical reconstruction and philology. This is, it bears repeating, more evidence that Cheyne’s approach is deeply affected by ecclesial division as he regards the Church, representative of “authority,” to have failed at the exegetical task.

Aside from his comment in the introduction, the only significant connection that Cheyne makes to Jesus in the New Testament is by way of Delitzsch’s comment that “everything that is said of the Lamb of God in the New Testament has its origin in this prophecy.” Cheyne, however, is careful not to say that in fact that Jesus plays no part in the referent of this passage, but rather that the passage was used in such a way by New Testament authors. On the other hand, neither does he reject this as a possible exegetical interpretation; this, however, does not play a part in his commentary proper, but is addressed later in his Essays.

The “Christian” Reading of Isaiah

This section considers Cheyne’s “Essays Illustrative of the Commentary on Isaiah” that follow his commentary. In them, Cheyne often reveals a great deal more of his own thinking regarding exegesis and Isaiah, which is only hinted at in the commentary proper. We particularly find Cheyne attempting to offer up a reading that comports in some way with the fact that he is a Christian, amidst giving pride of place to a philological approach to Scripture, and a need for a rigorously historical point of view.

90 Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 47.
Nonetheless, though he is aware that there is controversy in the various approaches to Isaiah, he often disdains what he considers a failed attempt by the Church to determine the meaning of the text. For example, in his discussion of the chronological placement of the Servant passages, he avers:

> It seems to me clear that, though not discordant with the other passages relative to the servant, this obscure and difficult section cannot have been originally intended to follow chaps. xlix. 1–lii.12. *Let any plain, untheological reader be called upon to arbitrate; I have no doubt as to his decision.*

While admittedly Cheyne is referring to an “arbitration” concerning a very specific passage, my contention is that his use of new critical tools (while avoiding the “extremes” of Wellhausen) is also an attempt to arbitrate between various readings of Scripture, for it is the Bible that often provides the fodder for ecclesial division. He is in a context whereby there is no longer reference to tradition, Church, or authority of the Bible, but uses “nontheological” methods to which all can appeal.

Despite this, Cheyne takes an approach to Isaiah that functions in a different mode than the rest of his commentary in Essay III, “The Christian Element in the Book of Isaiah.” Here is, finally, Cheyne the ordained priest of the Church of England, who is no mere atheist, but one who desires to give witness to the Christian message in light of the modern era. This too is part of his “reconstruction” project. As his opening to this essay says, “the effort to express this witness anew must now be made; it is useless to repeat what is no longer in harmony with the best knowledge of the age. Apologetic theology must be reformed, and Biblical criticism and exegesis have to aid in preparing the ground.”

From Cheyne’s point of view, he is not the “negative critic” that Robert Payne Smith disdains, but he believes he is participating in defending the Christian faith: *he is an apologist.* However, the “older” ways were unsuccessful in how they conceived of the

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faith, so, as described above, new ways must be used to “arbitrate” in the midst of a divided Church.

It is in this essay on the “Christian element” in Isaiah that Cheyne states concisely his objective:

The object of the present work . . . is mainly exegetical, and only indirectly critical; but it is, perhaps, for that very reason important to meet the expectations of any section of its readers with more than usual frankness. For it is emphatically not a party book, but designed to help as many students as possible to a philologically sound view of the text, from which they may proceed, if they are so disposed, to the fruitful investigation of the ulterior critical problems. Most English books on Isaiah carry their theological origin on their forefront; this one can hardly be said to do so.\(^93\)

Does Cheyne consider his work a necessary prolegomenon to exegesis? Or is it exegesis proper? Despite the fact that he does not claim to be part of a “party,” a typical claim by a Broad Church thinker, it would be difficult to see Robert Payne Smith or Christopher Wordsworth approving of his approach to Isaiah. But it is revealing that he does not want to be associated with a “party,” for doing so would suggest a set of theological claims, which I argue he is strenuously trying to avoid. Rather, the way he reads Isaiah emerges out of the awareness of the divisiveness inherent in reading Scripture in the modern world. He attempts not to be divisive: “Its scope . . . is not polemical,” but

the essays on Biblical subjects called forth by controversy have seldom been those which have permanently advanced the sacred interests of truth. After spending even a short time on the heavy air of controversial theology, the student is forced to exclaim with a kindred spirit among the prophets, “Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men!” [Jeremiah 9:2]. . . . Yet the misunderstanding and suspicion which from opposite sides meet the Biblical investigator may well render him as reluctant to publish on questions of the day as Jeremiah was to prophesy. . . . As the preceding commentary will have shown, he belongs to a school of interpretation mainly, at any rate, composed of rationalists. It is true he has come to believe in a definitely Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, but this he thinks should be based entirely upon the obvious grammatical meaning.\(^94\)

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\(^93\) Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v2, 192.

This quote demonstrates Cheyne’s conclusion in the midst of controversy: his “lodging place” of retreat from the division and conflict between different parties is that of “rationalism” of a sort. At the same time, he does not reject a Christian interpretation of Isaiah, and it is to this that I attend.

In his essay, Cheyne makes clear that he is uncomfortable with the idea of a “Christian” interpretation of Isaiah: “I have ventured to use the phrase ‘a definitely Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.’ I do not thoroughly like it, no more than I like the distinction between the natural and the supernatural.” He continues by stating his view in what is, at first glance, a classic Christian perspective on the Old Testament: “Everything in the Old Testament stands in some relation to Christ, whether ‘definitely’ or not.” The reason, however, for this is not as such a theology of Scripture, as it is about his view of Christ and the disposition of the reader:

Every revolution of the ancient heathen world, whether in politics or in thought, is a stage in its journey towards that central event, which is the fulfilment of its highest aspirations. Plato speaks almost as if he foresaw the crucifixion. . . . It is at least not irrational to maintain that the “prophetic voices” which announce the Messiah in the Old Testament are so definite and distinct, and in such agreement with history, as to prove that God has in very deed revealed himself to Israel . . . in a fuller sense than to other nations. . . . It depends on one’s moral attitude towards the two great Biblical doctrines summed up in the expressions “the Living God,” and “the God-man Jesus Christ.” If you believe heartily in the God of Revelation and of Providence, you are irresistibly impelled to a view of the Scriptures, which, though it may be difficult to demonstrate, is none the less in the highest degree reasonable.95

Here is a rather broad understanding of what can be seen as a kind of “natural religion,” in which the world is so related to this cosmic sense of Christ that there is not as such a distinction between “general” and “special” revelation. All spheres of creation reveal, and the “moral attitude” of the observer determines its probative value in reference to God’s revelatory will. It is only given the general revelatory potential of nature itself and its teleological ordering that warrant a “reasonable” point of view that Scripture has

predictive value, albeit somewhat provisionally. However, the actual nature of Scripture itself has very little ontological grounding in the economy of salvation in Cheyne’s account; he is primarily focussed on the fact that it is reasonable to suppose that one so religiously disposed can indeed interpret Scripture such that Christ serves as the key to interpretation.

Cheyne is aware that a divided Church in the modern era has resulted in numerous conflicting approaches to the text of Isaiah. In a passage that highlights the Broad Church appeal to a very real *via media*, Cheyne describes this reality and its consequences:

> The torrents of ridicule which have been poured out upon “circumstantial fulfilsments” have left a general impression that they can only be admitted by doing violence to grammar and context, which to a modern student is nothing short of “plucking out” his “right eye.” Hence many “liberal” theologians have been fain to stunt their religion in favour . . . of their philology . . . But must there not be some mistake both on the side of the cross-bearers and of the cross-rejecters? Can it be that human nature is “divided against itself,” and left to choose between intellectual and religious mutilation? Here at least scepticism is the truest piety.96

Cheyne aims to avoid the trap of stunted “liberal” religion, while wanting to affirm that there is some form of Christian interpretation that does not conflict with new critical approaches to the text. The remainder of Cheyne’s essay outlines his view of the meaning of prophecy, which, on the surface, takes a classical approach by affirming that the Old Testament “foreshadows” events in the New. But two brief points need to be made: first, he gives a definition of prophecy as having to do with “principles and broad characteristics, and only in the second with details.”97 Second, Cheyne’s study of Isaiah and the Psalms leads him to the conclusion that the latter are more “messianic” than Isaiah. Psalm 22, for instance, funds the description of Christ’s Passion much more than


anything in the Suffering Servant passages. A large portion of this essay describes what he sees as five kinds of “Messianic” Psalms.

Finally, it is helpful to give an account of Cheyne’s understanding of what the word “messianic” means, which, just as with the “Christian” interpretation of Isaiah, he describes only in this essay. There is a similarity between this and his account of the generalized christological presence in Scripture and nature. He writes, “I think I am in harmony with the Biblical writers if I define the word Messiah as meaning one who has received some direct commission from God determining his life’s work, with the single limitation that the commission must be unique, and must have a religious character. . . . David was a Messiah. . . . The people of Israel was theoretically a Messiah.” Thus, there is a “general” Messiah of which Christ was a kind of “anti-type” in a weak sense. Indeed, with respect to the Psalms, Cheyne concedes that “in some of its details, the traditional Christian interpretation is no doubt critically untenable, but in essentials it seems to me truer than any of the current literary theories.” The christological aspect of the text, however, is not grounded theologically, but is demanded by virtue of a certain literary aporia:

It now appears to the author that [the results of a literary study of the Old Testament] supply a sound basis for the “Christian interpretation” at any rate of the Psalter; but this is entirely an after-thought. That there is a mysterious \( x \) in this wonderful book became clear to the author from a purely literary point of view. Applying the key furnished by the Christian theory, he then found himself in a position to explain this mystery, and was further enabled to rediscover those peculiar, circumstantial prophecies which are so natural and intelligible upon the Christian presuppositions.

This is a somewhat grudging acceptance of a correspondence between the Old Testament

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100Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, v2, 204. It is perhaps a minor detail of no particular import, but it is strange to note that it is only when Cheyne is making one of his most “Christian” statements regarding Isaiah, he refers to himself in the third person.
and Christ, and it is only by virtue of an apparent “mysterious x,” after the historical and philological reconstruction have been completed, that the Christian interpretation can finally fill out the text — only, of course, for those who are so predisposed. But this is not based on any well-defined hermeneutic of Scripture in which the christology is the hermeneutic; but it is no better than a secondary interpretation. Indeed, it is only in this essay that Cheyne gives any serious consideration of the christological interpretation of the text, once the entire commentary has been completed. It is the “Christian remainder” that hovers at a rather abstract level, funding a “religious” mode of reading.

Cheyne’s view of the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament is taken from a history-of-religions point of view, which is that there is a development in the “messianic doctrine” that began in the Haggadic literature. Cheyne briefly traces the development of various Jewish conceptions of the Messiah, where, for instance, there was an idea of two “Messiahs,” one “Son of David,” and the other the “Son of Joseph.” One is a Messiah of war and the other of suffering. But Cheyne argues that several factors came to play in the development of this doctrine; while he states, “I believe that the suffering Messiah is, at least germinally, in the Old Testament,” he also states that the meaning of “Messiah” must be expanded to include both kingship and affliction:

Surely an open-minded reader must allow that the writer of these words [of Isaiah 52 and 53] identifies the Messianic king with the afflicted teacher and redeemer; that, in a word both are Messianic, and that we have to look out for a wider definition of the word Messiah than the pedantry begotten of controversy would allow. That, in fact, the progress of revelation or (if rationalists will not allow this) the progress of religious thought has introduced new elements into the conception of the Messiah.

I would suggest that Cheyne’s attempt at distancing himself from the “rationalists” is


102Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 221.

103Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, v2, 222.
somewhat disingenuous; for, given all that I have indicated above about his preference for modern approaches to the Bible, Cheyne almost certainly would prefer to use the image of religious progress, a development of the messianic doctrine that was influenced by numerous historical forces, of which the Bible can provide clues. Furthermore, I would also argue that Cheyne’s attempts to argue for a “Christian” reading of the text are mere efforts at appeasing those who find his rather “untheological” reading to be wanting.

Conclusion

Thomas Kelly Cheyne’s exegetical work, paralleled in kind if not in size by that of Matthew Arnold, is an embrace of new and modern critical tools, which are brought to bear on Isaiah. This exegetical method further subsists within a religious milieu that conceives of the Bible as an expression of human religious phenomenon, devoid of ecclesially linked dogmatic categories. The consequences of examining the text qua text are to avoid historically divisive dogmatic issues in favour of a perception that new strategies bring certainty that Church dogmas had heretofore failed to do. These critical tools are primarily those of historical reconstruction and philology. In the former, such an analysis of the text calls for not taking the words as meaning what it says, but to go “behind” it. A consideration of the contexts of the text’s writing illuminates the intended meaning, to which the Church has often been blind due to the deposition of numerous theological layering.

The result is a commentary in which there is no role for the Church, for such a divided entity has proven itself unable to come to certainty regarding textual meaning; rather, it is perceived that the Church had built numerous theological “systems” that obscure the text and that only an unbiased modern approach can clarify. This is not to say that Cheyne or Arnold would consider their exegesis of the text as not theological, for a proper reconstruction and illumination of the religion of Israel, discovered from the clues of historical methods, is what proper theological exegesis should be.
Just as there is no role for the Church, neither does Cheyne espouse an individualist interpretation along the lines of that of Robert Payne Smith. Those who are able to offer the correct interpretation of Isaiah are those who are properly trained in the skills of philology, the original languages, and history. Moreover, any kind of canonical consideration of Isaiah is of no concern for Cheyne or Arnold. Any connection between Isaiah and other biblical texts is by virtue of the context during which they were written. As a case in point, for instance, Job aids an understanding of Isaiah as it is seen as a contemporary book.

Finally, in terms of a christological reading of the text, both Cheyne and Arnold — somewhat grudgingly, I would suggest — accept that this is one possible understanding of how to read the text. However, they tend to render such a reading as “secondary.” Perhaps there is more in Arnold’s view that would allow for a christological interpretation, but it is only because such a view enhances the “religious” nature of the text and the sentiments that it can effect. For Cheyne, it is the “mysterious x,” the remaining meaning of the text once the reader has carried out all other analyses.

This chapter is not intended to bemoan a “liberal” reading, nor a loss of a uniquely Anglican reading of Scripture per se. Rather, it is to argue that the state of reading Scripture in the nineteenth century by the Broad Church party in the Church of England is the consequence of finding new ways to read Scripture that aim to avoid the divisions that “theological” exegesis would bring, which I refer to earlier as an irenic approach to the Bible. In one sense, it could be suggested that the move to common principles of “certain” exegesis is not a divisive one, but a “peacemaking” one that attempts to avoid division. While this may have been what thinkers like Cheyne thought, it is clear that (i) such a decision — and actually one that at the time was not usually done with such self-consciousness — was a product of ecclesial conflict and therefore was shaped by it, and (ii) it inevitably eschews a hermeneutic considered “traditional” or “dogmatic.”
Despite this irenic, putatively non-dogmatic desire that funds their academic and exegetical pursuits, I have argued that this impulse leads many in the Broad Church party — Cheyne and Arnold as exemplars — to a new set of theological commitments. The ultimate result for Cheyne in his latter years was to become committed to principles informed by the Baha’i faith, which is that all religions are part of a single truth. I suggest that this is the somewhat natural, though by no means inevitable, extension of an irenic exegesis taken to its logical conclusion. If dogmatic commitments are to be avoided (which is in fact impossible), one does not have to become a Baha’i in order to at least implicitly accept that they are merely outward accoutrements of an inward (i.e., spiritual) human phenomenon. Cheyne and Arnold argue for a set of general beliefs, often deeply moral, regarding religion as an anthropomorphic phenomenon. While Cheyne’s “conversion” to the Baha’i faith is not inevitable, such a view of Christianity in the Broad Church is similar in kind, if not degree, as is the direct product of a divided and confused Church.
CHAPTER 7
ENGLISH ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND ISAIAH: EXEGETICAL MINIMALISM IN A STATE OF SIEGE

1 Introduction: A Textual and Ecclesial Bifurcation

In *The English Catholic Enlightenment*, Joseph Chinnici incisively observes that “during the polemics of the Counter Reformation [the] emphasis on the mutual inherence of Holy Writ and Holy Church bifurcated into a dualism that opposed Scripture (written word) to church (custodian of unwritten tradition).”¹ The purpose of this chapter is to show that such polemics specifically come to bear on the reading of Scripture in English Catholicism, generating this bifurcation, and resulting in an avoidance of exegetical engagement with the Bible. It is also my intention to use this chapter to allow some Roman Catholic writings to come into dialogue with the Anglican exegetes of the previous chapters. In so doing, this highlights some of the central themes of this project.

By the use of Roman Catholic academic journals, devotional literature, and other popular works, I show that the effect of this bifurcation has an exegetical parallel to that of the kind of reading offered by the Broad Church party of the last chapter. I situate this within the context, again as with T. K. Cheyne, of a response to the breakdown and re-establishment of methods of “certainty.” For Broad Churchmen, certainty is achieved methodologically via irenic (that is, non-dogmatic) exegetical strategies, and religiously through an appeal to a common human religious consciousness within. This latter aspect

is particularly illustrative in Cheyne’s turn to the Baha’i faith. In the case of Roman Catholicism in England, the approach is by no means an identical one but exegetically comparable to that of the Broad Church in two ways. First, while there is a nominal belief in the close connection between theology and the text, the practice is to regard the conclusions as perfectly congruous with Church practice. The Church, therefore, continues, but the text itself remains behind and scant theological exegesis is performed beyond using it as a buttress against Protestant polemics, in a kind of “supportive” capacity. Second, Broad Church exegetes sought authority in something other than the biblical text by an appeal to a universal human religious capacity. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, also sought for religious authority, but from the Church itself, the only living revelatory source of theological meaning. Part of this, as I show, is a reaction against Protestant claims to the sole authority of Scripture (itself also a claim made in distinction from Roman Catholic assertions). Roman Catholics in England frequently portray the Bible as a dangerous book, the unfettered distribution of which was the cause of divisions and errors exemplified in the numerous Protestant churches, effecting confusion regarding how Scripture was to be engaged. In the following analysis, I present examples from literature of the era that illustrate this attitude.

The result of this negative orientation toward Scripture are frequent warnings against biblical engagement in any way akin to that of Protestants, particularly as regards various critical approaches. Theologically, however, English Catholics were in a state of confusion as to the relation between the Church and Scripture, leading to numerous responses. For other Catholics, however, they felt that some of the new critical work pioneered primarily by Protestants was warranted, and despite the official proscription of critical scholars by the curia, many referenced such scholars in their reading of
This confusion regarding the role of Scripture, in the midst of a fractured Church, provided few options to Roman Catholic thinkers. One gets the sense that thinkers who take this approach relegate Scripture to a rather static existence, positioned in a more “supportive” role, which is to say, as a kind of source for proof-texting Church tradition. This has affinities with Robert Payne Smith’s reading of Isaiah as a book to be mined for its proof of the truth of the Christian faith.

One of the more infamous (though, relative to those whom I discuss, quite late) injunctions against critical biblical study was the Syllabus of Errors, which warned against approaching Scripture in a “modern” way. I attend to this below. With respect to Catholics who had to work in a critical mode against such proscription would be Alexander Geddes, though he is one of the more obvious (and quite exceptional) examples of thinkers who explicitly diverge from basic Catholic assumptions on Scripture. One can sense an incipient “critical” approach to the Bible in much Catholic literature, the purpose of which was to provide evidence against biblical perspicuity. In fact, the seventeenth-century French Catholic biblical scholar Richard Simon (1638–1712), seen by critical scholars (and even Spinoza) as “the father of higher criticism,” wrote Richard Simon, *Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament* (Rotterdam: Chez Reinier Leers, 1685). In it, he was one of the first to argue against the Mosaic authorship for a series of textual “layers” in the Old Testament. It is interesting to note that much of his interpretive approach was developed within the context of his engagement with other Protestants. It was his aim at one point to work with Protestants to work toward a kind of interdenominational translation of Scripture “that would avoid doctrinal disputes” (Donald K. McKim, ed., *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007], s.v.). Eventually, however, he was unable to succeed and he produced his *Histoire Critique*. Despite Simon being essentially the first to develop the initial incarnation of the historical-critical method, he did not see his questioning of, for instance, the traditional view of authorship as problematic. In fact, part of the impetus was an anti-Protestant orientation in his work, for “les grands changemens qui sont survenus . . . aux Exemplaires de la Bible, depuis que les premiers Originaux ont été perdus, ruinent entierement le principe les Protestans & des Sociniens, qui ne consultent que ces mêmes Exemplaires de la Bible, de la maniere qu'ils font aujourdui. Si la verité de la Religion n'étoit demeurée dans l'Église, il ne feroit pas feur de la chercher maintenant dans les Livres qui ont été sujets à tant de changemens” (Simon, *Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament*, n.p). There is an implicit aim in Simon, and present in other modes of English Catholic discourse, which is to show Scripture’s obscurity and necessitates the need for the Church and its “professional interpreters” to provide its meaning. “Bien-loin donc qu’on croire avec les Protestans, que la voye la plus courte, la plus naturelle & la plus certaine pour décider les questions de la foi, est de consulter l’Ecriture Sainte, on trouvera au contraire dans cet Ouvrage, que si on separate la regle de droit de celle de fait, c’est-à-dire, si on ne joint la Tradition avec l’Ecriture, on ne peut presque rien assûrer de certain dans la Religion” (Simon, *Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament*, n.p; Simon, *Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament*, n.p). Thus, the issue turns on certainty, which the text cannot provide. In Simon’s case, it is on the basis of a complex textual history of transmission; for less radical Catholics, the problem of interpretation is the insufficiency for Scripture alone to provide clear dogmatic guidance.
I address Catholicism\(^3\) in the context of this analysis of division and the nineteenth-century English Church because, for historical and theological reasons, Catholicism usually remained by definition the ultimate antagonist for all Protestant thinkers. As we have seen in previous chapters, Smith, Wordsworth, and Cheyne each disparage Roman Catholicism. Part of this attitude toward Catholics by English Protestants emerges out of historical antecedents that shape religious life in England, with the rise and fall of king and queens with Catholic commitments or sympathies. By the time of the nineteenth century, the Union with Ireland Act of 1800 did not help in allaying fears, with many Catholics moving from Ireland to England, nor did the admission of Catholics as members of Parliament.\(^4\) But, more importantly, right from the emergence of Protestantism in England (and elsewhere), exegesis of the Bible was formed in opposition to Catholicism.

This chapter aims to provide evidence that the often defensive stance on the part of English Catholics meant that, since the Bible was often the battleground of division, there was a studious avoidance of serious exegetical engagement with Scripture, particularly that of Isaiah. Indeed, much of this chapter is unable to present any significant Catholic analysis of Isaiah: I consider this part of the strength of my argument that, as a key biblical text in the history of exegesis, Isaiah is conspicuously absent in English Catholic catechetical and doctrinal literature. This analysis also raises issues from previous chapters, negotiated within a Catholic context.

\(^3\)For the sake of simplicity, I use the term “Catholic” to refer to “Roman Catholicism,” which is to be distinguished theologically from “catholic.”

\(^4\)In Caroline M. Hibbard, Charles I and the Popish Plot (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983) she notes the lack of study (in the twentieth century) by historians with respect to the strength and tenacity of the fears of popery in the English psyche. It has often been assumed that the numerically weak representation by English Catholics posed a proportional influence on their anxieties, but, in fact, there was more than mere fear of popery, but that of a very real papal “cabal” that aimed at taking over England. Charles I’s behaviour did little to allay the fears of MPs.
To some extent, the comparison between Catholics and Protestants in England is an unfair one. Even though almost all prohibitions were removed by the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, it was not until 1854 that a Catholic could obtain a degree from Oxford, and 1856 for Cambridge. Few Catholics could thus obtain an education in England to be equal to that of Smith, Wordsworth, or Cheyne. For this reason, I focus primarily on the latter half of the nineteenth century. There were, however, some opportunities for higher education on the Continent, most notably at Douay, out of which emerged the definitive Roman Catholic English translation of the Bible, the Douay-Rheims Bible. Moreover, much of the influential work by academics was written in the eighteenth century, particularly the catechetical writings. However, this is not to suggest an absence of polemical engagement prior to the nineteenth century that contributed substantially to theological disarray and decline.

English Catholics saw the divisive nature of Protestantism’s reliance on *sola scriptura* and “private judgment” as proof of the errors of granting the Bible such a

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5Douay was founded in 1568 for the purpose of training priests to serve in England. There was also the English College in Rome, founded in 1579 in the hopes that England would be restored to its lost Catholic faith.

6Peter Marshall’s discussion of Protestant and Catholic debates surrounding the location and nature of Hell in the intra- and post-Elizabethan era has strong analogies to my contention that ecclesial division attenuated theological exegesis. He shows that, first, the result of many reforms “was perhaps the single most audacious act of theological downsizing in the history of western Christianity” (Peter Marshall, “The Reformation of Hell? Protestant and Catholic Infernalisms in England, c. 1560–1640,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 2 [April 2010]: 280). With respect to the doctrine of hell, for instance, the numerous levels, namely the *Limbus patrum* (the limbo of the fathers), purgatory, *Limbus infantium* (the limbo of unbaptized infants), and hell proper were reduced, at least at the level of discourse, only to a discussion of hell proper. For Catholics, at least as Marshall suggests with respect to England, they tended to discuss the physicality of hell, such as the nature of the fire and brimstone, and its location, which many concluded was at the center of the Earth. For Protestants, because of “the tactical demands of theological polemic” there was “a greater openness to the possibility of allegory and metaphor in making sense of the reality of hell” (Marshall, “The Reformation of Hell,” 295). Marshall’s ultimate argument is that the subtleties of this debate contributed (in England) to “a suggestive dimension to existing discussions of the ‘decline of hell’” (Marshall, “The Reformation of Hell,” 297). Marshall’s consideration of the nature of division and its impact on the doctrine of hell is a fine example of my claim of a similar disintegration of theological interpretation in the nineteenth century, which, like Marshall’s example, has its roots in the controversies of previous centuries.
central place in theology. The effect was that Catholic thinkers often ignored the Bible, especially in connection with doctrinal issues. Many became “anti-modernist,” resorting to earlier scholastic methods such that “for the anti-Modernists a neo-scholastic formulation of the faith and the faith itself were so identified that they could hardly be separated; to reject the formulation was to reject the faith itself.”7 Other Catholics latched onto the idea that the Bible’s perspicacity was so minimal, and that an unguided reading of it was so prone to error, that any critical exegesis would lead to innovation.

I arrange my discussion as follows. Before I provide an analysis of influential Catholic literature of the nineteenth century, I give a general overview of the context in which English Catholics lived out their faith. Then I look at three kinds of Catholic theological literature. First, I consider influential catechetical works and the course of study for Catholic priests destined for England. This is primarily an analysis of writings that held sway into the nineteenth century. Second, I briefly consider two commentaries of a sort, particularly that of Isaiah, namely the Haydock Bible Commentary and the comments written in the Catholic translation of the Bible by Bishop Richard Challoner (1691–1781) in the Douay-Rheims Bible. Third and finally, I examine the most predominate English Catholic scholarly journal of the mid- to late- nineteenth century, The Dublin Review, and mine it for its contribution to understanding Catholic discourse with respect to Scripture and, where possible, that of Isaiah. Most of these three categories of Catholic works speak to matters related to the Bible, and particularly provide evidence that Catholics were wary of reading Scripture and critical of the effects of sola scriptura.

2 English Catholics in the Nineteenth Century

This section describes the intellectual and hermeneutical context in which English Catholics functioned during the nineteenth century. Part of this relates to the broader movements in Catholic Europe (e.g., the *Syllabus of Errors*), but the English instance of Catholic thinking is particularly reactive against Protestant notions of Scripture. I argue that this led to a general approach that avoids close engagement with the text and confusion about the relation between the Bible and the Church.\(^8\)

The rather consistent Protestant anti-Catholic bias led to a perspective within the Catholic community, amidst anti-Catholic penalties, that self-identified as a beleaguered minority in England. For this reason, many communities functioned in a “sectarian” manner\(^9\) and frequently an attitude pervaded of rigidity and conservatism that was ineffective in responding to the emerging challenges of modernity. As Watkin, himself a Catholic, argues,

Conservatism and defence . . . such has been the presentation of Catholicism from the Reformation to our own time, a presentation inevitably restricted by its

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\(^8\)Though I focus on England, I would suggest that it is not entirely unique. I discuss some of the movements in Germany, below, and François Laplanche addresses some of the attitudes of Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in *L’enseignement de L’Exegese dans Les Universites Catholique a L’Epoque Moderne (16\(^6\)-17\(^e\) Siecles)*. He shows that while Erasmus was originally admired for his work on Scripture, “La lente mobilisation de l'Eglise catholique contre la Réforme protestante a contribué, comme tout effort de guerre, à figer les positions et à transformer l'apôtre de la *philosophia Christi* [that is, Erasmus] en ennemi de la vraie foi” (François LaPlanche, “L'Enseignement de l'Exegese dans Les Universites Catholique à L’Epoque Moderne [16e–17e Siecles],” in *Université, Église, Culture: L'Université Catholique à l’Epoque Moderne De la Réforme à la Révolution XVIème–XVIIIème Siècles* [Paris: FIUC, 2003], 379. While Laplanche does not speak to the English case, this perspective is descriptive of the general English Catholic view toward innovative readings of the text.

\(^9\)Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage, and Religion, c. 1550–1640*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3. Questier challenges this notion of Catholic “sectarianism” in favour of evidence that shows a much greater inculturation in English society, especially by Catholic aristocracy. He also shows that there were numerous competing opinions between Catholics about what is meant to be such in post-Reformation England. This indicates that, as I partly bring out in this chapter, there were several “factions” within Catholicism itself that I would argue parallel those of the Church of England.
historical conditions and therefore unable to prove permanently satisfying.\textsuperscript{10}

For the most part, Catholic biblical exegesis was generally impacted by the Counter-Reformation, out of which emerged the Council of Trent,\textsuperscript{11} which rejected the idea of \textit{sola scriptura}, as it was seen to be equivalent to private interpretation — a view not usually denied by Protestants.

It would be a mistake to denote Catholic thought in England — in Europe for that matter — as monolithic. Indeed, while there were penal laws that had been inconsistently applied to the Catholic communities since the Elizabethan laws of uniformity, there was a kind of uneasy truce that had emerged between Roman Catholics and Protestants such that English Catholicism, separated from Rome both geographically and culturally, was often practiced in a way that had its own “English” form. It has been suggested that Anglo-Gallicanism resulted, born not only of suspicions of papal jurisdiction that had their own historical precedents, but also of a desire to prove loyalty to the monarch of England, regardless of his or her Protestantism. After Emancipation in 1829, however, a wing of Catholicism gradually arose that was Ultramontane, represented by people such

\textsuperscript{10}E. I. Watkin, \textit{Roman Catholicism in England, from the Reformation to 1950}, Home University Library of Modern Knowledge (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 13. Note that Watkin is writing from a pre-Vatican II era. At the time of his writing, there was a kind of flowering of Catholic theological interpretation of Scripture, taking into account some of the results of historical-critical study. This was especially ushered in by the work of those involved in \textit{ressourcement}, namely Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, and Yvers Congar. See Marie Anne Mayeski, “Quaestio Disputata: Catholic Theology and the History of Exegesis,” \textit{Theological Studies} 62 (2001): 140–53. Mayeski’s claim regarding the extent to which \textit{ressourcement} theologians took critical study into account, however, is debatable. Moreover, given that Mayeski’s title claims to be a \textit{history} of exegesis, her discussion remains firmly within the bounds of early twentieth-century debates. She neglects to mention nineteenth-century moves toward critical study at, for instance, l’École Biblique de Jerusalem, not to mention some of the other thinkers who generated debate, whom I address below.

\textsuperscript{11}See Guy Bedouelle, “Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation,” in \textit{A History of Biblical Interpretation, Vol. 2, The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods}, ed. Alan J. Hauser & Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 428–49. Bedouelle makes an important distinction between the Catholic Counter-Reformation and a Catholic Reformation; the former is a direct (antagonistic) response to Protestant arguments and the latter, as most councils seek to do, is a series of changes to bring about needed reform of the Church.
as Nicholas Wiseman (1802–65) and former Tractarian Henry Manning (1808–92). They were often in sharp and vitriolic opposition to the relatively moderate “Cisalpines,” who were Catholics who came out of the more “Anglo-Gallican” tradition of Douay College. Representatives of this latter “school,” were well known people such as John Lingard and Charles Butler.\textsuperscript{12}

In the larger Catholic world, there was a strong reaction against the “liberalism” that had been developed primarily by Protestants, an attitude that can be seen most acutely in the \textit{Syllabus of Errors}, released by Pope Pius XI in 1864.\textsuperscript{13} The document was not itself a newly formulated one but a conglomeration of papal issuances published previously and characteristic of the perspective of the \textit{curia} at the time. The \textit{Syllabus} consists of 80 statements that the Church is to oppose, the topics ranging from politics, to philosophy to marriage. Of interest to the present discussion are such condemned statements as that of Proposition 7, “The prophecies and miracles set forth and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith the result of philosophical investigations. In the books of the Old and the New Testament there are contained mythical inventions, and Jesus Christ is Himself a myth;” or Proposition 18, “Protestantism is nothing more than another form of the same true Christian religion, in which form it is given to please God equally as in the Catholic Church;” or Proposition 80, “The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{14} These statements (in

\textsuperscript{12}For this history, see Chinnici, \textit{The English Catholic Enlightenment}.

\textsuperscript{13}This is often referred to as the “anti-modern” stance of Catholicism at the time. The employment of both the terms “modern” and “liberal” is fraught with definitional ambiguity. Within the context of Catholic attitudes, there was by no means a rejection of “modern” conveniences emerging from new technological innovations. Rather, the objection (also shared by many Protestants) was to any emerging theological innovations that challenge the historically accepted methodology of reading Scripture.

\textsuperscript{14}Taken from http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P9SYLL.HTM
which Scripture is mentioned only once) shy away from anything that was perceived to be theologically innovative and are often portrayed as the product of Protestant thought.

In England, Nicholas Wiseman, despite the fact that he “gloried in the inventiveness of the times, and sought to attach Christianity to the expansive and progressive qualities of the intelligentsia,” nonetheless “saw English Protestantism all round him sinking into liberalism and ultimate scepticism.”15 Such documents as the Syllabus can therefore be seen as strong reactions against the perceived heterodoxy of Protestants.16 While the reaction to the Syllabus was predictably rather negative for most Protestants, the reaction of Catholics was mixed. Many considered it a wholesale rejection by the Magisterium of most Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment principles, and for this reason it was hailed or rejected either for its clarity, or its harshness.

There was, at the same time, a struggle over the Bible by Catholics in the Katholische Tübingen Schule in Germany, which put forth various theories of biblical inspiration in the nineteenth century that would have some impact in England. This movement is worth a brief mention to indicate some diversity within Catholicism. They argued under the göttlich-menschlich formula that there is no competition between human and divine agency in the formation of the canon of Scripture. The Holy Spirit at times provides specific revelation about events or concepts, but the general rule was that no author writes beyond his or her own human capabilities. “The sacred writer’s faculties, far from being immobilized during periods of divine takeover, are hypersensitized for their task, so that while following their ordinary human operational laws, they become

15Edward Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1984), 86. Wiseman was the first bishop of the newly restored Roman Catholic hierarchy of 1850. This event alone reveals the deep distrust of Roman Catholics in the English consciousness, as the papal bull generated considerable agitation, and even rioting.

16At the same time, there were other historically contingent factors that elicited such a response; many were political, such as the proposal to disestablish the Catholic Church in Spain.
empowered to transmit a deeper, divine message.” Early pioneers of these ideas included Johann Sebastian von Dey and Johann Adam Möhler. Burtchaell notes the similarities between von Drey and Schleiermacher; the only difference between the two is the extent to which the individual believer plays in the development of the “tradition.” For Schleiermacher, this development does not occur in the community but in the individual believer:

Thus it is as representing each individual’s personal understanding of Scripture that . . . his true expressions of Christian piety take shape. And the interpretation of Christian faith which validates itself in each age as having been evoked by Scripture is the development, suited to that moment, of the genuine original interpretation of Christ.

For both the Catholic Tübingeners and Schleiermacher, Scripture emerges out of the Church (rather than vice versa) and is only one instance among others of the Holy Spirit giving the Church its faith. “Though the written gospel was an expression of the living gospel, it was never a total expression.” Moreover, “Christianity was never a religion propagated by writing. A book-religion is a fundamentally individualistic, private affair: each man reads by himself and draws his own conclusions. Christ and the Church have always approached men through preaching, a communal activity.”


19 One important distinction is that Catholics aimed to maintain the Old Testament as part of the canon, whereas Schleiermacher wanted it as a kind of historical appendix (Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration*, 16).


instance, the community is not just one of faith in general, but that of the preservatorial office of the Church. Möhler and von Drey, despite resembling a rather “liberal” approach to Scripture in their argument that God is not per se the author of Scripture, criticize the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle, suggesting that “every aberration in belief could and did appeal to Scripture; thus the further need of an interpreting authority.”\(^{23}\) Therefore, although there are similar sentiments between Schleiermacher and the Catholic Tübingeners, the ultimate aim of the latter is to grant greater authority to the Church at the expense of Scripture. They do so by employing the same tools of “liberal” academics to call into question Scripture’s divine source.

Johann von Kuhn is an ideal representative of this *göttlich-menschlich* model of biblical inspiration.\(^{24}\) Just as the Chalcedonian formula asserts Christ’s dual natures — unconfused and in perfect harmony — so too does Scripture illustrate “the Bible both as God’s immediate production and as the literary responsibility of the human authors.”\(^{25}\) This acknowledgement of Scripture’s human element for some meant that “much of what it contains is not the object of faith, for there is much purely human material intercalated among the items of revelation. Being so thoroughly heterogeneous . . . a document, it can never serve by itself as the adequate and exclusive source of faith.”\(^{26}\) Thus, in order to know the entire Word of God, one must see beyond this one instance of the Spirit’s work

\(^{23}\)Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration*, 25.


\(^{26}\)Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration*, 30. One must immediately note that the Chalcedonian analogy breaks down just at this point. Surely no Catholic would find Christ’s human nature unreliable, or make a distinction within the one Person between one act and another without entering into quasi-Nestorian discourse. Rather, this is a grasping at a theological principle in order to use it against Bible-centred Protestants.
to where God’s Word also resides in tradition, the unwritten Word. Burtchaell’s central point is that

The Tübingen Catholics wrought their formula in the forge of controversy. . . . Catholics at the time felt themselves challenged theologically at either flank. On the one hand, orthodox Protestantism had laid it down that the exclusive, infallible source of Christian faith was the Bible, and the Bible alone. The necessary subsidiary to this dogma seemed to be a belief in verbal inspiration. On the other hand were the adversaries from the Enlightenment. Christianity as they saw it was one of the more impressive creations of the human spirit, but no more than that. . . . To the Protestants they insisted that much of revelation had eluded the New Testament and had to be sought in ancillary Church traditions. Against the Deists they urged that prophecy and miracles were irrefragable credentials of a supernatural revelation.  

I do not go into more detail on these matters within Germany except to note that similar controversies were intellectual undercurrents of matters in England, though they were not formulated in the same context.  

Burtchaell notes, however, that John Henry Newman was influenced by some of this thought. Like his German predecessors (though not necessarily because of their influence, for Newman had no knowledge of German),

[Newman] takes the stand on the problematic of Scripture which was typical of the English Liberal Catholics: he admits the obscurities, the contradictions, the insufficiencies of the Bible. Indeed, he underscores them, he brandishes them — and then turns them to his purpose by insisting that they only postulate an infallible interpreter to preside over genuine development and preserve it from deviation.

What can be seen is that there were numerous dedicated Catholics who had various opinions regarding Scripture; in fact, as a result of the rather reactionary perspective of the curia, there was a general sense of confusion about the nature of Scripture and its relation to the Church and doctrine.

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27 Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration, 40–41.

28 One major difference between the two countries was that, for these German theologians, they were professors, colleagues with Protestant thinkers at the same university.

29 Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration, 69.
3 Catechetical Literature for Clergy and Laity

In this section, I explore some central works that were used for Catholic training, both for priests and lay people in (or for) England. For each, I look at the general approach to Scripture and its relationship to theology. Where possible, I also explore the function of the book of Isaiah. I show that the catechetical use of Scripture has a strong tendency toward “proof-texting” that neither closely links verses to their historical contexts, nor locates them within a larger hermeneutical-theological context.

Peter McGrail has collated material on the Eucharist that was published between 1568 and 1910, which was used primarily to catechize children. McGrail refers to the well known *Garden of the Soul* by Bishop Richard Challoner, who was a significant leader in English Catholicism in the eighteenth century, as a book that “enjoyed enormous popularity within the English Catholic community. . . . It was effectively the prayer-book of most English Catholics.” It also has sections that provide religious instruction. Challoner also penned the popular catechetical work *The Catholic Christian Instructed*. It is the latter work to which I attend directly. It is interesting to note that much of this material was written before the nineteenth century but was still widely in use. Very little popular catechetical literature was developed in the nineteenth century for English Catholics.

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33 Richard Challoner, *The Catholic Christian Instructed in the Sacraments, Sacrifices, Ceremonies and Observances of the Church by Way of Question and Answer* (Baltimore, MD: G. Dobbin and Murphy, 1809).
I proceed by considering each of these catechetical works under three categories: first, I illustrate the use of Scripture in the structure of theological arguments themselves. Second, I consider relevant theological discussions about Scripture, its nature, and its relation to theology and the Church. Third, I show how Isaiah in particular functions within these two categories — which is to say, the prophet does not function in any significant way.

With regard to English clergy, few priests, let alone the laity, had books that were current; after his visitation to various English parishes in 1855, Bishop Goss notes that “the chief impression one gets from the lists is that the books were old, a feeling that the collections were about a hundred years out of date. There is very little after 1820, and the years most heavily represented are 1600–1750.”34 The primary works I examine comprise a catechism that came out of Douay in 1649, by Henry Tuberville, and that enjoyed wide use in the nineteenth century: *An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine with Proofs from Scripture on Points Controverted*.35 In addition, there was Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet’s *An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church in Matters of Controversy*, composed in 1668 and reprinted in 1830, interestingly, by members of the Church of England (translator unknown.)36 Although Bossuet was French, his work had some early impact on English Catholics and caused some controversy when *An Exposition* was translated.37 I end with an examination of Challoner’s *The Catholic Christian Instructed*.

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The instruction of the clergy in the nineteenth century would include these various catechetical works that could be found at places like Douay. The details of the curriculum, however, are not always clear:

It is difficult to ascertain the exact content of the educational scheme at Douai, St. Omer’s, and the English College, Rome, after 1750. The extant material relates mostly to the English College, Douai. There the common course of studies for the priesthood took eleven years: a five-year course in the humanities... then two years of philosophy and four of theology. The greatest emphasis was on the classics: Cicero, Virgil, Tacitus, Livy, Homer, Thucydides, and Herodotus. The curriculum demanded a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin and a familiarity with Hebrew.  

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38 Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment*, 7. Chinnici also states that “the theology course at Douai... relied heavily on a study of the sources, Scripture and the patristic tradition” (Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment*, 8), but very little evidence is offered regarding the nature of scriptural engagement. See also Martin Haile & Edwin Bonney, *Life and Letters of John Lingard, 1771–1851* (London: Herbert & Daniel, 1911), 29–31 in which the course of study is described; Hebrew and Greek are taught, presumably for the purpose of biblical study, but the Bible is not explicitly mentioned. This is also the case in David Milburn, *A History of Ushaw College: A Study of the Origin, Foundation, and Development of an English Catholic Seminary, with an Epilogue, 1908–1962* (Durham: Ushaw Bookshop, 1964), 7, where a very brief description of the course of study is listed.

It is worth briefly considering the course of study of Church of England ordinands. Generally, the curriculum was uneven and not necessarily any more biblically oriented than that of Catholics. “The academic preparation considered necessary for ordination was in itself in transition [in the early nineteenth century] and it also varied from diocese to diocese” (Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 110). Knight notes a certain Bishop Kaye, who required “in addition to obtaining an attendance certificate from a divinity professor, his ordinands were expected to read some of the classic texts of eighteenth-century Anglicanism — Prideaux’s *Connection*, Home’s *Introduction*, Paley’s *Natural Theology*, Burnet on the Thirty-nine Articles and Butler’s *Analogy* — volumes that were widely regarded as containing all things necessary for ministry in the Church of England” (Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church*, 111). Knight observes other instances where candidates are “quizzed” on their theological knowledge of various subjects, but there are no significant exegetical points to which Knight attends. Since the various parties within the Church of England were relatively firmly defined by the mid-nineteenth century, the training one received would be contingent on the “party affiliation” of their Bishop. By the late nineteenth century, for instance, numerous small colleges and universities were set up for Evangelical clergy, such as St. Aidan’s, Birkenhead and St. John’s, Highbury (David Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training: The Redbrick Challenge*, Oxford Theological Monographs. [Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 64–106). Dowland alludes to some of the courses at St. Aidan’s: “the theological courses, extending over two years, included classes and lectures on the Bible, Hebrew, Liturgy, Thirty-nine Articles, General Church History, History of the Church of England and Evidences of Christianity” (Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training*, 101). He also argues that St. Aidan’s decline was given impetus by the insistence of Principal Baylee that his *Introduction to the Bible* be used — a work “not generally considered outside St. Aidan’s as an outstanding contribution to theological scholarship” (Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training*, 91. Dowland also notes King’s College London as an institution started by old High Church divines, such as Hugh James Rose, in order to combat the perceived increase in a purely secular training at University College London (Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training*, 35–63). Biblically, however, all that was required was a
Douay’s pedagogical material was influenced by Challoner and Bossuet, who were “cited frequently by all of the textbooks, [and] represented an assiduous search for ‘pure doctrine.’”

Peter Doyle notes, however, that by the time of the restoration of the hierarchy, the bishops advocated a training which isolated the seminarians from contemporary developments in secular education and which was marked by a deep suspicion of the world; it reflected a very narrow view of theology, and was partly responsible for the failure to develop a commitment to continuing study after ordination in many of the clergy.

Doyle also observes that the Bishops who set out to establish colleges often considered it an important part of clerical training to be prepared to defend oneself against Protestants. What was unusual for a Catholic college, as opposed to on the Continent, was that as a result of the antagonistic climate, Greek and Hebrew were taught, but this rarely went further in terms of close biblical study. Doyle notes, for instance, that A report from St. Edmund’s Ware, shows that there, at least, the study of scripture was subordinate to that of dogmatic theology. The same lecturer taught both, and the scripture course consisted mainly of “an abstract of the rules of scriptural interpretation dictated twice a week.”

The result, argues Doyle, was a “static” form of Roman Catholicism. When Bishop Goss made the visitation I note above, he observed that the clergy possessed books that

“competent” knowledge of Genesis, Luke and Paley’s *Evidences* and some history (Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training*, 46). Crowther notes that, at Oxford, still a primary though diminishing source of clergymen, “the amount of actual teaching . . . depended upon the energies of the professors and of individual college tutors. . . . The divinity professors were often inactive because their lectures were not compulsory for students and were therefore badly attended” (M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, Library of Politics and Society [Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970], 225). She notes that the situation was not much different at Cambridge.


were rarely related to biblical matters: “While bibles and copies of the New Testament are common, commentaries and works on scriptural interpretation are rare.”

Henry Tuberville’s *Abridgment of Christian Doctrine with Proofs of Scripture on Points Controverted* is an ideal illustration of a typically Catholic perspective on the relationship between Scripture, doctrine and the Church. It was often called “The Douay Catechism” and new editions were published well into the nineteenth century, despite its 1649 origin. As can be discerned from the title, the catechism is not merely a tool for teaching Catholic doctrine, but also apologetically oriented for the purpose of opposing Protestants.

With regard to the *use* of Scripture, the point can be made rather briefly: Scripture is used merely as a “proof” for the various doctrines described. For instance, one of the questions concerns the administration of the Eucharist under only one kind:

Q. How do you prove it is lawful for the laity to communicate under one kind only?
A. First, because there is no command in scripture for the laity to do it under both, though there be for priests in those words, “Drink ye all of this,” *St. Matt. xxvi.* 27, which was spoken to the apostles only and by them fulfilled: for it follows in *Mark xiv.* 23, “And they all drank.” 2. Out of *St. John vi.* 58, “He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” Therefore, one kind sufficeth.

This is perhaps not unusual for a catechism, as most Protestant catechisms use Scripture as a guarantor of doctrinal statements as well. However, the non-contextual deployment of Scripture to affirm (if not justify) ecclesial practice is striking. For instance, consider the series of questions pertaining to issues that offend some Protestants:

Q. How do you prove it is lawful to dedicate or consecrate material temples?

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46 A typical example is that of the Heidelberg Catechism, in which footnotes are sprinkled throughout, referring to appropriate biblical passages, to show that its doctrinal claims are supported by the Bible.
A. Out of . . . St. John x 22, where it is recorded, that Christ himself kept the
dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, instituted by Judas Maccabeus. 1 Mac. iv.
56, 59.
Q. How do you prove it is lawful to adorn churches with tapestry, pictures, and the
like?
A. Out of St. Mark xiv. 15, where Christ commanded his last supper to be
prepared in a great chamber adorned.
Q. What proof have you for the order and number of the canonical hour?
A. For Matins, Lauds, and Prime, that of Psal. v. 4. “Early in the morning will I
stand up to thee, early in the morning wilt thou hear my voice.”
Q. What for the third, sixth, and ninth hours?
A. For the third, out of Acts ii. 16. “At the third hour, the Holy Ghost descended
on the apostles.” For the sixth, out of Acts x. 9, “Peter and John went up into the
highest part to pray, about the sixth hour.” And for the ninth, out of Acts iii. 1,
“And at the ninth hour Peter and John went into the temple to pray.”
Q. What for the Even-song and Complin?
A. That of the Psalmist, “Morning and Evening will I declare the works of our
Lord.”

It is also instructive to consider how the catechism speaks of Scripture. In its
discussion of the nature of the Church, the catechism argues that “with Catholics it is
essential and fundamental to believe in the Holy Catholic Church; to hear her rather than
our own idle fancies; and to abide, in doubts on religion, by the judgment of her Pastors.”

This is followed by:

Q. Is it not possible to settle religious doubts or controversies by private judgment
without an infallible tribunal?
A. No; it is not possible. 1st. Because the judgment of most men change and
differ one from the other, and especially in matters of Religion, as may be seen in
the numberless sects into which those who are not in the Church divide
themselves . . .
Q. Why may not the letter of the scripture be a decisive judge of controversies?
A. Because it has never yet been able, from the first writing of it, to decide any
one, as the whole world doth experience; all Heretics pretending equally to it, for
defence of their novelties and heresies, and no one of them ever yielding to
another.
Q. How then can we be assured of the truth in points controverted?
A. By the infallible authority, definition, and proposition of the Catholic Church.
Q. For what end then was the Scripture written, if not to be a decider of
controversies?
A. The writing of the Holy Scriptures was for the purpose of the better preserving
the revealed will of God, and that by a sensible and common reading of it, without
any critical or controversial disputes of words, we might be able to know that God
is, and what he is, as also that there is a heaven and a hell, rewards for virtue, and
punishment for vice, with examples of both, all which we find in the letter of the

This is a remarkable view of Scripture in that orients it in a way that devalues its revelatory character. This is a key example of Richard Popkin’s claim regarding Catholic tendency, in the debate over the interpretation of Scripture with Protestants, to assert interpretive authority as residing in the Church. There is a devaluation of the revelatory power of Scripture beyond these rather minimalist claims about rewarding people for their deeds and the existence of God. Insofar as doctrine is concerned, beyond these rather fundamental points, the only infallible source for such doctrine (and for certainty) resides in the Church. Notwithstanding the irony that this entire catechism attempts to prove doctrine — even controverted doctrine — using Scripture, the assertion is that the Bible cannot be turned to in difficult matters: it is not an infallible authority.

It is also important to emphasize that those doctrines listed above that can be determined “by a sensible and common reading” of the Bible differ very little from some forms of deism. This is not to say that Catholics tended toward such a system, but that the argument as I have shown it suggests that one can scarcely get much further than such a perspective with the Bible alone. Terrence Tilley, argues that the “eclipse of biblical narrative” happened much earlier than Hans Frei’s historical scheme would indicate. Tilley shows that combatants of early conflicts between groups such as the Huguenots and Catholics regarded these wars in terms of unfolding historical events that disclose God’s providential favouritism of one side over another. This led such Catholic sceptics as Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) to mock the self-serving dissymmetry of such theological polemics. . . . It is this insoluble confrontation over the meaning of events in the biblical narrative that forces a new pattern of discourse. . . . The eclipse of the biblical narrative for structuring European Christendom begins in the wars of religion in the sixteenth century and

in the polemical arguments Protestants and Catholics made against the other; it is not merely the result of the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, as Frei is often understood to imply.\textsuperscript{50}

Tilley argues that “these Christian theologians became pure philosophers in their arguments. Theological particularity was caught in the stalemate and abandoned. . . . [They] proposed a Christianity completely without mystery, a ‘theism’ with a god so distant from the world of creation as to deserve the new nomenclature ‘deism.’”\textsuperscript{51} Most Catholics did not take this route, but Chinnici’s bifurcation between Word and Church often resulted in a confusing disconnect between doctrine and Scripture, and the passage from the catechism above also appears to suggest as much. It is also important to note the way that Tilley’s argument affirms my claim of the impact of division on these changes. Frei’s descriptive account of the “eclipse” of biblical narrative in terms of new intellectual movements omits the more \textit{causal} element of ecclesial division that is generative of a vast array of competing exegetical approaches.

Finally, with respect to the use of Isaiah, I merely list representative references, few as they are, for they are no more central than any other biblical text and cannot be seen to serve any particularly key theological role. For instance, the front page quotes Isaiah 30:21, “This is the way; walk ye in it.” The proof of the lawfulness of making pilgrimages to holy places quotes Isaiah 11:10, “Him the Gentiles shall beseech, and his sepulchre shall be glorious.”\textsuperscript{52} And Isaiah 11:21 establishes the acceptability of making vows: “They shall make vows unto the Lord, and shall perform them.”\textsuperscript{53} In terms of Isaiah’s predictive capacity, Isaiah 11:10 is used to show that it was predicted that


\textsuperscript{51}Tilley, \textit{History, Theology, and Faith}, 73.

\textsuperscript{52}Tuberville, \textit{An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine}, 53.

\textsuperscript{53}Tuberville, \textit{An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine}, 55.
Christ’s burial would be with honour (“and his resting place will be glorious”). It is clear that this meagre use of Isaiah illustrates that it does not figure prominently in theological discourse, at least, not for catechetical material.

Bossuet’s An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church in Matters of Controversy, to which I now turn, is not a catechism as such, but is representative of English Catholic thought, as he influenced many Catholics of a more “Anglo-Gallican” orientation. I limit this discussion to his use and account of Scripture. It should be mentioned that Isaiah plays no role in this work.

Bossuet’s statement regarding the relationship between the Bible and tradition ought to be familiar by now:

Jesus Christ having established His Church by the preaching of the unwritten word, it became the first rule of Christianity; and when the writings of the New Testament were added to it, this word lost none of its authority on that account: therefore we feel bound to receive with the same reverence all that the Apostles taught, whether by writing, or by precept, as St. Paul himself has expressly declared, 2 Thess. ii.15. And it is a certain proof, that when no origin of a doctrine can be traced, and yet it is embraced by the whole Church, it must have come down from the Apostles themselves.

Scripture itself (2 Thessalonians) is used to support the idea of non-scriptural teaching; like most movements of the time — Protestants and Catholics alike — Bossuet aims to uncover what best represents “primitive antiquity.” As such, it is only the Church, “the deposit of the Scriptures and of Tradition,” who can interpret Scripture; “for by means of Tradition we interpret the true sense of Scripture. . . . It is thus that the children of God acquiesce in the decisions of the Church, believing to have heard by her mouth the oracles

54Tuberville, An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine, 16.

55Despite his antipathy toward Protestants, he argues that the change from the Edwardian to the Elizabethan form of the Church of England was a move in a more Catholic direction, and part of the Exposition’s purpose is to show this.


57Bossuet, An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church, 10.
of the Holy Spirit.”58 This illustrates the now-familiar Catholic response to Protestant claims that the Holy Spirit speaks infallibly through the text of Scripture. Bossuet’s argument against private interpretation is not just that it is theologically problematic, as much as it is dangerous:

[The Church] has neither the means nor the intention of innovating in the least, since she not only submits herself to the Holy Scripture, but the better to silence at once all private interpretations of it, which are too apt to be regarded in the same light as Scripture, she has determined to listen to no other interpretations but those of the Fathers as regards matters of faith and discipline.59

While the stated aim of the Exposition is not to be combative, the Catholic position remains clear for Bossuet. Despite his statement that the Church submits herself to Scripture, the historic, ecclesial interpretation is presented as exhaustive: no further engagement with Scripture is necessary. Moreover, the Bible remains insufficient in informing faith and in fact can be problematic without the interpretive presence of the inspired primitive Church.

Richard Challoner bears some similarities with Bossuet. He was an important and influential figure for Roman Catholics in seventeenth-century England. Born of a strongly dissenting Catholic family, he converted along with his mother and left for Douay at the age of fourteen.60 He participated in the Douay-Rheims revision of the Bible, as well as its commentary, in addition to The Catholic Christian Instructed, and the popular devotional manual The Garden of the Soul.61 He also wrote an Abridgment of


61Despite its quite significant popularity, I do not in the main section of my discussion attend to Garden of the Soul as it is primarily a devotional work in which the Bible is rarely mentioned, and Isaiah even less. Nonetheless, given its impact on English Catholics, it is helpful to give a brief analysis of The
Christian Doctrine, which is similar in form to that of Tuberville. It was often called “The Penny Catechism,” and “for countless Catholics it was, in fact, the beginning and end of their doctrinal training.” I attend to his larger catechism, as it was written in a state of conflict, in this case with the controversialist and deist Conyers Middleton (1683–1750). The latter had written a popular book, arguing, with typical Protestant anti-Roman rhetoric, that putatively non-biblical practices in the Roman Church derive from pagan customs. Although Challoner did not write the catechism in order to refute Middleton, he added a response to him in the preface. While the exchange is an interesting one, as

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Garden here. First, as with other Catholic works I consider, Scripture functions in a supportive capacity for certain doctrines, but also in a contemplative and meditative context. For instance, it urges Matthew 7:13, 14, Jesus’ illustration of the narrow gate, “to be pondered at leisure by every Christian soul” (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 20). John 1 is also urged as a source of meditation on the Incarnation. There is also frequent use of the Psalms in a liturgical context. Therefore, Scripture, in a meditation and personal — one could say “non-dogmatic” — capacity is employed with some frequency. Second, direct mention of the Bible’s function is especially rare, but when present, it is a repetition of familiar statements. For instance, in the first section on Christian Doctrine, Challoner states, “With this catholic church, the scriptures both of the old and new testament were deposited by the Apostles: She is, in her pastors, the guardian and interpreter of them, and the judge of all controversies relating to them” (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 15). There is, however, one section in which the Christian is urged to read the Bible personally and individually. Challoner recommends the reading of good books for personal edification, and when he comes to Scripture he says “Look upon it, that as when you are praying you are speaking to God, so when you are reading or hearing his word, he is speaking to you. . . . Hear the word of God as often as you have the opportunity” (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 196). Note the distinction between this and the previous quotation. Personal, individual use of the Bible is encouraged, but certainly not with regard to matters of controversy. There is a moral link between the individual reader and the Bible but at the same time an implicit danger of attempting to read Scripture in the adjudication of contentious matters. Finally, for the sake of completeness, I list the occasions of Isaiah’s use and give little analysis other than to state that as a book Isaiah has no role to play in Garden of the Soul. However, it could also be argued that the Bible in general has little priority. In his discussion on the importance of pondering the terrors of hell, Challoner claims to quote Isaiah, where he says, “Terrify yourselves with the words of the prophet Isaiah; O my soul, are thou able to live for ever in everlasting flames, and amidst this devouring fire?” (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 60). He does not state to what part of Isaiah he is referring; one can only guess that it is perhaps Isaiah 5:24, “Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” In another section, he suggests that if one wakes up in the night, he or she should think on Isaiah 24:9, “My soul hath desired thee in the night” (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 187). Finally, Isaiah 5:21 is used to warn against drunkenness (Challoner, Garden of the Soul, 217).

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with all catechetical literature, I examine only those passages that bear on issues of the Bible. Challoner was also a grandfather of sorts to a group who came to be known as the Cisalpines, firmly Catholic, but also just as firmly “English,” willing to declare their allegiance to the crown; at the same time they sought relief from penal laws. At his own time and afterward, he was highly respected:

This calm ordered devotedness marking his days at Douai was yet more striking in a London profoundly alien to any aspect of deep religion. In these missionary years the veneration which was felt for him in later life first took hold of the English Catholics; a quite special character of reverence and restrained affection was to mark his people’s feelings towards the only real leader which God then gave them.64

As with many catechisms, The Catholic Christian Instructed is structured in question/answer format, but more importantly, it is formulated with the complaints of Protestants in mind. Challoner had a particularly acute interest in the liturgical effectiveness of the Catholic Church and vigorously defended the theological integrity of her practices. He aimed to show that no practice contradicts Scripture, but also that such church ceremonies not mentioned in the Bible are justified by their ancient provenance.

There are two aspects to Challoner’s understanding of Scripture that reflect a typical English Catholic attitude in the nineteenth century, ultimately working to reduce the importance of the Old Testament in general and Isaiah in particular. First, is the deeply functional role the Bible is granted. As in other Catholic contexts, Challoner’s reading of Scripture is not exegesis, but rather a positioning of the Bible in a supportive role to prove that Catholic practices, contra Protestants, accord with Scripture. For instance, Challoner offers several “proofs” for the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; John 6 is one of them, out of which he argues that when Jesus talks of eating his flesh and

drinking his blood, he refers to the partaking of the elements in Communion. Or, in a specifically directed question against the Quakers’ practice of not baptizing everyone,

Q. How do you prove against the quakers that all persons ought to be baptized?
A. From the commission of Christ, St. Matt. xxviii 19. Go teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In a most interesting example of expressly antagonistic exegesis of Scripture, Challoner uses the book of Revelation against Martin Luther. In a section where Challoner discusses various religious orders, he mentions that of St. Augustine. Challoner then adds

From this order Luther apostatized in the 16th century, and like the dragon, Revel. xii. ver. 4. “drew with him the third part of the stars of heaven, (that is, great numbers of religious of all denominations) and cast them to the earth.”

Nothing is added to this, and while such an explicitly antagonistic use of Scripture is not frequent, Catholics are apparently no less reticent than Protestants in using Scripture against their opponents.

Second, it is instructive to note that Challoner generally avoids figurative or spiritual readings of Scripture in favour of a “literal” interpretation. The implication for this is a distrust of potential ambiguities of meaning in favour of clear and distinct referents in literal interpretations. Whereas in earlier ages, the figurative reading of the Bible was a crucial component in exegesis, we now find the following:

Q. Why do you take these words of Christ at his last supper according to the letter, rather than in the figurative sense?
A. You might as well ask a traveller why he chuses [sic] the high road, rather than to go by by-paths with evident danger of losing his way. . . . In interpreting scripture the literal sense of the words is not to be forsaken, and a figurative one followed without necessity; and that the natural and proper sense is always to be preferred, where the case will admit it.

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The phrase “without necessity” is to be noted here. It refers to a mode of reading Scripture where the figurative sense is perceived as extraneous and abstract, and certainly one not sufficient in controversial matters. The figurative mode (a central aspect of Old Testament theological interpretation) is now pressed further from the literal sense. This “without necessity” suggests a certain extraneous quality about any interpretation that goes beyond the literal. This is not to say that Challoner disapproves of figural interpretation in certain warranted instances. He concedes,

in certain cases, when a thing is already known to be a sign or figure of something else, which it signifies or represents, it may indeed, according to the common laws of speech and the use of the scripture be said to be such or such a thing; as in the interpretation of dreams, parables, and ancient figures.69

Challoner’s aim is a reading of Scripture according to a proper understanding of its variegated literary forms. For the most part, however, he describes the reading of the Bible in terms of its most “obvious” sense; if this is not sufficient, then one can turn to the infallible interpretation of the Catholic Church.

Given that his ideas on Scripture are refracted through a polemical lens, there is a diminishment of Scripture’s multifaceted influence in favour of clear and distinct concepts, shorn of the layered fecundity attributed to it in earlier eras. With this diminishment of figuralism comes, almost by necessity, a similar attenuation of import given to the Old Testament. There are times that Challoner employs Isaiah, but, as with most other texts, it functions only as a proof text in support of Catholic practice and teaching. For instance, Isaiah 53, 58, and 60 are quoted in support of various prayer times (specifically none, lauds, prime, and sext), yet Challoner does not speak of any christological significance in the same Isaiah 53 passage.70


While Challoner has a deep knowledge of Scripture, the above analysis of his catechism indicates the strong bifurcation, as mentioned above by Chinnici at the beginning of this chapter, between Church and Scripture. Thus, in the end, Challoner indicates his agreement with regard to the insufficiency of Scripture alone for faith. It also indicates that this view arises out of the matrix of controversy with Protestants.

4 Popular Biblical Commentaries

While there were no significant scholarly Catholic commentaries on Isaiah, two resources that were used by many English Catholics warrant mention. The first is the translation of the Bible many Catholics had in their homes, namely, the Douay-Rheims version, which was originally published before the Authorized Version. By the nineteenth century, those English Catholics who owned Bibles had one in which there were comments written by Bishop Challoner or ones to which were additionally appended notes by Rev. Leo Haydock. There is not a great deal of exegesis, nor significant introductions to the Testaments or individual books. However, some points can be noted. For instance, Challoner introduces Isaiah by saying,

This inspired writer is called by the Holy Ghost, the great prophet (Ecclesiasticus 48, 25), from the greatness of his prophetic spirit, by which he hath foretold so long before, and in so clear a manner, the coming of Christ, the mysteries of our redemption, the calling of the Gentiles, and the glorious establishment, and perpetual flourishing of the church of Christ: insomuch that he may seem to have been rather an evangelist than a prophet.71

Thus, Challoner’s view of Isaiah is that it reads like a gospel of sorts. Note also that both the Church and Christ are important referents in the text. Bearing in mind, however, Challoner’s preference to minimize figural reading, this is, I suggest, a moment of concession that supports the general Catholic perspective on Isaiah without significant

71 The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate and Diligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek and Other Editions in Divers Languages with Notes by Bishop Challoner; and Also the Encyclical Letter On the Study of the Holy Scriptures by Pope Leo XIII; and a Preface by William H. McLellan (New York, NY: The Douay Bible House, 1941), 676.
exegetical depth. Where there is some exegetical engagement with Isaiah, Challoner’s interpretation is often directed against Protestants. For instance, for Isaiah 2:18 (“And idols shall be utterly destroyed”) he argues,

This was verified by the establishment of Christianity. And by this and other texts of the like nature, the wild system of some modern sectaries is abundantly confuted, who charge the whole Christian church with worshipping idols for many ages.\(^72\)

In Challoner’s interpretation, in order for this prophecy to be rightly fulfilled, the Catholic Church must be the referent the prophet held in view: being the more ancient of the two rival Christian groups, Catholicism is *ipso facto* the true Church as opposed to Protestantism.\(^73\)

What I refer to as The Haydock Bible maintains Challoner’s notes, but has additional introductions and comments interspersed with those of Challoner that allow for more insight into early nineteenth-century thinking with respect to Scripture. Father Leo Haydock (1774–1849) had spent some time in the English College at Douay, but left during the French Revolution. He served as general prefect and master of schools. Though he was well educated, he was not an academic as such. He did, however, spend some time studying on his own, especially during a tenure when he was forbidden to say mass for eight years.\(^74\)

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\(^72\) *The Haydock Bible*, 677.

\(^73\) Other Isaianic engagements are worth mentioning but do not add significantly to my discussion. Three of the most common connections between Isaiah and the New Testament are that Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14); that a child to be born will be called “wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6–8); and the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53. It is interesting to note that for Isaiah 7:14, Challoner provides no commentary, aside from giving references to the New Testament passages that connect to it. This is also true for Isaiah 9:6-8, of which nothing is said. Of Isaiah 53, there is once again only a list of cross-references to the New Testament, except for a heading that says that the chapter is about Christ’s passion. It would be presumptuous to offer reasons regarding Challoner’s reticence to comment on these famous passages. What is interesting is that Challoner tends to offer comments for the purpose of refuting Protestants, which indicates the extent to which his interpretation is shaped by the controversies of his time.

\(^74\) The reason for his suspension does not appear to be theologically motivated, but the result of a
In the Preface, Haydock lists the commentators whom he uses in his notes. It is interesting that he includes many Protestants, such as Calvin, Grotius, Luther, and Wesley, in addition to some other Jewish thinkers. He marks all non-Catholics with a †, noting that as “perhaps men of learning . . . have erred from the faith which was once delivered to the Saints, and can therefore be consulted only as Critics, or to be refuted.”

He also says that

though we have occasionally consulted some of the heterodox versions and commentators, in points of criticism; yet it has been with fear of deception, and we have dwelt upon the works of Catholic authors, both with greater pleasure and advantage. . . . In all these things let us stick invariably to the doctrine of the Church, and receive the bread which she breaks for her little ones with gratitude and submission.

Haydock is careful which biblical critic he allows into his comments and their views must always submit to the rule of the Church. What is interesting is his willingness to refer to Protestant writers at all, especially those who are critical of the text, notwithstanding the fact that his principal sources are Jerome, Calmet, and Worthington. Moreover, in order to refute these Protestant critics, he of course has to read them and they comprise most of the more recent commentaries on Isaiah to which he refers — unsurprising, given the scarcity of Catholic exegetical contributions. Therefore, I suggest that Haydock, in a more conservative mode, reflects what I show below in the case of The Dublin Review: the aridity of Catholic exegesis is such that Catholics eventually have no choice but to refer to Protestant writings.


75 The Haydock Bible, xi.

76 The Haydock Bible, x.

77 A mention of some of the Catholic dictionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates this turn toward Protestant critical works, even as they at times reject the conclusions. For instance, William Addis’ Catholic Dictionary, though it does not have an entry on Isaiah, does have one
In his introduction to the Prophets in general, Haydock states that “all the sacred writings refer ultimately to him [Jesus], who is the end of the law (Rom 10.4). . . . Their predictions are the most convincing proof of its divine origin Is. 41.23. They contain many things clear, and others obscure; having, for the most part, a literal and a mystical sense.” Furthermore, unlike Challoner, Haydock provides a commentary on Isaiah 7:14, which is a standard argument in favour of alma meaning a virgin, summoning St. Jerome for support. For Isaiah 9:6–7, he objects to Grotius’ translation of “Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty” as “the consulter of the strong God,” suggesting that despite Grotius’ opposition to non-Trinitarian Socinians, “he too often sides with them.” Of Isaiah 53, Haydock once again assembles the standard, but remarkably brief, statements made by Challoner, Calmet, and Jerome that it is about the Passion of Christ.

on the “Canon of the Scriptures.” There are some references in this section to the historical critics Gustav Volkmar and Franz Delitzsch, as well as a disapproving note about William Robertson Smith (William E. Addis, A Catholic Dictionary: Containing Some Account of the Doctrine, Discipline, Rites, Ceremonies, Councils, and Religious Orders of the Catholic Church [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1884], 107–9). There is also the French Dictionnaire de la Bible by Fulcran Grégoire Vigouroux (1837–1915), the first secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. He is worth mentioning given his fame as a conservative apologist. And, even though he was not English, the Dictionnaire was undoubtedly used by English Catholics. Given his conservatism, it is remarkable how conversant he is with the critical work of scholars such as Koppe, Eichhorn, Hitzig, Driver, and Duhm (Fulcran Vigouroux, Dictionnaire de la Bible: Contenant Tous les Noms de Personnes, de Lieux, de Plantes, d’Animaux Mentionnés dans les Saintes Écritures, les Questions Théologiques, Archéologiques, Encyclopédie Des Sciences Ecclésiastiques, vol. v [Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1912], 946–84). While he disagrees with many of their conclusions, the very fact that these commentators are his interlocutors is significant.

Therefore, while Haydock may similarly disagree with the conclusions of Protestant critics, if he is to engage at all with contemporary exegesis, he must give them some attention. Moreover, I would argue that, despite disagreements, many English Catholic thinkers found these critical works of some use in formulating their ideas and to provide points of reference for their readings.

78 The Haydock Bible, 1015.

79 The Haydock Bible, 1022.

80 The Haydock Bible, 1024.

81 The Haydock Bible, 1064–65.
Thus Haydock provides a kind of “commentary of commentaries,” at times raising minor points of controversy in translation, and in this sense his book was an aid for the English Catholic to get a handle on some exegetical matters. The end result, however, is that, despite its popularity, this can hardly be called a “commentary” in a sense that it can be compared to that of Cheyne or Wordsworth; it is even less so a “theological commentary,” for it does little more than repeat traditional doctrine with no significant elaboration. For example, there is the usual predictive aspect of prophecy with scant attention given to figuration. There is some mention of Israel as the figure of the Church;\textsuperscript{82} what this means beyond the image of shadow to fulfillment, Haydock provides no elaboration.

These first two sections on catechetical literature and popular Catholic commentaries give a sense of the exegetical state of affairs for most English Catholics. There are essentially three themes with respect to Scripture that are not necessarily overt but are more explicitly formulated in the next section. First, is the claim that the Bible is a dangerous book, which, if allowed to be the only source of doctrine and subjected to the whims of individual, private interpretation, the result would be confusion, division, and splintering into an array of competing doctrinal claims. Protestantism is, in such a view, proof of this claim. Second, Scripture is oriented in what I refer to as a “supportive role” for the dogmatic claims of the Church. That is, there is an exegetical flattening of the text that minimizes figural readings, seeking textual support for doctrine in a way that conceives of Scripture in a rather static mode. Third, the lack of exegetical engagement by English Catholics meant that people such as Leo Haydock, who wanted to provide some exegetical commentary, had no recourse but to consult with Protestant critical work.

\textsuperscript{82}E.g., \textit{The Haydock Bible}, 1056.
5 Catholic Biblical Issues: The Case of The Dublin Review

In what follows, I explore various articles in The Dublin Review as a journal that is representative of English-speaking Catholic attitudes toward Scripture. This journal was a prominent, academically-oriented English Catholic journal that began early in the nineteenth century, and it allows us to trace its responses to events of that time.83 I continue with the themes I raise in the previous two sections, namely, Scripture’s danger, the use of Scripture as a support for ecclesial dogma, and, later in the life of The Dublin Review, a move toward reading liberal Protestant modes of exegesis.84

The consistent Catholic perspective was that Protestant failure to engage Scripture in a way that maintained orthodoxy was proof that any exegesis, without being linked to the structures of the Catholic Church, results in exegetical and theological confusion. This is a rather rigid following of the Council of Trent’s decree that no one, relying on his own skill, shall . . . presume to interpret the said Scriptures contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, — whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, — hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. . . . And wishing, as it is just, to impose a restraint, in this matter, also on printers . . . [not to] print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all person indifferently.85

83 Another prominent journal is The Catholic World; however, it is an American journal and therefore not as focussed on events in England. It does, however, have contributions from English thinkers such as Newman and Wiseman. Much of what I say about The Dublin Review can be applied to The Catholic World.

84 It is a legitimate question to ask why this recourse was to liberal Protestant exegetical strategies. Why not Evangelical? I would suggest, first, that the Evangelical hermeneutical approach was too virulently anti-Catholic. But, more importantly, some Catholics considered Evangelical exegesis an over-simplification of the text to its apologetic function that, on this point, too closely resembles that of Catholicism. While a liberal Protestant like Cheyne also theoretically flattens the text, there is no doubt that the force of his historical, linguistic, and philological analysis provides a deep complexity that was liberating for some Catholics. There is also the important point that the liberal deconstruction of the text, and how form and redaction criticism reveal the deep diversity of the sources, shows that the Bible is unreliable on its own. Interpretation therefore necessitates ecclesial guidance.

85 J Waterworth, trans., The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent
John Sandys-Wunsch argues that the effect was either to choose “between the impossible problem of making the fathers of the church agree among themselves about biblical interpretation or . . . [to accept] an increasing emphasis on the authority of the papacy.”

The statement by Trent reveals a perspective that regards an unfettered access to the Bible as a dangerous idea, and this sentiment can be seen consistently in the articles of *The Dublin Review*.

*The Dublin Review* was founded in 1836 by Nicholas Wiseman, Michael Joseph Quin, and Daniel O’Connell. Despite its name, it was situated in London. It is therefore representative of English Catholic thought, albeit from a more Ultramontane perspective, given Wiseman’s influence. In its inaugural volume, we find a consideration of Renn Dickson Hampden’s famous Bampton Lectures of 1832. This lecture incensed both Newman and Pusey as they thought Hampden’s lectures argued that there was no doctrine in Scripture, and that “faith” and “creeds” are distinct. The writer in *The Dublin Review*

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Tod Jones lists several of the statements that generated theological furor (Tod E. Jones, *The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement* [Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003], 84–87). Typically, the matter had to do with Dickson’s apparent inability to affirm the truth of central Christian doctrines. A classic statement he makes with respect to the Trinity is “the truth itself of the Trinitarian doctrine emerges from these mists of [scholastic] human speculation, like the bold naked land, on which an atmosphere of fog has for a while rested, and then been dispersed. No one can be more convinced than I am, that there is a real mystery of God revealed in the Christian dispensation; and that no scheme of Unitarianism can solve the whole of the phenomena which Scripture records. But I am fully sensible, that there is a mystery attached to the subject, which is not a mystery of God” (Hampden, *Scholastic Philosophy in Its Relation to Christian Theology*, 146). Elsewhere he declares, “the doctrinal statements of religious truth . . . have their origin in the principles of the human intellect. Strictly to speak, in the Scripture itself there are no doctrines”
considers Hampden’s apparent rejection of the Trinity and the sacraments, among other doctrines, as representative of Protestants who reflect the “strait to which the right of freedom in religious opinion, on the one side, and the exacted submission to subscription on the other, have, by alternate and repeated blows, driven the theological science of the Establishment.” With respect to the Oxford Movement, despite its vitriolic opposition to Hampden, the author of this article sees the Tractarians as “a species of mythological protestantism; which, like the Homeric deities, was invisible save occasionally as a thin vapoury phantasm appearing amidst the turmoil of controversial warfare.” Of Protestantism in general, the author offers a final invective:

if two contending parties arise in the Protestant Church, the one is driven to tax the other with Socinianism, and that other retorts with the accusation of popery. It only confirms what every Catholic must feel, that the rejection of the principle of authority necessarily leads, theoretically at least, to the rejection of all mystery, and so to Socinianism, while its adoption obliges its supporter to reason on principles purely Catholic.

If only the debaters would, muses the author, set aside their antipathy toward “popery” and consider authority rightly, they would come to the Catholic position.

It is remarkable that no mention is made of Scripture in the article, even though much of the criticism of Hampden had to do with his claim about the Bible. Rather, for the *Dublin Review* author, when authority is invoked, it is in the context of the Magisterium. This absence of significant engagement with Scripture is also reflected in an article published in the same volume, *Declaration of the British Catholic Bishops*,

(Hampden, *Scholastic Philosophy in Its Relation to Christian Theology*, 374). In Hampden’s view, Scripture presents the reader with a series of “facts” which the Church, through the ages, employed in a “scholastic” systemization of doctrine that functions rather extra-biblically. Moreover, it is equally sullied by the influence of various extra-biblical philosophical constructs.

89. “The Oxford Controversy,” *The Dublin Review* 1 (May 1836): 253. For quite some time, the authors’ articles were written anonymously.


which states that although the Church has never “forbidden or discouraged the reading or 
the circulation of authentic copies of the sacred Scriptures,” nonetheless,

when the reading and the circulation of the Scriptures are urged and recommended 
as the entire rule of faith, as the sole means by which men are to be brought to the 
certain and specific knowledge of the doctrine, precepts, and institutions of Christ; 
and when the Scriptures so read and circulated are left to the interpretation and 
private judgment of each individual: then such reading, circulation, and 
interpretation, are forbidden by the Catholic church, because the Catholic church 
knows that the circulation of the Scriptures, and the interpretation of them by each 
one’s private judgment, was not the sole means ordained by Christ for the 
communication of the true knowledge of his law... The unauthorized reading 
and circulation of the Scriptures, and the interpretation ... by private judgment, 
are calculated to lead men to contradictory doctrines on the primary articles of 
Christian belief; to inconsistent forms of worship, which cannot be part of the 
uniform and sublime system of Christianity; to errors and fanaticism in religion, 
and to seditious and the greatest disorders in states and kingdoms.92

With respect to this declaration, there are two central points that are noteworthy and that 
run as common threads throughout Catholic censure against the Protestant biblicism.

First is the very clear idea that the “right to private judgment” (which, as with Robert 
Payne Smith in Chapter 4, was an important hermeneutical principle) is the cause of 
ecclesial breakdown and its legitimacy must be denied. One can attach many meanings to 
this term. From the Catholic perspective, it was not necessarily individualism that was 
problematic, but private interpretation, the view that either an individual or a group of 
people can read Scripture, unimpeded by any extrinsic rule. Without the Church 
providing the correct interpretation and approved translation, the potential result is as 
many errors and sects as there are readers of the text.93

92“Declaration of the Catholic Bishops, the Vicars Apostolic, and the Coadjutors in Great Britain,” 

93There is, I should note, bound up within the Protestant milieu of English culture, an 
anthropological, theological, and political notion of “right,” of which private judgment is but a part. 
Theologically, the notion of the “priesthood of all believers” suggests that “access” to God (and Scripture) 
does not have to be mediated by the Church. This also impacted Protestant notions at a soteriological level 
by formulating the discourse in more individualistic terms. This I show in Robert Payne Smith’s approach 
to Scripture. Politically, however, within the increasingly pluralistic context of the nineteenth century (to 
say nothing of the following century) and a distrust of authority, there was much more emphasis given to the 
individual conscience and the immorality of anyone to dictate it.
A second point to note is the rejection of the Protestant claim that in Scripture alone is found the “entire rule of faith” and doctrine. While the Tractarians also chafed under what they viewed to be a wooden Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, the Catholic perspective suggests that doctrine as such can be formed outside the biblical realm. Therefore, in this statement by Catholic bishops, there is the suggestion of a separation between doctrine and Scripture. Since in England, there *was* no official Catholic authority as such to grant an *imprimatur* to new translations and scriptural notes, the effect was to render Scripture in a more devotional mode without permitting an exegesis that engaged with the theology of the Church. 94 In other words, with the lack of any official Catholic authority in England to provide the guidance needed for interpretation, serious exegetical engagement was not carried out beyond the level of popular devotional literature, which I show above in Challoner’s work.

Many articles in subsequent issues of *The Dublin Review* bear out these two points. In an article that praises the work of Maynooth College and defends it against many charges levelled by Protestants, 95 there is the rather terse comment that “many passages of the Old Testament, and, in particular, the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, which the Protestant practice places, without any disguise of language, in the hands of all, without distinction of age or character, are susceptible of, and have actually suffered, similar perversion at the hands of the infidel and the blasphemer.” 96 In a review

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94 There were the Vicars Apostolic, but England was divided into large sections with very little oversight; their bishoprics were titular, and they were considered bishops *in partibus infidelium*. Vicars Apostolic exist today, such as the Vicariate Apostolic of Alexandria of Egypt, Arabia, and Istanbul, Turkey.

95 Maynooth College was set up in Ireland in order to provide for the education of priests in 1795 because they were unable to receive such education in the universities of that country.

96 “Maynooth College,” *The Dublin Review* 2 (December 1836): 152. While I select relevant material from *The Dublin Review* to illustrate my point, it should be noted that articles pertaining to Scripture are very rare. Many of the articles touch on somewhat mundane matters, from the changes in population and funding of Catholic parishes, to poetry, to “mesmerism and animal magnetism,” to the dangers of “Quackery.”
of various lectures given by Wiseman, an article briefly discusses his biblical criticism, which succeeds in fending off that of such people as Griesbach. Rather, in Wiseman’s hermeneutical approach, he “shows how the principles of this science have been known and applied in the earliest ages of the Church . . . [and] . . . how the progress of this study has conduced to the vindication of the ancient fathers of the Church.”97 The article aims to show how Wiseman “proceeds to point out the importance of this study in relation to polemical theology.”98 It is noteworthy that it is not even apologetics as a form of evangelical defence of the faith against unbelievers, but a “polemical” theology that aims to show which church is the true one.99

In 1837, The Dublin Review examined a lecture given by the Tractarian John Keble, “Primitive Tradition recognized in Holy Scripture.” The author of the article is intrigued to consider the views of “a small body of youthful, learned” clergy who “have seized . . . a territory not their own, but of our legitimate possession.”100 The central concern of the article is Keble’s summary of the relationship between the Church and Scripture. He claims that the Church is subordinate to Scripture, and that the individual must submit to the authority of the Church in matters of faith and doctrine. Keble’s assertion is thus an attempt to deny the right to private judgment, but also to subsume the Church under the infallible rule of Scripture, so that the Church cannot say anything more than what is in the Bible. Keble, however, does concede a point on which the Catholic reviewer latches. Given that the canon of the New Testament took some time before it

97“Science and Revealed Religion,” The Dublin Review 2 (April 1837): 324. “Science” here is used in a very broad sense. In this case, it generally refers to “up-to-date” knowledge of a particular field.

98“Science and Revealed Religion,” 323.

99To be sure, at the time, it was often thought that Protestants were, in fact, infidels and unbelievers by official Catholic doctrine. See e.g., “Anglican Claim of Apostolical Succession,” The Dublin Review 7 (August 1839): 139–80.

100“The High Church Theory of Dogmatical Authority,” The Dublin Review 3 (July 1837): 46.
was complete, there was a period during which there was a “tradition” that was sufficient for salvation apart from Scripture; this was “the good treasure entrusted to you” of 2 Timothy 1:14. Where the reviewer finds fault is Keble’s suggestion that this prescriptural tradition was somehow abrogated by Scripture: “A right clearly conferred, and not limited by, or made dependent on, contingent events, requires a clear abrogation before it ceases. Traditional, authoritative teaching, was clearly appointed; the substitution of Scripture never was; how then can this have abrogated, or even limited the other?”

What is remarkable about the nature of this discussion, and an indicator of the deeply divisive nature of theological discourse, is that there is no mention of a text that the “primitive” Church most certainly had in hand — the Old Testament. Considering my intent to show the use of Isaiah in the nineteenth century, one could ask of both Keble and his Catholic interlocutors why they seem to omit a discussion of the Old Testament as the Scripture at the time of the “primitive” Church, in which Isaiah already played a prominent doctrinal role (see Chapter 1). The entire discussion is overshadowed by matters of “authority” and the order of priority between the Church and Scripture. This is one of the central themes of this project: to show that in the fallout of a fractured Church is a focus on competing doctrinal claims — in this case, Church authority vis-à-vis Scripture — and an occlusion of the text itself.

The conclusion of the critic in The Dublin Review is therefore predictable: Scripture is not all-sufficient, neither for historical reasons (there was, in his view, no

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101 “The High Church Theory of Dogmatical Authority,” 51.

102 This is a particularly salient point — the indispensability of the Old Testament in the formation of Christian doctrine — made by Christopher Seitz in Christopher R. Seitz, The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011). There was not only oral preaching that sustained the early Church; rather, Christ’s life, death, and resurrection were seen as carried out “according to the Scriptures” (cf. Rom. 16:26, 1 Cor 15:3-4, Luke 24:25-27).
Scripture in apostolic times) nor for textual ones (nowhere does Scripture argue it is all-sufficient, nor do the early Fathers of the Church). The culprit for the Church of England’s woes, ultimately, is the reliance on private scriptural interpretation, despite the claims of High Church or Tractarian parties. The Catholic Church, the author continues, maintains a consistent doctrine and tradition, each of which have equal authority. The Church is unafraid to enforce its authority when needed and to proscribe such a diversity of opinions. These warnings of the dangers of private judgment are constant in *The Dublin Review*. For instance, eight years later, a lengthy article decries how private judgment “has formed one of the most powerful impelling causes of the Romeward progress of [Protestants],” for, in their view, it is essentially equivalent to Rationalism. Another article aims to suggest that “in vindication of the Catholic Church, from the imputation of hostility to the Bible,” the Catholic Church did in fact publish numerous Bibles and polyglots prior to the Reformation and, further, that “in nine-tenths of the European states, no popular version existed when they embraced Protestantism.” The fact that many received Protestantism without ever having a Bible (of the Welsh, for instance, it is said that they did not have a Bible in their language until 1588) highlights the point that “the reading of Scripture, therefore, has not promoted Protestantism.” The intimation is that Protestantism is less a biblical reformation of the Church than a heresy that is fundamentally schismatic in purpose, leading the faithful astray. Claims to a retrieval of repristinated Christianity are false because Protestantism has moved away from the age-old practices and ecclesial structures that guarantee its

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104“Dewar’s German Protestantism,” 405.


106“The Bible and the Reformation,” 449. The author also makes the salient point that, even when there may have been a Bible, many could not read.
faithfulness.

In an 1838 article on the *Tracts for the Times*, a Catholic perspective is offered on the Oxford Movement and its hopes for renewal in the Anglican Church. The author asks, “Will they succeed in their work? We firmly believe they will; nay, strange to say, we hope so. As to patching up, by their prescriptions, the English Church, it is beyond human power.”

The Church of England’s “foundations” are crumbling under the effect of the Reformation:

It will be a curious and unexpected result of such mighty convulsions in the religious and political world . . . that the great safeguards of revealed truth should have been pulled down; the stable foundation of divinely appointed regiment in the Church plucked up; rites and ceremonies coeval with christianity abolished; practices come down from the first ages discontinued and discon tentenced; and ordinances, believed of old to have been apostolical, abrogated and condemned. And yet all this must be called a “godly work of reformation,” that same “Reformation” signifying a repristination of primitive christianity.

What is especially pertinent is the perception that the Reformation was merely the alteration of the rites and ceremonies of the Church, that is, the tradition. This is the bulwark to which the author clings. In addressing the nature of Catholic “reform” at Trent, the author speaks of amendments to acknowledged laxity in certain “religious practices.”

There is considerable self-satisfactory sentiment in the author’s observation that the Tractarians finally appreciate the importance of ancient Church practice and the damage the Reformation wrought. Some in the Church of England, in this view, are finally coming around to what Catholics have always held to be essential to the faith. In a rare instance when Isaiah is used in such an article, it is employed for rhetorical purposes, and it is only a phrase from Isaiah 34:11: “the line of confusion, and the stone of

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109 “Tracts for the Times,” 326. There is hesitancy to use the term “reformation” in application to the Catholic Church as the author argues that “we disavow any reform amongst us” (“Tracts for the Times,” 326). Rather than “reform,” there was a clearing away of “abuses.”
emptiness.”

Many of the articles continue along similar lines of thought, often decrying Protestant insistence on the right to private judgment. The *Dublin Review* contributors are of course astute enough to know that private judgment is in practice rather ephemeral: “it must be plain that this principle extends only to bringing different sects into existence; and that, as soon as they are in being, and have established articles of faith . . . it can no longer be allowed by them.”

Therefore, even Protestants have “popery” of sorts, or at least certain guiding statements from which one cannot dissent if they wish to remain in the “sect.” Catholic “popery” is therefore merely more consistent and open about its stance on ecclesial authority. Furthermore, the Church asserts that such authority has existed from the time of the Apostles. While Protestants contend that the Pope has arbitrary and tyrannical power, the history of the Church of England, whose head is the monarch, tells of numerous illustrations of equally tyrannical and despotic application of power.

Yet, all the while, no direct engagement with Scripture is offered by the authors of these articles in *The Dublin Review*, despite the claim that the Catholic Church is the true “owner” of Scriptures. There is no exegetical meditation on biblical texts and very frequent polemical screed-like writings against Protestants and their

110“Tracts for the Times,” 334. With a further polemical twist, it cites this phrase from Isaiah as Prot. vers.


113“Arbitrary Power,” 31. See also “The Reformation the Result of Tyranny,” *The Dublin Review* 41, no. 81 (September 1856): 1–27, which is directed specifically against the role of the Established Church and the government in its actions against Roman Catholics, especially under Elizabeth.

114In a later article, the author states that “those who are alien to the Church have purloined the Scriptures. . . . The protestant world can never establish its right to hold, disseminate, or read the Scriptures” (“Christ, the Church, and the Bible,” *The Dublin Review* 42, no. 84 [June 1857]: 320–21).
religious failures. Equally frequent are articles that defend either the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the acceptability of praying to saints, or the importance of the Virgin Mary.

Part of the reason for Scripture’s danger is its high level of complexity, always at risk in the Catholic mind of engendering erroneous interpretations. While the contributors to *The Dublin Review* hesitate to point out actual biblical contradictions or inaccuracies, they indicate that exegesis is clouded by an inherent opacity:

Holy Scripture is a book of unfathomable depth, as well as of inexhaustible riches. It is possible that not a single chapter of it has yet been fully explored. A single text is often so many-sided that it reveals meaning beneath meaning, as it is more and more deeply searched. For this reason the mystical interpretation of Holy Scripture has ever been insisted on by Catholic theologians, as well as the literal. But if isolated individuals are to interpret it, they cannot trust themselves to a method of interpretation. . . . It is the apostolic Church only that can interpret Scripture according to the profounder method of the Apostles. 

While this is a rich perspective on Scripture, English Catholics rarely carried out this scriptural vision by providing its people with the means to traverse its dangerous waters. Indeed, in the early Church, it was often the case that biblical complexity was the *cause* of biblical commentary, from which new insights were gleaned. Instead, these English Catholic leaders warned people away from the text in light of Protestant error.

In almost all cases, when the issue of the Bible is raised in *The Dublin Review*, it is in the context of opposing the views of Protestant interlocutors. One rare case of minor exegesis can be provided. In an article that praises the work of (Catholic) Bishop Kenrick for his translation of the four Gospels, it states that “it is intended to vindicate that Catholic Vulgate, and shew its superiority to the Anglican.”

It contends that if we would only take full possession of scripture, and place it before those who love, or affect to love, it, in its true and catholic light, and draw from all its practical, yet most moving lessons, in the catholic spirit, we should easily convince our adversaries that ours is the only religion of Scripture, and our

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inheritance is its interpretation.\textsuperscript{117}

The article proceeds to show how Jesus used parables in his teaching, such as that of the sower (Mark 4:3–9). Even in this exegesis, Protestantism is the referent in that the parable shows the dangers of false sects, the weeds in the parable: “Protestantism is essentially Donatist, whether in its high-church theory of branch separation from the trunk, or in its lowest evangelical idea of an invisible elect church.”\textsuperscript{118} Thus, in this rare instance of actual biblical exegesis, it is performed in a highly antagonistic context. What the author appears to mean in the above quotation by “in the catholic spirit” is that Jesus’ parables must be read in a way that proceeds beyond the stunted reading of Protestants, with a view to the text revealing the glories of the Catholic Church.

Thus far, I have followed the discourse of Catholic thought from approximately 1836 to the next several decades. Two central, interpenetrating themes pertaining to Scripture inhibit English Catholics from a deep exegetical engagement with it. First, the Protestant tendency to form numerous sects is proof that Scripture as the sole source of doctrine is a dangerous idea. Second, the idea of a “right” to private judgment is rejected as it is seen to diminish the importance of the visible, authoritative Church, bringing into question the certainty of the historic faith. I have shown these to be deeply influential ideas in the articles of The Dublin Review, but the greater impact was a paucity of serious biblical engagement. As I consider the later publications of the journal, I suggest that this exegetical dearth finally led to a positive engagement with biblical critics despite official curial proscriptions. The result, strangely, is an approach to Scripture that has some

\textsuperscript{117}“The Parables of the New Testament,” 184.

\textsuperscript{118}“The Parables of the New Testament,” 203.
similarity to that of T. K. Cheyne of Chapter 6.\textsuperscript{119}

Later articles of \textit{The Dublin Review} begin to wrestle more with the pervasiveness of critical biblical scholarship, given the publication of \textit{Essays and Reviews}, the case of Bishop Colenso, and later the release of \textit{Lux Mundi}. In general, it continues in the nineteenth century to remain conservative in its perspective, maintaining that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch and that “inspiration” meant that God was the author of Scripture, as Trent and Vatican I state.\textsuperscript{120} However, in concluding my analysis of \textit{The Dublin Review} articles, an essay in three parts called “The Church and the Bible” stands out for its new approach to Scripture. These essays were written in response to the

\textsuperscript{119}A figure that must be mentioned who worked quite apart from \textit{The Dublin Review}, and a rather unique one in his own right, was Alexander Geddes (1737–1802). Like Richard Simon, he anticipated the Catholic turn to Protestant critical methods that I von Hügel (see below) and other German Catholic thinkers represent. He is remarkable in that he was a British (originally Scottish) Catholic for whom such critical methods and academic dissent were uncommon. Mark Goldie refers to him as “the most wayward, unorthodox, iconoclastic, and intellectually adventurous priest to emerge from the British Catholic community in the eighteenth century” (Mark Goldie, “Alexander Geddes at the Limits of the Catholic Enlightenment,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 53, no. 1 [2010]: 61). Goldie notes several ways in which Geddes differed from traditional Catholic thinking, for instance, in his support for republicanism and the French Revolution. However, his perceived biblical infelicities began later in life when he started an English translation of the Bible. As with many early Protestant translators, he found the Vulgate (and thus the Douay version, which was based on it) to be unreliable and he sought to use Hebrew and Greek sources (Goldie, “Alexander Geddes,” 66–67). His view of the textual history was often more radical than that of Protestant liberals: “Johann Eichhorn in Germany and Jean Astruc in France had already suggested that the book of Genesis was a compilation of two earlier independent sources: the ‘documentary hypothesis.’” Geddes thought the sources for Genesis were even more heterogeneous than that, a redaction of several inconsistent sources: the ‘fragment hypothesis’ (Goldie, “Alexander Geddes,” 68). He pronounced the Creation narrative a myth, and that “Adam and Eve symbolize the intellectual and sensual aspects of human character” (Goldie, “Alexander Geddes,” 69). He also went so far as to doubt that God was the source of the commands to kill the Canaanites. In the end, Geddes’ hermeneutical approach can scarcely be distinguished from that of Protestant liberals. Indeed, he played a part in contributing to new critical tools for such thinkers such as Michaelis. This assessment is confirmed by Goldie’s remark that Geddes was “violently anti-episcopal and anti-papal” (Goldie, “Alexander Geddes,” 72). He is hardly a fair representative of general Catholic opinion at the time. Yet he is indicative of the fact that there were essentially only two choices for Catholics: to remain in a rather narrow, dogmatically predetermined space in which Scripture plays little part, or a minimally dogmatic quasi-Protestant mode.

encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* and composed by the Catholic scholar Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925).\(^{121}\) They are additionally instructive as they directly refer to Isaiah. Though an Austrian by birth, von Hügel resided in England from the time he was fifteen; he is also viewed by many as a “modernist” and therefore his contributions to *The Dublin Review* can in some ways be seen as a departure from its more conservative roots. His is a Catholic attempt to negotiate the rough waters of theological orthodoxy and biblical criticism in the late nineteenth century. Of the article, Burtchaell says that von Hügel “strove to arrange some sort of armistice between pope and scholars.”\(^{122}\) In von Hügel’s first article, he asserts that, with respect to revelation, “the communication of Revelation by God to its minister was, of course, always mental, and never by writing.”\(^{123}\) This leads him to agree with Lessing that Christianity existed prior to the writing of its sacred texts. In other words, he asserts a compatibility between the (liberal) Lessing and Catholic doctrine that “we cannot then well think of Revelation without Inspiration.”\(^{124}\) Therefore, the Church rests on more than the Bible; there is a history, a “religion” that exists beyond the boundaries of a written document. And this document is also fully open to be subjected to various critical methods that, for instance, reveal that one synoptic gospel is reliant upon another.\(^{125}\) Von Hügel does not hesitate to employ the works of “liberal”

\(^{121}\) *Providentissimus Deus* was released in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, and it has to do with the study of the Scriptures. Generally seen as a conservative document, it warns against what it refers to as “Rationalists” emerging from what is a thinly veiled reference to Protestant thinkers: “These detestable errors, whereby they think they destroy the truth of the divine Books, are obtruded on the world as the peremptory pronouncements of a certain newly-invented ‘free science;’ a science, however, which is so far from final that they are perpetually modifying and supplementing it” (from [http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html)).

\(^{122}\) Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration*, 194.


\(^{124}\) von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible,” 324.

\(^{125}\) von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible,” 333–36.
critics to support his arguments. His contention is that, as he says in his second article, “Revelation and a Church are practically identical, but . . . Revelation and Scripture are not; that the former are necessary, the latter but contingent consequences of man’s creation. . . . The relations between the necessary Church and contingent Scripture are necessarily twofold, and must ever be kept carefully distinct.”

Von Hügel’s second essay speaks to the nature of the Old Testament and prophecy, referring directly to Isaiah, though relatively briefly. Like Robert Payne Smith, who we saw aimed to use the tools of the critics in order to prove the truth of his case, von Hügel takes a rather similar stance, arguing “not as to what the Church . . . rightly claims from direct Catholic believers about [these prophecies], but as to what we can, within the bounds of Theistic principles and of ordinary historical proof . . . [use] as solid arguments in favour of such Christian and Catholic beliefs.” He freely quotes from a wide assortment of “modern” interpreters, from Ernest Renan, to William Robertson Smith.

Von Hügel’s consistent theme with regard to the Old Testament is that of “development.” We may find Christ within the Old Testament, yet it is “defective” since it falls short of Christ. Thus there is a shift away in von Hügel from a kind of “prophetic” mode of time, a non-linear correspondence between events, to the modern

126 Friedrich von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” The Dublin Review 116 (April 1895): 306. Note how closely this sentence accords with Lessing’s dictum regarding the necessary truths of reason and the accidental truths of history.


128 He refers to Smith as one who “lived and died with a faith of splendid solidity” (von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 309). These are hardly the words that other writers in The Dublin Review would say of a “schismatic.” Ernest Renan (1823–92) was a French scholar, whose most famous contribution was an examination of the life of Jesus that employed standard historical-critical methods of the time.

129 Von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 312.
conception of cause-and-effect, progress, and development. Using the parable of the grain of mustard seed he presents this development: “First, the potent seed of Mosaism, and then the blade, so fresh and hopeful, of Prophetism, and then the hard, protective ear of Legalism, and at last the full corn, the Bread of life, Christianity.”

There is a similarity here to Cheyne; there was Mosaism or Prophetism, or, we could call, in general, various forms of Israelite “religion” that bear glimmers of messianic expectation. Jesus then claimed these prophecies for himself, and Paul continued in these applications. “And the New Testament expressly requires us to find in the Old Testament this slow divine education, not only as to legal matters, that Law which Our Lord Himself has expressly taught us that He came ‘to fulfil,’” Matthew v. 17. . . . But also as to prophecy, which He came to fulfil in the same sense as He fulfilled the Law.”

Finally, regarding Isaiah, von Hügel states that “catholic scholars are coming to admit . . . a deutero-Isaiah.” He cites Henry Newman and Alfred Loisy in support of this, though it is doubtful that this was as yet a majority opinion among Catholic scholars at the time.

Insofar as the fulfillment of prophecy is concerned, he approvingly offers a long quote from Wellhausen of “the striking fulfilment of some of their predictions concerning the near future,” by which he means a local fulfillment, not directly referring to Christ. From Wellhausen, he also suggests that Deutero-Isaiah emerged to show that Cyrus

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130 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 312.

131 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 329. Note again the hint of Lessing in his mention of “divine education,” though this is, of course, a theme that can also be found in others such as St. Augustine.


133 Alfred Loisy (1857–1940) was another controversial Roman Catholic figure whom many Catholics saw as a kind of representative of biblical modernism. He challenged many traditional notions of the Bible and the history it tells, and did so by immersing himself in the works of historical-critical scholars, primarily from Germany.

134 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 322.
would not be the final instrument by which Israel would be saved. In this section of the book, there is “the reality, persistence and progressive purification of the Messianic expectation.” Like Cheyne, we see that there is a change in the “Israelite religion” (not his term) out of which emerged a hope for a figure who would save them.

How does von Hügel connect the two Testaments together? To answer this, he borrows from the thought of another non-Catholic liberal scholar, Adolf von Harnack, asserting that Jesus and especially Paul were steeped in rabbinical modes of thinking when using the Old Testament. Thus Paul used this mode of reading the Old Testament to develop a theology that incorporated texts such as Isaiah: “Development and economy apply, as to the whole Old Testament, so also to the Messianic prophecies and to their New Testament interpretation.” The Old Testament is in this sense a kind of pedagogical instrument (divine or otherwise) used judiciously by Jesus and other New Testament writers:

And the New Testament expressly requires us to find in the Old Testament this slow divine education, not only as to legal matters, that Law which Our Lord Himself has expressly taught us that He came ‘to fulfil,’ Matthew v. 17 . . . but also as to prophecy, which He came to fulfil in the same sense as He fulfilled the Law.

The use of Isaiah and other such prophets was thus “but a sifting and utilising of the religious language of the times, a language simply necessary and legitimate and true in the strict sense and for the limited purpose in which Our Lord and His apostles used it.”

Note the similarities between Cheyne and von Hügel: although their respective


136 Adolph von Harnack (1851–1930) was a German liberal scholar who questioned many of the traditional claims about Scripture and theology. His was a history-of-religions approach in which various doctrines developed over time.

137 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 328.

conclusions differ, each draws from an acceptance of a critical approach to the text. For von Hügel, the nature of Scripture is analogous to the two natures of Christ: divine and human, what we saw earlier as the göttlich-menschlich model. Therefore, the inlitteration of the Spirit is as real in the one case, as the Incarnation of the Son is in the other. Our Lord’s body weighed a particular weight on His mother’s arm. . . . The Spirit’s letter is composed of such and such documents of a definite age and length and literary complexion. In both cases the Faith tells us that Reason can thus observe and register, and bids Reason to do so as far as possible.140

We see support here for Chinnici’s bifurcation in another form: there are the words of Scripture as text, to which can be applied all the methods of scientific exploration. Then there is doctrine that transcends these words, the object of ecclesial theologians. These are two separate tasks. At the end of his last article, von Hügel ends on a personal note, which indicates that it is not primarily the Bible from which doctrine proceeds:

Only through what I may keep and gain in common with the truly humblest of my fellows, can my soul’s ear be won to the divine harmonies of the Spirit in Scripture, and of that “God-gifted organ-voice” of all men, the testimony, teaching and authority of the Catholic Church.141

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139 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation,” 331.
140 Friedrich von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation (Part 3),” The Dublin Review 117 (October 1895): 283.
141 von Hügel, “The Church and the Bible: The Two Stages of Their Interrelation (Part 3),” 304. It is worthwhile to contrast von Hügel with John Henry Newman, as some regard the converted Newman as a “liberal Catholic” (e.g., Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration, 65). I contend that this misrepresents his thought; rather, much of Newman’s writing on Scripture as a Catholic and as an Anglican was shaped by his struggle to wrestle with what an “ecclesial reading” of Scripture was to mean. Consider Newman’s response to the Syllabus of Errors as found in a letter to the Duke of Norfolk (John Henry Newman, A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation [London: B.M. Pickering, 1875]. He is responding to William Gladstone’s various anti-Catholic invectives against the Roman Catholic Church based on such documents as the Syllabus as well as Vatican I. In his discussion of the Syllabus, Newman’s rather coy attempt to regard the document as “nothing more than a digest of certain Errors made by an anonymous writer”(Newman, A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, 102) is rather hard to accept as his true opinion. One must keep in mind that this is the same Newman who engaged in significant linguistic acrobatics in Tract 90 to show the compatibility between the Articles of Faith and Catholicism. One can sense a similar (yet perhaps more believable) attempt in his aim to mediate the issuances from Rome, such as the Syllabus and the infallibility of the Pope as promulgated by Vatican I. His view in general is that the positive propositions outlined in the Syllabus “have no dogmatic force,” (Newman, A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, 106). Rather, the Syllabus is a document that points to a series of more detailed allocutions and
utterances, of which the Syllabus is a mere summary. The danger is that people read the list of errors and assume that they apply in a universal sense rather than understanding the document as emerging out of specific circumstances. For instance, with respect to Error 42, “In the case of conflicting laws enacted by the two powers, the civil law prevails,” Newman argues that this error “is a universal . . . and the Pope does but deny a universal” (Newman, A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, 114). Note that he here is no longer arguing that the Syllabus was written by an “anonymous” author, but came out of various documents written by the Pope, albeit collated by someone else. He makes a similar case with respect to Error 77, “In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.” The stated error arose out of Spain’s attempt to disestablish the Church. His point is that the Errors cannot be properly understood unless the underlying documents from which they are extracted are examined.

Newman’s concern is that the Syllabus touches on numerous theological matters, and that since “theology is a science, and a science of a special kind” (Newman, A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, 119), one must be so trained as to interpret the meaning of this or any other document that comes out of the Magisterium. In his lectures “On the Inspiration of Scripture,” Newman argues that there is room for various interpretations of scripture in Roman Catholicism, even challenges to authorship or historical truths that are “not obligatory upon us, because they are not the subjects of ex cathedra utterances of the Church” (John Henry Newman, On the Inspiration of Scripture, edited with an introduction by J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray [London: Dublin, 1967], 186). The purpose of Scripture is not as a presentation of “history” as such, and certainly is not that aspect of which Scripture is inspired. The Church and the Council of Trent “specify ‘faith and moral conduct’ as the drift of that teaching which has the guarantee of inspiration” (Newman, On the Inspiration of Scripture, 189). The category of inspiration, according to Newman, does not by necessity include “matters of fact.” Rather, there are “two agencies, divine grace and human intelligence, co-operating in the production of the Scriptures,” (Newman, On the Inspiration of Scripture, 194), and therefore the Scriptures can manifest distinctly human qualities. It is of no concern for him, then, that there may be two writers of Isaiah, or “interpolations or additions in the sacred text” (Newman, On the Inspiration of Scripture, 196; Newman, significantly, makes explicit mention of the possibility of more than one author of Isaiah). It is clear that he does not have significant problems with higher criticism as long as the critic believes the “scripture [to be] inspired as a whole, in so far as it related to the supernatural” (J. Derek Holmes, “Newman’s Attitude Towards Historical Criticism and Biblical Inspiration,” Downside Review 89, no. 294 [1971]: 29) and that God is the ultimate author.

Another response to biblical difficulties is Newman’s much-discussed concept of obiter dictum. For instance, Newman says, “[Trent and Vatican I] decide that the Scriptures are inspired, and inspired throughout, but they do not add to their decision that they are inspired by an immediately divine act, but they say that they are inspired through the instrumentality of inspired men. . . . They have a human side, which manifests itself in language, style, tone of thought, characters, intellectual peculiarities, and such infirmities, not sinful, as belong to our nature, and which in unimportant matters may issue in what in doctrinal definitions is called an obiter dictum” (John Henry Newman, The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility, selected, edited, and introduced by J. Derek Holmes [Oxford: Clarendon Press ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979], 133. Some see Newman’s postulation of various obiter dicta as evidence that “non-religious statements are obiter. Newman was, in effect, endorsing the view that inspiration was partial, and that it was limited to matters of faith and morals” (Burchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration, 76). This is a hasty conclusion, not making the distinction between the text and the inspired author, as well as the telos of the Bible. Despite Newman’s “liberal” acceptance of various scientific investigations into Scripture, he can hardly be connected to someone like Cheyne, or even von Hügel. Newman did not have an overall “system” of biblical thought. He did not want a rigid definition of “inspiration” to impede a close study of the Bible from various perspectives. But even in his Anglican days, he found repulsive the idea of private interpretation. He was not “liberal” like von Hügel, and certainly not like Cheyne, for he aimed to find not a history which is merely a human science, but one in which Christ and the Church can be found.
nineteenth century, much is spoken about the Bible in English Catholic circles with very little actual engagement with it. I suggest that as a result of the inherently divisive nature of Protestantism, funded by the doctrine of individual private judgment, Catholic scholars were discouraged from providing commentaries on the Bible. The conservative statements of the curia regarding the dangers of the Bible led to confusion as to its nature, generating within Roman Catholicism various competing perspectives on the Bible. There were ultramontane thinkers like Wiseman, the Cisalpines, and other more liberal scholars, such as von Hügel, who were willing to challenge the text without relating it to ecclesial doctrine. In other words, this confusion was an impetus to seek for a way to engage Scripture amidst exegetical aridity. And many like von Hügel found a perceived resolution in the thought of Protestant liberal scholars.

This is not, however, to bemoan the fact that some Catholics turned to historical-critical methods in reading the Bible. Rather, for liberals and conservatives alike, there is a truth that is somewhere “behind” or “beyond” the text, which is the Church. But especially acute in the nineteenth century, and also notable in earlier centuries, is the frangible quality of ecclesial definition. This is the unstable nature of the bifurcation between the text and doctrine that results from the controversies of ecclesial division. These articles give evidence of a hermeneutical parallel with Broad Church thinkers like Cheyne, who see a kind of amorphous religious consciousness behind the text that governs his reading.

6 Conclusion

This analysis has been rather disparate. It has perused catechisms, commentaries, and journal articles to explore the ways that division impacts Catholic exegesis of Scripture in England. There are no definitive commentaries on Isaiah in England by Roman Catholics, and therefore I have selected from several sources to illustrate my claims. Indeed, the very fact that such commentaries do not exist is indicative of the
nature of exegesis in the English Catholic world. What the data reveal is that there are few instances of direct engagement with Scripture, but considerable instances of conflict even within the Church as to the Bible’s nature. This is the result of confusion generated by the response of the Church to fissiparous Protestantism that emerged from the dangers of unlimited biblical access and the right of individual private judgment.

The Magisterium, the Vicars Apostolic, and the eventual Bishops in England conceived of the Bible in terms of its dangers to the laity. With respect to the Bible’s relation to doctrine, the works I consider speak of how the Church was not only the ultimate arbiter of doctrinal matters, but the one who pronounces what such doctrines are. Beyond that Scripture functions in a kind of supportive mode. That is, it serves as a buttress of doctrinal claims. But it also implies that doctrine resides somewhere “above” the text, guaranteed by an infallible Church. As such the effective view of the Bible was that exegesis was superfluous: all necessary doctrines have already been determined.

Meanwhile, thinkers like von Hügel grappled with the relation between the Bible, doctrine, and the Church. The central focus of attention was the nature of inspiration, leading to discussions about the divine and human nature of the text and how reliable it is. Part of the reason for this was that the reactive nature of the Magisterium created confusion regarding how to respond to the challenges of “modern” biblical approaches to the text. Since the level of engagement with the Bible was so minimal, thinkers like von Hügel felt it necessary to turn to the critical methods of Protestant liberals. This can also be seen by the later comments of someone like Leo Haydock, who, albeit in a negative mode, consulted critical Protestant works. All of this is to conclude that there was very little engagement with the biblical text itself, and even less that of Isaiah. I chose Isaiah in order to see it as a kind of “lens” through which the hermeneutical problematic amidst division can be examined; the conclusion for Isaiah applies for the test of Scripture with respect to Isaiah: division has obfuscated not only Isaiah, but much of Scripture.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION: THE DESPAIR OF ECCLESIAL BIBLICAL RETRIEVAL

1 Summary

This project is a kind of exegetical genealogy with one over-arching theme: the impact of ecclesial division on the exegesis of Isaiah in the Church of England. The thesis is that the fragmentation of the Church is so profound, and so theologically foundational to exegesis in England, that a unitary meaning of “theological exegesis” is rendered incomprehensible. In this section, I briefly summarize the representative exegetes of the previous chapters and the way that ecclesial division not only impacts but is constitutive of their interpretation. I continue with a discussion of more global ecclesial implications. My assertion is that ecclesial division within a divided (Western) Church is just as profound as it is in the Church of England. Moreover, the theological implication is that the “selfhood” of the Church contains within it so many deep self-contradictions that various projects of exegetical retrieval are in a state of “despair,” defined in ecclesially transposed existentialist (Kierkegaardian) language. I do not intend to offer a “solution” to the problem of ecclesial despair other than by offering this as a description of the state of the Church’s identity. I suggest, however, that the process of pointing out this reality can commence a process of ecclesial regeneration. I end by indicating the limitations of this project and suggestions for future research.

A secondary but equally important goal of this project is to challenge the “standard” account of modern exegesis. In this account, scientific discoveries and new historical methods present a set of serious oppositions to the reliability of the Bible and to
traditional exegesis. In other words, the standard version of the story is a subset of the “religion versus science” paradigm that asserts an incompatibility between the two. In distinction to this, my work narrates a history in which the vociferous conflicts in the Church over dogma, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, generate modes of reading Scripture that lessen the dogmatic scope of exegesis. These new, methodological, self-consciously non-theological approaches in favour of historical, philological, and other kinds of exegesis set aside theological referents as functionally separate from the text. For instance, even for a conservative exegete like William Day (see Chapter 3), figurative and typological forms of exegesis are rendered as a “secondary” meaning — a serious devaluation of a scriptural orientation so central to theological exegesis less than a century earlier. Thus, it is the engine of ecclesial division that begins what is eventually a secularization of exegesis as a distinct task from dogmatic theology. If this conclusion — emerging from my analysis of Isaiah — is correct, then the central issue regarding Scripture and exegesis has less to do with the putative challenges issued by science to the “reliability” of Scripture, and more to do with the way that internal Church division brings Scripture into question. If there is evidence of failure and unreliability, it is that the Church no longer has a coherent sense of its identity vis-à-vis the Bible. The problem has to do with a failed ecclesiology, not with the Bible.

Within the putatively one Church of England, numerous exegetical “traditions” emerged that had their roots in the seventeenth century; indeed, “tradition” is an appropriate term, for several reasons. First, each exegetical form arose out of a historical process, and is deeply indebted to it. Second, each represents a hermeneutical stance that is the product of a select group of people and terms that are given definition by that particular faction. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, despite overlaps, exceptions, and objections by those involved, theologians in the nineteenth century can generally be
placed in one of the three categories: Evangelical, High Church and Broad Church, not because Aidan Nichols is right in his claim that Anglicanism is inherently unstable, but because this is the outgrowth of competing exegetical visions.¹

Before presenting a summary of my findings, an important observation must be made: the number of commentaries on Isaiah written by people from the Church of England is remarkably sparse.² There are virtually no Evangelical Church of England Isaiah commentaries available.³ For this reason, for Robert Payne Smith, who did not

¹It is only suggested in Chapter 7, but one could indicate similar contradictory exegetical approaches to Scripture within the Roman Catholic Church, for instance.

²That is, within my specific terms of engagement, which consider only those commentaries written by scholars within the Church of England. There was plenty of devotional literature and even commentaries of a sort on Isaiah for family use. An example is that of Geroge Ellicott, who compiled a set of commentaries on all of Scripture (Charles John Ellicott, ed., An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers by Various Writers [S.l.: Cassell, 1882–87]) for the lay person, as well as that of Cunningham Geikie (Cunningham Geikie, Hours with the Bible: Or, The Scriptures in the Light of Modern Discovery and Knowledge [London: S.W. Partridge, 1881]). There were also quite learned works by women such as Sarah Trimmer (Sarah Trimmer, A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures: Being an Attempt to Explain the Bible in a Familiar Way [London: For F.C. and J. Rivington, St. Paul’s Church Yard; and J. Hatchard, Piccadilly, 1806]). About Trimmer, see Heather E. Weir, “Helping the Unlearned: Sarah Trimmer’s Commentary on the Bible,” in Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible, ed. Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series, no. 38. (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). This is not to suggest that the number of commentaries written in England is few, but that this paucity is present within the Church of England. There were some commentaries on Isaiah by dissenters, such as George Adam Smith (George Adam Smith, The Book of Isaiah, The Expositor’s Bible. 2nd Series. 3rd Series Expositor’s Bible [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893–95]) and Adam Clarke’s commentary on all of Scripture (Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorised Translation, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts: With a Commentary and Critical Notes Designed as a Help to a Better Understanding of the Sacred Writings [London: Printed for Joseph Butterworth, 1810–17]).

³There are some general commentaries on Scripture, such as the one written by Richard Mant (1776–1848), in collaboration with Rev. George D’Oyly, Richard Mant and George D’Oyly, The Holy Bible: According to the Authorized Version; with Notes, Explanatory and Practical; Taken Principally from the Most Eminent Writers of the United Church of England and Ireland: Together with Appropriate Introductions, Tables, Indexes, Maps, and Plans (Oxford: Printed for the Society at the Clarendon Press, by S. Collingwood and Co., printers to the University, 1826), written from a High Church perspective. I consider this to be too early a commentary for purposes of comparison. From an Evangelical perspective there is also the similarly early work of Thomas Scott (1747–1821) (Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, According to the Authorized Version: With Explanatory Notes, Practical Observations, and Copious Marginal References [London: Printed for L.B. Seeley and Son, Hatchard and Son, and Baldwin, 1824]) and the popular Speaker’s Commentary by F. C. Cook (Frederic
publish a commentary, I could only employ his lectures. Nor was Christopher Wordsworth’s commentary written as a result of any particular expertise with Isaiah but it was part of a larger biblical commentary. And, there simply were no Roman Catholic commentaries on Isaiah in England at the scholarly level. Thus, Thomas Kelly Cheyne’s work on Isaiah is a considerable tour de force in this area for someone of the Church of England. But what to make of this nineteenth-century dearth of engagement by Anglicans with Isaiah in a scholarly mode? Several reasons can be postulated in theological terms; I suggest three. First, there simply was less interest in the Old Testament or “Jewish” Scriptures at the time, which was a function of prevailing notions of “progressiveness,” where humanity had little need for the writings of a “primitive” people. This is

Charles Cook, *The Holy Bible, According to the Authorized Version [A.D. 1611]: With an Explanatory and Critical Commentary and a Revision of the Translation, by Bishops and Other Clergy of the Anglican Church* (London: J. Murray, 1871–81), a rather late work that began as a response to the challenges of Bishop Colenso. Aside from such commentaries on all of Scripture, there was not a particularly wide offering of works on the Old Testament, but rather on the New. The rather prolific work of Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886), for instance, tend to focus on the Parables and the sayings of Jesus, such as Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (London: J.W. Parker, 1841).

That of Rev. Leo Haydock is certainly the closest, as he was well-informed of contemporary scholarly debates and biblical textual issues.

I note in the above footnote some devotional commentaries, as well as works by Anglicans that commented on all of Scripture, but what I say of Isaiah is generally true of most Old Testament books. The work of Wellhausen and his challenge to the traditional view of the Pentateuch began to take hold but did not generate a significant increase in commentaries.

Primitive in this sense is pejorative, suggesting an almost barbaric assortment of superstitious people with no knowledge of a scientific mediation of nature. Elsewhere the term is applied with reference to the Church, wherein it denotes purity, free from the dross of human tradition. In the context of German Old Testament scholars Eichrodt and Wellhausen, Childs argues that there was a “low estimate of the late post-exilic period, and [they] assumed that in some fashion the New Testament had recovered from prophetic religion what Judaism had lost” (Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985], 5. Or, “the application of the historical-critical and history-of-religions approaches to the Scriptures effectively undercut the traditional claims which had been made . . . the Old Testament, as seen through the lens of historical criticism, turned out to be a very human book time-bound to contexts of long ago, diversified and contradictory in its contexts, scientifically primitive in its outlook.” (John H. Hayes and Frederick C. Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* [London: SCM Press, 1985], 144–45). This is what Walter Brueggemann refers to as “an intellectual supersessionism committed in the name of Enlightenment rationality” (Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 343
connected to a sometimes subtle anti-Semitic orientation. Hermeneutically, this is informed by a form of neo-marcionism that offers a diminished view of the Old Testament in comparison with the New. Second, for Evangelicals and High Church exegetes (both in their eighteenth-century and Tractarian forms), the Old Testament was not per se avoided, but close critical engagement was minimal precisely because of the attention that new critical work — coming from the Continent, and primarily from Germany — granted the Old Testament. With respect to Isaiah itself, new critical approaches are represented by figures such as Grotius and Gesenius, whom I discuss in Chapter 3. But there was a larger project that, in the eyes of many in England, carried out a destructive agenda directed against what they considered as biblical orthodoxy. Thinkers such as Johann S. Semler (1725–91) and J. D. Michaelis (1717–91) were part of a group of Old Testament exegetes who, “at the turn of the [eighteenth] century . . . had been brought up Pietists, and both had moved away from Pietism under the influence of English Deism, and . . . [from] the results of the biblical criticisms of scholars such as . . . Richard Simon and . . . Benedict Spinoza.” There was an erosion of belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, and the historical accuracy of the account began to be questioned with more vigour. We can therefore observe not only an avoidance of Isaiah, but of the

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7By this I mean, “anti-Jewish” as opposed to “anti-Hebrew.” Many at the time would agree with Robert Lowth and others regarding the wonder and beauty of “Hebrew faith” as evinced by its poetic, almost divine language. Like the common Protestant story of a pure faith that degenerated into priestcraft and superstition, so too did the Hebrews become blinded by their disbelief in the true Messiah, holding on to “old” ways, stubbornly maintaining their dead religious practices. I find this approach to be more common in the treatment of Judaism, at least of Isaiah, rather than merely using an epithet such as “Christ killers,” a term that was used by none of the commentators I consider.


9Also precisely because other “spiritual” interpretations are elided and separated in the irenic
Old Testament in general by more conservative parties in order to circumvent critical challenges. Finally, traditionally Isaiah is considered as a crucial “bridge” between the two Testaments in Christian theology. Yet, with an attenuation of the importance given to the Old Testament, so too was there an equally strong attempt by more conservative elements of the Church to maintain the connection between the two Testaments. Isaiah was seen as central in this apologetic stance, in which these conservatives defended Christianity against those who attack biblical veracity. That is, Isaiah is “proof” in that it predicts Christ or prefigures important Christian doctrine. However, many of these same biblical conservatives did little else by way of deeper exegesis. In other words, Isaiah is often quoted as a proof text but rarely commented on in a deeply theological manner.  

My analytic method is based on the claim in Chapter 2 that the historical roots of the Church of England have a deeply biblical basis, out of which emerge three central themes: (1) the reading of Scripture in common within the Church and the Church under the judgment of Scripture; (2) the Bible as constitutive of the one Word of God in its entirety; and (3) the christological centrality of biblical interpretation as the key to understanding the Bible. I refer to these themes as comprising the touchstone of Anglican hermeneutics in order to illustrate the ways that various interpreters cohere or diverge from this vision.

Furthermore, I introduce three conceptual movements that play an important role in the discourse of an emerging divided Church: humanism, spiritualist traditions and scepticism. Humanism engenders new forms of scholarship, which in exegetical terms tend to pay closer attention to the philological and historical interpretation of the text in

interpretive framework, the Bible effectively becomes only a historical “source” of the religious disposition of a certain people.

10I acknowledge and address the problem of defining “theological exegesis” in Chapter 1. The idea of Isaiah’s use as a “proof-text” is not an innovation, nor is it “un-theological;” rather, my point is that it becomes effectively reduced to this capacity.
distinction from (and often at the cost of) tradition. Or, rather, a new set of traditions (e.g., Greek) and literature come to bear on the sense of the meaning of the text and even what the Bible is as a text. Spiritualism devalues concrete referents in interpretation in favour of inward, individual dispositions. Theologically, this engenders a disdain for outward liturgical practices and a concomitant disavowal of any interpretive import granted to, for instance, the levitical practices in the Old Testament, beyond a spiritual “core.” The impact on ecclesiology, however, is particularly notable in that the Church is untethered to the people of Israel and becomes defined in biblically external ways. Finally, scepticism, in the midst of Church disintegration, erodes confidence in the historical and theological tradition of the Church and seeks other means to confirm the truth of the faith conceived in terms of particular factions. Protestant insistence on the Bible alone and the Roman Catholic appeal to the priority of the Church are two paradigmatic stances.

Robert Payne Smith is the best representative of one working within this latter, defensive orientation. He presents Isaiah in terms of its probative value in ensuring the truth of Christianity. As such, Smith’s method is to engage in a vigorous attack against those who challenge the prophetic, supernatural essence of the book. My argument is that, in doing so, Smith places himself in an exegetical situation whereby he can only engage in this task in terms defined by his opponents. He selects for exegesis only those passages that are in question, such as Isaiah 9 and 53. He also employs the tools developed in earlier centuries by irenic exegetes against those who have come to opposite conclusions, but who employ the same tools. This interpretation relies on exegetical tools derived from this irenic form of reading in that it avoids dogmatic interpretations. The difference with Smith is that he argues that the same methodology concludes with his desired theological aims. In other words, whereas the irenic reading was formulated in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century climates for the purpose of avoiding
theologically contentious exegetical matters, Smith’s employment of this reading alleges a clear and rational reading that accords with Christianity. His argument is that supernaturalist presuppositions are the *sine qua non* of proper biblical exegesis. The proof of their success is revealed in the contradictory conclusions of the “negative critics,” as opposed to the consistent ones of those with these supernaturalist presuppositions.

Like all exegetes whom I consider, Smith manifests the presence of humanism, a spiritualist orientation, and offers a solution to scepticism. Of the three, spiritualist discourse exerts the strongest influence on his exegesis. The impact of this can be described in terms of Smith’s relation to the Anglican touchstone. As regards the Church, there is no way to identify that embodied reality to which Smith refers when he speaks of the Church. Indeed, Smith’s prevailing themes relate to the centrality of the individual and the working out of his or her free will. Scripture is not the constitutive bedrock of a *common* ecclesial reality; rather, the Church is both incidental to the process of exegesis, and rarely a coherent referent. Part of this is a response to Roman Catholic disparagement of private judgment in matters to do with Scripture. With regard to biblical canonicity, Smith employs modern tools that direct his attention to the Prophet Isaiah *qua* individual literary genius. This exegetically prescinds from a Bible held together in the unity of God’s providential ordering of the history to which it bears witness. Moreover, and again indicative of spiritualist motifs, while there is a connection between the two Testaments for Smith, the relation is one of abrogation in which the carnal, outward faith of Israel is subsumed and overcome by the coming of the “Church” when Christ came. But Smith says little that offers a definitive account of the nature of the Church to which he refers, aside from representing a new spiritual reality that had been at the core of “Jewish” religion, made plain by Christ’s coming. This core was previously enmeshed in outward liturgical practices that no longer have theological
significance for true religion. The value of Old Testament exegesis is in its predictive function. This ineluctably leads to a form of progressivism, a story of the growth of human spiritual awakening.

In terms of the christological aspect of his exegesis, the elements of evidentiary proof and spiritual references continue to dominate. Christ is certainly an important referent, but Smith only invokes Christ in the context of Isaiah’s function of foretelling the future and proving the supernatural, and hence divine, source of the Bible. Deeper typological and figural interpretation, regarded in early Anglicanism (and before) as the connective tissue of Scripture, shaped by the figure of Christ, is absent.

Smith’s exegesis is therefore intrinsically bound to the reality of a divided Church. It takes on an “antagonistic” form in that he gave these lectures in order to directly oppose new critical challenges to Isaiah. In doing so, he also adopts exegetical tools that were developed in a situation that sought for such tools in order to find non-dogmatic methods of exegesis — what I refer to in Chapter 3 (borrowing from Legaspi) as irenic exegesis. For an Evangelical like Smith, who identifies with a group so committed to the centrality of Scripture, there is no deep theological approach to Isaiah other than in its ability to provide proof to those who disparage it. In doing so, the arguments proposed by his opponents shape the form of his exegesis. Moreover, the Church is minimized in favour of individual, private interpretation, Christ is present only as a purely future referent, and the entire Old Testament is perceived within a highly supercessionist theology. The deeply divisive climate thus impacts this Evangelical reading in a way that, I suggest, maintains similarities to the theological minimization phenomenon of Chapter 3.

In Chapter 5, I turn my attention to Christopher Wordsworth’s commentary on Isaiah. I engage with the “old” High Church party, in distinction from the Tractarians. It was during the eighteenth century that a significant split can be discerned between the Evangelicals and the High Church inheritors of the Caroline tradition. This is incorrectly
and superficially cast by some critics in terms of the former’s disdain for the “enthusiasm” that attended various Evangelical movements, notably those connected to the Wesley brothers, George Whitefield, and others associated with the so-called “Great Awakening.” While it is true that High Church divines found repugnant what they saw as emotionalism and irrational exuberance in the Evangelical movement, the two were united against the menace of deism and latitudinarianism. The real break emerged on the basis of a theme that serves as the focus of my analysis, and which is central to understanding the role of ecclesial division in High Church exegesis. This is the ecclesio-political vision of an “English” Church that powered the vision of Wordsworth and people like him. While his confessional commitments (e.g., on matters related to the Trinity and the ancient creeds) are superficially identical to those of Smith, Wordsworth’s notion of the “one, holy, catholic Church” is so narrowly focussed on the nationally established Church of England that it is difficult to speculate on his conception of “catholic.” Therefore, part of the reason for the break between Evangelicals and the old High Church party is the ever-increasing calls for relief, not only to Catholics, but also to dissenting parties within England during the second half of the eighteenth century, supported in general by the former. Thus, High Church identity can be seen as shaped by a response to the modern challenge of pluralism. As regards Wordsworth’s exegetical moves in his analysis of Isaiah, there is the expected vitriolic disparagement of Roman Catholicism. I suggest this is so, not only because he merely reflects a typical Protestant sentiment, but because his animosity toward Roman Catholics arises out of his view that they are distinctly un-English. They are therefore unworthy participants in the Establishment that is to give succour to its Church.

The exegetical impact of this politically infused reading is a radically different approach to the same texts that Smith considers. With respect to the Church, there is a much greater focus on its concrete particularity, namely, in a nationally established form.
Wordsworth sees a biblical parallel between the “national” religion of Israel and that of England, employing Isaiah 49:23 in the same way as such earlier High Church divines as George Horne and Samuel Horsely. Conversely, however, despite Wordsworth’s apparent emulation of the Church Fathers, he has little to say about the text’s tropological impact on the believer. Any moral or individual applicative meaning is eclipsed by the centrality of his ecclesial/political concerns. So strong are these concerns that he intimates that the purpose of Christ’s death was primarily to set up his Church on Earth, and he says little else of any salvific purpose in Christ’s death.

Wordsworth bears strong affinities with Robert Payne Smith in his strongly apologetic mode of exegesis, which often departs from what are often more insightful comments on the text. Like Smith, he appeals to sources (primarily from Germany) that support his theological claims, or he appeals to statements by such ancient figures as Origen and Jerome. Often the results are rather one-dimensional interpretations of the words of Isaiah. Therefore, while Wordsworth’s claims to the unity and canonicity of all of Scripture are made more explicit than Smith’s, he frequently resorts to the mere defence of biblical passages of disputed interpretations.

Thomas Kelly Cheyne’s exegesis is by most accounts inimical to that of both Smith and Wordsworth, though it too has certain parallels with them. I present Cheyne as the culmination of a religious disposition that employs irenic exegetical tools. This disposition (at the time when his commentary was written) leaves theological matters at the periphery in order to bring to bear the power of this non-dogmatic, irenic exegesis. This leads in later years, for Cheyne, to embrace the Baha’i faith, which purportedly accepts all religions as merely siblings of the same human phenomenon — the most irenic form of ecumenism. Of the three tools of division to invoke, given the choice of spiritualism, humanism, and scepticism, the latter two best characterize his exegetical influences in philosophical/theological terms. This is proven by the fact that almost all of
his interpretive strategy is directed at philological matters and historical/textual reconstruction; at the same time, he studiously avoids most theological issues in favour of religious ones. That is, Cheyne explores the religious history of Israelite faith, as an instance of a certain anthropological phenomenon, rather than regarding the Old Testament as constitutive of the one Word of God. This historical reconstruction is the humanist side of his exegesis, but, more subtly, in response to the scepticism engendered by the perceived failure of dogmatic religion, Cheyne regards his religious orientation of explicit scepticism as the most theologically accurate (and thus certain) form of faith.

Knowing Cheyne as a scholar, and bearing in mind those who influence him, it should come as no surprise that there is virtually no role for the Church in his exegesis, precisely because this entity has failed to provide certainty; in fact, dogmatic commitments only generate strife and division. This ecclesial lacuna, unlike Robert Payne Smith’s exegesis, is not counterbalanced by an increased attention to the inner disposition of the individual. Rather, Cheyne’s orientation demands a new kind of textual mediation, namely, that offered by the professional scholar. There is little room for the personal piety that an individual reading of the Bible entails, and an even stronger dislike of any reference to the tradition of biblical exegesis that accords with the Anglican touchstone. Cheyne is deeply embedded in the Broad Church tradition of reading the Bible that is suspicious of ecclesial, and thus dogmatic, exegesis.

At the same time, Cheyne is theologically reserved, as was often the case with biblical exegetes in nineteenth-century England. There was a well-established bifurcation of biblical commentary between textual/philological analysis and theological interpretation. Cheyne therefore primarily engages in philological and historical reconstruction of the text, while offering excurses on theological matters. With regard to the unity of Scripture, Cheyne attempts to maintain a connection, however feeble, between the prophetic utterances of Isaiah and some of the events in the Gospels. There
is, however, no significant sense in which Scripture functions as one canon in Cheyne’s approach. Such an idea simply gives no interpretive value to the structure of his interpretation.

Cheyne does not deny that Isaiah is “Christian” Scripture, and, as such, attempts to sketch out the historical referents of the text and the religious meaning of the “messianic doctrine” embedded within it. He regards this as an idea that historically emerged as a spark in the religious consciousness of Israel and grew in anticipative power. In purely historical terms, therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to read certain passages as “messianic prophecies,” namely, expressions of the expectation of Israelite religion and politics. In Cheyne’s reconstruction, this religious idea is concomitant with the notion that Israelite prophets were heralds of monotheism as a new religious orientation in distinction from the Babylonian polytheism of the exile.

When Cheyne speaks directly to a “Christian” reading of Isaiah, this is the closest he comes to a christological reading of Scripture. In many ways, Cheyne’s own dogmatic commitments have moved so far from the Anglican touchstone of Chapter 2 that the term “christological” has almost no theological utility in comparison to someone like Nehemiah Rogers of Chapter 3. Nonetheless, he wants to argue that he is defending the Christian faith and rejects claims that he is one of the “negative critics” against whom Robert Payne Smith contends. In point of fact, he is just as committed to an apologetic stance as Smith, though for Cheyne, he wants to update Christian theology to be in accord with modern academic assumptions about history, texts, and science, as well as to respond to the inherent violence of ecclesial division. In christological terms, Cheyne certainly does not want to deny that there is room within Isaianic exegesis to allow some form of Christian understanding of the text. But the nature of this is highly abstract; he refers to it at one point as a “mysterious x.” Thus, while such a christological
hermeneutic was necessary in early Anglican biblical theology, for Cheyne and his colleagues, it is secondary, even only a mere possibility. In the end, the “Christian” reading allows for the possibility that Jesus of Nazareth fulfils the idea of a Messiah, but, equally so, characters such as David or even groups of people, in particular, Israel as a nation.

Chapter 7 is an analysis of the state of Roman Catholic exegesis in England. This exploration is a necessary one, since for all three Anglican parties, the “papists” are representative of the very definition of what to avoid in reading Scripture. All Protestant parties regarded Roman Catholics as the epitome of “priestcraft,” superstition, and the heretical development of non-biblical theological doctrine. Given these accusations, in addition to the antipathy that the common Englishman had toward Roman Catholics, it is necessary to outline the exegetical path that English Roman Catholicism follows in the nineteenth century.

My conclusions regarding Roman Catholic exegesis is that its response to Protestant polemic is an equally acerbic discourse. Much of the Roman Catholic literature derides the vapidity of a reliance on the Bible alone as the source of doctrine and the ecclesial life. As a counter to the Protestant insistence on biblical sufficiency, English Roman Catholics resort to practising a wooden ecclesial reading that is equally lacking in its richness and textual inter-connectivity as its Anglican counterparts. Emerging from this polemical context is a reading that has little resemblance to classic Western exegesis from Origen through to the Middle Ages. In other words, because of Protestant focus on Scripture, Roman Catholic exegesis distances itself from the Bible, giving it a role that functions as a buttress for ecclesial claims. Left in the hands of the laity, the Bible is a dangerous book, generative of schism, heresy, and confusion. In the

specifically English case, Roman Catholic exegesis functions with a somewhat sectarian mindset, in a kind of siege mentality. Given this fact, in addition to the limitations imposed on them in academic terms, English Roman Catholics produced few significant commentaries on Scripture, and even fewer on Isaiah.

I present the Catholic perspective on the Bible in terms of danger and its insufficiency for faith without the Church providing the role as sole protector and interpreter. Much of the Catholic approach is, in effect, an ignoring of the Bible. Controversies occur at a high level, namely, around concepts such as biblical sufficiency and the right of private judgment rather than direct engagement with the text itself. I consider how Catholic journals and academic articles, catechetical devotional literature, and the specific case of the Haydock Bible Commentary address the Bible and its exegesis. In terms of the themes of spiritualist traditions, humanism, and a response to scepticism, the clearest factor is that Roman Catholic polemics strive, almost painfully, to offer a certainty in Mother Church in the face of challenges by a Protestant country to its historical claims.

My construal offers a kind of analogy between Broad Church biblical engagement and that of English Roman Catholics. That is, in the Broad Church’s own search for certainty by engaging the tools initiated by irenicism, exegetes such as Cheyne minimize or “flatten” Scripture in order to extract historical data. Its relation to dogmatic claims by the Christian faith is minimal, and to read the Bible with such claims as guides is, in their view, mistaken. The general Roman Catholic consensus, on the other hand, assumes that the Church embodies a perfect correlation with the theological content of Scripture. Therefore, the Bible similarly becomes a kind of “relic,” to be left behind, as the Church is the sufficient object of faith. This conclusion, however, is one I make as an inference of what is said in their literature and the dearth of biblical engagement. It would certainly not be an explicit claim that any Roman Catholic would make, nor would Cheyne claim
that his exegetical practice was “untheological.” My conclusions, however, emerge on the basis of Roman Catholic effective engagement with Scripture.

2 Implications

In this section, I outline the significance of this study in more general terms. I step back from Isaiah, and consider what it means to engage in the process of exegesis in the midst of the current reality of a divided Church. I begin by using Origen’s exegesis of Ezekiel 16 to indicate an exegetical approach to Scripture that is absent from modern purview, namely, a view that God’s judgment rests on a divided Church, just as it did on a divided Israel. Part of the reason for this exegetical absence is the divisive atmosphere that encourages an identification with a certain “party,” which either regards the Church as an assortment of numerous contradictory “churches” or in terms of that particular faction as the “true” Church. Origen was not the only exegete to encourage this reading of Scripture and I indicate various ways that this interpretation is seen up to the Middle Ages and the early part of the Reformation.

I then consider Kierkegaard’s use of despair as applied to an individual who is unable to integrate the disparate facets of the whole self, transposed in terms of an ecclesial self. By a brief examination of some current attempts at an ecclesial retrieval of the Bible, I suggest that they are, at bottom, projects of resignation and ecclesial despair. I then use Reinhard Hütter’s concept of pathos and suffering to suggest that the beginning of a solution to exegesis in a rent Church is to suffer the divine text.

In the third century, Origen (c.184–c.253) wrote a series of sermons on Ezekiel. Consider Ezekiel 16, which speaks of Jerusalem as a harlot. The prophet uses striking imagery; in verse 25 he writes, “at every street corner you . . . degraded your beauty, spreading your legs with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by.” It is not
incidental that this is a passage rarely addressed in sermons today. In the eighteenth century, John Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* interprets “Jerusalem” of v. 1 to be “the whole race of the Jews.” Given our experience with much English thought, this would not be a controverted interpretation. Not so with Origen; on the one hand, it is certain that Ezekiel *qua* individual prophet *meant* to refer to the Jewish people. Origen admires “historical” Ezekiel’s ability to speak in such harsh language, for Ezekiel is willing to risk danger at the hands of those who hear him. He therefore affirms the historical referents of the texts. Yet, on the other hand, there is not for Origen a “mysterious x” that hovers above this “historical” reading of the text, another mode of reading whereby the literal or historical is “set aside.” Origen states that “we should know that everything that is said about Jerusalem applies to all people in the church.” He connects this to Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 20, saying, “If [Jesus] had reason to weep over Jerusalem, he will have much more reason to weep over the church, built to be a house of prayer but become, through shameful greed and luxury of some (and are not leaders of the people among them?!?) a den of thieves.”

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12 The fact that the Revised Common Lectionary leaves out this verse (and a great deal of Ezekiel) indicates that sections of the Bible are too “problematic” for modern ears. E.g., with respect to the Rape of Tamar by her half brother, see Robert Knetsch, “Tamar’s Tale: Elizabeth Hands as a Protofeminist Theologian,” in *Strangely Familiar: Protofeminist Interpretations of Patriarchal Biblical Texts*, ed. Nancy Calvert-Koyzis and Heather E. Weir [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009], 33–48).


15 Origen has indeed been accused of doing so in his attempts at “spiritual” interpretations, but the fact that there are instances in which he diverges from his intent does not detract from the fact that maintaining a historical referent is essential to his hermeneutical approach. Ezekiel 16 is a case in point.


17 von Balthasar, *Origen, Spirit and Fire*, 159. There is some license taken here by either von Balthazar or Robert Daly, von Balthasar’s translator into English, in the rather informal use of punctuation.
Origen continues to speak, as does Ezekiel, of Jerusalem as a whore, in his mind, he struggles with the fact that the Church is also part of the textual referent. For Origen, the Church is at once the perfect bride of the Apocalypse, yet also beset by sinners from within its own boundaries. Of these people, it is therefore “give[n] the name ‘church’ to this whole mixture of just and unjust.” Origen, there is only one Church and there indeed may be “factions” within this Church, and even sinners who misinterpret the Scriptures. But there are not numerous “churches” — the one Church is under God’s judgment. Origen, because of his hermeneutical orientation, can utilize such “obscure” passages as Ezekiel 16 and exegetically affirm the reality of a corpus permixtum, not the multa corpora that is so facilely accepted as a reality since the Reformation.

I raise the issue of Origen and the idea of Scripture’s judgment on the singular body of the Church because it is one interpretive approach to Old Testament exegesis that is missing from all exegetes but one whom I consider in this project. This lack is equally true for those whose agenda is either to retrieve patristic interpretation (e.g., Wordsworth and the Roman Catholic tradition) and those who regard themselves as the true inheritors of Reformation principles (e.g., Robert Payne Smith and Thomas Kelly Cheyne.) For the former, the problem is resolved either, as in the case of Roman Catholicism, by a forceful and repetitive claim that there has only ever been one Church, or a complete disengagement with the reality of numerous competing ecclesial bodies, as with the old High Church party. In the case of the latter, Smith “spiritualizes” the Church to such an extent that its concrete “incarnation” in the world (as the body of Christ) is illusory. And

Nevertheless, Origen’s critique of the very leadership of the ecclesial community is indeed a startling approach in his time.

18 von Balthasar, Origen, Spirit and Fire, 158.

19 Origen quotes St. Paul (1 Cor 11:19), noting that factions prove who is and is not genuine (von Balthasar, Origen, Spirit and Fire, 171).
for Cheyne, it must be said rather perfunctorily, he has no concern with the Church as such.

I note in Chapter 3 that Nehemiah Rogers is the only exegete of Isaiah that employs a robust ecclesial reading in which the Church itself comes under the judgment of the Bible — a necessary but often ignored corollary of the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*, though not one that is taken up by any other exegete I consider. Indeed, as I have shown with Origen, this is not only a Protestant interpretive principle, for God’s judgment on the Church was an important part of Origen’s interpretation. Rogers is not merely participating in a project of retrieval (as I suggest Wordsworth is), but stands within a larger “reform” tradition, in which the Church of England was a part. Origen, too, was engaged in his own attempt at “reform” in his interpretation of Scripture.

By the Middle Ages, amidst warring states and a powerful Church, this kind of exegesis was rare, though not entirely absent. In the early thirteenth century, Francis of Assisi, despite his dedication to obeying ecclesial authorities, saw the form of Jesus’ life as given not just in its material poverty, but as the poverty taken on by the Word made flesh; he regarded this as the example, biblically informed, that he and his followers were to emulate.20 This was a call to ecclesial reform, a calling back to the image of the enfleshed Word who himself lived in poverty. In other words, despite Francis’ deep obedience to Church authority, he saw Scripture’s power in critiquing a Church that had moved away from the One who gives it its body and who is also the embodiment of that same One. While the Church leaders found Francis uncomfortable, he was never censured for his call to reform. A little over a hundred years later came John Wycliffe (1328–84), whose opposition to the Church was more brazen, yet equally as challenging as that of Francis in its attempt to regard the Church under the authority of Scripture. He

had several theological concerns, but much of his agitation was directed against the papacy’s failure to serve the laity.\textsuperscript{21} He thought that the Church should not be a monetarily rich entity holding temporal power.

These are rather fleeting instances in which the Bible is interpreted as pronouncing judgment on the Church. It was not until the Reformation that this notion was revived. Yet this often devolved into a form of judgment against one part of the Church — the Roman Catholic Church, or the radical reformers, and vice versa. The common Protestant recourse was to avoid concrete ecclesial definition in favour of an “invisible” Church. In doing so, there is little influence that this Origenist aspect of scriptural ecclesial judgment can have on the Church body as a whole, as it is explicitly divided into the true, “invisible,” Church, or an ill-defined conglomerate of opposing factions. But my contention in this project is to suggest that the scriptural vision of the Church of England maintains the hermeneutical tradition of Origen, Francis, and Wycliffe. This tradition in Anglicanism is less explicit than Origen’s claim of ecclesial whoredom, but I suggest that it can be found, for instance in Article 20 of the Prayer Book:

\begin{quote}
The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21}See, for instance, his injunction against the abuses of papal indulgences: “gret falsnesse iþ to magnyfie þe popis power so mychil in purgatorie þat no man here can teche bi holy writt ne reson, sîþ we seen in þis world þat a litel harlot dispiseþ þe pope & stroieþ his lordischiphe . . . it seems for many skillis þat þis feyned pardon is a solit merchaundise of antichristis clerkis, to magnyfie her feyned power & to geten worldly goods . . .” (John Wycliffe, \textit{The English Works of Wyclif: Hitherto Unprinted}, ed. F. D. Matthew, Early English Text Society [Series]. Original Series, no. 74 Elibron classics [London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by Trübner, 1880], 83). Wycliffe was not the first to suggest that the Pope is either himself the Antichrist or is a participant in his kingdom, but this idea gave great impetus for his Protestant successors.
The Church is thus not only the “keeper of Holy Writ,” but also subjected to it. As William Covell (d. 1613) says in his commentary on Hooker’s doctrine of Scripture in 1603:

> Touching therefore the authoritie of the Church, and the scriptures . . . we say, that we are taught to receive it, from the authoritie of the Church; we see her judgment; we heare her voice; and in humilitie subscribe unto all this; ever acknowledging the Scriptures to direct the Church, and yet the Church to afoord (as she is bound) her true testimony to the Scripture.\(^\text{22}\)

Unfortunately, the overwhelming pressures of ecclesial division from the Puritans and other movements (many of which were influenced by Continental ideas) curtailed the hermeneutical force of this aspect of exegesis in the confusion of competing theological and exegetical claims. This is not to suggest that the Anglican touchstone evaporated, for its influence can be discerned in the exegesis of Nehemiah Rogers.

While this has been a highly specific project in that it considers only the exegetical works of Anglicans in England — and only those of Isaiah for that matter — I suggest that it indicates the problematic nature of maintaining a cohesive Christian exegetical practice for the past several centuries. And, the case of the Church of England’s reception history of Isaiah serves, *mutatis mutandis* and *ceteris paribus*, as a kind of parable for the state of biblical exegesis up to the twenty-first century. I argue that theological *coesiveness* is lacking, a stable theological understanding of what the Bible *is*, its ontological location within the economy of God’s providential ordering of history. I am not arguing for normative uniformity of exegesis — such a thing has never existed. But this lack of cohesiveness is tethered to ecclesial division. With this in mind — that the “ecclesial self” is a non-integrated entity — I invoke, for the purpose of

illustration, Kierkegaard’s concept of despair as applied to various contemporary projects of connecting Scripture to the Church. This comprises publications by Matthew Levering, Christian Smith, Robert A. Oden, Roland Boer, and Stephen Fowl.

Despite their laudable contributions, these recent efforts reside, in my construal, within the despair of the ecclesial self. To be in despair within the context of the ecclesial self, and in reference to biblical exegesis, means to work as a conflicted self, offering theories of reading Scripture (and, as seen below, they are often quite different) that cannot resolve the non-integrated self of the Church. The primary reason for this is a lack of serious recognition that a crucial element of the Church’s identity is Scripture, and if this identity is limned in confusion, then so is the efficacy of theological exegesis.

There are many attempts to offer a solution to the difficulty of holding together the exegetical reality of bifurcation into textual analysis and theological extraction. They often have to do with a “recovery” project to somehow locate the Bible in its “proper” theological/ecclesial location. Despite their many merits, I suggest they are exercises of despair. Instead, in order to move closer to a theologically real account of the Bible in the Church, they must, rather, be ones of suffering, which is to learn to endure, to live within the text and under its judgment in the same mode of exegesis of Origen above. To be in this mode is one of being (that is, a mode of existence; this is not an ontological statement per se) rather than a grasping at new exegetical methods that cannot hold together the divided ecclesial self.

I borrow the distinction between despair and suffering from the Kierkegaardian tradition, especially the language of his influential works, Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death.\(^\text{23}\) The dilemma that Kierkegaard addresses is the disjunction

between universal principles of reason that can be *known* and the individual who must come to know these things in a particular way. For Kierkegaard, the self is “a relationship to the juxtaposed ‘contradictory factors’ of finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, necessity and freedom.”

This is a particularly modern problem in which the self cannot hold together these contradictory factors, such that the result is that every individual is in despair, unless he or she can succeed, like Abraham in his response to the ultimate call to sacrifice his son Isaac, to become a “knight of faith.”

This despair is a state in which the self is unassimilated, incomplete. Yet, there is no doubt that Abraham *suffered* in his struggle to “suspend the ethical” and follow God’s call.

It is a valid objection that I employ the language of despair and suffering within the context of a highly individualist philosophical discourse, and thus constitutes a category error directed against a communal entity. I wish, however to suggest that, with respect to the Bible, there is a kind of ecclesial existential crisis. Moreover, I aim to give more meaning to the term *despair* than a mere state of mind of those who think on these

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24 Edward F. Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation: Reading Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling*, SUNY Series in Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 69. This is a rather simplified summary of Kierkegaard’s original phraseology, which in its complexity has its own kind of poetic force: “the self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation . . . that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but that the relation relates itself to its own self. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors” (Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 17).

25 Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 32–33. Kierkegaard speaks of the “absurdity” of Abraham’s act: he is “either a murderer or a man of faith” (Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 57). But it is by virtue of the absurd that Abraham can hold together the universal and the particular, by an absolute duty to God.

26 We can see some of this wrestling with universal reason, particularity, and the experience of polarities also in Pascal’s *Pensées*. For instance, “it is incomprehensible that God should exist, and it is incomprehensible that He should not exist; that the soul should be joined to the body, and that we should have no soul, that the world should be created, and that it should not be created, etc” (Blaise Pascal, *Pascal’s Pensées*, Introduction by T. S. Eliot [New York, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1958], 64–65).
matters; rather, despair characterizes the whole exegetical process. Indeed, it is quite an obvious fact that a divided Church is, in general, in a state of universal despair, as her component members cannot be theologically integrated. When Kierkegaard says that everyone (except the “true” Christian) exists in a state of despair, he does not necessarily speak of a feeling, that everyone subjectively experiences a loss of hope or direction in life, but that, even in the midst of (counterfeit) happiness, they exist in a state of despair.27 When the Church was a true “self” — when its referent was to a singular body — it suffered, but it was not in despair.28

In terms of suffering, I wish to invoke another thinker who speaks in a more directly theological mode, namely, Reinhard Hütter in his book Suffering Divine Things.29 Here is a more constructive vision of the Church in which he describes its pathos:

Christian faith under the conditions of modernity experiences itself in a two-fold difference: on the one hand in the context of the split in Western Christendom, and on the other with respect to a modernity that understands itself to be post-Christian. This double difference makes ecclesiological self-reflection necessary in a way quite unknown to pre-Reformation Christianity. . . . Theology has two choices. It can continue to take its orientation largely from a comprehensive concept of reason, one that does, however, under the conditions of postmodern criticism, increasingly become an explicit “project” itself, that is, an intersubjectively appropriated “construction.” Or theology can understand itself directly and explicitly as “poesis,” that is, a “construction,” its creator being the religious subject who within the framework of its theological constructions conceptualizes certain . . . religious experiences and makes these experiences communicable. . . . The other alternative would be explicitly pneumatological as

27A crucial moment can happen when one realizes they he or she is in despair and resorts to becoming a “Knight of resignation.” He or she lives in the realm of eternal ideas; this is generally a dead end. But the “Knight of faith” makes the “movement” of resignation, which leads to the suspension of the ethical universal systems in order to enact his or her obedience to God.

28Indeed, if the notion of the Church as the body of Christ is to apply, then there is some sense of “selfhood” that can be described, at least in carefully nuanced terms. The Church is not the “self” or person of Christ himself, but is an acting agent participative in Christ’s being. Radner’s notion of the Church’s shape as formed by the broken body of Christ (e.g., Ephraim Radner, The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West [Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998], 39) is thus the motif with which I am working. What is even more stark, perhaps, is that these broken pieces still act as (despairing) agents at war with each other.

29Reinhard Hütter, Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
well as ecclesiological prolegomena to Christian theology, that is, a development of the pathos that makes Christian theology plausible as a distinct Church practice.30

Elsewhere, Hütter defines pathos as ‘‘suffering, undergoing’ as opposed to ‘doing’ . . . . The reference is . . . to the ‘other’ of action, that which determines or defines a person prior to all action, in all action, and against all action, that which only a person can receive.”31 Referencing Martin Luther, Hütter shows that this reception, this undergoing of the action of another, is the hearing that is faith, the hearing of “the word.”32 Hütter’s scope is larger than that of biblical exegesis, but I would like to work within the mode of what I call the ecclesial call to the suffering of Scripture as its primary poesis, its central practice. What does this ecclesial pathos of the biblical text imply? I argue that the Church must suffer the divine word spoken to it in order to commence a move out of the enigma of despair, in which the ecclesial self is fragmented into opposing corporeal shards.

I begin by describing various recent theological efforts that pertain to Scripture and the Church, in order to indicate how they work in the mode of despair by not sufficiently holding together the various interpretive elements sufficiently. The Church is in most cases an indefinable quantity, and therefore these models resign themselves to division as a norm. In so doing they ultimately fail to articulate an integrated ecclesial self, because such a self does not exist. For instance, in a more popularly oriented recent book, Christian Smith, from an Evangelical Protestant perspective, notes that the central Protestant claim to Sola Scriptura often leads to an untenable position of “biblicism.”33


33There are numerous “versions” of the Sola Scriptura principle, running from the doctrine that in the Bible one finds all that is necessary for salvation (e.g., Article 6 of the Articles of Religion), to one
This runs from the absurd (“biblical” recipes and cures for cancer gleaned from the Bible\textsuperscript{34}) to the more serious reality that out of a staunch biblicism emerges “the problem of interpretive pluralism.”\textsuperscript{35} This mode of reading Scripture also encourages inductive lay Bible study, individualist interpretations, and an avoidance of extra-biblical literature. Given the previous chapters, such ideas should now be familiar as congruent with a historical hermeneutical process that began in England and has its parallels in other parts of the West. At the end of his book, Smith suggests a more robust model for a “true” Evangelical reading of the Bible. He suggests that there must be a new “christological key” to understanding Scripture whereby “a Christocentric reading of the Bible . . . simply says that all topics both addressed in the Bible and not must be read and considered through the logic of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{36}

What, however, of the Church? Who are the readers, and in what context is Scripture read in this christological key? For Smith cannot be read apart from his follow-up book, \textit{How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps}.\textsuperscript{37} At this point Smith argues (as did Hütter, in fact) no longer for Evangelicalism, but for the virtues of Roman Catholicism. He recognizes the pitfalls of interpretive plurality that obtain in the Protestant tradition. Smith believes that the “security” found in modern Evangelicalism betrays a feeling that it is “flat, even empty, claiming that Scripture ought to specifically govern involving all areas of life. In Smith’s case, he is critiquing the second version.

\textsuperscript{34}Christian Smith, \textit{The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2011), 8.


\textsuperscript{36}Christian Smith, \textit{The Bible Made Impossible}, 103.

\textsuperscript{37}Christian Smith, \textit{How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps} (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).
about supposedly having it all figured out.”

For him (among a whole host of other problems), it is the sense of mystery that attracts him to the Catholic tradition (and its lack in Protestantism that drives him away). Smith explicitly rejects the objection that he is merely exchanging one form of certainty for another — biblical inerrancy for an infallible Church. I am therefore not about to argue that Smith’s arguments parallel those of Roman Catholics in nineteenth century England. However, it is curious that one of his “steps” is to suggest that there are indications that the Great East-West Schism of 1054 will be overcome and result in “a genuinely global catholic communion,” and later refers to the breaking apart of the Anglican Communion.

But more importantly, his central concerns have to do with the nature of the Church and the personal struggle he went through — yet Scripture does not figure prominently in his discussion. One point where Scripture exerts its power on Smith is when he reads passages that warn against division:

> Something or other hits you that makes you notice in a new way how thoroughly and deeply the visible Christian church is divided. . . . Scores of biblical passages calling for Christian unity and harmony and condemning church division and schism start coming to mind (e.g., Rom 15:5–6, 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10–13, 3:3–4, 11:18–19, 12:12–26; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:2,14, 4:1; 1 Pet 3:8, 2; 2 Tim 2:23–24.)

The suggestion in this passage is that a turn toward Rome is one toward Christian unity and harmony. He continues to argue that Protestant reliance on *Sola Scriptura* is “self-

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38 Christian Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic*, 35. Smith does regard his book as a kind of “autobiographical” book, and it is certainly not pitched to an academic audience. He is, however, a scholar, and a tell-tale of a larger movement of many Evangelicals to the Roman Catholic Church, after experiencing “existential” angst at its apparent contradictions.

39 Christian Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic*, 151.

40 Christian Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic*, 163, 181. Thus the brokenness of the Anglican Communion is a catalyst for a move toward an entity he perceived as “less broken.” I said above that I would not argue that he urges a new form of certainty in the Church to replace that of Protestant biblical certainty, only because he explicitly rejects this. I cannot help, however, but mention that his line of argument leads one to rest in that institution which has a longer line of historical continuity — a salve to challenges to certainty.

defeating.”

However, the unity Smith achieves is merely a nominal one. It disregards Roman Catholicism’s own internal exegetical (and otherwise) factions, and must essentially resort to a claim that Catholicism obeys Scripture more than any other ecclesial community. However, is not ecclesial pathos also a requirement for Roman Catholics? While cataloguing the suffering he endured under Protestant absurdities, does a move toward the Catholic Church avoid God’s Word spoken to a Church under judgment? I suggest that Smith is representative of a move from one state of ecclesial despair to another. By his latter move into Roman Catholicism, it is despair in the sense that he avoids the apparent absurdities of Protestantism by a retreat to another ecclesial form in which the disintegration of the Church is less apparent, or ignored. Yet the reality of the broken body remains. Exegetically, the tradition remains within Catholicism that this Church most closely (if not entirely perfectly) corresponds to the biblical model of Church. That is, Catholic doctrine is the same as that intended by Christ and Scripture. This, however, is no different than the claims of a host of other Protestant “sects.”

A more direct approach to exegesis itself is Participatory Biblical Exegesis by the Roman Catholic scholar, Matthew Levering. I consider this in engagement with Protestant Stephen E. Fowl’s Engaging Scripture. Both suggest a “way” to read the Scriptures in light of the fact that the task of studying Scripture in the academy is dominated by the historical-critical method, leaving out the uniquely Christian guidelines that have historically played such a central role. Levering asks a question that goes to the

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42 Christian Smith, How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic, 43.


heart of the matter: “what happens to the texts of Scripture when read through the lens of the synagogue or the Church, rather than solely through the perspectives of the academy?”

Fowl states that “scriptural interpretation should shape and be shaped by the convictions, practices, and concerns of Christian communities as part of their ongoing struggle to live and worship faithfully before God.”

Levering and Fowl are “orthodox” Christians and offer complementary visions of reading the Bible from the opposite sides of Rome’s boundaries.

Despite the many positive contributions each make, Levering’s analysis of Fowl goes to the root of the problem: “Fowl cannot identify any actual Christian communion that possesses . . . the ability to read Scripture authoritatively as a Church.” Indeed, it is only in a footnote that Fowl directly addresses the issue of what he interchangeably refers to as the Church and the “Christian community.” He says, “I am not, however, willing to make global judgments about any particular type of group. Using the phrase “Christian community” both allows me to include the church and allows for the possibility of considering a wide range of groupings that might not be strictly churches, but still manifest the relevant communal characteristics to find my arguments of value.”

With respect to the relation between the individual and the Church, Fowl urges a “granting” of authority to the Church as this interpretive community. But he does not, and in the terms he has set out, cannot, speak of the relation between the Bible and this Church. This is the greatest weakness of his argument, for the Church in his account is a

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45 Levering, Participatory Biblical Exegesis, 90.

46 Fowl, Engaging Scripture, 62.

47 I appreciate the ambiguity of the term “orthodox.” By this, I denote someone who accepts the historic creeds of the Church and generally accepts the truth claims that Protestantism and Roman Catholicism hold in common. This, of course, does not resolve the problem of definition, as it assumes that there is a single “Protestant” set of truth claims.

48 Levering, Participatory Biblical Exegesis, 130.

49 Fowl, Engaging Scripture, 2.
disembodied self, an amalgam of various communities, many of which, he neglects to seriously consider, read the Bible antagonistically against each other. He attempts concrete specificity in interpretation, but it is hard, ultimately, to consider Fowl’s proposals as anything but merely methodological ones, resigned to the “universal.” This is the kind of despair, therefore, in which Fowl struggles, namely, to deny the Church its identity in terms of its concrete particularity — at least, not when it comes to describing biblical exegesis.

Levering also presents proposals as a salve to the destructive effects of the historical-critical method. In his “participatory” approach, in which interpretation takes part in the economy of God’s salvific history in the world, his is, more than Fowl’s, a “retrieval” project in favour of “patristic-medieval exegetical practice.” A “truly ecclesial biblical interpretation” is by the “Spirit-constituted Church.” In Levering’s case, given his frequent choice of exegetes (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, Henri de Lubac) and his interaction with the Pontifical Biblical Commission, he clearly intends that the ideally constituted Church is the Roman one, though he does not say so explicitly. As with Fowl, Levering writes a footnote about the Church in an interaction with N.T. Wright. He approvingly cites Wright’s definition of the communal context of interpretation but critiques his assertion of teaching by “the church’s accredited leaders.” In response, Levering asks, “Who accredits them, how do they receive this accreditation, and what does their accredited status mean for the practice of cruciform obedience . . . in the Church?”


52 Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 255.
very clear in the Roman Catholic tradition. These questions are more important in terms of the concrete constitution of the Church in the world.

But more importantly, Levering’s retrieval project misses the interpretive tradition as exemplified by Origen. What if the Church herself cannot actively participate in God’s economy because of its riven body? Thus, cruciform obedience would need to be cast in terms of suffering the divine judgment on the people of God. There is no definable Church that can act as an agent in this figural history, except only as shaped by the state of Christ’s body on Holy Saturday, or the people of Israel in Babylon. The problem, as I see it, is that both Fowl and Levering see a fitness between the Church as presently constituted and the exegetical outputs that emerge from it. We have already seen how this is untenable in the case of the Church of England.

There are other retrieval projects of a sort from the “non-orthodox” side. In such cases, resignation to the irretrievable quality of the ecclesial self results in wresting the Bible away from the perceived strictures placed on any sense of ecclesial reading; often this is reminiscent of the reading offered by Cheyne. For instance, there is *Rescuing the Bible* by Roland Boer. Its title may give the impression that the author sympathizes with a thinker like Robert Payne Smith. His position becomes clear when we discover from whom the Bible is to be rescued, namely, “from the clutches of the religious and political right, its most systemic abusers.” In its place, Boer argues for a “new secularism” in which “religion and secularism are entwined like two strands of a rope. . . . This is to the benefit of both.” Boer’s work is indeed a “manifesto,” self-consciously in the Marxist tradition; the relevant point here is that though his sights are fixed on right-
wing American political abuses of the Bible, he has no interest in considering any positive role for the Church. The Church has only been a hindrance to the revolutionary power of Scripture. A similar work, *The Bible Without Theology* by Robert A. Oden, is likewise highly critical of the history of interpretation in which theology plays a central role.\(^{56}\) He argues that

> theologically governed biblical scholarship wishes to imply that what makes Israel’s religion unique is not simply a nonrepeatable set of historical circumstances. That which is responsible for this religion’s essential character is also the presence of revelation — of divine guidance that is subtle, complex, and often almost hidden but that remain unexampled. . . . Hence comparative religion in the instance of the religion of the Hebrew Bible is strictly speaking impossible. Hence, too, a whole range of potential historical and comparative questions is at the outset so removed by the theological tradition that questions at the center of a variety of academic disciplines throughout the course of the present century go unasked.\(^{57}\)

Oden’s worry is that the “theological tradition” suppresses the correct academic approach to Scripture, namely, a comparative-religion or history-of-religions orientation.

Boer and Oden are akin to Cheyne in their disparagement of the role of the Church or some kind of theological tradition in biblical interpretation. At the same time, they both engage in “rescue” projects, not just to wrest Scripture out of the clutches of an abusive Church, but to generate new projects for recovering its “true” meaning. For Boer, it is a new alliance between the secular and the religious; for Oden, the Bible freed from theology can finally reveal its deeply human dimension, a religious artifact indicative of religious sociological phenomena. There is no end to this generation of new projects; from Levering to Oden, all have their roots in the historical process and exegetical habits in which the role of Scripture inexorably becomes highly contested in a

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fissiparous Church. This project shows how deeply this confusion is rooted in the theological divisions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This is the implication central to this project, that all exegetical projects reside in the existential state of despair because of the dismantling of the ecclesial self by the theologically divisive struggles of the early modern period. I suggest that this is a normative statement of the condition of the Church in exegetical terms.\(^{58}\) I should make it clear that I am not fundamentally pointing to the fact that there are numerous disagreements between believers. Rather, the historical roots of theological antagonism have generated the exegetical “tradition” of irenic, philological, apologetic, and outright antagonistic exegesis that have intrinsically shaped the nature of the exegetical task. These methodological developments eclipse the deeper theological modes of exegesis, of which I argue early Anglicanism is representative.

Moreover, my view is that the Church must seek out a new existence, which I suggest is first achieved by taking the direction of pathos, of suffering the divine text. This is not at root a call to a retrieval project or a re-imagining of a new ecclesial existence. For the Word of Christ, present within the very words of Scripture (and I shall remain within the Old Testament), speak words to his unfaithful people, to whom he says “the idols among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion; indeed, they are your lot” (Isaiah 57:6). I suggest, perhaps ominously, that the Quest for (and reification of) Methodology, the minimization of theological substance within the text that hides the presence of the Word spoken, is “the portion,” “the lot,” of the present Church.

Theological thought perhaps needs to reconsider the distinction between the ecclesia

\(^{58}\)Without employing Kierkegaardian terminology, nor speaking only regarding the nature of exegesis (but, rather, pneumatologically), this parallels the judgment of Radner on the Church in Radner, *The End of the Church*. Like Radner, I do not take into account Eastern Orthodoxy. This is an area of possible theological investigation as the influence of Orthodoxy, theologically and numerically, in the West is increasing.
militans and triumphans, and revive the concept of the third notion of the Church, the ecclesia penitens, the suffering Church, traditionally denoting those Christians who are in Purgatory. Or, to avoid altering this traditional definition, I suggest ecclesia passione as it evokes the image of the Passion of Christ, the One who was broken, whose very body, like the Church, lay dead at the hands of his own people.

I do not claim to offer a solution to the loss of the ecclesial “self” and its attendant exegetical quandaries. Yet I suggest that the Church (by whatever definition) needs to subject itself to a kind of epoché, that is, a kind of suspension of poesis in the mode of devising new methodological solutions to exegetical disparity. Of new methodological approaches there is no end, yet the call of Luther to a vita passiva, of oratio, meditatio, and tentatio with respect to Scripture remains an imperative. This is another way of saying that the Church undergoes the pathos of the text, which presents the Church today with a great question mark.

If we follow Origen’s exegesis of Ezekiel with respect to Israel, which describes the unfaithful spouse as a figure of the Church, then this question mark etched on the Church is one of identity. When most Churches every week throughout the world proclaim the notion of a “catholic” Church in the Apostles’ Creed, the problem is not just that there is no longer any consistency in the definition of the term: it is either rendered incomprehensible, or comprehensible only in the terms defined by that particular community that allows each community to understand itself in the midst of division.

On these matters, I digress into areas of pure ecclesiology rather than exegesis, but I contend that the two are inextricably linked. For now, the answer to the question that Scripture directs to the Church eludes her. Neither can I provide one, other than to

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59 That is, prayer, meditation and temptation. For more on these terms and their relation to theology and Scripture see John Kleinig, “Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?” Concordia Theological Quarterly 66, no. 3 (July 2002): 255–67. This is a more directed form of my more general comment in reference to R. R. Reno’s invocation of askesis that I discuss in Chapter 1.
suggest that the implications of this project are that the exegetical task is currently one of despair. And, secondly, that a kind of “therapy” for the Church (if I remain in a Kierkegaardian/psychological mode) is an explicit acceptance that the Church and theological exegesis are currently in a mode of despair. The commencement of a way out is not to seek “new” exegetical strategies, but to find a way to live under the text, to simply read Scripture and enjoin the Church to endure the Word spoken to it.

The Church of England’s failure, in terms of ecclesial identity, is to pride itself on comprehensiveness, which is to define itself in very broad terms, which comprise great latitude in theological commitments. This is, as I show in Chapter 2, mistakenly thought to be an aspect of the Elizabethan settlement. Rather, this perspective, first, must be acknowledged to arise out of an antagonistic milieu, whereby comprehensiveness is seen as an antidote to perceived Roman Catholic (and Puritan) rigidity. Second, it is the culmination of the historical process of theological minimization such that the unique Anglican view of Scripture of Chapter 2 is a mere shadow of its former power. This is true for Anglicanism in general, and there are great theological controversies within the “communion,” between the northern and southern hemispheres, in general. And both have to do with exegesis and the nature of the Church. These antagonisms are played out very publicly, revealing the obvious dysfunction (and despair) of the Church. But my argument is that this is a “catholic” phenomenon (and least, in the West), which is to say that it is a universal problem. For if the Anglican Communion is too “comprehensive,” many other, more narrowly-defined churches identify themselves with great specificity — often in terms of how Scripture is to be “properly” read. Claims regarding inerrancy, verbal inspiration, authority, and proving the validity of Scripture, once again mute deeply theological readings of the Bible in favour of fervently staking out these propositions. Therefore, what I show by a consideration of the factions of a specific
national denomination, is that the Western Church can, to a great extent, be “mapped” onto the categories of high, low and broad ecclesial communities.\(^{60}\)

### 3 Limitations of this Project and Areas of Future Exploration

There are two axes along which this project is oriented: the reception history of the book of Isaiah and the history of the Church of England. The central assumption taken on in this project is that an exploration of how a given exegete reads Isaiah is indicative of how that exegete regards the Bible. I justify this by the fact that Isaiah historically, right from the origins of the New Testament, figures prominently in the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. Moreover, I give attention only to the Church of England and its various factions. The obverse risk, of course, is that such high focal specificity makes the implications I suggest above to be less assured in terms of the “global” implications of ecclesial division. It is necessary to continue this process of exploring the exegetical landscape by looking at the reception histories of other biblical texts, and in other contexts. One book (or series of books) that comes to mind is the reception of the Psalms. As I note in Chapter 5, George Horne comments on the deep figural meaning of many of the Psalms with respect to Christ; he also counts the many passages in the New Testament that allude to or directly quote from a Psalm. Therefore, the axis regarding which reception history to explore can be altered in order to continue examining other books in the Bible.

England, of course, is not the only nation that had to wrestle with the implications of ecclesial division. Therefore, I do not give attention, for instance, to Germany, or the Lutheran “wing” of the Reformation. This second axis, that of denominational (or national) origin, offers its own difficulties in relation to those of the Church of England,

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\(^{60}\)Obviously, in one sense the Roman Catholic Church is mapped onto itself; however, even within Catholicism, there is a high degree of “comprehensiveness,” despite more rigid control by the curia.
since England is, as it were, a more “self-contained” entity. Nonetheless, exploring other wings of the Reformation bears consideration. Legaspi’s work on the situation in Germany is a helpful example, though it is a project that gives attention to a single exegete, rather than directly focussing on a scriptural text.

Finally, it bears repeating that my treatment of Roman Catholicism is incomplete. It was essential to maintain focus only on Roman Catholicism in England: the sheer scope of Catholic life and exegetical practise precludes an entirely detailed analysis. My observations and conclusions arise directly out of my engagement with English Catholicism, which, as I note, has its own form in distinction from that of the Continent. I am confident that I have not mischaracterized English Catholicism in the nineteenth century; my discussion, however, is limited to that time and place. The validity of my thesis regarding the intrinsic relation between division and the form of exegesis must be further tested along other axes by projects which continue what I have done.
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