

## **Recent Biblical Hermeneutics in Patristic Perspective: The Tradition of Orthodoxy**

JOHN ANTHONY MCGUCKIN

### **An Introductory Context**

The twentieth century witnessed a veritable explosion in scholarly interest in hermeneutical issues. As in the aftermath of other kinds of explosions, the resulting field (especially in regard to biblical analysis) is not tidy, but presents to the interested eye many possibilities of 'new-build.' In terms of any subsequent analysis of the intellectual life of twentieth century Christianity, I suspect that this hermeneutical ferment will probably present, to the eye of later Church historians, one of the most distinctive aspects of the period, and one of the chief (often unrecognized) issues behind the current flux of Church life in America and Western Europe. As the twentieth century progressed this overwhelming interest in hermeneutics was manifested first in how such considerations elucidated literary analysis of texts (how patterns of analysis could be systematically applied to narratives), then how they illumined historiographical problems raised by texts, and finally the focus turned in more narrowly to what became almost an obsession with the philosophy of hermeneutics itself. It was hermeneutical issues, at base, that gave rise to postmodernism's easy passage from analysis of textual motive to philosophical critique of the claims made about 'objective meanings,' in terms of the post-Enlightenment historical-critical method, and of the

possibility of reconstructing 'authorial intention.' The New Hermeneutic of Gadamer, derived from Heidegger, which suggested a 'fusion of horizons' between the historical and subjective-existential perspective, fell prey to the general criticism of Heidegger by Derrida: that it was based upon a 'metaphysic' of its own devising. From the 1970s the demise of the hermeneutical movement set in ineluctably. This has, perhaps, not been observed by many religious studies departments (even in the early decades of the twenty-first century) who came to discover the whole area much later than academic philosophy and literature departments, and often embraced it (ironically) with more credulity than their predecessors, as a perceived weapon against skepticism posing as 'objectivity' in the study of religions. The snake had begun with its own tail, and it could only have been a slight surprise when it was time for the head to disappear. By the later decades of the twentieth century, not only conservative voices were being heard protesting against the Historical-Critical school of biblical analysis,<sup>1</sup> for several of its chief protagonists were publicly wondering about the utility of the whole enterprise, and had seriously begun to question whether biblical criticism had departed from any residual concern to relate to ecclesiastical tradition or the preaching of the faith as a result of its presuppositions.

Yet James Barr could also point out what seemed to be obvious to most who worked in the academy, that the achievements of historical criticism were manifold and would be long-lasting, even if many smaller details came to be reconsidered over time:

Some of the main positions achieved [by biblical criticism] have remained as essential reference points for the discussion, and no alternatives have been proposed that have gained anything like the same degree of assent. Still more important, the general intellectual atmosphere of criticism, with its base in language and literary form, its reference

grid in history, and its lifeblood in freedom to follow what the text actually says, has established itself as without serious challenge. Serious work on scripture can only be done in continuity with the tradition of biblical criticism.<sup>2</sup>

Barr is perhaps over-sanguine about the gap that had been widening through most of the century between scholarly criticism of the Bible, and faith-based preaching interests. One may add the even greater split that had grown up between 'professional' readings of the Bible and the received traditions of the churchgoing faithful. Has not the gap progressively developed into a chasm that is bridged by very few indeed? The academy at large consistently refused interest in the Bible considered as a canon<sup>3</sup> of sacred literature (although it was strangely inconsistent in its attitude to other canons of sacred literature that were given attention in the field of 'world-religions'). Accordingly, from the 1980s onwards, many New Testament scholars, anxious for some form of academic acknowledgement,<sup>4</sup> progressively turned biblical and patristic study away from doctrinal, literary, historical, and theological avenues, into the new field of Late Antique Studies, considered as a sub-branch of Classics and Ancient History. Late Antiquity was meant to be pursued by strictly literary and historical criteria that often explicitly rebuffed traditional ecclesiastical readings in the quest for (strangely paradoxical) 'new readings.'<sup>5</sup>

All of the various trajectories of hermeneutical theory and practice as they unfolded, especially from the 1930s onwards, left deep marks on the craft of biblical exegesis (or 'biblical criticism' as it progressively came to be known in the academy), and set up a multitude of distinct theological and philosophical schools, despite the avowed aims of many academic protagonists to be strictly 'neutral' in their interpretative approaches. What used to be seen as the 'tail' of scholarly enterprises (that is, application) ended up wagging the dog (that is, exegesis) as first philosophy, after

Wittgenstein, and then literary criticism (in University departments of English Literature), took up the insights of the new semantic analysis, and brought them mainstream into the service of critical methodologies such as post-colonialism, feminism, or deconstructionism, to name only a few. Let me elucidate, if only in a little detail, that recent history, at least as it applies to biblical analysis; for it is an important one, covering a most fertile, yet confused, era in scriptural theology, and accordingly, it is one from which we can learn much by careful reflection.

### **Modern Hermeneutical Movements**

The so-called 'Higher Criticism' of the Bible is the child of two movements in late-nineteenth-century philosophy. The first is Romanticism (closely allied with German Pietism, that great engine behind so much interest in the biblical text in Europe). The second was a belief that scientifically applied history could lead a way out of the morass of the strife-ridden field of theology which had begun to be seriously questioned as having any claim to being a 'scientific' subject in the new universities that were appearing in Europe. Theology and Church History raised eyebrows in the new university contexts of the late nineteenth century because they had so patently been exposed as disciplines axiomatically based on party lines, rather than close observation and deduction. The new Romanticism that rose out of its eighteenth-century predecessor in Germany, was spearheaded by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. For both, the working premise was that in order to understand a text the reader must seek out and grasp the circumstances (context or creative vision) that caused the author to first produce it. This hermeneutical approach resonated deeply with principles of Protestant piety that encouraged the 'inspired' reading of the Scripture. The Romantic theorists at first laid stress on the

science of interpretation as the progressive involvement between the reader and the text, as the analysis of words and phrases, verses and sections, progressively gave way to a grasping of the collective sense of the work considered as a whole. If one had the correct empathy with the original author (by means of careful close-hand work with the scripts) it would inevitably, it was thought, produce a more global comprehension of the 'message' of the whole book; not simply a collation of parts, but a movement into a deeper and more holistic insight which the author wished to communicate. Such a philosophical starting point led to many interpretative attempts which can be themselves globally summed up as the 'Biblical Theology Movement' which had a long and fruitful life until circa the late 1960s when it was progressively fragmented, and sidelined. Many Orthodox scholars of the twentieth century found this school a source of many useful insights, for reasons we will return to later. The same was true of Roman Catholic scholars who were emerging in the late 1960s after decades when the schools had been forbidden any engagement with Protestant 'Higher Criticism.' Their rapid reinvolvement in the European stream of scholarship, signaled by the Pontifical Biblical Commission decree *Divino afflante spiritu* issued under Pius XII in 1943, was based on the positive reception then being given to the Biblical Theology Movement, and to the theory of 'authorial intent,'<sup>6</sup> two things which Vatican decrees ever since have sustained as significant bridges between individual scholarly research<sup>7</sup> and ecclesial tradition.

The New Romanticism (itself quintessentially Protestant in spirit) gave a lively role both to original (inspired) author, and modern-day (inspired) interpreter. Between the two, in a form of recreative empathy the fire of a shared meaning could be experienced and appropriated once more. The Historicist strand tended to unravel this almost from the beginning. Historical criticism took the idea of 'scholarly ob-

jectivity' with greater seriousness. What mattered was not so much the intentions of the author, but the shape of the text itself. Generations of previous Church Historians (Catholic and Protestant were meant) had shown that Church History, for all its pretensions to objectivity, was always being used as a front for ideology and dogmatizing (the modern study of patristics took its own origins from the long-running battle between Anglicans and Romans over issues of the papal primacy, for example). For such reasons the new 'textual' or 'contextual' Historicists desperately wanted to establish an 'objective' method whereby a text could be contextualized by comparative studies in the sociology of religion. Authors and subjective empathies could be set aside in the cold cross-listing of phenomenologies of religion. Not unsurprisingly the new Historicism found that History itself was reluctant to emerge into the clear light of day. The more they studied, the more they were aware of the highly 'shaped' form of the Early Christian Scriptures, and this insight would lead Bultmann, for example, at an early stage to elaborate a philosophy of hermeneutics (of an existentialist type) to attempt a rehabilitation of the movement, something we shall return to in a moment. The first exemplars of the New Historicism, however, clung to the idea that there was an objective historical standard, which the traditions of the Church had more or less fully obscured. The Historian alone, especially as he or she exercised a strictly skeptical method, was the sole guide to the 'true history.'

Higher criticism of the Bible more or less began in Germany and from the outset was *wissenschaftliche* (scientific). It took as its model the reconstruction of the origins of religious ideas, by reference to a comparative analysis of shared themes in sacred literatures so as to demonstrate the commonalities in all human religious experience. There was, of course, strong resistance in the nineteenth century to approaching the canon of the Bible from such perspectives.

Many scholars, in the Protestant heartland of Germany, felt that comparative analysis of sacred literatures undermined the uniqueness of biblical revelation. The unspoken agenda behind the 'historic-scientific' approach, however, was that if the sacred texts of religions could become objects of historical study, they could merit a place in the new universities, which had set their faces against the closed traditions of piety that had characterized, and been presupposed by, most institutes of higher learning to that date. Bible study, already at the end of the nineteenth century (and it was to become increasingly more so as time went on), was no longer seen as a 'proper' university subject. If it were to survive in the curricula of the university it could be only in terms of world religious literature, studied without fideist presuppositions, and to that extent wrested from the hands of the *Ecclesia*, that is from an audience that had preemptive meanings it wished to preclude from scrutiny. From its origins, therefore, historical criticism of the Bible had difficulties with theology; and even with the religious impetus *per se*. It was a powerful and often refined tool (in the hands of the inept it could also prove to be a crude platform for fictions masquerading as research), but one that was suited to skepticism more than constructive interpretation, and oriented towards translating messages into other languages and idioms, rather than to listening to the voices themselves. The problems involved in applying historical 'higher criticism' to the Christian Scripture were not made easier when Roman Catholicism at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries weighed in with strong denunciations of the method as part of a wider web of what the Vatican defined as 'Modernist Heresy.' It was difficult to take Modernism seriously as an intellectual analysis of anything, given that it included within its remit more or less anything that questioned traditional Vatican values, including the sovereign power of the Popes as a God-given paradigm for sociopolitical systems. Indeed, in

the years since the first decade of the century, almost every element of Modernism, as defined by Pope Pius X in 1907, has been quietly forgotten by the Western Catholic tradition: never renounced openly, but implicitly abandoned, and often explicitly contradicted, even in official Vatican documents.

Almost all of this intellectual ferment more or less passed under the radar of the Orthodox churches of the first decades of the twentieth century, who saw it (as did the Roman Catholic scholars, at least until the middle of the twentieth century) as mainly a phenomenon among Protestant biblical interpreters. Other things were occupying attention in the Orthodox world, especially Russia and Eastern Europe, where hostile forces were devastating the libraries and the ranks of the intellectuals, and often destroying the very centers of Eastern Christian academic life. In any event, most of the Orthodox had a clear and fixed 'intellectual canon' that mediated their perception of the controversy, namely: that Protestantism privileged the Bible over Church Tradition; that Roman Catholicism set Bible and Tradition side by side, but both under a monarchical pontifical authority that synopsized and directed conciliar authority; and lastly, that Orthodoxy itself believed that Scripture was one of the most authoritative aspects of the Church's Tradition, but could not be set apart, as if Tradition was divided among itself with dissident voices. Accordingly it was widely believed among Orthodox and Catholic observers that hermeneutics, as practiced among Protestant scholars, took the Reformist principle of the individual's right to interpret the sacred narrative to a new pitch. The generic Orthodox suspicion of the movement was correct in one respect at least (one that was not widely recognized at the time): that the very concept of biblical 'criticism' was not so much an impertinent attempt to attack biblical authority as such, but was rather a method that wished to use the biblical text as the sole standard of judgment, in order to criticize various meanings which had



been previously applied to it by other ages in Christian history. Criticism in all forms (including the Biblical Theology Movement) was dependent on the notion that previous ages had obscured biblical meaning by submission to Church tradition, and that only a serious new effort could establish 'true biblical meanings' on the basis of new historical, literary, and philosophical criteria systematically applied in a reformatory manner by a university specialist. The Professor's lecture room had become a higher seat of authority than the pulpit, and all in the name of a re-pristination of the old principle of *sola scriptura*.

From the middle of the twentieth century a great strain began to be felt in the American and European Reformed Churches, who hitherto had always encouraged a tradition of learned interpretation of the Scriptures among their clergy as a fundamental method of preaching and teaching. At first, throughout the nineteenth century, Higher Criticism had restricted itself mainly to Old Testament analysis, and had enjoyed some prestige and success with literary unweaving of the texts into 'sources' of the Pentateuch, and 'genres' in the Psalms. Later, with the increasing tendency of the Historical method to investigate the Gospels and Apostolic literature, the results of new interpretations, often highly speculative in character, began to be heard in Churches from preachers who hung on the new interpretations as the latest revelation of biblical truth and meaning. In the twentieth century one powerful and highly successful movement among the new historicism was led by Rudolf Bultmann.

Paradoxically Bultmann wished to stress the impossibility of historical research for establishing any significant faith data about Jesus as Lord. His form of fideism was highly dichotomous in a German Pietistic tradition. His historical analysis was concerned with the state of the Christian communities before the formation of the Gospel accounts. To get to that condition, reduction was the only vehicle, and

the canonical Gospels were themselves the material that had to be archaeologically excavated (not elucidated, but deconstructed). The forms of traditional units gave to Bultmann the shape of what lay before. His disciples (though many of them took his ideas in ways he would not have sponsored) directed this archaeological excavation sideways, and became very interested in the analysis of the second generation of the Church: not Jesus and the Apostolic preaching, but the era of the Gospel writers who were now seen primarily as highly creative ecclesiastical editors,<sup>8</sup> at one remove (in time and authority) from the apostolic disciples they depicted. These Gospel-editors were seen to have assembled largely pre-existing materials with varying, but significant, degrees of personal interventions that often demonstrated their own environments more than those of Jesus. Bultmann's immediate disciple Fuchs, together with Gerhard Ebeling, were actually the founders of what emerged in the 1960s as the 'New Hermeneutic' in Biblical studies.<sup>9</sup>

Moved though he was by deep sentiments of faith, Bultmann's work in revealing the historical origins of the Gospel material by studying the accumulation of genres and other literary signs of editorial interference in ancient oral traditions (Form Criticism), was widely perceived as driving a wedge between biblical scholarship and the reading of the Gospels as sources of revealed truth. Put simply, the issue was seen to be an inherent clash between criticism and faith. Bultmann's concern was entirely with the elucidation of faith. He believed that this was the original intent of the evangelical narratives, but that their kerygmatic force had been blunted by reading them in contemporary contexts. The material, he argued, was not meant to 'describe' (historical record) but to 'convert' (kerygmatic proclamation). The act of rendering the old text capable of converting the hearer (kerygmatic deconstruction and reconstruction) he defined as 'de-mythologization.' As Thiselton says:

The strength of this approach is that it takes seriously the practical function of the Bible for its writers and earliest audiences. Its weaknesses are that it makes claims about the definition and use of 'myth' that are open to question, and that it undoubtedly underplays the importance of historical report and factual truth claims in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup>

Form Criticism's success (in the biblical field) gave a stimulus to a host of other hermeneutical methods and styles (and of course the most powerful of all methods – which has been the eclectic accumulation of varied methods to analyze texts) which have since proliferated throughout the twentieth century: Tradition Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Analysis, Narratology, Reader-Response Criticism, and a variety of 'Hermeneutics of Suspicion,'<sup>11</sup> such as Liberation Theology, Feminist Hermeneutics, and Deconstructionism. This rapid assimilation of a variety of philosophies of interpretation, and a host of differently inspired<sup>12</sup> hermeneutical methodologies, has led to a richness of interpretation-theory unrivaled since, perhaps, the Age of Second Sophistic, which influenced so many of the early Christian Fathers.

By the 1960s the cumulative effect of 'Structuralism,'<sup>13</sup> wherein the interpretative system had extended to almost all fields of discourse, had caused a reaction among academic circles which were now feeling somewhat stifled. The proclamation of the 'death of the Author,' by Foucault, was merely a prelude for a larger announcement of the 'death of Man,' that is the 'death of the subject' itself. Structuralism argued passionately that the old Enlightenment idea of the person (the 'free-thinking individual') as the very center of cultural processes,<sup>14</sup> a subject able to exercise control and dominion over the external environment through the applied use of reason, was a 'delusion.' In fact, so the Structuralists argued, meaning is a system of signs, and thought itself is the complex product of systems which mask themselves to allow the ideological delusion of independence. These all-

embracing claims of Structuralism to have identified a stable system of meaning in semiotics were rejected by a wave of theorists from the early 1970s onwards, most notably Jacques Derrida (b. 1936) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Both emphasized the power issues at the heart of claims to 'authoritative' meanings; both were strong critics of the essential 'hierarchies' (social as well as semantic) that were operative in the Structuralist view of the world. Accordingly, most of the new interpretative philosophy (which became known as Deconstructionism) was highly critical of any attempt to foster or protect 'normative' readings in regard to texts, as being no more than an attempt to render other meanings not simply 'non-normative' but positively 'abnormal.' Foucault's famous three volume *History of Sexuality*<sup>15</sup> argued the thesis that Christianity, using powerful systems of control, had rendered the previously unobjectionable Greek ethos of homosexuality first into a 'non-normative,' then into an 'abnormal' condition, in advance of criminally penalizing it. To expose the power systems at play between texts and social systems became, for much Deconstructionist Postmodernism,<sup>16</sup> the single most important point of textual analysis. The root ideas of sacred canon, and normative authority, became anathema in a newly sharpened way, and the 'last state' ( if so we can designate it for the purpose of ending this skeletal introductory review) brought the whole field of criticism, as applied to the concept of biblical literature, back to a supremacy of 'critical suspicion,' and a powerful new emphasis on the primacy of the dissident critic (whose chief duty is to resist authoritarianism in all forms, especially the imposition of authoritative meanings on texts).

### **An Orthodox System of Biblical Analysis**

So much for a brief, almost gnomic, view of hermeneutical developments that constituted the 'analytical explosion'

of the last century. What can Orthodox scholars make of all this, in a generation when the old schools are finally being liberated from old oppressive political forces, and an urgent search is currently underway to restore devastated libraries, and update empty book repositories as part of the reestablishment of Orthodox schools? There is more at stake here than asking what material would be useful for the new libraries of the academies, for in the end the simple question is a larger one: What will be the Orthodox Church's collective response to the patterns of biblical criticism as they have been established in Western Europe in the last century, set out by the Protestant movement, and partially endorsed by post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism? Can Orthodoxy venture any opinion? Will it have a distinctive attitude to the New Hermeneutic? Will it try to ignore it? What follows here, perhaps as sketchily as was my foregoing history of hermeneutics, is a preliminary suggestion of what values could guide Orthodox scholars in considering the New Criticism as a collection of very valuable tools, and how selections could be made by Orthodox theologians in such a way that the ideological and theological axioms that underlie so much of Critical theory do not pass unnoticed, but can be scrutinized and assessed in the light of Orthodox principles of interpretation and tradition. This is not to invite Orthodox theologians to develop a principle of biblical criticism, as if to suggest there is not already one actively in place, rather it is to invite consideration of how to respond to modern interpretative methods and incorporate them into the Church's current biblical styles. This is an issue that has been a critical imperative in several ages of the Church previously (most spectacularly when the varied forms of Greek rhetoric were co-opted in the fourth century to become the mainframe of the patristic biblical hermeneutic), but has not been, for many centuries, so pressing a task as it is today. For what follows, as will be obvious, the focus of my thinking has been

patristic understandings of the central issues involved in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

### **Contemporary Relativism and the 'Ecclesial Reading'**

One key element of a genuinely Orthodox biblical hermeneutic is that the 'critical' presupposition that each previous age has obscured the truth that now at last is to be laid bare by 'objective' historical research, or by newly sharpened philosophical acumen, is both arrogant and uninformed. It perpetuates a misunderstanding of the nature of history and textuality, and deliberately cuts itself off from any communion or solidarity with the originating community of discourse. No historical context, or text, exists in some disembodied space that can be objectively scrutinized by an infallible academic voice. Neither do text, context and interpretations merge into one another, in an intertextual world where it is no longer proper to speak of meanings. Nor is it an acceptable axiom to believe (as many Postmodernists came to affirm) that Protagoras was right, and that 'Man is the measure of all things.' The recognition and perception of meaning is undoubtedly driven by human epistemological systems that have only recently come to be more fully understood; but the philosophical step forward from this, namely that humans have created meaning rather than recognizing it (one so central to the relativism that postmodernism wishes to inculcate), is a secular 'act of faith' (not fact) that stands in contradiction to much that is held valuable in human culture at large, and most of what the Church would recognize as the patterns of revelation within the created order. Far from text being detached in a disembodied space, text (at least ancient text, such as Scripture) is the collective 'song of the community.' The interpreter who understands this is one who is sensitive to the community of meanings that constitute the 'community's meaning.' In Orthodox terms this means that

the text of the Bible 'belongs to' the Church, as much as the Church belongs to the Bible; and the ecclesial reading of the *Ekklesia's* Song, therefore, is very much a matter of conformity to the appropriate modalities of interpretation. Much contemporary criticism finds this highly objectionable. The ancients, especially the Christian Fathers, never failed to argue that true interpretation demands a *symphonia* of understanding between the discourses brought into association: that 'like can only be known by like.' We might express it today by the dictum that the insightful critic has to have deep empathy for the subject. A music critic, for example, certainly does not need to be a performer. If he or she is not an empathetic musician, however, their criticism is hardly worth reading.

Nevertheless, a key result of much modern 'hermeneutic of suspicion' has been the systematic rejection of other perspectives that conflict with the axiomatic ideologies of the principles that are being applied, and an unwillingness to subordinate the critical commentator to canons of judgment other than his or her own selected 'principles.' From the first, this visibly resulted in an exile of patristic analysis. The vast collection of patristic sermons on scripture was banished from all serious academic discussion of biblical hermeneutics as hopelessly irrelevant. At a stroke the community which strenuously elevated the canon of the Bible, and faithfully preserved it in kerygmatic preached discourse, was eliminated from our considerations of appropriate interpretation. Today, very few biblical commentaries seriously consider how a pericope has been interpreted in the past. The rich and nuanced body of patristic material has been caricatured as all of a piece 'allegorical' or 'typological' analysis and set aside. Such crudity of categorization can only be the fruit of ideology. The same is suggested by the observation that only at the very end of the twentieth century were any serious scholarly analyses of patristic biblical hermeneutics

making their appearance.<sup>17</sup>

Orthodoxy can always look afresh at the sacred texts, applying parts of the hermeneutic of suspicion (how much the role of apostolic women in the earliest age of the church has been enhanced by feminist readings of texts, for example), but the fundamental ideology behind that hermeneutic will always be resisted, since the consciousness of communion with the Church of the originating age of the biblical texts is one that underpins the whole Orthodox ethos of biblical reading; and behind that, the understanding of the contemporary Church as being the (same) Church as the apostolic period (though of course in a different environment). It is not so much a hermeneutic of suspicion that is active here, but a hermeneutic of familial trust. This is what contemporary criticism would call 'Grand Narrative imposition' of a high order, but what Orthodoxy would recognize as its primary drive and instinct of self-recognition across the ages. In Orthodox studies this would be recognized as a fundamental aspect of the 'Sacred Tradition' (*Paradosis*) that undergirds the reception of the Apostolic Gospels' proclamation, the creation of the biblical canon<sup>18</sup> in response to that, and the ongoing ontological life of the Church across the centuries: its worship, its intellectual life, as well as its socio-historical forms.

If we can call this primary principle of Orthodox hermeneutics the principle of the 'Ecclesial Reading,'<sup>19</sup> we will see how, basically, it matters that an Orthodox interpreter shares a 'consonant' motivation for interpreting the sacred text; consonant, that is, with the kerygmatic motive of the earlier saints, preachers, and biblical commentators whose works have been 'received' by the Church at large. This commits Orthodox interpreters, of course, to a large body of biblical interpretation which may not be particularly 'accurate,'<sup>20</sup> but which remains salubrious in so far as it has proved its utility in building up the faith of the community, and enter-



ing into the heart of the community. If previous meanings have fallen out of the heart (and memory) of the community, so be it. It would be ridiculous in the name of authenticity to patristic tradition, for example, to resurrect some of the patristic biblical homilies that were warmly welcomed in earlier centuries, but which to modern congregations would simply sound fanciful, and prove a barrier to the comprehension of the core biblical message of salvation. Some element of falling out of memory, and falling out of favor, in the life of the Church is an important aspect of the self-renewal of the tradition of the saints, and ought not to be interrupted by the work of 'archaizers.' Those who simply read out patristic sermons in the course of the liturgy, for example, as a response to the demand to preach the Gospel, surely have a deep need to examine their praxis. It is a practice none of the fathers would have allowed to become a principle; this seems obvious, as they themselves originated powerful new interpretations of the kerygmatic message in contemporary Greek rhetoric of their own.

### **The Principle of Consonance**

Consonance with the ecclesial tradition, as the primary requirement for the Orthodox Christian biblical interpreter, is exactly what Athanasius meant when he wrote this axiomatic passage about biblical interpretation in the *De Incarnatione*. It stands to this day as a charter for the Orthodox conception of attaining to biblical meaning by an underpinning of 'that virtue<sup>21</sup> which is of Christ,' and by 'consonance with the saints':

1. What are the requirements for the searching of the Scriptures, and for true knowledge of them? An honorable life is needed, and a pure soul, and that virtue which is of Christ. For the intellect must apply this to guide its path and then it shall be able to attain to what it desires, and to comprehend it, insofar as it is possible for a human nature to learn of

things concerning the Word of God. 2. But, without a pure mind and the modeling of one's life after the saints, a person could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints. 3. If we wanted to see the light of the sun, for example, we would certainly wipe our eyes to brighten them, and would purify ourselves in some appropriate way related to what we desire. So, for example, the eye by becoming light would then be able to see the light of the sun. Or take the case of a person who wanted to see a certain city or country. Such a person would surely journey to the place in order to be able to see it. It is exactly the same for someone who desires to comprehend the mind of those who speak of God. Such a person must begin by washing and cleansing their own soul, and by addressing their manner of living. They should approach the saints by imitating their own works. By such consonance with the saints in the conduct of a shared life, a person may understand also what has been revealed to them by God. From that time onwards, because they are so closely in communion with the saints, they too may escape the perils of sinners and the fires of the day of judgment, and they will receive what is laid up for the saints in the kingdom of heaven, those things which "No eye has seen and no ear heard, things which have never entered into the heart of man," the very things that have been prepared for those who live a virtuous life, and love our God and Father, in Christ Jesus our Lord: through whom and with whom be to the Father himself, with the Son himself, in the Holy Spirit, honor and might and glory for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>22</sup>

Basil the Great also says much the same thing in his *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*<sup>23</sup> when he describes how the interpreter of the oracles of the divine Spirit, needs to be rendered clear by the working of the same Holy Spirit (just as glass when clear can mediate the sun). This kind of interpretation requires 'consonance.' In other words, the communion with the Holy Spirit who inspires the text is a fundamental precondition for the authentic 'opening up' of the sacred book. Without that, there may be many levels of historical and

morphological comment possible on the biblical text; but no *exegesis* properly understood.

This leads us to the conclusion that, for Orthodoxy, biblical exegesis belongs properly to the community of the Church, which is defined by the possession of the charism of the Spirit. Individual biblical interpreters supplement their own possession of the charism of the Spirit's illumination, with the gift of illumination that over the centuries has been granted to preceding generations of the Church. For this reason alone, no Orthodox interpreter can presume to disregard, or ridicule, the interpretative efforts of previous generations; least of all those of the saints who have been preserved in the tradition as particularly worthwhile. Consonance in this case is certainly not the same as monotonous repetition of past utterance, which would amount to strict conformity, and would signal the end to intelligent development of biblical analysis; on the contrary, what is meant is that new applications of biblical interpretative methods proceed reflectively 'within the communion,' just as variations on a theme are self-evidently linked to the master theme which they, in turn, set out to elaborate, illuminate, or extend. This principle, of course, allows Orthodox interpreters to make use of a large range of biblical readings, methods, and styles<sup>24</sup> that have not been produced by those within the same communion, and perhaps not written with much regard for what one might call the 'inspired' character of the sacred text. However, it also commits the Orthodox interpreter to view and process all of that extrinsic material in the light of the Church's inner principles of receptivity. In all things the method is an interpretative tool, merely a tool. The guiding metaphysic (the process towards authentic reception of the exegesis of the Bible) has to be the reception of the sacrament of revelation in the present moment: what the fathers called the *Mysterion Christou*.

The principle of consonance (which we could also call

the principle of communion) is extensively set out, and most elegantly so, in the first of the *Five Theological Orations* by St. Gregory the Theologian,<sup>25</sup> who elsewhere throughout his work describes the biblical commentator as a priest who is allowed entry into a temple; but the deeper the progression into the sacred areas (beyond the veil past which no human can go in this earthly life), the more pressing is the need for purity of heart and acumen of mind. Both things, moral and intellectual power, are seen by Gregory to be significant charisms that cannot be neglected, and if they are not present in the manifested works of the interpreter, the priestly act of biblical exegesis will be rendered into sacrilege.<sup>26</sup> These patristic writers who speak of consonance with the mind and spirit of the biblical author are largely echoing Origen who, in turn, is developing his principles of biblical interpretation from the starting point of 'seeking the mind of Christ,' since for him, that mind (and also mindset) is a matrix which the *energeia* of inspiration lays down in the mind of the apostolic author. His starting point for this is, of course, the apostolic dictum in 1 Corinthians 2:16, which is itself the summation of one of the first considered essays on the Christian theology of inspiration from the hand of the Apostle himself:

And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory... These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God... Now we have received not the

spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

This is not to imagine that sophisticated biblical theologians such as Origen, Athanasius and Cyril, or the Cappadocian Fathers, ever envisaged a direct or literal transference of information from God to the human author (something the icon painters somewhat naively depicted); rather that they imagined inspiration as being a divine *en-ergeia* that inspired the charism of 'comprehension' of the things of God in a human heart. Such comprehension was seen to be partial (inevitably so, since no human mind could fully comprehend the purposes of God) but substantively accurate. Accordingly, the Fathers understood the differences in the biblical accounts of Jesus, for example, as fundamentally related to the quality of the inspiration of each of the various evangelists. John and Paul were always recognized, in almost all patristic literature, as being clearly more in possession of the 'Mind of Christ' than most of the others.

Origen expressed this sense of degrees of inspiration among the biblical writers<sup>28</sup> in a regularly repeated image, that some of the apostles were called to the mountain with Christ to see things that the others could not witness directly, but had to hear of only through later report (he had in mind the episode of the Transfiguration in Mark 9). The patristic idea of consonance, however, was fundamentally one that resisted the atomization of biblical texts into disparate trends,

or parts. It is this fundamental vision that accounts for the Church's refusal to allow Marcion and the Gnostics to divide the Testaments. It is also at the heart of building and defending the biblical canon: whatever is recognized as canonical literature is endorsed as sharing in that communion of spirit which is authentically the Jesus tradition. Not all parts of the Jesus tradition share the same level of inspiration, this implies, but they all share the same communion of authority. It follows that the contemporary principle of affording the highest level of authority to chronologically earlier materials (such as the so-called 'Jesus Seminar' endlessly arguing over what is or is not an authentic utterance of the historical Jesus) is deeply inimical to Orthodox principles of biblical interpretation. There is no hidden canon within a canon, a pure core of historically verifiable materials (as distinct from what later disciples added to the Ur-tradition) to be established by the sagacious historian; but rather a collegiality of kerygma beginning with the preaching of Jesus, and from there extending back over the whole comprehension (or reception) of the Old Testament itself, and extending forward over the whole unveiling of Christian civilization (the culture of the Church).

### **The Principle of Authority**

This is an area in which there will always be radical difference between Orthodox biblical interpretation, and so-called 'independent academic criticism' in so far as Orthodoxy is fundamentally defined by its allegiance to evangelical and apostolic authority. The principle of authority is robustly resisted in the modern critical hermeneutic precisely because the contemporary interpreter is given the highest status of authority. If it is necessary to share that authority among others (as in cases of controversial points of judgment) then a cabinet of academics can be convoked (strangely echoing

the historical movement of Christianity from apostolic to synodical principles of judgment making). One can see this process operating consistently among biblical critics, from the unshaken confidence of the nineteenth-century liberals to the more tentative dogmatism of the Jesus Seminar, which votes on what is to be considered (or not considered) authentic Jesus-utterance. Common to both is the sense that the putative academic judgment is the last and highest court. No reference ought to be made to any other type of authority to elucidate 'authentic meaning.' If there is such an appeal it is often regarded as a 'professional foul.' This fundamental attitude has survived even its most rigorous twentieth-century attack, mainly by ignoring it, which came in the form of Liberation Theology's protest that such academic self-enclosure cut off the voice of the poor and dispossessed who did not share in this type of discourse, and could see in it only the age-old marks of the oppressive disregard of the rich for the poor. Even so, for most of the lifetime of higher criticism the concept of 'apostolic' witness has been merely of a piece with 'patristic' or other forms of medieval or modern piety – at best irrelevant to the elucidation of the quest for authenticity (considered as chronological priority<sup>29</sup>), and at worst evocative of systemic forces of historical oppression.<sup>30</sup>

For Orthodoxy, the apostolic authority is not an oppression, but a liberative lens through which the Church, and its biblical interpreters in the present age, can share in the commonality of the experience of the Christ-Mystery. Dominical and apostolic utterance become, as it were, the set key signatures, within which the present music of the re-expression of the evangelical kerygma can be extrapolated: that music which is the essential expression of the Church from age to age.<sup>31</sup> It is an 'oppression' only in the sense that the fugal form necessarily guides the composer in the creation of a fugue, or in the way a sonnet is required to rhyme. Irenaeus had much to say about the creativity of Tradition, which

was not open to endless 'redefinitions' (say in the hands of the Gnostics). In another place I have more extensively considered the 'open-endedness' of ecclesial Tradition as a closure-system.<sup>32</sup> This is not a contradictory notion as many presume: no more so than is the notion of bounded infinity within which modern cosmologists understand the strange reality of the ever-expanding universe as it appears to scientific observation. Irenaeus amplified the biblical sense of apostolic tradition (first seen in the epistolary literature) with the concept of apostolic succession of bishops in the main-line 'apostolic' Churches. His point was that if one first discerned, then scrutinized the apostolic tradition of Christian doctrine, one would find that there was perfect unanimity as to the *Regula Fidei*, and his current interpretation of scripture. This was proven by appeal to the record of the main apostolic centers - the ancient and leading Churches. He was suggesting a universal test of tradition, as well as invoking a particular claim for the authenticity of his own charism as a Christian teacher: that he stood within the Church's *consensus*, not without it.

Irenaeus further developed his thought by suggesting that the apostolic Churches had the '*charisma veritatis*'<sup>33</sup> which could not be presumed to be at work elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> For him, this essential *charisma* was manifested above all in the manner in which the leaders of the great Churches interpreted the Scripture soberly, and with catholic consensus. It was in this context that he developed his famous image of the interpretative 'key' to the Scriptures (*Hypothesis*) which the Church possesses, but which others do not. It was to grow into the fuller patristic concept of the *Mens Ecclesiae*, the 'Mind of the Church,' or what Athanasius was to call the Church's *Dianoia*<sup>35</sup> and its sense of the *Skopos*<sup>36</sup> of Scripture and Tradition - the comprehensive overview given to the Spirit-illuminated faithful, which was radically partialized and distorted by Arius and other dissidents, who hereticized



themselves precisely by refusing the consensus of illumination. For Irenaeus, the chief thing that was wrong with Gnostic exegesis was its lack of a harmonious sense of direction. He regarded this as proof that they did not possess the 'key' to the Scripture. They were like people who reassembled the pieces of a mosaic – he uses the image of a mosaic of a king – and made it up again from the original parts but now representing a dog; claiming that they were authentic because their mosaic bits were original.<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus added further to the fundamental vocabulary of the theology of Tradition when he developed the argument that the key to biblical interpretation was the 'canon of truth,'<sup>38</sup> which in the Latin version of his works gave to the West, decisively so in the hands of Tertullian,<sup>39</sup> the principle of the *Regula Fidei*, or *Regula Veritatis*. This *Regula*, Irenaeus says, is the strongest refutation of Gnostic variability, for it is maintained in all the Churches and goes back to the apostles. Apostolic succession, then, is not primarily a matter of succession of individual bishops one after another, but the succession of apostolic teaching from the time of apostles to the present.<sup>40</sup> It seems to me that the whole care for the *Symphonia* of biblical teaching within Orthodoxy is an extremely important way in which individual theological teachers within the contemporary Church express and defend their own (and the Church's) apostolic charism and witness. It is not a dead category, in other words, but a living praxis of the reception and transmission of evangelical experience.

### The Principle of Utility

Beyond the principle of consonance, many other Fathers point regularly to a most important aspect of undisputedly Orthodox biblical interpretation, which is its edificatory character. The biblical commentary is not, essentially, an historical essay or semantic analysis, but an expression of

the charism of preaching within the Church. We might call this the principle of utility: how the proclamation of the faith is rendered 'appropriate' from age to age; how in one era the discourse is suitably Semitic and poetical, while in another the framework of Greek rhetoric and hymnody works most effectively, and in another age does not work so well, and may require simpler forms of re-expression. Origen (who certainly saw the act of biblical commentary as an extension of the prophetic charism of preaching the word) expressed this principle in his own time by describing the commentator as a 'spiritual herbalist' whose duty was to know the values of all the contents of the herbarium, and be able to make a potent mix for the benefit, not the bane, of the recipients:

The saint is a sort of spiritual herbalist who culls from the sacred Scriptures every jot and every common letter, discovers the value of what is written, and its use, and finds then that there is nothing in the Scripture that is superfluous.<sup>41</sup>

This, in short, is a caution to Orthodox biblical commentators of the future, that commentary cannot be separated from the task of kerygmatic proclamation; and, since the latter includes dogmatics at its heart, a caution that Orthodoxy must be very careful indeed not to allow the same divorce between systematic theology, biblical interpretation, and pastoral theology, that has so painfully and so decisively marked much of Protestant and Roman Catholic theological development in the aftermath of the New Hermeneutic. The Orthodox sense of the liturgical rootedness of all theology serves as a counterweight to processes that tend to erect systematic division between fields and subfields. It may be that the life of the academy was unable to cope in any other way with the burgeoning complexities, and increasing literature, of its subfields; but the progressive atomization of domains of expertise has been a bane of the twentieth century human-

ities, and cannot be presumed to be a desirable path for the future (although there seems to be at least a century of 'lag time' before educational establishments repair large-scale defects in curricula).

### **Concluding Remarks**

It is precisely this lag time that may position Orthodox reflection on biblical hermeneutics to assume a more significant role in biblical scholarship in the next generation, at just the moment when the academy's religion departments are once more coming around to an openness to listening to symphonic voices in place of atomized dissonance. There is much work to be done to establish a newly (re)vitalized tradition of biblical theology in the Orthodox academies, both in the West (which leads in terms of wealth and resources), and in other parts of the East, and especially in Eastern Europe, which is only now emerging from the ruins of oppression. It is imperative that the achievements of Biblical Criticism are neither avoided because of fears that their underlying hermeneutics are, in many instances, inimical to Orthodox Tradition, nor slavishly adopted without reflection, so as to fill the vacuum of contemporary literature on biblical history and interpretation. Orthodoxy, in the great patristic centuries, showed that it was more than willing to adopt the latest refinements in interpretative method, and boldly re-expressed Semitic idioms in Hellenistic metaphorical style. The Church's involvement with recent hermeneutical methods will undoubtedly be a very significant aspect of its theological dialogue with the West in the years ahead. It will demand of Orthodox theologians a high sensitivity to philosophical and historical issues that have not been extensively discussed by our Church theologians. It seems to me that this is a problematic time, but also one of immense promise. A large variety of biblical methods now lie at the disposal of text commentators, and

they can potentially revitalize the preaching of the Scriptures in the Church. Many of the methods, as I have demonstrated, elevated their own metaphysics, several of which were hostile to the very concept of apostolic authority. It belongs now to Orthodox commentators, secure in their overarching Tradition, to sift and assess and incorporate where appropriate. This eclectic method has always been descriptive of patristics exegesis (no better example can be found than in Basil's *Hexaemeron*), and so, although Orthodoxy may be using new terms, it is hardly the case that the argument or the process is new. It may well find it has to use new tools and models of discourse, but it will not be using new principles or values. It is a great and challenging task that lies ahead, and one where the Orthodox witness to fidelity to the past may be combined with what was once a shining aspect of Orthodox theological style (at least in the hands of the great Fathers and saints): a contemporary relevance that speaks to the moment, becomes, as it were, a *kairos* of grace, and in that flexible *economia*, demonstrates to society at large the beauty of the Tradition that is at once 'ever ancient, ever new.'

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning, conservative Church schools feared the historical method's apparent independence from faith-claims, and there were several celebrated clashes in the late 19th century, not least the controversial dismissal of W. Robertson Smith from his professorship in Scotland in 1881, and the clerical trial of Charles A. Briggs, at Union Seminary in New York, in 1893 (which resulted in Union's detaching itself from ecclesiastical control). In England in this period, the Anglican Church mediated the conflict, with S. R. Driver and Charles Gore at Oxford cautiously paving the way for critical scholarship to become a University standard.

<sup>2</sup> James Barr, "History of Interpretation," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. B. Metzger and M.D. Coogan; New York: Oxford, 1993), 324

<sup>3</sup> There were significant exceptions, however, such as Brevard Childs, who pointed to the significance of canonical criticism for purposes of a literary analysis based once more upon the 'text as received' (rather than the text as constituted by prior layerings – historical or redactional).

<sup>4</sup> These scholars were also aware that much previous theological analysis of the Bible and Fathers had often been conducted in an historical vacuum.

<sup>5</sup> Paradoxical in the sense that most of the 'new' readings seemed to be merely retrospective and revisionist adaptations of movements that were, in most other fields of theology, already showing signs of age, such as Marxist textual analysis, Post-Colonialism, and Feminism. It is, perhaps, too early to judge, but the effects of the 'Late Antiquity' movement's attempted deconstruction of patristics and canonical biblical exegesis, seem to pull both subfields into an environment where canons and standards of ancient historical analysis could no longer be ignored. It is also notable because of the movement's many appeals to disparate ideological imperatives; in this sense it is at root a parasitical phenomenon, rather than a genuinely philosophically coherent school.

<sup>6</sup> The fundamental meaning of a text was what the original author intended to convey by his writing.

<sup>7</sup> After the 1970s it became more and more difficult to distinguish any substantive difference between university level 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' biblical scholars.

<sup>8</sup> This explains why the style became known as 'redaction' criticism.

<sup>9</sup> This biblical movement allied itself with major philosophical currents being pursued (slightly later) by Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer, that grew into Existentialism. Existentialism struck the Bultmannian school as an ideal vehicle for re-expressing the 'crisis of choice and commitment' that the kerygmatic proclamation was seen to evoke.

<sup>10</sup> A. Thisleton, "Hermeneutics," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. B. Metzger and D.M. Coogan; New York: Oxford, 1993), 280.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricoeur traces the concept back to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

<sup>12</sup> I think it is also worth noting that most, if not all, of the varied hermeneutics took their origin not only outside the Church, but also outside the academic departments of Theology and Religion.

<sup>13</sup> This had its beginning with Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Throughout the 1950s-60s de Saussure's semiotic observations led the way for semiotic analysis to be wrested from the field of philology and applied extensively in philosophy, and the study of social meaning-systems. Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) led the way in this, and Roland Barthes (1915-1980) brought it to bear more intensely on textual interpretation.

In a famed essay of 1968 Barthes proclaimed the ‘death of the author.’ This has largely been interpreted as the end of authorial intentionality commanding primary allegiance in interpretative analyses, though it was intended by Barthes mainly to draw attention to the manner in which the author was not a supreme didactic authority speaking to a mainly passive audience, but was only a significant interlocutor in an ongoing dialogue. The author, for Barthes, was a channel through which language itself speaks. The principle that, ‘the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author’ was the stimulus for much ‘Reader-Response’ criticism, inaugurated by Wolfgang Iser, and Stanley Fish. This, too, was soon borrowed and applied to the biblical text, to argue that the biblical meaning is primarily what it means to the contemporary reader, without any necessary reference to ‘original’ or ‘authoritative’ meanings.

<sup>14</sup> Most analysts set the rise of the idea of person-centered subjectivity in the Enlightenment era, though more serious historical study would have demonstrated it to have been a primary notion widely introduced to Western systems through patristic Christological, Trinitarian, and Soteriological reflections from the late 4th century onwards.

<sup>15</sup> This is notable more for its philosophy than its historical exactitude.

<sup>16</sup> Also enforced by the contributions of Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1999).

<sup>17</sup> Such as Manlino Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1992); Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective* (Brookline, MA.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997); Archbishop Demetrios Trakatellis, *Hoi Pateres Hermenevoun: Apopseis Paterikes Biblikes Hermeneias* (Athens: Apostolike Diakonia, 1996); J. Panagopoulos, *He Hermeneia tes Agias Graphes sten Ekklesia ton Pateron, vol. 1* (Athens: Akritis Press, 1994); Alan Hauser and Duane Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation, vol. 1: The Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> For Orthodoxy, the Christian canon is only apparently historically ‘subsequent’ to the canon of Hebrew scripture. In fact, from its inception (and this was why the concept of the reception of the canon took some time to develop in the nascent Church) the whole corpus of Scripture was received collectively. The New Testament, in other words, is not an ‘add-on’ to the Hebrew canon, but the whole canon (a textual shorthand for the biblical consciousness of covenant election) is adopted in the Church through the very process of the reception of the Gospel, which both constitutes the Church and is demonstrated in the appropriation of Israel’s sacred history as its own. By virtue of this history being read exclusively through the climactic covenant event of Jesus, the meaning of

that history will be significantly different from that of the Synagogue's, in any age.

<sup>19</sup> The convenient notions of divine inspiration, and apostolic authority, are not, strictly speaking, hermeneutical, though, of course, they too impact upon Orthodox understandings of an appropriate interpretative process.

<sup>20</sup> Some of it is historically inept, and based upon symbolic rhetorical elaborations of the texts, not upon serious contextual analysis.

<sup>21</sup> *Arete* is not simply moral probity, but connotes the energy of direction, and instinct for knowing when one has arrived. These are elements of the divine power of the Logos communicated to the Church, which Athanasius is deliberately adding in to his account.

<sup>22</sup> *De Incarnatione*, 57.1-3.

<sup>23</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 9.23.

<sup>24</sup> I refer here to the so-called 'theologies' of this or that.

<sup>25</sup> *Oration 27*.

<sup>26</sup> See J.A. McGuckin, "The Vision of God in St. Gregory Nazianzen," in *Studia Patristica 32* (ed. E.A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 145-152.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 2:3-16.

<sup>28</sup> His central insights into the process of biblical criticism were collected by the Cappadocians Gregory and Basil and assembled in the *Philocalia of Origen* (ed. G. Lewis; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911).

<sup>29</sup> All are based on the flimsiest of evidence bases, that makes other serious academics outside the biblical field look askance at the methodologies being applied here to historical literature.

<sup>30</sup> The rise of Patriarchy, for example, or the suppression of the Gnostics, or the resistance of the Reformers' theology, or countless other incidences.

<sup>31</sup> This includes its spiritual and liturgical life, but also its intellectual and social culture.

<sup>32</sup> J.A. McGuckin, "Eschaton and Kerygma: The Future of the Past in the Present Kairos," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42 (1998): 225-271.

<sup>33</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, 4.26.2

<sup>34</sup> This is not to suggest it is always absent elsewhere – but that it cannot be presumed to be consistently operating elsewhere

<sup>35</sup> *Ten ekklesiastiken dianoia; Con. Arianos*. 1.44.

<sup>36</sup> *Con. Arianos*, 3.35.

<sup>37</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, 1.8.1.

<sup>38</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, 3.2.1. *The Kanon Tes Aletheias*. He also speaks of the Church having the 'body of truth': *Adv. Haer.*, 2.27.1.

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian pressed the legal context much more than Irenaeus. For him tradition was transmitted within the churches that were linked by 'familial' apostolic relationship. Tradition is thus the legal patrimony of the apostolic churches: a patrimony that is the legacy left by the legal founder of a corporation. It belongs only to the legitimate heirs. False pretenders to the legacy, such as the heretics, must be excluded by a legal *praescriptio*: that is, their claims are voided by default. (*De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 19-21.)

<sup>40</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.3; cf. *Adv. Haer.*, 4.26.2 ; and *Adv. Haer.*, 4.33.8.

<sup>41</sup> *Philocalia of Origen* 10.2. (ed G. Lewis; Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1911), 52.