

Introduction

The contemporary movement in theology that seeks to recover ways of understanding and reading the Bible as Christian Scripture has, in large part, been constituted over against a captivity of the Bible to the hegemonic claims of historical criticism.¹ These claims are often taken to delimit the ways in which meaning can be found in biblical texts and to be destructive of Christian uses and readings of those texts as Scripture.² Much thinking in this movement challenges therefore that understanding of meaning or reframes the issue in terms of a theological account of the Bible as Holy Scripture. Historical-critical inquiry, in all its variety, however, is informed by a more basic sensibility, a sense of the historical character of reality, which poses serious challenges for Christian theology and for the whole project of the theology and theological interpretation of Scripture. Yet this challenge goes largely unaddressed in much of the literature, and where addressed, its full force does not seem to have been registered. What follows, therefore, lays out one way of beginning to address these challenges, drawing on the theology and exegesis of a fourth-century theologian-bishop, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the thought of a twentieth-century theologian, Hans Frei. At its heart is the proposal that the ontology, meaning, and meaningfulness of Scripture can be located within a properly theological historical sensibility centered upon Jesus Christ as the one who in his historical existence is the luminous presence of God and the focal center of God's ordering of all of history, in all its contingency and complexity. The force of this meaning as the frail bearer of the presence of Christ is mediated through a scripturally wrought rhetoric, deploying the story of Christ and other texts in connection to him, to further the transformation of human beings and the slow and tenuous reshaping of human society.

1. Such, for example, seems to be the tenor of the contributions to Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995).

2. Jon D. Levenson argues cogently for the destructive consequences for Jewish and Christian scriptural interpretation of making historical context primary in biblical interpretation. See his "The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism" in his book of the same name (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 1–32.

I

The sense of history as a vast, complex network of interrelated phenomena that are, in principle, explicable in terms of their mutual relations lies at the heart of Ernst Troeltsch's careful, critically realistic account of historiography. It also provides, on his account, a strong objection to belief in the manifestation of the absolute in history, and this difficulty has profound consequences for the theology of Scripture, as I explore in Chapter 1, and hence for the current movement for the recovery of the theological interpretation of Scripture.

The signs are abundant of the vitality now long-lived and broad tendency in recent theology to seek to recover theological and ecclesial ways of reading Scripture, supported by theological accounts of Scripture's reality, meaning, and significance.³ Several accounts of this tendency situate it explicitly over against a putative hegemony of historical critics with respect to the legitimate, scholarly reading of biblical texts. Others seem to presuppose this hegemony and the claims about the nature, meaning, and significance of biblical texts. We can tentatively distinguish three overlapping approaches here.⁴

The first takes the canon of biblical texts as its focus, and proposes that understood rightly it evinces a powerful coherence that allows it to serve as the vehicle of the divine will. Here we might instance Brevard Childs's

3. Besides the literature cited below, which is by no means an exhaustive survey, there are a number of other indicators. First, there are now several undergraduate-level introductions to the subfield of the theological interpretation of Scripture. Examples include Stephen E. Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009); Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008); J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); and Alexander Jenson, *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM, 2007). A second indicator is the several series of theological commentary on the books of the Bible being published by Westminster John Knox (*Belief*), Brazos/SCM (*Theological Commentary on the Bible*), and Eerdmans (*Two Horizons*). A third is the revival of interest in premodern exegesis (and in the mid-century enterprise of *ressourcement* among Catholic writers of the so-called *nouvelle théologie*) evidenced not only by some of the literature cited below but also by the publication of collections of patristic and medieval commentary on biblical books by Eerdmans (*The Bible in Medieval Tradition*, *The Church's Bible*), InterVarsity Press (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*), and by the publication of Mark Sebanc's multivolume translation of Henri de Lubac's *Exégèse médiévale* in the series *Ressourcement: Retrieval and Renewal in Catholic Thought* by Eerdmans (1998, 2000, 2009). The growth of graduate courses in the subfield, the development of dedicated journals and scholarly aids like K. J. Vanhoozer et al., eds., *The Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), are further signs.

4. For an alternative and more extensive analysis, see Daniel J. Treier, "What Is Theological Interpretation? An Ecclesiological Reduction," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 2 (2010): 144–61.

proposal that the canonical shaping of scriptural texts and of the canon as a whole is determinative of the meaning of the texts whereby they express God's intentions.⁵ George Lindbeck's proposal that biblical narratives instantiate normatively the semiotic code of Christian communities, and propose a world of meaning that "absorbs" the world in which we live so that in it we live and move and have our being, and may conform our lives to the ultimate reality of God, is another example.⁶ Francis Watson also privileges the final form of the scriptural texts in their canonical context, subject in turn to the constraints of the church's rule of faith, as capable of addressing the realities of the world in which the church finds itself and responding to the critiques that arise from that context.⁷ All these accounts resist the constriction of biblical meaning to original authorial intentions or ancient receptions or reconstructions of the pasts to which they refer, without letting go of historical referentiality, but none grapple substantially with the issues raised by historical consciousness.

The second likewise concentrates on the final form of the texts in their canonical collection, but seeks to make its peculiar modes of truthfulness intelligible in light of philosophies of textual meaning and reference. On the one hand are accounts indebted to hermeneutical philosophies of Hans Georg Gadamer or Paul Ricoeur (or both), such as Sandra Schneiders's account of the New Testament's picture of Jesus Christ in terms of God's symbolic self-expression, which, through the semantic meaning of the text in its final form, discloses to the reader possible ways of being and seeing in the world for them to actualize.⁸ The distancing, through writing, of texts from the original authors and the circumstances they addressed is the condition of possibility of this kind of reference. Historical criticism is useful in attending to the semantic meaning, but the reference projected by that meaning exceeds its concerns and requires a lived appropriation. Werner Jeanrond is another example of this approach. Here, Gadamer and Ricoeur are supplemented with reader response theory and a critical appropriation of David Tracy's theological method to argue the strong affinity of Christian theology and hermeneutics so understood. On this account, the dynamic potential of biblical texts and their capacity to disclose God's Word in new ways are unleashed as we interpret them in new contexts, selecting appropriate styles of reading from a plurality of approaches, and so exercising our freedom and responsibility as fallible interpreters to enter

5. See Chapter 1.

6. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 116ff.

7. *Text, Church and World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994).

8. See Chapter 1.

into critical conversation with them.⁹ These accounts acknowledge historical consciousness, but, as I argue later, fail to address the full force of its challenge.

Various appropriations of speech-act theory to understand biblical texts and the canon at large as God's speech also belong here, such as those of Nicholas Wolterstorff or the early constructive work of Kevin Vanhoozer.¹⁰ Here the intended meanings of biblical authors are realized in the communicative actions of the texts and are appropriated by God as his own speech acts in respect of later readers and communities. Such theories seek to guard against problems of indeterminacy of meaning but also construe meaning in such a way that it is not limited to the ancient past. Here, too, the issue of history is not really a prominent concern.

The third approach rethinks meaning and understanding in terms of readers' agency. One version of this approach likens biblical interpretation to artistic performance.¹¹ Nicholas Lash's programmatic essay illustrates the main thesis.¹² The interpretation of texts depends on the text and its use, he argues; some texts require performance for the realization of their meaning. Such is the case with New Testament texts as relating the story of Jesus and the first Christian communities. The primary form of their Christian interpretation consists in the life, activity, and organization of the believing community as a witness to the one whose words, life, and suffering rendered the truth of God in our history. Interpretation is a corporate act bound in creative fidelity to the original meaning, concerns, and claims of the texts.¹³ This approach resists the dominance of historical-critical biblical scholarship without abandoning its contribution. It incorporates a degree of historical sensibility, for the metaphor of performing the Scriptures seems to make biblical interpretation historically located and contingent, but it has not been pursued in relation to the deeper issues raised by historical consciousness.

9. *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking* (London: Gill & Macmillan, 1986).

10. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), and his *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL/Nottingham: IVP Academic/Apollos, 2002).

11. See Stephen Barton's account of this approach in his "New Testament as Performance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52, no. 2 (1999): 179–208.

12. "Performing the Scriptures: Interpretation through Living," *The Furrow* 33, no. 8 (August 1982): 467–74.

13. Frances Young has developed this theme in conversation with early Christian uses of Scripture in her *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990). Kevin J. Vanhoozer takes up the metaphor and extends it considerably in his *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

A similar emphasis on readerly agency and praxis is offered by Stephen Fowl. For Fowl, textual interpretation varies with the aims, interests, and practices of interpretations.¹⁴ Such an “underdetermined” account allows Christians to specify the diversity of their interpretations and performances of specific scriptural texts. Biblical interpretation, for Christians at least, will be the occasion of complex interactions between the biblical text and the varieties of concerns that are part of the everyday lives of Christians “struggling to live faithfully before God in the contexts in which they find themselves,” which no method can specify in advance.¹⁵ Here readers’ virtues and communal practices are central to shaping the interpretation of Scripture in any given context, whether in avoiding abusive readings, discerning questions of inclusion, offering counter-conventional readings, and learning how to disagree.¹⁶ There is much to be admired in this account. It too refuses the hegemony of a concern with original meanings without forsaking critical scholarship, and again it is pervaded by a sense of historicity with respect to readers’ contextualized agency. The saving purposes of the triune God provide the overarching theological framework, but there is no engagement with the questions historical consciousness poses to that schema.

Finally, though all these approaches invoke divine revelation and contextualize biblical interpretation within divine saving action in some sense, several recent works have offered more developed ontologies of Scripture, placing the texts, its origin, and its reception by the church within the field of God’s saving economic action. John Webster’s *Holy Scripture* is exemplary here.¹⁷ For Webster, Holy Scripture has certain properties in virtue of its relation to God’s communicative activity, and to describe it we must talk of the triune God’s saving and revelatory acts, for it belongs to the saving economy of God’s loving and regenerative self-communication—which is not to diminish its human character. Scripture denotes a set of fully human texts sanctified for, and taken up into, service of God’s saving communicative agency, which

14. *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 57.

15. *Ibid.*, 60.

16. These concerns are also reflected in Fowl and L. G. Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (London: SPCK, 1991).

17. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Angus Paddison, “Locating Scripture,” in his *Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 5–32; Richard R. Topping, *Revelation, Scripture and Church: Theological Hermeneutic Thought of James Barr, Paul Ricoeur and Hans Frei* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); and Mark Alan Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Human and Divine Agency* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

graciously establishes covenant fellowship with human beings. This ontology forms the basis for thinking about Scripture in the church, the character of ecclesial reading, and the nature of theology, all understood in relation to the hearing of the Word through Scripture and its creative, vivifying, and mortifying functions. Webster's position makes divine action primary but inclusive of the creatureliness of Scripture and its readers and is hospitable to a historical sensibility but, like other similar works, does not substantially address the questions raised by historical consciousness.¹⁸

The account I develop later in dialogue with Frei and Gregory shares commonalities with many of these accounts—for instance, on the importance of the final form of the text, of readers' practices and character, of a theological ontology of Scripture and its reception. These works have other concerns besides the question of history. Nevertheless, the relative lack of detailed engagement in this field with the issues raised by historical consciousness seems strange when so many contributors seek to emancipate theological reading from the limitations of historical-critical reading, and especially when, as I will show in Chapter 1, the issues are explicitly or implicitly acknowledged by some leading contributions.¹⁹ Nor is it easy to point to a publication or debate in which the question was settled long ago. One might object that history as a discipline has become theoretically problematic in recent decades, but to read Troeltsch on historiography is to become aware that it has long been possible to offer an account of the discipline that takes account of the selective, perspectival, and constructive nature of historical analysis and history writing without giving up on the whole exercise.

II

Why, though, turn to Gregory or Hans Frei, and why combine them in respect of this issue? A brief précis of their biographies only sharpens this question, for their historical contexts and the concerns they pursued in those contexts are quite diverse.²⁰ Gregory pursued an ascetic life in uneasy relation with a turbulent ministry of pastoral leadership and authoritative Christian teaching in Nazianzus, a small town in provincial Cappadocia, and briefly in Constantinople, the imperial capital, in the fourth century CE. He was one of

18. Murray Rae's work is a notable exception in discussing the problem of history in great depth, and is examined in Chapter 1. See his *History and Hermeneutics* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005).

19. It is also striking that Mark Noll's article on "History" in *The Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, and Daniel J. Treier (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 295–99, omits the issues Troeltsch raises.

a number of pro-Nicene theologians seeking to uphold faith in the Trinity and in the full divinity and humanity of the one Jesus Christ, to promote and model forms of holiness, and to further the transformation of Greek cities in the East in respect of their philanthropic practices and the Christianization of their literary culture. His mode of leadership and influence here drew on the accepted public function of rhetors in those cities and on the rhetorical forms of the “Second Sophistic,” the revival of rhetoric in the Greek-speaking world under Roman rule in the second and fourth centuries CE. His theology is conveyed in the form of orations, poems, and letters. It is largely rhetorical in form and pastoral in function. Its content focuses on the proclamation and defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, of the God made manifest in the economy of salvation, and especially in the incarnation and the gift of the Spirit, in respect of human beings as microcosms of the spiritual and material realms.

Hans Frei, by contrast, was a Jewish convert to Christian faith and an immigrant from Nazi Germany to the United States of America, who settled there with his parents in the late 1930s and was drawn into academic theological study through the influence of another immigrant, the theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, who became his doctoral supervisor. Frei’s world was that of the largely secular modern university, one in which the academic study of religion was formally and institutionally distinguished from the training of people for Christian ministry. His concerns have to do with the nature of Christian theology in the modern world, and with its intellectual history, but also with the teaching and formation of theologians and the relationship of Christian theology to its institutional academic context. His theology is largely in the form of commentary upon other theologies (with the exception of *The Identity of Jesus Christ*), and is often set forth in dense, difficult formulations. Jesus Christ is its principal concern, and how theology may be constituted in relation to other disciplines and to the scriptural text so as to attend to him as rendered to us in the stories of the New Testament about him. In connection with this

20. On Gregory’s life, see John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001); Christopher Beeley, “Introduction,” in his *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1–62; Jean Bernardi’s more introductory *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Le Théologien et son temps (330-390)*, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995); and Paul Gallay’s classic, *La vie de saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Emmanuel Vitte, 1943). On Frei’s biography, see John F. Woolverton, “Hans W. Frei in Context: A Theological and Historical Memoir,” *Anglican Theological Review* 79, no. 3 (1997): 369–93; Mike Higton, *Christ, Providence and History: Hans W. Frei’s Public Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 15–20; Paul J. DeHart, *The Trial of Witnesses: The Rise and Decline of Postliberal Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 1–31.

concern, he seeks also to articulate a Christocentric theology of history and an account of how Christian theologians ought to exercise a public function, especially in his own context of the United States, its fragile power, and its global responsibilities.

Despite these marked differences, however, Gregory and Frei share some significant similarities, especially in relation to the theology of history and the theology of Scripture. Both understand history to be providentially governed without prejudice to creaturely freedom. They each have high Christologies that emphasize the oneness of Jesus Christ, divine and human, and make him the center of human (and cosmic) history. Both, furthermore, understand the nature and function of Holy Scripture in relation to the presence of Jesus Christ by way of the text of Scripture. For both, this account of Scripture relies on an understanding of divine action as so transcending creaturely interactions and freedoms as to ground and order them without competing with them, and yet in ways that exceed our understanding or full explanatory capabilities.

These broad similarities make possible a constructive dialogue between the theologians in respect of the challenges posed by historical consciousness to the theology of Scripture. In this dialogue I analyze Gregory's theology first, and draw out lines of thought and theological strategies for addressing those challenges. I then show how, in his own way, Frei pursues similar lines of thought, similar strategies. Gregory thus appears to "prefigure," in a premodern way and without anachronism, a strategy that can with modification be applied to a historically conscious theology of Scripture. Frei instantiates that strategy in chastened terms, in ways that explicitly take account of the challenge of historical consciousness. The virtue of combining their accounts, besides showing a significant measure of similarity across very different conceptualities and forms of theological writing, does not lie therefore in a simple application of premodern theology to modern theological problems. The particular way Frei realizes the strategies he and Gregory broadly share enables him to address those problems in ways Gregory's thought cannot. Yet the similarities allow Gregory's thought and practice to suggest ways of supplementing and enriching Frei's approach, so that by placing their accounts alongside one another we begin to see possibilities that combine their strengths without blurring their differences.

It would have been possible to undertake such an exercise with a number of patristic exegetes, and Gregory is not especially known for his exegesis. He is, however, known for the excellence not only of his theology but also of his rhetoric, and it is his understanding of the rhetorical character of the exposition of Scripture and his exemplification of its use in rhetoric that make

him especially useful here.²¹ For a historically conscious theology of Scripture, I will argue, ought to emphasize the significance of such rhetorical mediation.

Chapters 2 and 3, therefore, draw out from Gregory's orations his theology of history, providentially ordered, shaped by God's saving action centered upon the incarnation and drawing human beings into participation with that saving action in Jesus Christ by the incorporative work of the Spirit. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 analyze Gregory's theology of Scripture as the textual embodiment of Christ in his teachings, the way he understands those teachings as inscribed in the letter of the text and drawn from it in a movement conforming to the dynamics of God's action in history, and his account and practice of the deployment of scriptural pedagogy through Christian rhetoric. Chapter 7 turns to Frei's theology of history as providentially ordered in Jesus Christ in all its creaturely contingency and complexity, and suggests several ways of taking it forward in light of Gregory's pneumatology and concerns with divine pedagogy and persuasion and human transformation. Chapter 8 completes the argument by examining Frei's theology of Scripture in its connection to his theology of Scripture in virtue of his Christocentric account of Christian reading and of the truth of Scripture, and again proposes similar theological modifications in light of Gregory. I conclude by arguing that a truly historically conscious theology of Scripture ought to seek the rhetorical mediation of the significance of Jesus Christ for particular contexts and situations.

III

This account thus offers a contribution to wider debates about the theology and theological interpretation of Scripture in respect of the problems raised for that project by modern historical consciousness. In virtue of the approach taken here, however, it also makes contributions to three further fields of inquiry.

First, it extends our understanding of Gregory's theology of Scripture and how it relates to his use of Scripture in the orations. There is no developed account of this topic, though there are a number of studies and surveys of Gregory's exegesis. Many of these treat Gregory in terms of the somewhat tired categories of literal, typological, and allegorical interpretation or related terms. Here Gregory is variously characterized as an exponent, even an apologist, of Origen's Alexandrian allegorical "method."²² Sometimes this description is

21. See George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 215: Gregory was the "most important figure in the synthesis of classical rhetoric and Christianity." He adds that Gregory is rightly regarded "as the greatest Greek orator since Demosthenes" in his *New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 261.

qualified by reference to his recourse to typology.²³ Sometimes Gregory is seen as more typological than allegorical in approach and hence betraying the influence of the school of Antioch.²⁴ Others see him pursuing a middle path between literalism and overspeculative allegorism or between Alexandrian and Antiochene traditions.²⁵ Richard Hanson's praise of Gregory's relatively "realistic" doctrinal exegesis also belongs to this outlook on patristic exegesis.²⁶ More recently, scholars have begun to move beyond using these categories to summarize early Christian use of the Bible in general, and Gregory's in particular. While Origen's influence continues to be noted, what Gregory takes from Origen is not only a lively figural imagination and an aversion to literalism (Brian Daley observes), but a concern for the reader's participation in the world disclosed by Scripture; Gregory understood exegesis to be concerned with healing and transformation of the hearer.²⁷ Daley also notes how Gregory's scriptural allusions are intrinsic to the rhetoric of his orations.²⁸ Similarly Frances Young, who has done so much to advance the study of patristic exegesis in its complex concerns, contexts, and various procedures, observes in Oration

22. So Robert Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (London: A. & C. Black, 1965), 97–98, cited in K. Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory of Nazianzen: A Study in Rhetoric and Hermeneutics* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1996), 250–51; Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1976).

23. So Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla*.

24. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969).

25. J. Plagnieux, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze Théologien* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 1951), 39ff.; P. Gallay, "La Bible dans l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nazianze le Théologien," in *Le monde grec ancien et la Bible*, vol. 1, ed. C. Mondésert (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 313–34.

26. In his "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 442, and his "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Early Church," in R. P. C. and A. C. Hanson, *The Bible without Illusions* (London: SCM, 1989), 30. Arguably Donald Winslow's critique of Gregory's Christological exegesis as bifurcating the divinity and humanity of Christ belongs here too. See his "Christology and Exegesis in the Cappadocians," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 40, no. 4 (1971): 389–96.

27. Brian Daley, "Walking Through the Word: Gregory of Nazianzus as a Biblical Interpreter," in *The Word Leaps the Gap*, ed. J. Ross Wagner et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 514–31. Pierre C. Bouteneff likewise treats Gregory as a critical student of Origen's theological hermeneutics in his *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 140–51. Frederick Norris notes the communal and confessional context that shapes Gregory's exegesis, and its sacramental quality, in his "Gregory Nazianzen: Constructing and Constructed by Scripture," in *The Bible in Greek Antiquity*, ed. P. Blowers (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 149–62.

28. As Paul Gallay had observed in his earlier "La Bible dans l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nazianze le Théologien," 321.

1 a highly developed and subtle “intertextuality,” for which the categories of literal, typological, and allegorical are inadequate.²⁹ The reading of Gregory presented here extends those insights through close study of his use of Scripture in connection with Gregory’s theology of Scripture and his hermeneutics.

Second, it also extends our understanding of Hans Frei’s theology of Scripture. Many accounts of Frei treat him as a foil for alternative theological constructions. In such accounts, Frei is often taken to propose an account of Scripture in which the text is self-referential, or even to propose an anti-realist account of theology, or which at least fails to secure adequately the reference to historical events and transcendent realities intended in the text.³⁰ Several excellent works have adequately refuted these claims in the course of advancing our understanding of Frei as a theologian with a profound interest in history, among other concerns. George Hunsinger rightly traces how Frei’s analysis of Jesus’ identity leads to the assertion of his risen presence, as a self-warranting fact, in the context of Frei’s nonapologetic description of the logic of Christian belief as an alternative to modern liberal theologies, while raising questions as to whether Frei needed a higher Christology.³¹ More significant still is Mike Higton’s *Christ, Providence and History*, which successfully argues that Frei offers a Christocentric theological account of history.³² Here Christianity has a proper historical consciousness of its own, one that emerges from who Jesus is in the gospel narratives: at once immersed in history and just so identified in unity with God in bodily resurrection.³³ His identity is inclusive of all others through the relation of fulfillment to figure. This relation preserves the distinction

29. Frances Young, *Biblical Interpretation and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195.

30. Scholars troubled about a lack of concern for reference include: Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (London: SCM, 1992), 19; Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “History and Hermeneutics,” in *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century*, ed. James Livingstone, F. Schüssler Fiorenza, Sarah Coakley, and James H. Evans (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 376; Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 104–9; Francis Watson, *Text Church and World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 25–29. Francesca Aran Murphy seems to take Frei for an anti-realist in her *God Is Not a Story: Realism Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 113ff.

31. “Hans Frei as Theologian: The Quest for a Generous Orthodoxy,” *Modern Theology* 8, no. 2 (1992): 103–28. In his reply, John Webster argues that Frei’s Christology is high but needs more explicit statement by way of a more developed conceptuality (“Response to George Hunsinger,” *Modern Theology* 8, no. 2 [1992]: 129–32). See also the excellent analysis in Charles L. Campbell’s *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), to which I am indebted in the conclusion to this book.

32. *Christ, Providence and History: Hans Frei’s Public Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

between them and the historicity, unsubstitutability, and contingency of both; its display allows us to see the public world in which humans are situated as agents in its secularity as mysteriously providentially governed and directs us to careful, progressive political engagement in it. My own argument is in substantial agreement with and indebted to Higton's analysis, though I seek to show that Frei can be seen to address Troeltsch's principle of correlation, which seems to go to the heart of the challenge of history.

Higton also gives a useful overview of Frei's theology of Scripture as being concerned to clarify the resilience at the heart of the scriptural text, found in the narrative portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, and grounded in a Barth-like doctrine of the Word.³⁴ Jason A. Springs has argued more forcefully that Frei's moves to frame reading Scripture in social, practical terms are grounded in a Barthian doctrine of revelation.³⁵ It is God's use of the scriptural witness to mediate Christ's presence that gives rise to embodied practices, to which the theologian must attend. Such arguments are in sharp contrast to those of Mark Alan Bowald and Richard Topping who, while sympathetic readers of Frei, fault him for not realizing the need for a more thoroughgoing or explicit theological approach to Scripture and its interpretation. Frei's account suffers, they argue, from not making divine agency prior to and all-encompassing of human processes involved in the production and reception of the scriptural text.³⁶ I take the side of Higton and Springs and seek to show in more detail the thoroughly theological character of Frei's account of Scripture, but more importantly to connect his theology of Scripture with his theology of history in order to show its potential for addressing the issues raised by historical consciousness for the theology of Scripture. In doing so I seek to take account of important (and surely related) critiques made by John David Dawson and David Demson, namely that Frei fails to attend sufficiently to the transformation of disciples and that he fails to specify adequately the relation between Jesus and the disciples, and in relation to them all the rest of us.³⁷

33. Another useful correction to misreadings of Frei on the historicity of the resurrection can be found in Jason A. Springs, *Toward a Generous Orthodoxy: Prospects for Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

34. "Hans Frei," in Justin S. Holcomb, *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 220–39.

35. Springs, *Toward a Generous Orthodoxy*, 234.

36. So Richard R. Topping, *Revelation, Scripture, and Church: Theological Hermeneutic Thought of James Barr, Paul Ricoeur and Hans Frei* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Mark Alan Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Finally, by combining Gregory and Frei, I make a contribution to the particular venture of drawing on premodern theology and theological exegesis of Scripture—and patristic forms in particular—for the theological interpretation of Scripture in the present. There have been several important contributions to this subfield, combining careful analysis of early Christian thought and practice on Scripture with the elucidation of its possibilities for the present.³⁸ However, most of these do not seem to take account of the challenge of modern historical consciousness to the theological interpretation of Scripture and to the recovery of premodern approaches. In its concern with the theme of history, the present work shares a significant measure of common concern with Matthew Levering's *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*.³⁹ While I also share common concepts with his argument—especially divine pedagogy and history as participation—Levering's reframing of history as participation in the economy of salvation fails to grapple with the challenge posed by Troeltsch.

In formal terms, the present project also resembles David Dawson's *Christian Figural Reading*. He draws critically but constructively on Frei to view Christian figural readings of scriptural texts as extensions of their literal meaning. Such readings do not entail the erasure of the identity of Jewish readers or Jewish ways of reading. Frei's understanding of figural reading is in turn challenged by Origen's more fully developed account of the reader's transformation. Dawson leaves the contrast between Frei's high Christology and low account of the reader's transformation, on the one hand, and Origen's more developed account of the reader's transformation premised on a less absolute distinction between Christ and the disciple, on the other, unresolved. I seek to reconcile a high Christology and an account of readerly transformation within a more developed theology of history drawn from Frei and Gregory, one that entails a more rhetorical account of the deployment of Scripture to historical human beings.

37. See David Demson, *Hans Frei and Karl Barth: Different Ways of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); J. David Dawson, *Christian Figural Readers and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002).

38. See, for example, Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), or David Steinmetz's famous article, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 26–38; Robert Louis Wilken, "In Defense of Allegory," in L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley, *Theology and Scriptural Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 35–50; Graham Ward, "Allegoria: Reading as a Spiritual Exercise," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 3 (1999): 271–95; Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

39. *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).