

SITUATIONAL HERMENEUTICS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT'S USE OF THE OLD

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ABSTRACT

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The New Testament's use of the Old Testament presents some unique hermeneutical challenges. New Testament authors utilize Old Testament texts in ways that do not seem to strictly adhere to modern interpretive methods, and they seem to exhibit multiple hermeneutical methods in their usage of scripture. This study seeks to explore the relationship between these various ways of interpreting scripture, and to propose a consistent way of evaluating the hermeneutical validity of varying usages which can apply to the New Testament's use of the Old as well as to modern interpretation of the Bible.

It begins by discussing the problem under consideration and laying out a methodology which involves comparing two instances of New Testament usage which utilize the same Old Testament text in differing ways. This study then explores two such texts, Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18, which both use the same Old Testament text, Genesis 21:12. It proposes speech act theory as a framework for furnishing a method of consistently evaluating the usage of scripture in multiple situational contexts. This study discusses speech acts as they appear in Romans 9:7, Hebrews 11:18, and Genesis 21:12. Using these texts as examples, it then demonstrates how speech act theory can effectively account for situational factors which render varying interpretations hermeneutically valid within their respective situational contexts. Finally, this study proposes the concept of a situational hermeneutic as a way to broadly account for the variety of ways in which the New Testament uses the Old, and it examines how a situational hermeneutic might be applied to modern usage of scripture.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Even among those who can agree upon the centrality of Scripture to the lives of followers of Christ, upon its inerrancy, authority, and its status as the very word of God, there remain nuances of understanding with regard to how Scripture is to be interpreted. The whole field of hermeneutics is devoted to this question. However, simply asserting that the Bible is inerrant or that one holds to a literal interpretation is rarely sufficient to account for one's interpretation of the wide range of biblical materials. The Bible is a complex document, and interpreting it correctly demands a deep level of engagement and no small amount of careful effort, particularly for those who seek to understand it thousands of years after its books were written, and who must therefore struggle against cultural, linguistic, and historical barriers to understanding.

Much has been done to establish modern techniques and traditions of biblical interpretation. Historical-grammatical interpretation has benefited greatly from historical and linguistic scholarship even within the last century. Historical-grammatical interpretation, which locates the source of meaning in authorial intent, provides a reliable basis for a rational and objective approach. However, the study of hermeneutics has a difficulty with which it must contend under this historical-grammatical rubric: the New Testament's own hermeneutical approach to the Old Testament. The hermeneutics evident within the New Testament's use of the Old have the distinction of being part of inspired Scripture. Either those hermeneutics practiced by the New Testament are themselves inspired and inerrant, or else they raise a serious question concerning how an inerrant text could exhibit an erroneous hermeneutic. Yet, the manner in which the New Testament uses the Old in practice does not seem to adhere completely to

historical-grammatical methods alone. For those who hold that Scripture is inspired and inerrant (leaving room for at least some nuance of understanding with regard to what those concepts mean in practice), the New Testament's use of the Old Testament connects hermeneutical method to the absolute truthfulness of the very text biblical interpreters seek to understand. Indeed, hermeneutical approaches of any stripe must deal with this question: how ought the New Testament's use of the Old Testament be characterized hermeneutically and what does that mean for modern methods of interpretation?

Many scholars have sought to answer this question with regard to a variety of passages. Indeed, those who maintain that the New Testament's use of the Old does not represent an invalid or an erroneous hermeneutic can find answers which support their approach, even in the case of particularly problematic passages. These answers are often complex, delving deeply into the intricacies of both Old and New Testament contexts on a case-by-case basis. In *Handbook on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, G. K. Beale seeks to set forth a methodology for navigating the intricate interpretive landscape which appears when the New Testament authors quote or allude to the Old. In the final stage of his methodology, Beale counsels his readers to take into account the rhetorical intent of a New Testament authors when they quote or allude to Old Testament texts. Although Beale does not say much about this methodologically, he highlights the necessity of understanding these rhetorical factors.¹

These factors, however, can be as varied as the individual texts in question. It is not unreasonable to argue that the New Testament's use of the Old, though varied and creative, is

¹ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 49.

valid. Although such an argument can be made on the basis of the myriad of varied answers to particular hermeneutical problems throughout the New Testament in its use of the Old, an important question remains: is there a unifying characterization which can be applied to the New Testament's many uses of the Old in terms of their hermeneutical validity? This question becomes even more important in light of another question: how can modern readers replicate the interpretive moves of the New Testament authors and use Scripture in the same way they did? If the New Testament's use of the Old is held to be valid on the basis of the sum of individual arguments regarding individual passages, then it stands to reason that modern readers can replicate that valid hermeneutic. However, without a unifying characterization of the New Testament's use of the Old, modern readers are left without criteria for evaluating their own usage alongside that of the New Testament authors.

The aim of this study is to put forward a unifying characterization of the New Testament's use of the Old with particular focus on hermeneutical validity. The study will attempt to provide a criterion for hermeneutical validity which, while it can account for the validity of individual instances of New Testament usage of the Old, transcends them in such a way that it can apply to any such usage, including usage of Scripture by modern readers. Such a unifying criterion requires a unifying characterization of the New Testament's usage of Scripture. This study will argue that such a characterization must take into account the variety with which the New Testament uses the Old, and it will put forward the concept of a situational hermeneutic. It will be argued that speech act theory provides a criterion to evaluate usage of Scripture situationally with regard to hermeneutical validity. Moreover, this characterization and this criterion can be applied to modern usages of Scripture just as they can be applied to the New

Testament's use of the Old. The concept of a situational hermeneutic can account for both the creativity and the validity with the New Testament uses the Old, and that an understanding of the speech acts being performed by the New Testament authors in using the Old provides a unifying way to account for hermeneutical validity under this view.

The Problem

Many readers simply conclude that the New Testament's hermeneutic is no different from their own. Those who hold to historical-grammatical interpretation can claim that the New Testament itself also employs historical-grammatical interpretation.² With regard to some cases, however, there is at least room to question whether this approach tells the whole story. Any sufficiently thorough attempt to address this problem will grow quite nuanced very quickly, as there are examples that seem to throw a wrench into the idea that New Testament use of the Old always reflects straightforwardly historical-grammatical exegesis. Much can be written about the hermeneutics of any particular specimen of the New Testament's use of the Old. Historical-grammatical interpretation itself is by no means monolithic to begin with, and it will be argued here that the same holds true of the New Testament hermeneutic.

Canonical reading, on the other hand, raises its own set of questions. When New Testament authors interpret the Old Testament in light of the whole canon, are they in fact paying due respect to the internal meaning of individual texts? Canonical reading is in some sense a type of creative interpretation, at least from the perspective of a hermeneutic that values

² For example, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament," *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 46-47.

authorial intent. How can the New Testament's use of the Old be characterized hermeneutically in light of these various ways of using Scripture?

The assertion that there is a single characterization which can be applied to the totality of the New Testament's use of the Old hermeneutically seems difficult to maintain, with some particular passages being notoriously problematic to categorize. Questions about the hermeneutical methods used by the New Testament authors inevitably become nuanced, and in need of repeated qualification with regard to texts that seem to be outliers. This is not to say that the hermeneutical methods which appear in the New Testament are always inconsistent, nor is it to say that they defy classification. Rather, it is simply to suggest that perhaps this complexity should draw attention also to another question which may be in some ways more pertinent. Rather than just asking what the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament authors are, perhaps the better question is this: allowing that the New Testament does not display a monolithic hermeneutic, what determines and informs the interpretive methods that do appear?

This, of course, opens the door to another problem raised by the New Testament's use of the Old, one of perhaps greater practical importance. Ought modern readers to imitate the interpretive practices of the New Testament authors? The answer to this question hinges to some degree upon whether modern readers should consider the interpretive methods displayed in the New Testament as valid. Should one conclude that they are not valid, questions arise as to whether modern readers are given license to use Scriptures loosely or are otherwise obligated to hold themselves to a standard that differs from that of the New Testament authors. This study will not concern itself overmuch with the problems which arise if the methods exhibited in the New Testament are invalid. It will choose instead to argue that those methods are in fact valid,

and to put forward an approach which will perhaps provide additional reason to see them as valid. However, if one concludes as this study does that the interpretive methods exemplified in the New Testament are valid, there are problematic cases in which it is not immediately clear how such methods might be replicated by modern readers consistently.

Others have already concluded that there is a valid way to replicate such methods today, even in the case of difficult passages that don't seem to directly mirror modern exegetical methods. This conclusion seems to flow directly from the premises that (1) the interpretive techniques displayed in the New Testament are valid, that (2) they can be replicated by modern readers, and that (3) these difficult, non-straightforwardly exegetical passages exist.³ However, the justifications for replicating the methods displayed in the New Testament have not always been satisfying from a hermeneutical perspective. It has been suggested for example, that modern readers may repeat the interpretive moves of the New Testament authors precisely, sticking to the particular passages or theological moves directly evidenced in the New Testament itself. However, this approach smacks of an unsatisfying justification as to the validity of the interpretive methods of the New Testament authors. Modern readers are left to repeat the New Testament authors' statements, but not their methods. Why would this be so if those methods are in fact valid? If Divine inspiration is required in order to legitimize such interpretive moves, this seems to imply that those moves are not justifiable on their own. If, however, the interpretive

³ Beale, for example, argues that there is no clear reason not to take the New Testament's interpretive example as normative, and that the burden of proof rests on those who claim it is not normative. G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question did Jesus and his Followers Preach the Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts?," in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 403-404.

methods displayed in New Testament are repeatable, then what hermeneutical limitations do they follow that can be replicated by modern readers in order to avoid an interpretive slippery slope? Thus, it seems that there is a need to understand more clearly the hermeneutical limitations which guided the New Testament authors. Perhaps doing so will provide better insight into how their methods might be replicated more fully in a way which does not lead to mishandling of the text. Such a thing must be possible, if indeed the methods of the New Testament authors are to be seen as valid in themselves.

The New Testament uses the Old Testament in a variety of ways. Those who seek a single hermeneutic consistently applied across all instances of the New Testament's use of the Old may find themselves disappointed. However, it will not be argued here that the New Testament authors interpret the Scriptures without restraint. Saying that they employ more than one hermeneutic does not imply that they employ any and all. Rather, the argument that will be made here is that the New Testament's use of the Old Testament is situational, but within the bounds of a particular bibliology, bounds determined by what that theological understanding of the Bible allows. Importantly, it will be argued that this approach provides for an accounting of replication of the New Testament author's varied but appropriately restricted methods by modern readers.

Even to say that more than one hermeneutic could possibly be compatible with a particular bibliology might seem surprising, but it will be argued here that it is the situational nature of the New Testament's use of the Old that makes this possible. It is important to note that while all the writings of the New Testament serve the purpose of being Divine Scripture, they also served the purpose of doing ministry in their own time and place. As such, they are written

in unique situations, with specific and unique goals in mind. These situations allow for and even call for differing hermeneutical emphases and methods within the bounds of a particular bibliology. This bibliology posits a high view of Scripture in accordance with that professed within the New Testament itself. It also encompasses a particular salvation-historical theology which informs Old Testament usage, but in a way which consistently respects the Old Testament's contextual meaning.⁴

Another facet of this problem concerns the nature of meaning as it relates to scriptural texts, particularly in scenarios that involve intertextuality. The creativity of the New Testament's use of the Old has led some to define meaning in ways which are more accommodating toward usages that ostensibly do not respect the intent of the original author. This study will argue that the New Testament's approach to the Old does in fact respect the Old Testament's meaning in that stricter sense. This may seem to be a difficult task in light of the fact that this study allows that the New Testament does not practice a single, monolithic hermeneutic. However, this study will characterize the New Testament's use of the Old as involving a situational hermeneutic. It will further argue that this situational hermeneutic is ultimately respectful of the Old Testament's meaning within its own context.

The problem which this study seeks to answer may be summed up thusly: the New Testament exhibits variety in its methods of using and interpreting the Old Testament. Yet, if modern readers are to be able to replicate the New Testament's interpretive methods on the basis of their hermeneutical validity, they are faced with a very complicated task. In fact, it is not

⁴ What is meant by this is that the New Testament authors' bibliology includes their belief that Scripture relates to salvation history in a particular way.

enough to simply say to modern readers, “Use the same method that the New Testament authors do,” because what the New Testament authors do is to use Scripture in a wide variety of creative ways which are both hermeneutically valid and effectual specifically within the context of particular situations. How, then, can modern readers characterize the New Testament’s use of Scripture in a unified way which can inform and allow or limit modern usage?

This study will argue that a characterization of the New Testament’s hermeneutic as situational in nature can account for both hermeneutical validity in light of the creativity with which the New Testament uses Scripture as well as the ability of modern readers to replicate that situational way of using Scripture. The way to accomplish this is to devise a hermeneutical criterion that can evaluate hermeneutical validity in the context of situational usage, a criterion which can apply to both the New Testament’s usage of Scripture as well as usage by modern readers. This study will use speech act theory to develop such a criterion, arguing that this approach adequately accounts for the phenomenon of New Testament usage as well as being applicable to the guidance and limitation of similar usage today.

Significance

The significance of properly understanding the hermeneutical relationship between the New Testament and the Old is threefold. First, it can help modern readers to better and more accurately answer questions about what the New Testament’s use of the Old says about hermeneutics. The New Testament’s use of the Old represents an inspired hermeneutic, which raises questions when the New Testament does not seem to maintain a historical-grammatical method acceptable by modern standards. This can go so far as to raise questions about inerrancy on the one hand (is an incorrect reading of some Old Testament text an error?), and the validity

of historical-grammatical hermeneutics on the other (is a New Testament Christological reading, as opposed to a purely historical-grammatical one, prescribed for modern readers?).

Alternatively, it can be claimed that there is harmony between historical-grammatical interpretation and the way the New Testament uses the Old. There have been multiple approaches to arguing for this harmony. Part of the argument of this study is that an understanding of the situational nature of New Testament usage of the Old can help provide some support for this harmony, or at least augment some of the answers that have already been given.

Secondly, a proper recognition of the importance of situation in the New Testament's use of the Old has importance with regard to proper biblical interpretation. When the situational nature of the New Testament's use of the Old is misunderstood or given too little attention, one can face a temptation to shoehorn one's characterization of the New Testament's hermeneutic into an incorrect set of hermeneutical constraints. This approach may cause one to miss out on some nuances of the meaning of a New Testament text. In some cases, the sophistication of the New Testament's use of the Old might deserve more credit than it is given under such an approach. On the other hand, the same temptation could lead one to draw otherwise unwarranted conclusions about the meaning of an Old Testament text in order to escape some self-imposed interpretive difficulty. If the New Testament employs a situational hermeneutic, then acknowledging that fact is sure to lead to more accurate interpretation. Accurately understanding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament in all its nuance is part and parcel of New Testament exegesis.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this study, a more complete understanding of how the New Testament uses the Old Testament situationally can provide a better understanding of situational hermeneutics as they may be practiced today. Some ways of using Scripture may be exonerated, so to speak, if they are in line with a New Testament bibliology in their particular situational context. In other instances, an understanding of how bibliology guides New Testament use of the Old even when taking situational factors into account may weigh in favor of greater restraint with regard to a particular modern situation. What this improved understanding will not do is provide license for eisegesis or “playing fast and loose” with the text. Modern interpretation, in some scenarios, may well already be situational in a way that is similar to New Testament usage, and a better understanding of the New Testament patterns can serve to refine techniques under that rubric, even if it is unlikely to radically change them. An understanding of the situational nature of the New Testament’s use of Scripture allows modern readers to take their own situations into account in evaluating their own usage of Scripture, and it does this in a way which allows them to lay that evaluation alongside the New Testament’s situational usage of Scripture.

Clarifications

The claims that have been made here so far are certainly in need of a great deal of clarification, and it is best to provide this before proceeding any further. First, what is meant here by the “situational” use of the Old Testament should be clarified. Second, the role of speech act theory in the context of this study will be introduced. Finally, some clarity should be established around what exactly is meant when referring to the relationship between bibliology and hermeneutic.

Situation / Situational

Central to the argument of this study is the idea that the New Testament applies multiple varied hermeneutics situationally. It is important to be clear about what exactly is meant by situational use of the Old Testament. In the context of this study, situational use of the Old Testament refers to the relationship between the New Testament's use of the old and the varied contexts of individual instances of that use. The "situation" surrounding a particular quotation of the Old Testament consists of a variety of things. For example, it includes the literary and theological context of the author's use of the Old Testament within the text itself, as well as the historical, cultural, rhetorical, and even pastoral or ministerial contexts and authorial intentions associated with that particular text. Part of the argument that will be made here is that the New Testament's use of the Old does not represent a single, monolithic hermeneutic, but rather a variety tied together by a central bibliology. The validity of any of these hermeneutics with regard to that central bibliology (and perhaps even with regard to modern notions about hermeneutical validity) is situation-dependent. That is, it interacts with the particular situations surrounding particular instances. To put it differently, certain ways of using the Old Testament may be valid in certain situations even though they may not be valid in others.

The upshot of this is that differing situations may contain mitigating factors which lend themselves to or even open the door of validity to certain ways of using Scripture. As such, these situational factors form an integral part of New Testament hermeneutical methods when it comes to their validity, and they should not be ignored. Is a particular New Testament passage referring to the Old Testament as a source of theological authority? To make a statement about prophetic fulfillment (and if so, in what sense)? For illustrative or rhetorical purposes? Some complex

combination of these? Such questions are really questions about textual situation as it is understood for the purposes of this study.

This understanding of situation shares much in common with the idea of context, but the term situation was chosen for two reasons. First, it is not quite synonymous with context, which is often taken to refer in a general way to surrounding factors. Much has already been said on the importance of context with regard to interpretation. Context as a term is loaded, and not quite in the right way. It seems probable that to rely too much on this term here is likely to create confusion. Secondly, situation invites a focus on response. Situations are things that people react to, and they form a backdrop against which observers view those actions. In the case of the New Testament writers, they react to their situation, including even situations they have created for themselves in the preceding context of their work, by choosing to perform particular speech acts with regard to the Old Testament which are useful and justified given that situation. This places a desirable emphasis on the relationship between speech acts and the factors which render those speech acts hermeneutically valid.

The identification of speech acts which involve action toward the Old Testament text itself has already been put forward as a way of understanding how the New Testament writers interpret the Old Testament text, a distinction which is useful here as well. Characterizing such speech acts serves as a way to build some clarity around the relationship between situation and hermeneutical validity. More will be said further on about how this fits with a high bibliology and what it means for modern readers of the Bible.

Speech Act Theory and a Situational Hermeneutic

It is important to clarify here what role speech act theory plays in the discussion of a situational hermeneutic in the New Testament. It is related to hermeneutical justification, which concerns the question of whether or not the New Testament authors are justified in using the Old Testament texts the way they do. If they do not misuse the text, then they are hermeneutically justified. It will be argued that speech act theory presents an approach to hermeneutical justification that can help navigate a situational hermeneutic in a consistent and objective manner. Importantly, this objectivity enables modern usage of Scripture to be evaluated in a way that is consistent with the evaluation of New Testament usage by using this same approach for both. It will not be argued that speech act theory furnishes answers to questions of hermeneutical justification where none have yet been found. The study of the New Testament's use of the Old has already addressed even the most problematic passages, and others have already offered arguments against seeing the New Testament as misusing the Old even in these difficult cases.

The goal of applying speech act theory here is to provide a consistent approach which can evaluate hermeneutical justification in the context of a situational hermeneutic. If the New Testament authors indeed use a variety of hermeneutical methods, some of which may only be justifiable situationally, then there is a need for a way to consistently and objectively evaluate the validity of hermeneutical methods that takes situational factors into account. This is of particular importance if modern readers wish to utilize a situational hermeneutic themselves. Such an approach should be able to evaluate modern usages in light of their situations just as it can do within the context of the New Testament. It will be argued that speech act theory is able to provide such an approach, since the relationship between situational factors and use or misuse of

a text is effectively a relationship between situation and a performative speech act. This argument will be made primarily in the fourth chapter of this study.

With this in mind, it is important to note that there will not be an attempt to show that this approach based upon speech act theory is superior to any traditional approach in terms of its ability to justify any particular New Testament use of the Old. It will not be argued that such an approach can justify particular passages where other approaches cannot. This approach which involves speech act theory will be discussed in terms of its relationship to already-established approaches. The purpose of the use of speech act theory here is to provide a unifying bridge which can weigh hermeneutical justification in cases which involve differing hermeneutical methods and differing situational contexts, thus providing a consistent way to evaluate situational usage within the New Testament as well as by modern readers.

Bibliology vis-à-vis Hermeneutic

Part of the argument being made here is that it is bibliology rather than hermeneutic which unifies the New Testament's use of the Old. It may seem obvious that bibliology informs hermeneutic, but it is not always clear what role bibliology plays in how questions about New Testament use of the Old have been addressed in the past. G. K. Beale, for example, in *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* focuses on discussing the theological and hermeneutical presuppositions of the New Testament authors in terms of how they guided their interpretation of the Old. He identifies five such presuppositions that are evident in New Testament use of the Old overall.⁵ This study will focus specifically on what the presuppositions

⁵ Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 83-84.

of the New Testament authors (such as those suggested by Beale) say concerning their beliefs about Scripture (their bibliology) and on how that interacts with their interpretive practices in a situational way. This focus will help identify those interactions between bibliology and situation in a way that is instructive for better understanding the New Testament's use of the Old. Going directly to questions about how the New Testament authors interpret the Bible may miss this point. It is important to ask first what the New Testament authors believe about the Bible and how that informs their use of it. Their hermeneutics, after all, did not arise in a theological vacuum. While interpretive guidelines existed in the New Testament era, these had theological foundations, and this relationship is even more pronounced in the New Testament authors themselves. Their bibliology served to guide and limit their hermeneutical techniques.

This bibliology, it will be argued, is closely related to a New Testament, Christological understanding of salvation history. This means that the New Testament authors' understanding of Scripture involves a particular understanding of the nature of Scripture and of its relationship to salvation history in light of Christ. This particular relationship between Scripture and salvation history informs the New Testament's view of Scripture itself. The belief that the Old Testament is historically continuous with the same salvation history characteristic of the New Testament era is, in some sense, a bibliological belief. Asking questions about what the New Testament authors considered appropriate hermeneutical approaches without considering how their understanding of Scripture and its relationship to salvation history affected and informed their hermeneutics misses a salient point. As such, when hermeneutics are discussed here vis-à-vis bibliology, the focus will be on how the New Testament authors' beliefs about the Bible inform and guide the ways in which they use the Old Testament in different situations.

Perhaps a good analogy for the distinction made here between bibliology and hermeneutic as drivers of methods of using the Old Testament is the distinction between biblical and systematic theology. While both ways of doing theology can be valid in a way which acknowledges the theological authority of Scripture, the difference is one of focus, and this difference in focus becomes a source of useful insight. It is possible to translate the conclusions of biblical theology into systematic terms, but biblical theology arguably finds its strength in uncovering the theological concerns of the biblical authors themselves. Perhaps, in a similar way, looking at what the New Testament authors believed about Scripture, rather than looking only at their hermeneutical methods, will make it easier to understand their use of the New Testament. This distinction is not, at its core, qualitative. It is a difference of focus. Nevertheless, it will be argued here that there are advantages to approaching the question of what guided and limited the New Testament's hermeneutical methods from the standpoint of their beliefs about Scripture rather than only from the standpoint of hermeneutics. It is better suited toward gaining a fuller understanding of their interpretive methods in a way that is more holistic and suffers less from stumbling over outlying examples.

Methodology

In order to argue for the relevance of speech acts as a way of reconciling a variety of hermeneutical methods with a high view of New Testament hermeneutics, it is best to focus on concrete examples from the Scriptures themselves. As such, the methodology used in this study will focus on dealing with particular examples of New Testament texts, and will make its argument within the context of an examination of some specific texts. It will seek to apply this

argument to those specific texts at every interval so that it is clear how the argument functions in a concrete setting.

An important component of the argument of this study is that the New Testament does not display a monolithic hermeneutic in its use of the Old Testament. The answer to the question of how the New Testament authors interpret the Old Testament is “it depends.” Of course, this is not necessarily agreed upon, and therefore it will be necessary to provide some argument in favor of this view. One way to both establish this understanding of New Testament hermeneutics and provide some insight into the different ways in which texts are interpreted in different instances is to focus on a single Old Testament text that is used more than once in the New Testament. Even more useful in this regard are Old Testament texts that seem to be used by different New Testament texts in different ways. This provides a way to compare and contrast varying New Testament hermeneutics with regard to a single Old Testament text, thus significantly simplifying the task of this study. In this way, the additional complexity involved in comparing two different Old Testament texts (and their respective contexts) is removed. So, the first part of the methodology that will be used here will be to locate and examine an Old Testament text that is used by more than one New Testament text, preferably ones which do not seem to use that Old Testament text in question in the same way.

The texts which will be used for the purposes of this study are Genesis 21:12, “... for in Isaac shall thy seed be called,” and Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 which quote it. The authors of Romans and Hebrews both quote the same text, but they seem to use it in different ways to make somewhat different points. As such, these texts present a good case study in which to apply the method set forth here.

The next step in this methodology begins in a way that is fairly classic when it comes to understanding New Testament texts which use the Old Testament. It will be important to examine the Old and New Testament texts in question in order to establish their meaning within their own respective contexts. This will serve as a basis for characterizing the hermeneutical methods present in the respective New Testament texts and for comparing them to one another. Of greatest importance will be the hermeneutical differences revealed through this exercise, as these will serve not only to establish the argument against a monolithic New Testament hermeneutic but also to point out the relevant questions about situation which might explain the presence of multiple hermeneutics.

This study will then seek to define the speech acts reflected in each New Testament text in a way that is tied to their respective contexts. It will attempt to answer the question: what is the New Testament author saying, and what are the speech acts being performed in the New Testament context? Any speech acts which are performed with regard to the Old Testament text itself will be of particular importance. This step is crucial and will function as a source of nuance, so it will be important to define these speech acts in as complete and accurate a way as possible, and to tie them to the questions about hermeneutical methods already discussed.

Finally, having closely examined the contexts of the texts involved and defined the speech acts evidenced within them, it will be possible to show how an understanding of the speech acts present in each respective New Testament text *vis a vis* the Old Testament text serve to account for the validity of the varying hermeneutical methods used in the New Testament texts. Use or misuse of Scripture will be framed as an instance of illocutionary speech act, and it will be argued that this framing serves to provide a way to consistently evaluate hermeneutical

validity in light of a variety of situational contexts and hermeneutical methods. This will involve a discussion of hermeneutical justification and the formation of a criterion for hermeneutical justification rooted in this framing of use and misuse as illocutionary speech acts. An argument will be made that this criterion is satisfied with regard both New Testament texts, but that differing situational factors in each text play a role in satisfying it. This will serve as the basis for discussion of a situational hermeneutic. Following this, it will be possible to sum up the overall argument and draw some tentative conclusions about bibliology as a source of boundaries within the context of multiple, situational hermeneutics and about the efficacy of identifying speech acts with regard to justifying those hermeneutics within such boundaries.

Limitations of This Study

In the interest of avoiding over ambitiousness with regard to the scope of this study, it is necessary to put certain limitations in place. The hermeneutics of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament is an area of study which lends itself easily and quickly to a high degree of complexity. In the interest of maintaining focus and providing a realistic scope, certain issues will not be addressed here.

One such issue, or rather perhaps an entire category of issues, which will not be addressed at length is skeptical criticism of the New Testament's use of the Old. There are many who have answered the questions raised by New Testament use of the Old by arguing that the New Testament authors appropriate Old Testament texts as they wish, with little or no regard for the original context of those texts. While it is certainly worthwhile to respond to and interact with these views, this study will not attempt an in-depth defense of New Testament

hermeneutics. Rather, it will assume a high view of the respect which the New Testament shows the Old.

Of course, it is acknowledged that there is much room for nuance even within that rubric, and this study argues that some uses of the Old Testament are looser than others, but the argument being made here is that such looseness appears only when it is situationally allowed in light of the speech acts being performed by the New Testament author. As such, while the argument of this study might provide for some elasticity in terms of how the New Testament's interpretive methods can be understood, it is the situational limitations which this study proposes which serve to differentiate it from a skeptical understanding. As such, although this study will differentiate itself from such a skeptical understanding it is beyond the scope of this study to rebut a skeptical understanding of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament as a whole. A high view of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament will be assumed, and the focus of this work will be to show how the ways in which the New Testament uses the Old can be seen as consistent with that high view, in spite of the presence of a multifaceted and non-monolithic hermeneutic.

Another limitation concerns the number of relevant texts that can be examined. Ideally, the argument of this study would be established via a thorough canvassing of all available data, that is, all instances of the New Testament's use of the Old. It should come as no surprise, however, that this is well beyond the scope of this work. As such, the intention of this study is merely to establish the potential usefulness of its proposed way of looking at the New Testament's use of the Old. Only one group of interrelated texts will be examined in detail, but it

is to be hoped that this will be enough to at least contribute to the discussion and perhaps open the door for a closer examination involving a greater number of texts.

This limitation in the number of texts that can be realistically covered in turn imposes an additional limitation. Since a study of this scope cannot examine a large number of examples in detail, it will also be unable to provide an exhaustive look at all of the varying ways in which the New Testament uses the Old. A deep dive into the relevant example texts for every type of usage is simply too large an undertaking for this work. Therefore, the concern here will be more focused on discussing the relationship between hermeneutical methods, situation, and bibliology with regard to a single set of texts, but in a way that could serve as a framework for examination of additional examples of New Testament interpretive methods in the future.

Survey of Literature

G. K. Beale

An author that cannot be ignored in discussing practically any topic related to New Testament use of the Old is G. K. Beale. In addition to works examining in detail the use of the Old Testament in particular New Testament books, he co-edited *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*,⁶ which attempts to comment upon nearly every instance of New Testament use of the Old. There is also *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts*,⁷ which he edited, and which contains relevant works by a variety of authors representing a variety of

⁶ G. K. Beale G. K. and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994).

viewpoints on the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. In one of his contributions to this collection, Beale argues in favor of the validity and reproducibility of New Testament hermeneutics. He sees in the New Testament's use of typology a sort of hermeneutical and theological unity with the Old Testament context which is not admitted to by those who point to highly problematic ancient Jewish interpretive methods and argue that those form part of a cultural milieu which directly influences how the New Testament authors interpret the Old.⁸ Furthermore, he sees the reproducibility of New Testament exegesis by modern readers as essential in understanding modern interpretation to have basis in apostolic authority.⁹

Also worth mentioning here is *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. In this work, Beale seeks to unpack the New Testament from a biblical Theology perspective, focusing heavily on the New Testament as it stands in light of biblical-theological themes rooted in the Old Testament. As such, he spends a great deal of time examining the Old Testament theological backgrounds of New Testament biblical theology.¹⁰ Insofar as biblical-theological connections become of great importance when looking at New Testament use of the Old, particularly when typology is involved, this kind of work is quite relevant to the study of the New Testament use of the Old.

Beale's own view on issues surrounding New Testament use of the Old comes forth most prominently, perhaps, in *Handbook on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, wherein

⁸ Beale, "Positive Answer," in *Right Doctrine*, 398-403.

⁹ Beale, "Positive Answer," in *Right Doctrine*, 404.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 11-13.

Beale characterizes the problems surrounding New Testament use of the Old and offers a methodology for interpreting New Testament passages which exhibit such usage. This methodology is not meant to simply resolve problems raised by use of the Old Testament and proceed onward to New Testament interpretation, but to directly engage the issue of how the New Testament is using the Old and to take that into account as part of the interpretive process. Beale argues that New Testament authors display varying degrees of “contextuality” in their usage of the Old Testament. He makes the interesting observation that “awareness of context must be presupposed in making such interpretation of OT texts,” which would seem to indicate that ignorance or inattention to Old Testament contexts is unlikely in any case. Beale points to “ironic or polemical intention” as drivers of less-contextual uses of the Old Testament, which hints at the idea which forms the basis of this study, though he does not examine this in detail.¹¹ This work also includes a very useful summary of the various ways in which the New Testament uses the Old.¹² Acknowledgement of hermeneutical variety present in the New Testament’s use of the Old is essential to the argument of this study, which will focus on the situational aspect of those types of usage and its hermeneutical significance.

Walter Kaiser

Another author that ought to be mentioned here is Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Kaiser’s views on the New Testament use of the Old overall represent a strict adherence to what he calls “the single intent of Scripture.”¹³ This view insists that the meaning of an Old Testament text is unified

¹¹ Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 51-82.

¹³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Single Meaning, Unified Referents”, 45.

across its human and Divine authors as well as New Testament authors who use or interpret it. As such, if the New Testament authors claim fulfillment in some particular event, Kaiser will argue that that is also what the Old Testament authors had in mind in a very real sense. According to him, any amount of leniency here, any admission of a Divine intent or dual fulfillment that augments the original Old Testament author's intended meaning, undermines the intelligibility of Scripture and opens the door any sort of interpretation by modern readers.¹⁴

In *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, Kaiser lists a variety of uses of the Old Testament in the new. He argues that these types of usage imply and necessitate a strong and unified hermeneutic, founded firmly in the Old Testament's own context and meaning.¹⁵ His work on this point is very relevant to this study, which acknowledges a variety of uses with a restrained (but still existent) variety of hermeneutical rules. On this view, the New Testament's use of the Old cannot be situational, or at least situation cannot have any effect on the type of hermeneutic that it employs, since it must always be one which adheres totally to the intent of the Old Testament author.

This is, of course, somewhat counter to the hypothesis being put forward here: that Kaiser may be right, but only some of the time, with different situations allowing for looser or stricter ways of using the Old Testament. More importantly, as this study seeks to establish this proposed relationship between situation and usage, it ought to answer Kaiser's objections about scriptural intelligibility and the hermeneutical slippery slope. It will be argued that taking into

¹⁴ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 228-235.

account situational factors can provide for consistency in asserting the possibility of objective scriptural interpretation while allowing for a less rigid understanding than Kaiser's of how the New Testament uses the Old.

Richard B. Hays

Another important contributor to the study of New Testament use of the Old is Richard B. Hays. In two of his works, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*¹⁶ and *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*,¹⁷ he examines the use of the Old Testament in the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels, respectively. He discusses not only direct quotations but allusions and theological connections between the two testaments. In *Reading Backwards*, Hays examines the concept of figural interpretation, which is related to typology but more hermeneutically-focused. Hays argues that this figural hermeneutic is taught within the Scriptures themselves (including both the Old and New Testaments), and therefore is not vector for the introduction of misreading.¹⁸

Another important work of Hays' is *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, wherein Hays seeks to examine Paul's own interpretation of Scripture in a fresh way. He argues that Paul's methods are instructive for the church today, and that if they are emulated the result will be a "conversion of the imagination," a new way of

¹⁶ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 1-16.

seeing “both Scripture and the world in a radically new way.”¹⁹ Central to Hays’ understanding of both Paul’s interpretive methods and those which Hays would prescribe to the church is an interpretive stance which Hays refers to as a “hermeneutic of trust,” as opposed to a hermeneutic of skepticism which he views as characteristic of modern critical interpretation, both liberal and conservative.²⁰

Hays’ conclusions on this point draw near to some of the arguments made in this study, namely that interpretive boundaries within the New Testament are driven primarily by bibliological rather than directly hermeneutical concerns. Hays argues that Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament is driven by an adherence to trust in the Scriptures in such a way that when the lived experience of the church raises questions about scriptural promises Paul is driven not to weaken his commitment to Scripture but to understand both Scripture and experience in new ways. Hays’ insights on this point will prove invaluable in examining the relationship between Paul’s bibliology and how he interprets Scripture in different situational contexts.

N. T. Wright: Thinking in a New Way

N. T. Wright’s *Thinking in a New Way* presents a view somewhat similar to that of Hays. Wright argues that Paul constructed Christian theology in response to questions raised by the salvation-historical reality of the rejection of the Messiah on the part of Israel.²¹ He sees Paul as wrestling with those questions and interpreting the Old Testament in ways which represent an

¹⁹ Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), viii.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 197-201.

²¹ N. T. Wright, *Thinking in a New Way: How and why Paul Invented Christian Theology* (2014) ntwrightonline.org, 19.

attempt to provide answers.²² Ideas like these point out the necessity for reconciliation between the Old Testament's theological focus and that of the New Testament. This study will attempt to show how such creative usages can be compatible with the Old Testament's internal meaning. As such, approaches like those of Wright and Hays are quite relevant.

J. Ross Wagner

J. Ross Wagner has contributed some works that deal with Paul's use of the Old Testament and which focus upon Romans 9-11 specifically. His approach should be taken into account particularly when dealing with the Romans 9 text in this study. In *Heralds of the Good News*, Wagner primarily focuses on Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans 9-11. However, he offers a detailed examination of Paul's use of the Abraham narrative in Romans 9 as part of that larger argument. In addition, he places some special attention on the concept of *seed* as it is relevant to Romans 9.²³ Wagner has also written an essay entitled "Mercy to the Nations in Romans 9-11," in which he discusses the theme of God's inclusion of the gentiles in Romans 9-11. This work is also highly relevant to the passage in Romans 9 that is part of the focus of this study.²⁴

Todd D. Still: God and Israel

A larger work to which Wagner has also contributed is Todd D. Still's *God and Israel*. This work is a collection of essays by several authors focusing on Romans 9-11. Multiple essays

²² Ibid., 19-20.

²³ J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2003), 45-51.

²⁴ J. Ross Wagner, "Mercy to the Nations in Romans 9-11," in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, eds. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 420-424.

within this volume are relevant to this study's characterization of Romans 9:7. Michael Wolter's "It is not as Though the Word of God Has Failed" offers a deep analysis of the theodicy which forms the context of Romans 9:7.²⁵ Simon Gathercole's contribution to this volume, "Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9-11," speaks to the Christological underpinnings of the passage.²⁶ The final relevant article in Still's collection is Jonathan A. Linebaugh's "Not the End: The History and Hope of the Unfailing Word in Romans 9-11." Linebaugh discusses the apparent juxtaposition in Romans 9-11 between the uniqueness of Israel in God's plan for history and his acceptance of Jews and gentiles into one body with "no distinction." As part of this discussion, Linebaugh addresses at length the context and message of Romans 9-11 in a way which may prove instructive toward this study's examination of Romans 9:7.²⁷

Ben Witherington, III: Paul's Narrative Thought World

A work that is highly relevant with regard to understanding Paul's thought as it relates both to his writing in general and to his use of the Old Testament is Ben Witherington's *Paul's Narrative Thought World*. Witherington argues for a developed and unified Pauline understanding prior to the writing of any of Paul's letters which he describes as a type of narrative. This narrative is ultimately the cosmic drama of redemption that runs throughout the Bible, and Witherington argues that Paul's writings are situational in-context expressions of that

²⁵ Michael Wolter, "It is Not as Though the Word of God Has Failed," in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9-11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 27-30.

²⁶ Simon Gathercole, "Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9-11," in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9-11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 117.

²⁷ Jonathan A. Linebaugh, "Not the End: The History and Hope of the Unfailing Word in Romans 9-11," in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9-11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 143.

unifying background narrative.²⁸ Witherington's work is relevant to this study insofar as it offers insight into the manner in which Paul's thought guides his interpretation. If bibliology determines interpretive limits, then perhaps Paul's thought, in a manner similar to that in which Witherington conceives it, plays a role in determining the shape of Pauline interpretation within those limits.

Dennis L. Stamps: "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as Rhetorical Device"

Hearing the Old Testament in the New, edited by Stanley Porter, is a collection of essays which is useful overall in studying the topic of the New Testament's use of the Old. However, one particular essay in that collection is especially relevant: Dennis L. Stamps' "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as Rhetorical Device." Stamps sees persuasiveness within the Jewish/Hellenistic multicultural context as the driver for interpretive method.²⁹ This study, of course, will disagree, seeing that driver as bibliological, i.e. belief in Scripture as Divine revelation on the part of New Testament authors. However, this study will nevertheless see a rhetorical aspect to New Testament interpretation of the Old, one which rises to greater or lesser prominence in different situational contexts. Regardless, Stamps' insight into the relevance of rhetorical factors with regard to the New Testament's use of the Old is valuable in the context of this study.

²⁸ Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 1-5.

²⁹ Dennis L. Stamps, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as Rhetorical Device," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 10.

David S. Dockery: Biblical Interpretation Then and Now

When it comes to study of hermeneutics in the first century and their relationship to intertestamental Jewish interpretations, as well as their relationship to modern hermeneutics, David Dockery's book *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in Light of the Early Church* is indispensable. Dockery discusses the history and development of biblical hermeneutics all the way from the first century to today.³⁰ His work on First Century interpretation is especially relevant. This study may not agree with Dockery's assessment on all points, but his work nevertheless serves as a valuable resource, offering a detailed examination of the interpretive and theological background of New Testament interpretation of the Old.³¹ This is particularly relevant when it comes to clarifying and understanding just what is meant by the bibliology-driven hermeneutic which this study posits. If indeed the bibliology of the early church drives New Testament interpretive practices, then Dockery offers some valuable insight into that early bibliology.

Darrel L. Bock

Another author who has contributed works relevant to this study is Darrel L. Bock. Bock provides some important insights into the hermeneutical presuppositions of the New Testament authors as well as a thorough examination of the importance of typology in understanding Jewish and early Christian interpretation. In *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, Bock contributes a chapter entitled "Scripture Citing Scripture," in

³⁰ David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 15-21.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

which he discusses the interpretive issues associated with Old Testament citations in the New.³² One important contribution of this essay is a discussion of the theological presuppositions which underlie New Testament interpretation. Bock examines these both where they converge and diverge from first-century Jewish presuppositions. Bock also provides an analysis of the variety of ways in which The New Testament uses the old. These center primarily around the relationship between the usage of the Old Testament and prophetic fulfillment, and around the concept of typology in particular. Of special importance is Bock's examination of the multiple and nuanced ways in which typology is employed, with typological and direct fulfillment not being mutually exclusive, but rather existing on a spectrum.³³

An earlier work by Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, lays some of the groundwork for Bock's understanding of typological fulfillment. Bock closely examines Luke's use of the Old Testament in this work and seeks to understand Luke's primary goal in using the Old Testament.³⁴ Bock concludes that this goal is proclamational in nature rather than apologetic, as some have claimed, and that Luke employs prophetic pattern as a way to proclaim Jesus.³⁵ This work provides some important foundational insights into the relationship between prophecy and New Testament interpretation. Specifically,

³² Darrel L. Bock, "Scripture Citing Scripture: Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2006).

³³ Darrel L. Bock, "Scripture Citing Scripture: Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2006), 255-276.

³⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation From Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield, 1997), 11-12.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 270-275.

it examines in detail how the ways in which the New Testament views the Old as fulfilled can be nuanced in terms of the role of typology. This insight will be important to take into account as this study discusses the varying ways in which the New Testament uses the Old.

Abner Chou: The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers

In *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, Abner Chou offers another perspective on the hermeneutic methods exhibited in the New Testament. He proposes what he calls a prophetic hermeneutic, which stems from the intertextuality found within the Old Testament itself. He sees the New Testament authors as standing in concert with this prophetic hermeneutic.³⁶ He views the Old Testament prophets as writing in a sophisticated way which anticipates, not fully but to some degree, the way in which the New Testament uses their texts.³⁷ This approach to the relationship between the Old Testament and the New is quite relevant to the questions that are at the center of this study.

Bateman, Bock, and Johnston: *Jesus the Messiah*

Bock has also contributed to another important work, along with Herbert W. Bateman, IV and Gordon H. Johnston. In *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*, these authors examine Messianic promise throughout the Old-, New-, and Intertestamental eras. This work provides some valuable scholarship on the trajectory of Messianic thought within the Old Testament on its own and its development into a New

³⁶ Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 120.

³⁷ Ibid.

Testament understanding of Jesus as the Messiah.³⁸ This is of particular relevance to this study due to the interrelatedness of New Testament Christology as it is rooted in the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament. The theological underpinnings of New Testament interpretation and of the New Testament's interpretive conclusions are heavily tied to the Old Testament Messianic aspect of Jesus' identity. In short, understanding the development of Messianic thought and how the New Testament authors viewed and portrayed Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament is critical in correctly understanding the theological backgrounds of their hermeneutical methods. As such, this work provides some important and relevant insight with regard to this study.

Phillips, van Rensburg, and van Rooy: “Developing an integrated approach to interpret New Testament use of the Old Testament”

“Developing an integrated approach to interpret New Testament use of the Old Testament” by Phillips, *et al.* contains some insights relevant to this study. It summarizes many of the issues surrounding New Testament use of the Old, but what is most relevant to this study is its conclusions on the issue of *sensus plenior*. The authors argue that while arguments *a-la* Kaiser that the Old Testament writers understood fully the truths espoused by the New Testament authors through the use of their texts fail to stand up to historical-grammatical scrutiny applied to those Old Testament texts, the New Testament authors generally respect the

³⁸ Herbert W. Bateman, Darrell L. Bock and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2012), 33-34.

Old Testament contexts and only rarely seem to depart from it fully.³⁹ This study will attempt to explore fully how this can be, arguing that this position becomes even more justifiable when situational factors are taken into account.

J. L. Austin

No discussion involving speech act theory would be complete without addressing the work of J. L. Austin. Although he certainly built upon the work of others, he seems to be the closest thing to the father of speech act theory in its modern form. His series of lectures entitled *Sense and Sensibilia*⁴⁰ originates most of the ideas that make up speech act theory. The theory itself is put forward more clearly and more completely in *How to do Things With Words*.⁴¹ These seminal works discuss the details of speech act theory in a way that remains relevant even today. Both of these works will serve here to introduce speech act theory and discuss how it applies to the argument of this study.

Other Works on Speech Act Theory

In addition to Austin's works on speech act theory, a few others need to be discussed. First, there is the work of John R. Searle, whose works *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy*

³⁹ Gregory Y. Phillips, Fika Janse van Rensburg, and Herrie F. van Rooy, "Developing an Integrated Approach to Interpret New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Die Skriflig* 46, no. 2 (2012): 8-10.

⁴⁰ J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁴¹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

of Language⁴² and *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*⁴³ serve to develop speech act theory from the foundation set forth by Austin. In addition, several authors have discussed speech act theory as it applies to biblical interpretation. In *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks*, Nicholas Wolterstorff uses speech act theory as part of his larger theory of Divine revelation.⁴⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton applies speech act theory directly to scriptural interpretation, making use of it in his commentary *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*.⁴⁵ He also discusses speech act theory as an interpretive tool in “Speech-Act Theory as One Tool Among Many.”⁴⁶ Brevard Childs offers a critique of Wolterstorff and contrasts his approach with that of Thiselton in “Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” a work which will prove useful here as well.⁴⁷ Finally, Richard Briggs’ volume *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* should be discussed, as it examines the relationship between speech theory and interpretation in detail.⁴⁸

⁴² John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁴³ John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13.

⁴⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁴⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, “Speech-Act Theory as One Tool Among Many: ‘Transforming Texts’,” in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁴⁷ Brevard S. Childs, “Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Scottish Journal of Theology* vol. 58 no. 4 (2005).

⁴⁸ Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001).

Graham Allen: Intertextuality

Another work that should be mentioned here is Graham Allen's *Intertextuality*. Allen discusses the topic of intertextuality in general and its background.⁴⁹ This study will take a particular approach to intertextuality and therefore will need to discuss intertextuality in order to clarify that approach. To that end, Allen's work will prove valuable in providing some background with regard to intertextuality in general.

Structure

Having introduced the problems and questions to be addressed in this study and suggested a useful method for examining them, the trail has been marked out down which this work may proceed. In the second chapter, this study will examine Genesis 21:12 and the two New Testament passages which use it: Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18. This chapter will focus on discussing the contexts of these respective passages and the interactions between them, with a view to making some preliminary observations about the hermeneutical features displayed in the use of Genesis 21:12 on the part of these two New Testament texts, especially where the hermeneutics of the two seem to diverge.

The third chapter will begin by discussing speech act theory in general, offering a definition of it and briefly summarizing the history of its development. It will then focus on identifying and characterizing the speech acts being performed in these three texts by their respective authors. The speech acts present in the Genesis text will be discussed first, followed by an examination of the speech acts in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 and how they interact

⁴⁹ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

with the speech acts in Genesis. In the case of each text, it will be important to discuss several possibilities for how the relevant speech acts can be understood, but some attempt will be made to come to a working conclusion in this regard. Again, special attention will be placed on outlining the differences between the speech acts present in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18, as these differences, it will be argued, serve to justify the differences in hermeneutical method between the two texts in a way that is reconcilable with a high view of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament.

The fourth chapter will focus on making the argument for which chapter three will lay the foundation. It will discuss the issues raised by the hermeneutical methods displayed in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18, especially in light of the differences in hermeneutical method between the two despite the fact they both interpret the same text. It will then proceed to show how these differing hermeneutical methods are variously justified in light of the differing speech acts being performed in the respective New Testament texts given the relationship between those speech acts and the ones performed in Genesis 21:12.

The fifth and final chapter will synthesize the previous arguments, discussing how the differences in hermeneutic *vis a vis* the differences in speech acts represented in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 can be characterized as evidence for a situational hermeneutic. This chapter will also seek to answer the question of how a situational hermeneutic can be limited, since it cannot point to a single hermeneutical method as a source of interpretive boundaries. It will suggest that such a limiting factor can be found in the New Testament authors' view of Scripture (their bibliology), and it will seek to show how the speech acts and interpretive methods evidenced in

Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 adhere to such a bibliology, even though there are differences between their interpretive methods.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the New Testament's use of the Old Testament is a deep and complex subject of study. It is unlikely that the questions and issues raised by the interpretive methods evidenced in the New Testament and what those issues mean with regard to hermeneutics will be answered easily. It has already been recognized by many scholars that the answer to the question of how the New Testament authors interpreted the Old is not a simple one. This study hopes to contribute some small insight which may help bring some additional clarity to some of these issues. It is hoped that by focusing on the relationship between the interpretive speech acts being performed by New Testament authors when they use the Old Testament, and by analyzing those speech acts in light of their situational context, an additional avenue may be opened whereby the use of the Old Testament in creative ways by the New Testament may be better understood, but without compromising a high view of Scripture (and of Scripture's use of Scripture), and without the need to adhere to awkward justifications with regard to more difficult passages. By looking closely at the example of Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in their use of Genesis 21:12, this study hopes to show that such a high view is compatible with an understanding of the New Testament's use of the Old which allows not only for creative ways of using the Old Testament but for a multiplicity of ways of using the Old Testament. Perhaps this can offer some benefit to the discussion of the New Testament's use of the Old and what that means for modern interpreters, both in terms of how they understand the message of the New Testament and how the interpretive moves of the New Testament may be emulated.

CHAPTER TWO:
CONTEXT AND HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES IN
GENESIS 21:12 / ROMANS 9:7 AND HEBREWS 11:18

Introduction

As the approach of this study is to apply the proposed method to a particular set of biblical texts, the first step is to examine those texts themselves. This chapter will begin by taking a somewhat classical approach to the study of New Testament use of the Old. That is, it will begin with a contextual study of the Old and New Testament texts with a view to uncovering the contextual and hermeneutical issues involved with them. Particular focus will be placed upon the hermeneutical questions which arise in light of the interactions between the Old and New Testament texts. Having laid out the contextual and hermeneutical landscape surrounding the texts involved, this chapter will attempt to identify hermeneutical differences between the use of Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18. The purpose of this exercise will be to outline these differences in hermeneutical terms so that the approach put forward by this study can, in subsequent chapters, be evaluated in light of its ability to answer the questions raised.

This study will begin in a fairly straightforward manner by examining each of the three texts in their own contexts. This will be done with a view toward understanding the message of each passage and the various hermeneutical issues surrounding it. Focus will be placed on discussing the hermeneutics involved in the use of Genesis 21:12 in both New Testament passages. This will be followed by a discussion of the hermeneutical differences between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in their use of the Genesis passage. The chapter will conclude by setting forth some hermeneutical questions which arise from the different ways in which the

two New Testament passages use Genesis 21:12. These questions will serve as a foundation for later chapters.

Genesis 21:12

It is best to begin this examination of the relationship between Genesis 21:12 and the two New Testament passages that quote it by addressing the context and message of Genesis 21:12 itself. It is important here to focus on the Genesis passage in its own context in a way that is influenced as little as possible by its usage in later Scripture. This is of particular necessity in order to best uncover the hermeneutical issues which will arise from how Genesis 21:12 is used, as these issues will stem from questions about how Paul and Hebrews employ the Genesis message and what hermeneutical moves they make in doing so. In order to avoid getting lost in an overly detailed analysis of the themes and theology of Genesis overall, special focus will be placed on contextual items most relevant to Genesis 21:12.

Background of Genesis 21:12 – The Righteous Seed

This examination of Genesis 21:12 will begin with a discussion of some important background of the text. Perhaps the largest overarching theme in Genesis which is closely related to Genesis 21:12 is that of עֲרֵב (offspring or seed). This term is used frequently in the book, but before discussing its thematic role in Genesis it is necessary to briefly consider a few lexical issues surrounding the term. Waltke notes that the term is used to refer to the seeds of plants, particularly in the creation account, as well as to the offspring of human beings. He further states that it is at times singular, referring to a particular son of an individual, and at other times it is

collective, referring to all of one's descendants.¹ T. D. Alexander offers a similar analysis, pointing out that the term denotes the singular individual of Ishmael in Genesis 21:13 while referring collectively to the descendants of Jacob in 28:14.²

Alexander argues that the focus on genealogies and the frequent use of זָרַע form the unifying background of the book (cf. Genesis 3:15, 4:25, 9:9, 12:7, 13:15-16, 15:5, 15:13, 22:17-18, 48:4).³ James McKeown agrees, seeing the major themes of the book as “Offspring, Blessing, and Land,” and argues that these themes form the lines along which the narrative of the book develops.⁴ Genesis, from the very beginning, is closely concerned with the idea of lineage, starting with the lineages of Cain and Seth. Genesis seems to concern itself especially with the idea of diverging lineages, with one lineage having some especial relationship or connection to God which other lineages do not. This concept seems frequently to take the form of divergence between brothers, who in turn become patriarchs of their respective diverging lineages. The purpose of this focus seems to be to express the idea of a particular, righteous lineage chosen by God, one which may play some sort of redemptive role (though it is important at this stage to be careful not to think of that redemption in New Testament terms). This theme begins with God's judgment upon the serpent in Genesis 3:15, where God mentions the *seed* of the woman

¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 321-325.

² T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 136.

³ T. D. Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” in *Tyndale Bulletin*, 44 no. 2 (November 1993): 257-260.

⁴ James McKeown, *Genesis, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

specifically. It is continued in the narrative concerning Cain and Seth, with Seth representing a *seed* to replace Abel, whom Cain killed in Genesis 4:25. The seed theme is carried forward to Noah's sons with the Genealogy in Genesis 5, and reiterated to them when God establishes a covenant with Noah and his *seed* in Genesis 9:9. Then there are Abraham's sons Ishmael and Isaac (directly salient, of course, with regard to the verse under discussion). God repeatedly speaks to Abraham about his seed with regard to the Abrahamic promises, for example in Genesis 12:7, 13:15-16, and 15:5-18. Genesis 21:12, of course, speaks of Isaac being the chosen seed, and verse 13 calls Ishmael Abraham's seed as well.⁵ The righteous seed theme proceeds beyond those two brothers, though, to be expressed again in Jacob and Esau when God's land promise to Isaac's seed is reiterated to Isaac in Genesis 24:7. There may be something of a nod to it yet again with the focus placed upon the concept of seed in the Judah and Tamar narrative in Genesis 38:8-9. Finally, the seed promise is again reiterated by Jacob to Joseph in Genesis 48:4, 11.⁶ Ishmael and Isaac seem to fit snugly into this pattern, and so this theme of a chosen, righteous lineage or seed forms the larger backdrop of Genesis 21:12 within the book of Genesis as a whole.

Genesis 21:12 is also somewhat integral to its nearer context within the story of Abraham. R. R. Reno argues that the focus on Abraham beginning in Genesis 12 represents a major shift in the tone of the book. The earlier chapters are, in his estimation, primordial and

⁵ זָרַע is used for both Isaac and Ishmael.

⁶ Joseph and Judah seem to be specifically contrasted in terms of their moral behavior in the Joseph narrative, and Joseph's sons receive special blessing from Jacob before his death, but this particular example diverges somewhat since both brothers (and indeed all of the brothers) are viewed as members of the chosen lineage of which Joseph merely receives a double portion rather than being the sole heir.

universal in their character and tone, but Abraham represents a transition from these universal themes to ones dealing with particularism centered on Abraham and his descendants.⁷ With Abraham, the focus of Genesis is no longer universal but on a particular family. God's promises to Abraham are closely tied to the overall theme of righteous seed, since the promises deal mainly with either God's provision of an heir for Abraham or with his promises concerning the resulting future lineage. God's promises to Abraham, in short, are seed-dependent. Abraham is to become a father of a great nation which will inhabit the land through which Abraham sojourns, but all of these blessings concern the lineage which will descend from Abraham's promised son. However, Abraham has not one but two sons: one by Hagar, the handmaid, and one by his wife, Sarah. So, the immediate context of Genesis 21:12 involves these Divine promises which depend on and will be fulfilled in Abraham's son, or seed, in light of the current situation in which Abraham has two sons.

God has already promised Abraham that it would be a son born of his wife Sarah, specifically, which would represent the fulfillment of the Divine promise of a son, a statement which God reiterated in spite of Abraham's objection "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" (Genesis 17:18). Thus, at least initially, there remained some question in Abraham's mind as to whether Ishmael represented the promised seed. Nevertheless, in fulfillment of the promise of God, Sarah has given birth to a son. Following this, there is a second conflict between Sarah and Hagar, and Sarah tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Sarah's concern seems to be one of inheritance. She does not want Isaac to be a joint-heir with Ishmael, a situation in which

⁷ R. R. Reno, *Genesis*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 137.

Isaac would presumably not only share the inheritance, but in which Ishmael would in fact be the firstborn.

The Message of Genesis 21:12

This sets the stage for the narrative which contains Genesis 21:12. The question of inheritance requires a solution, both with regard to the immediate issue of whether Ishmael will share in the inheritance and be the firstborn, and with regard to the carrying out of the Divine promise concerning nation and land. In this context, God speaks to Abraham in Genesis 21:12, telling him to comply with Sarah's wishes and send Hagar and Ishmael away "for through Isaac your descendants shall be named." It is precisely because Isaac is the promised seed that Abraham is counseled to send Ishmael away. In the context of questions about inheritance, the emphasis seems to be on Ishmael being disinherited, or at least on his disinheritance being solidified, in favor of Isaac. This, however, is in line with the Divine plan, as Isaac is the promised seed and inheritor of the Divine promises which concern Abraham's lineage. It is Isaac who will be the ancestor of the great nation which will inhabit the land of Canaan. In verse 22, Abraham is told that Ishmael will become a great nation "also," because he is also a son of Abraham. However, this "also" seems to indicate that Ishmael's blessing is extraneous. It is not a fulfillment of the original Divine promise but stands in addition to it. As such, the focus is on Isaac. It is Isaac who is the torch-bearer of the promises made to Abraham and of the righteous lineage which forms a major theme within the book of Genesis.

The message of Genesis 21:12 seems to be that Abraham is told by God to send Ishmael away because Isaac is the inheritor of the Divine promise that is already the focus of Abraham's story, and Ishmael is not. Isaac will become the ancestor of the great nation which will inhabit

the land of Canaan, Ishmael will not. Isaac presumably represent the continuation of the theme of the righteous lineage which permeates the book of Genesis, Ishmael does not. In short, Isaac is chosen by God to be the bearer of these promises, and Ishmael is not. Victor P. Hamilton characterizes this in terms of inheritance, which is to be withheld from the Ishmael even though he might have been expected to receive it. Ishmael will not share in the inheritance of the promise given to Isaac.⁸ As such, Ishmael is to be sent away and disinherited, for although he himself has his own promise from God, there is to be no question as to whether he will have any part in the original promises given to Abraham.⁹ It is worth noting at this point, though, that Ishmael's own promise is received by him precisely because he is a son of Abraham (Genesis 21:13, "because he is your seed"), even though Ishmael is not the promised seed. It seems that God's blessing over Abraham's life extends to Ishmael even if he is not the one to carry forward the Divine plan concerning the redemptive, righteous seed.

This message fits into and carries forward the overall theme of lineage in Genesis, contributing to the concept of diverging lineages with a focus on a particular, righteous seed.¹⁰ Ultimately, this lineage forms the background of the future nation of Israel, which is itself the audience of the book, and thus it ties into the greater Old Testament theme of the drama between Israel and God. It now remains to examine the New Testament authors with a view to

⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 81.

⁹Ibid., 81.

¹⁰ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994), 81.

understanding what they do with these ideas concerning God's chosen lineage as that pertains to the people of Israel.

Romans 9:7

Having discussed the context and message of Genesis 21:12 on its own, it is now possible to proceed to an examination of the New Testament texts which quote it. This study will begin by addressing the context and message of Romans 9:7. Like Genesis 21:12, Romans 9:7 will require some discussion of its background. This will be followed by some observations concerning the message of Romans 9:7 in its own context, as well as some comments about the usage of Genesis 21:12 and how that usage serves that larger contextual message.

The Background of Romans 9:7

An attempt to understand the use of Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7 would be incomplete without first speaking to the background and context of Romans 9:7. Any understanding of how it uses the verse from Genesis must make sense within the context of Paul's overall message in Romans. Romans 9 as a whole is a somewhat controversial passage from a theological perspective, dealing as it does with themes of election and the relationship between Christians and unbelieving Jews. Many theological views concerning dispensationalism, Divine election, and various ways of understanding the current status and final destiny of national Israel seek to find support in this passage. It is certainly well outside the scope of this study to unpack fully all of these theological issues. However, it is unnecessary to do so in order to understand the message of Romans 9:7 in a way that is sufficient for the purposes of speaking about the hermeneutical methods exemplified in its use of Genesis 21:12. As such, some of the ideas relevant to these theological issues will be touched upon insofar as they are important with

regard to understanding Paul's message and use of Genesis 21:12, but this study will not attempt to argue for or against any particular theological system which draws from this verse.

In the interest of being fair to those whose views on the theological message of Romans 9 may differ from those of this author, it is worth stating that this author understands Romans 9 to be concerned mainly with the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers as a collective group and unbelieving Jews as another collective group. Its relevance with regard to individual election is secondary to this, contra the interpretation of this passage which appears frequently within the reformed tradition. However, it is hoped that any difference of understanding on this point will not undermine the usefulness of this study with regard to its main focus, which does not necessarily hinge upon that particular theological issue.

A good place to begin discussing the background of Romans 9:7 seems to be the book of Romans as a whole. This book is concerned primarily with the concept of the gospel as an interaction between the justice/righteousness of God and his offer of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. There is a tension between these two truths, and in Romans Paul deals with that tension in various ways. In the early chapters, Paul is concerned with the tension between God's justice and salvation by grace. He famously paints the picture of sinful humanity, unworthy on their own merits to occupy any relationship with God other than one of enmity, resulting in judgment. It is precisely within this context that the tension between God's justice and salvation by grace appears, because if God is just then it would appear that he must judge man accordingly. Paul's point in these early chapters seems to be that not only does God in fact offer salvation by grace in spite of his justice, but in fact this salvation in no way compromises his justice.

J. R. Daniel Kirk, in *Unlocking Romans*, argues that Protestant readers of Romans, perhaps too greatly influenced by the West's roots in Greek philosophy, have tended to understand it in terms of "timeless maxims," when it should be viewed more in light of "Paul's apostolate and unbelieving Israel."¹¹ As such, he argues that the letter is a theodicy focused on solving problems and answering questions related to this real-world situation, and that the most instructive way to read the letter is with this in mind. Specifically, he states that resurrection plays a central role in these theodicies.¹² The tension between God's justice and the gospel forms a pattern in Paul's letter to the Romans which remains relevant in Romans 9. The pattern is one of theodicy, in which Paul defends the character of God in spite of apparent contradictions. He does this through a series of rhetorical questions expressing some apparent theological incongruity, each followed by the phrase *μη γένοιτο* (cf. Romans 3:4, 3:6, 3:31, 6:2, 6:15, 7:7, 7:13, 9:14, 11:1 and 11:11). In his commentary on Romans, Ben Witherington offers a review of several approaches to the rhetorical structure of the letter, but his own outline of that structure follows the arguments made in the *μη γένοιτο* passages.¹³

Paul's statement in Romans 3:25-26 expresses the tension which he seeks to address: "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so

¹¹ J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 9-11.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 21-22.

that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26, NASB). The aforementioned tension between God’s justice and his justification of sinners is exemplified in the words “both just and justifier.” Paul’s answer to the issue raised by this tension is, of course, that it is resolved through the shedding of the blood of Christ. The atonement is what allows God to remain just while declaring sinners as righteous.

Paul’s discussion of the law versus faith beginning in Romans 3:31 continues this pattern of theodicy, dealing with questions about what justification by faith means with regard to the law, particularly since the law is God’s own past declaration. Does God’s giving of the law to Israel represent a sort of self-contradiction in light of his provision of justification by faith in the present time? Paul’s answer, of course, is that it does not, and he points to Abraham as an example in whose life the principle of justification by faith operated prior to the giving of the law.¹⁴ Paul’s point here seems to be that this justification by faith is not some new development to supersede the law. Rather, it existed before the law, and therefore it must be in harmony with the law. As such, the law is not nullified as a result of God’s offer of salvation by grace through faith.

Beginning in chapter 6, Paul focuses on the relationship between justification and sin. Tom Holland argues in his commentary on Romans that the thrust of Romans 6 is corporate rather than individual, a continuation of the corporate bent of Romans 5.¹⁵ Membership in the corporate body of the bride of Christ necessitates that believers cannot continue in a sinful

¹⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁵ Tom Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 168-170.

lifestyle.¹⁶ Other commentators such as Arland J. Hultgren disagree with this fully corporate view of Romans 6, seeing it as departing from Romans 5 with a greater focus on individual behavior.¹⁷ Both of these views seem to agree, however, that Paul seeks to offer a theodicy against the objection that justification by faith allows, or even encourages, a sinful life. He objects that in fact those who are saved by grace through faith have become dead to sin and truly free from it. The law warned of sin, but it was unable to free people from sin effectually, either in terms of their standing before God or in terms of their actual behavior. Paul contends that justification does not in fact open the door to sin, rather it opens the door to righteousness in a way that the law could not.

Chapter 8 seems to conclude the first part of Paul's letter, bringing his affirmation of the gospel of salvation by grace through faith to a sort of climax. This climax focuses on life in Spirit, and the implications of the gospel for the spiritual life of the believer. Colin G. Kruse argues that this life in the Spirit is characterized by Paul in juxtaposition to "bondage to sin under the law."¹⁸ Having defended the concept of faith as opposed to adherence to the law as the salvific criterion, Paul speaks to the greatness and wonder of this truth and what it means with regard to the believer's position before God. Once he has established the nature of salvation in spite of the tension between grace and God's justice, Paul moves on to a different but related matter in chapter 9: the problem of unbelieving Jews. This is specifically a problem in light of

¹⁶ Ibid., 179.

¹⁷ Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 241.

¹⁸ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 322.

the fact that a great many Jews remain who have not become believers in Jesus, and yet the Jewish people are the recipients of the Old Testament promises and covenants. The fact that such a large portion of the nation of Israel remains outside community of faith raises questions about the faithfulness of God toward his chosen people. Romans 9:6 introduces another of Paul's theodicies, stating in spite of the situation: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed."

Romans 9:14, with its *μη γένοιτο*, ties this argument in with the rest of Paul's statements concerning theodicy. As such, the background of Romans 9:7 can be summed up as such: Paul is defending the justice of God in light of his offer of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ against various objections which may arise as a result of the tension between God's justice and his grace.¹⁹ Romans 9 specifically defends against objections which may be raised concerning God's faithfulness toward Israel, seeing as so many of Israel's people do not exhibit faith in Christ and therefore fall outside the God's new covenant and the fulfillment of many Divine promises. This forms the backdrop against which the message of Romans 9:7 can be evaluated, and in turn its use of Genesis 21:12.

The Message of Romans 9:7

The message of Romans 9:7 and its immediate context, then, can be examined against this larger theodicy defending God's faithfulness to Israel in light of the practical exclusivity of the Gospel. It is well worth noting that Romans 9:7 is only one in a series of verses quoting Genesis concerning the same topic. Paul points to a dichotomy between Isaac and Ishmael in Romans 9:7, but in verses 12-13 he points to a parallel dichotomy between Jacob and Esau. As

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 591-592.

such, a correct understanding of the message of Romans 9:7 must also make sense in light of those verses. Whatever message is understood to exist in Romans 9:7 must be more or less applicable to the Jacob/Esau comparison in in 12-13.

In the context of the numerous narrative parallels between the two sets of brothers, Paul takes special care to point out one in particular. In each case, Paul provides not one but two quotes. In verse 9, Paul speaks of “the word of promise,” which specifies that Sarah would give birth. With regard to Jacob and Esau, Paul relates God’s words to Rebekah and then quotes Malachi 1:3: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” These four quotations all share an important trait: they are all Divine declarations. The first three are promises made by God to people in Genesis, the fourth being prophetic in nature. Paul’s reason for doing this seems to be clarified in Romans 9:11. Paul is focusing on God’s choice. All four quotations are statements that expose the Divine will, and thus part of Paul’s focus seems to be that the election of Isaac and of Jacob for their respective roles in the context of the Genesis story is a matter of Divine choice alone. Paul’s quotation of God’s words to Moses in verse 15 seems to further solidify this point. So, a crucial element of the message of Romans 9:7 seems to be the concept of Divine will in choosing Isaac and Jacob, but not their brothers, for purposes related to the Divine promise made to Abraham.²⁰

A word should be said at this point about Paul’s use of Malachi 1:3. Paul’s hermeneutical methods in his use of Genesis 21:12, of course, will be addressed later on in this chapter, and this discussion will include some examination of his methods in using other texts in Romans 9. However, his use of Malachi 1:3 forms part of the context of Romans 9:7, and for that reason

²⁰ Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 364.

alone it is important to discuss this particular aspect of Paul's message here. A reading of the first verses of Malachi makes it clear that the prophet is speaking about Jacob and Esau as proxies for Israel and Edom.²¹ In Malachi, God points to his election of the individual Jacob over Esau as evidence of his love for national Israel in Malachi's day, and as evidence of the surety of his continued judgment against Edom. However, Paul's use of Malachi 1:3 seems to point directly at Jacob and Esau themselves in order to support his point about God's choice of one of Abraham's descendants and not another.²²

So, what is Paul's message in Romans 9:7? J. Louis Martyn argues that it deals with the particularity of God's election even within the context of Israel. He focuses on the question of ethnic Israel's election in Paul's thought. Martyn sees the particularity of that election with regard to Ishmael and Esau as a sign that, in Paul's mind, God's election of ancient Israel was never corporate or ethnic in nature. Instead, he argues that what seemed to be a national and ethnic election throughout the Old Testament era must have been issued repeatedly in each new generation on the sole basis of God's faithfulness.²³ Martyn's point seems to be that God was never under any obligation on the basis of ethnicity, but was always only accountable to nothing other than his own sovereign will, regardless of whether or not that meant, perhaps even temporarily, that all members of a particular ethnicity were indeed chosen by God. As such,

²¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 246.

²² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 501.

²³ J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (London: T & T Clark International, 1997), 172-173.

Martyn sees Paul's focus as being on God's right to deny such election to a portion of ethnic Israel in Paul's day.²⁴ Martyn's approach has some problems, however. The Genesis text seems to depict a fairly straightforward promise regarding Abraham's descendants. If that promised election actually was as Martyn depicts it, this fact is not something that seems to be communicated within the Genesis text itself.

Holland sees Paul's use Isaac and Ishmael (and later Jacob and Esau) simply as an affirmation that being descended from Abraham does not guarantee participation in the new covenant.²⁵ Martyn understands God's election of national Israel in Abraham's day and of Christians in Paul's day to be essentially the same election.²⁶ Holland, on the other hand, views Paul's argument as a simple statement about God's non-election of a portion of ethnic Israel under the new covenant. This distinction, of course, has implications regarding larger theological questions about the identity and future of national Israel under the new covenant. A detailed examination of such issues is beyond the scope of this study, but it is well worth pointing out the similarities between these two interpretations: both agree that Paul is pointing out that not all physical descendants of Abraham received the Abrahamic promise, regardless of how that promise may be defined or what that may mean for ethnic Israel in the church age or in the future. This idea seems to be at the center of the message of Romans 9:7.

Longenecker makes two important points with regard to Paul's use of Genesis 21:12. First, he argues that Jewish theologians in Paul's day largely saw the Abrahamic promises as

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tom Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage*, 306-307.

²⁶ Martyn, 172-173.

ethnically-targeted and irrevocable. Longenecker acknowledges that the chosen status of Israel is clear within the Old Testament (cf. Deuteronomy 7:6, Psalms 135:4, and Isaiah 41:8-9), and he allows that this creates a certain tension when combined with the idea that not all of Israel would receive God's blessings in some sense.²⁷ The second point which Longenecker makes seeks to resolve this tension with regard to Paul. Longenecker argues that Paul's argument which encompasses Romans 9:7 builds upon the Old Testament concept of a remnant. In his words: "the apostle is here setting out his own version of such a Jewish Christian form of remnant theology and remnant rhetoric."²⁸ Longenecker sees Paul's use of Isaac and Ishmael as in line with prophetic rhetoric in the Old Testament dealing with the concept of a righteous remnant (cf. Amos 3:12, 5:15, Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 8:18). Importantly, such a remnant is not inclusive, rather it is only portion, and a small portion at that. Only a small portion of God's supposed people are true followers of God. Paul, Longenecker argues, is applying this idea to his own situation in Romans 9, one in which Paul preaches a gospel which the Jewish people have, by and large, rejected. They have not all rejected it, though, and so those few who believe are a remnant. The majority are excluded from that group. Paul's reference to Isaac and Ishmael, then, serves to support the argument that God in fact has a right to do this. He is under no obligation to include the unfaithful majority of Israel in his new covenant.²⁹

²⁷ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 802.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 805-815.

Romans 9:7 can be taken in a variety of ways, and there are many questions about the theological implications of the message of Romans 9 overall, particularly with regard to the concept of God's election of individuals as well as the nature and future of national Israel. These views, however, seem to generally agree regarding an important point concerning the message of Romans 9:7 specifically: Paul's assertion that physical descent from Abraham is not sufficient in order to partake of the Divine promise. There are effectively two groups of people who are physically descended from Abraham. There are those who receive that promise and those who do not. Regardless of what that promise is taken to include and how exactly this applies to any particular person or group, this essential element of Paul's message seems more or less clear. The message of Romans 9:7 is related to the exclusivity of God's promises even among physical descendants of Abraham.

Use of Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7

If Paul is using Genesis 21:12 to speak to Divinely-chosen exclusivity with regard to God's promises, even among the physical descendants of Abraham, what remains is to characterize his use of Genesis 21:12 within that rubric, particularly in terms of hermeneutics. Perhaps it is best to first point out some hermeneutical issues which are raised by Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7.

The first issue that should be pointed out is perhaps the most obvious. While Genesis teaches that Isaac and Jacob would receive the promises whereas Ishmael and Esau would be excluded, it does not seem to imply in its own context that that promise would, in turn, be available only to a certain portion of Jacob's descendants. Rather, it is quite the opposite. Given the audience of Genesis, its message to Israel seems to be that they are God's chosen people,

inheritors of the promise made to Abraham. This, of course, does not amount to a strict and wide-ranging theological statement anywhere in Genesis, but the general thrust of the book seems to be that the Divine promise is inherited by Jacob and his seed, meaning all of his twelve sons. In the Pentateuch, Israel is God's chosen people, and this Divinely-promised and Divinely-bestowed national identity (and land) seems to be depicted as the birthright of ethnic Israel as it exits from Egypt. The point of the Genesis narrative seems to be that Ishmael and Esau (and their lineages) are excluded, but Isaac and Jacob (and their lineages) are chosen. It is at least somewhat odd that Paul then uses this passage to speak of a certain subset of Jacob's descendants as being excluded from a Divine promise. This is not to say that Paul somehow directly contradicts Genesis or the wider message of the Pentateuch. Exclusivity within the seed is indeed present between Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau, but it could be argued that while Genesis specifically speaks to the exclusion of Ishmael and Esau, Genesis itself does not speak directly to further exclusion within the chosen lineage of Jacob. If Genesis is to be read on its own terms, it is about the chosen-ness of Jacob's lineage, not possible exclusivity within it. Paul's point is valid, but it is also in some sense alien to the Genesis text, and this raises hermeneutical questions. Rather, it is simply to suggest that this disparity between the overall thrust of Genesis (which is not necessarily a fully detailed theology) and Paul's focus may be indicative of some related disparity of terms or of contexts.

There is another issue somewhat related to the first: the Divine promises of which Paul speaks may not be the same as the ones spoken of in Genesis. Paul, of course, focuses on the blessings of the new covenant, which includes believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. The inheritance which Isaac was to receive ("for through Isaac your descendants shall be named")

speaks of the Abrahamic promise that Abraham's descendants would be a great nation inhabiting a promised land. The significance of Genesis 21:12 is that it is Isaac's lineage, not Ishmael's, through which this promise would be fulfilled. Isaac, not Ishmael, would be the ancestor of that great nation which would inherit that promised land. It may be possible to find some connection between this promise and the new covenant salvation spoken of by Paul from a wider, canonical perspective, but can that connection be found within the context of Genesis itself? Genesis speaks of a national blessing which, while it would not include Ishmael's or Esau's descendants, would include those of Jacob. Once Jacob's lineage is reached, there doesn't seem to be any hint of exclusivity.³⁰ To be clear, the issue is not simply that Genesis fails to speak about exclusivity within the descendants of Jacob. Rather, a certain level of non-exclusivity seems to be close to the very heart of its message. Genesis is very concerned with Israel's national identity, and in the context of the Pentateuch it is quite difficult to separate the Divine choosing and physical descent from Jacob with regard to that identity.

Perhaps both of these issues can be summed up like so: Paul says that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;" and proceeds to offer two examples (Ishmael and Esau), neither of whom are descendants of Israel (Jacob) physically or in any other sense. It is necessary for any hermeneutical understanding of how Paul uses Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7 to account for and explain this seeming discrepancy in a way that makes sense within the context of Paul's argument in Romans 9.

³⁰ There are mentions in the Old Testament of the concept of individuals being "cut off" from the people. This might be relevant in understanding some of the theological issues surrounding Paul's idea of "true Israel," insofar as it may support the idea that physical descent from Jacob did not guarantee covenant membership. However, Paul does not use this line of reasoning and so an in-depth discussion of it will be avoided here.

Hebrews 11:18

Now that the context and message of Romans 9:7 have been discussed, particularly in terms of how they relate to the usage of Genesis 21:12, the same treatment must be given to Hebrews 11:18. Hebrews 11:18 will be examined in terms of its background and its own contextual message. This will serve as a basis for the discussion of the usage of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews. After examining Hebrews 11:18, this study will have laid the groundwork for a discussion of the usage of Genesis 21:12 in both New Testament passages and how they may relate to one another.

Background of Hebrews 11:18 – The Cloud of Witnesses

Hebrews seems to be a particularly controversial book, especially with regard to its prolegomena. This is exacerbated by the general lack of evidential or even traditional attestation concerning its authorship, date and audience. As an epistle, it lacks the usual salutation, and even seems to defy genre classification to some degree.³¹ Any discussion of the prolegomena of Hebrews depends almost entirely on internal evidence. Fortunately, the content of the letter itself does seem to provide some foundation for understanding its purpose and message in spite of the lack of external data.

David Allen characterizes the overall message of Hebrews as sermonically in nature, arguing that its purpose is to exhort (probably Jewish) Christian believers to persevere in their commitment to Christ. As such, the book alternates between warning and exhortation, focusing heavily on exposition of Old Testament passages. This perseverance is presumably to be

³¹ Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 13.

undertaken in the face of adversity. Although there have been numerous theories as to the details of this audience and whatever difficulty they may have faced, Allen argues that at least this much can be said based upon the internal evidence.³²

Paul Ellingworth also makes a few observations concerning the background of Hebrews which may be particularly relevant toward understanding its use of the Old Testament. First, he observes that Hebrews is especially dependent on the Old Testament. He notes the relatively high density of Old Testament quotation, as well as the fact that the book contains extensive expositions upon particular texts (such as Psalm 110).³³ Ellingworth also discusses the relationship between Hebrews and Philo. Though some have postulated that the author of Hebrews was influenced by Philo, Ellingworth concludes that the parallels can be explained simply by exposure to a shared theological, philosophical, and literary background by both Philo and the author of Hebrews.³⁴ Another important point that Ellingworth makes concerns the potential connections between Hebrews and Qumran, particularly in light of 11QMelch, which like Hebrews discusses Melchizedek. This raises questions about whether the interpretive methods exhibited in Hebrews should be characterized as *peshet*-like. Ellingworth notes, however, that there are important differences with regard to how Hebrews and 11QMelch utilize the Melchizedek figure. Specifically, Melchizedek as a person is given relatively little attention in Hebrews. 11QMelch, on the other hand, focuses extensively on the person of Melchizedek

³² David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group: 2010), 82.

³³ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 37-39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-48.

himself and speculates about him. Hebrews does not seem to imply some special status for him beyond the fact that he is an Old Testament example of an extra-Levitical priest and therefore serves as a sort of precursor or template for Jesus' extra-Levitical priesthood. He is only important in terms of what the author of Hebrews wants to say about Jesus.³⁵ Overall, it does not seem instructive from a hermeneutical standpoint to characterize Hebrews as utilizing *peshet*. While there may be interesting similarities, the differences are too great for *peshet*, by itself, to function as a sufficient characterization.

Gareth Cockerill sees Hebrews 11:1-12:3 as a contextual unit dealing with the history of the faithful people of God and the audience's part in it. Hebrews 11, the famous "hall of faith" in which 11:18 appears, seeks to "clarify the nature of the faith that the [author] would have his hearers emulate."³⁶ In addition, particular focus is placed on the way in which Old Testament saints maintained their faith when faced with adversity.³⁷ Cockerill sees the statement in Hebrews 11:1 as a "definition of faith," which in turn is displayed in the list of the faithful of history.³⁸ There is some disagreement as to what exactly the author of Hebrews means when he uses the word πίστις. Some have argued that it should not be understood in the same way as it can be understood elsewhere in the New Testament (Paul's writings, for instance).³⁹ However,

³⁵ Ibid., 48-49.

³⁶ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 515.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 519.

³⁹ Dennis R. Lindsay provides an overview of this debate. Dennis R. Lindsay, "Pistis and 'Emunah: The Nature of Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham, et. al. (London: T& T Clark, 2008), 158-159.

Dennis Lindsay examines some of the other proposed backgrounds for the meaning of the word (Josephus and Philo) and determines that a comparison of the use of πίστις between Hebrews and these works “compels us to look elsewhere to Hebrews’ understanding of faith, and, by virtue of the canonical context, Scripture itself is the most logical place to look.”⁴⁰

Allen agrees that Hebrews 11:1 is a sort of formal definition of πίστις, but sees the verse as an assertion that faith gives present substance to unseen, future hope.⁴¹ As such, faith is a sort of present manifestation or witness to an unseen and as yet unfulfilled promise.⁴² As such, the “hall of faith” becomes a catalog of this testimony throughout history. The Old Testament faithful are at once exemplars, but their commitment to unseen future promises also serves to testify to the reality of those promises. In the more immediate context of Hebrews 11:18, the author speaks of Abraham as looking for a “city.” Mitchell argues that this is a way of connecting the experience of Abraham to the experience of the readers of Hebrews. Abraham was promised a land for his descendants to dwell in, yet he himself lived his life as a nomad. The land is “reinterpreted” (Mitchell’s word) as a “city prepared for them by God.”⁴³ Abraham’s willingness to leave his homeland, to remain faithful to God in his nomadic life, not to return to his homeland even though he could have done so, these all testify to the reality of the promise. Abraham did all of these things because he knew (had faith) that what God had promised was real. This faith is, then, a testimony to the audience of Hebrews.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 168.

⁴¹ Allen, *Hebrews*, 543.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 242-243.

It is on the basis of this testimony that the call of Hebrews 12 is given. The audience is called upon to patiently endure the trials and difficulties which they will face, looking to Jesus' obedient endurance in facing the cross the cross as an example.⁴⁴ The "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1 is the great host of the faithful men and woman of the past. These people bear witness to the faithfulness of God through their actions, particularly their sacrifices. F. F. Bruce even goes so far as to argue that Hebrews 12:1 is an early example of the term μαρτύριον taking on the connotation of "martyr," connecting as it does the concepts of witness and personal sacrifice.⁴⁵

For the purposes of this study, the contextual background of Hebrews 11:18 can be summed up like so: The purpose of Hebrews is to encourage believers (likely Jewish Christians) from turning back from the faith in the face of adversity. It does this by alternatively exhorting and warning them. Hebrews 11, the more immediate context of the verse in question, sets forth a litany of Old Testament saints with particular focus given to their belief in as yet unseen future realities, and the way in which their continued faithfulness and sacrifices testify to those realities and to the faithfulness of God. The audience is called upon to join this "cloud of witnesses" in faithful obedience by not giving up or turning back, in spite of the difficulties they face. With this context in mind, it is possible now to discuss the message of Hebrews 11:18.

⁴⁴ D. Stephen Long, *Hebrews* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 211.

⁴⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

Message of Hebrews 11:18

Hebrews 11:18 falls within the portion of the “hall of faith” that deals directly with Abraham. Hebrews first focuses on the faith displayed by Abraham in his departure from his homeland to sojourn in the land of promise, with special focus on the fact that he did this as a nomad “living in tents” and not seeing for himself the receipt of the land-promise. The verse under direct examination here, though, falls within a discussion of another act of faith on Abraham’s part: his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

Within the larger context of Hebrews 11-12:1, this act on Abraham’s part fits among the list of acts of faith which testify to the unseen reality of the future promises of a faithful God. By leaving his homeland to sojourn in the Promised Land, Abraham adds his voice to the “cloud of witnesses” of Hebrews 12:1. In the same fashion, he further lends his voice to this “cloud” by offering up Isaac at God’s behest. The author of Hebrews seems to tie this explicitly to the promises received by Abraham by referring to Abraham as “he that received the promises.” He seems to be reminding the audience that Abraham was, essentially, offering up those very promises which he had received, because Isaac was the key to their fulfillment.⁴⁶

Hebrews offers an interesting additional bit of interpretation here as well: it states that Abraham, as he offered up Isaac, “considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead.” Abraham Oh discusses the origin of this idea, pointing out its proposed roots in the Jewish tradition of *Adequah*. *Adequah* represents a Midrashic reading of the binding of Isaac narrative

⁴⁶ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 556.

which features an atoning function attached to the sacrifice of Isaac.⁴⁷ Some debate exists as to whether this influenced the New Testament's construal of atonement through Jesus as well as the New Testament's Christological use of the binding of Isaac narrative (not only in Hebrews 11:18 but also in Romans 4:16-17). However, Oh concludes that while there are similarities between Isaac and Jesus that the New Testament utilizes, this does not extend to an atoning function on the part of Isaac such as that put forward by the *Adequah* interpretation.⁴⁸

The idea that Abraham trusted God to raise Isaac from the dead is not mentioned in Genesis. Perhaps there is even an argument to be made that this understanding is a bit of a stretch. After all, it is clearly not necessary for God to raise Isaac from the dead in order to fulfill the promise made to Abraham. The narrative itself proves this because God does not in fact do so. Instead, an angel stays Abraham's hand before he kills Isaac. That being said, Hebrews is hardly alone in making this connection between Isaac and resurrection. On the other hand, the author of Hebrews seems to be reasoning that Abraham, in order to reconcile the Divine command to sacrifice Isaac with the Divine promise that was to come through Isaac and yet be willing to go through with the sacrifice, must have believed that the promise could still be fulfilled even if Isaac was sacrificed. An obvious way of reconciling this is resurrection.⁴⁹ Hebrews goes so far as to say that Isaac was indeed resurrected "in a figure."

⁴⁷ Abraham Oh, "Canonical understanding of the sacrifice of Isaac: The influence of the Jewish tradition," *HTS Theological Studies* 72, vol. 3 (2016): 1-2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁹ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 556-557.

What verse 18 adds to all of this is an emphasis on Isaac as the key to the promises made to Abraham. To sacrifice Isaac was to cut off the promises because God had stated unequivocally that the promises would be fulfilled through him. Without this, the conclusion stated in Hebrews that Abraham must have believed Isaac could be resurrected does not make sense. If the author of Hebrews thought it possible, for example, that the promises could be fulfilled through some other son, or in some other way that did not involve Isaac, there would be no need to conclude that Abraham must have believed that Isaac, if killed, would be resurrected. Verse 18 provides the biblical basis for this, as a clear statement from God that the promises would be fulfilled specifically through Isaac.

This understanding of verse 18 serves to clear up the interpretive issue raised by Hebrews' mention of Isaac as Abraham's "only begotten son." Hebrews seems to be paraphrasing Genesis 22:2 here. Although the Genesis account of Abraham's sacrificing of Isaac speaks of Isaac as Abraham's "only son" in the original Hebrew, Koester notes that the LXX does not include "only," let alone "only begotten."⁵⁰ The author of Hebrews seems to have somewhat pointedly opted for the Hebrew text in this instance. Abraham, of course, had another son: Ishmael. Ishmael, however, was disinherited⁵¹ and Isaac was designated by God as the sole heir of the promises, per Genesis 21:12. The author of Hebrews seems to be drawing special attention to this fact. Isaac was the Divinely-designated heir of the promises, and so they could

⁵⁰ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 491.

⁵¹ Hamilton characterizes the incident in this way, arguing that the promise to Isaac is framed to some degree in terms of his receiving an inheritance which Ishmael will not receive. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, 81.

not be fulfilled without him. Thus, the internal logic of Hebrews 11:17-19 makes sense. Isaac was the sole key to the promises, therefore Abraham displayed great faith in offering him up, since he would be sacrificing not only his son but all of the Divine promises that were tied to that son through Divine decree, and furthermore Abraham must even have reasoned that God was able to preserve those promises if Abraham obediently offered Isaac up, even if that meant Isaac would be resurrected. So, in summary, the message of Hebrews 11:18 specifically seems to be that Isaac was designated by God as the heir of and key to the promises made to Abraham, in such a way that the promises could not be fulfilled without him.

Use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18

The use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18 is, when taken on its own, somewhat straightforward. The message of Genesis 21:12 centers on the Divine decree that Isaac would be the sole heir and vehicle of the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. Hebrews more or less parrots this idea. The contexts, though, are not identical. The focus of Genesis 21:12 seems to be upon the sending away of Ishmael. Abraham is counseled by God not to hesitate in sending Ishmael away because a) Isaac is the sole heir of the promises and b) Ishmael will receive his own separate blessing. Thus, while Genesis 21:12 speaks to the Divine revelation that Isaac alone will be the heir of the promise, its focus is on the exclusivity of that inheritance within the context of the Isaac / Ishmael drama. Hebrews, on the other hand, simply focuses on the fact of Isaac's centrality to the fulfillment of the Divine promise. Hebrews goes beyond the direct statements of Genesis by reasoning about Abraham's mindset when he offered Isaac. Genesis 22, in its narrative of the sacrifice, does not directly reference the promises tied to Isaac. Nevertheless, Genesis 21 is in contextual view of Genesis 22, and the reference to Isaac as

Abraham's "only son" in Genesis 22:12 may have 21:12 in view. After all, in what sense, contextually, is Isaac Abraham's only son in Genesis 22? The answer seems to be that Isaac is the sole heir of the promise, per 21:12.

As such, Hebrews seems to do little to depart from the meaning of Genesis 21:12 in its use of that verse. Even its application of that verse to the Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 is fairly close contextually to the message of Genesis itself. The biggest leap which Hebrews makes is, perhaps, its conclusions about Abraham's faith in God's ability to resurrect as an explanation for his willingness to obey God in spite of seeming contradiction between God's decree in Genesis 22:12 and the command of 22:2. Nothing in Genesis states that Abraham did not have such a belief, but there is also no direct contextual evidence in Genesis that Abraham had resurrection in mind as a solution to the apparent dichotomy. This, however, does not directly affect how the use of Genesis 21:12 specifically may be understood. Genesis 21:12 identifies Isaac as the sole heir of the Divine promises made to Abraham, and Hebrews quotes it in a more or less straightforward way to point to that fact, even if Hebrews uses that as part of a larger argument.

It is important, however, to take note of the fact that Hebrews does use its quotation of Genesis 21:12 as part of that larger argument. Hebrews 11 uses the experiences and actions of Old Testament saints to speak to the lives of early Christians. As such, connections are drawn between the two. The Christian audience of Hebrews looked forward to the fulfillment of Divine promise in the form the complete fulfillment of their salvation, and Abraham's faithfulness is interpreted along these same lines. Thus, Abraham is seen as awaiting a "better country."

Abraham's patient expectation of a land and a nation which he would not himself live to see is

viewed as an indication of an even greater hope. Similarly, Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac is seen not only as evidence of his belief that God will somehow "provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8), but that God can and will even resurrect Isaac from dead, if need be, in order to preserve the Divine promise. The binding of Isaac narrative is not the direct and immediate focus of Genesis 21:12. However, Hebrews uses Genesis 21:12 as part of a larger argument which concerns the binding of Isaac narrative. As such, the usage of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews also involves and includes this larger usage of the binding of Isaac narrative. For the purposes of this study, it will all be treated as one unit.

Is the Idea of Resurrection Latent in Genesis?

If the binding of Isaac narrative is to be seen as connected to the use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews, then a relevant question is whether and to what degree Genesis itself contains this idea of a resurrection. Just how natural is the inference made in Hebrews 11:18 about Abraham's thoughts as he sacrificed Isaac? Is it latent within Genesis in some form, or is it purely an invention on the part of the author of Hebrews? The answer to this question has pertinent implications regarding the hermeneutical issues surrounding the use of Genesis 21 in Hebrews 11.

Michell L. Chase sees the reasoning provided in Hebrews as something closely tied to and latent within the Genesis text. It simply flows out of the juxtaposition between the absolute trustworthiness (specifically in Abraham's eyes) of the Divine promise concerning Isaac as the seed and the command that Abraham sacrifice Isaac. The only logical way to reconcile these two things, in indeed Abraham is to actually go through with the sacrifice, is to assume that God

would raise Isaac from the dead.⁵² Chase sees this conclusion as valid partially because the “seeds” of a resurrection hope are already present throughout Genesis. He provides a cumulative case for this, and his analysis of the binding of Isaac narrative forms a part of this cumulative case.⁵³ Furthermore, he bases this enterprise on an argument that the New Testament Scriptures repeatedly validate the presence of a latent resurrection hope in the Torah.⁵⁴

In *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, Jon D. Levenson devotes an entire chapter to discussion of the concept of resurrection in the Torah. His primary focus is on rabbinic traditions which saw a concept of resurrection in the text. In his attempt to understand the motivations of the rabbis, Levenson argues that their commitment to the concept of a resurrection grew out of a need to adapt scriptural teaching to new contextual realities. He concludes that these rabbinic attempts “are, in a word, *derash*, the product of midrashic interpretation and not historico-grammatical exegesis.”⁵⁵ On the other hand, he sees the concept of a resurrection in a latent form within earlier Old Testament texts such as the Torah. Clear Old Testament statements about resurrection such as that found in Daniel 12:1-3, as well as rabbinic ideas about resurrection in the Scriptures, are founded in these latent precursors.⁵⁶

⁵² Mitchell L. Chase, “The Genesis of the Resurrection Hope: Exploring its Early Presence and Deep Roots,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 3 (2014), 478-479.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 471-480.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 467-470.

⁵⁵ Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

N. T. Wright sees the concept of resurrection developing in a similar way. Some of its earlier echoes, he argues, are founded in a vision of a sort of communal immortality focused on perpetuation of one's lineage.⁵⁷ This idea develops into an idea of personal resurrection, but it does so in a way that is intimately tied to the Old Testament's vision of God himself. This theological understanding, present from the very beginning, serves as the basis for thematic threads which ultimately weave together in order to form a resurrection theology.⁵⁸

What can be gathered from all of this is that resurrection is not clearly taught in Genesis. However, it is not entirely alien to Genesis either. Ideas about resurrection and life after death grow out of seeds already planted in the earlier Scriptures. This, perhaps, explains the New Testament assertion observed by Chase that a doctrine of resurrection is founded in the Old Testament Scriptures.⁵⁹ However, if a doctrine of resurrection was merely latent in books such as Genesis, what is to be made of the bold claim in Hebrews that Abraham was aware of it? Is this to be taken as evidence that an understanding of resurrection goes as far back as Abraham himself? Is the logic applied by the author of Hebrews concerning the binding of Isaac narrative sufficient to establish Abraham's trust in a resurrection, despite the fact that Genesis does not explicitly mention it? These are some of the hermeneutical issues which will have to be addressed in interacting with the use of Genesis in Hebrews 11:18 (and its immediate context) in this study.

Hermeneutical Differences Between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18

⁵⁷ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

⁵⁹ Chase, 478-479.

Before diving too deeply into the hermeneutical situations affecting either Hebrews 11:18 or Romans 9:7, it is important to discuss the hermeneutical moves present in these two passages with a view to how they are different. This will prepare the way for an argument to be made that the hermeneutics exhibited in these verses are affected by situational factors, and that such factors can play an integral part in the hermeneutics of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament.

Perhaps the most obvious statement that can be made about the hermeneutical differences between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 is that Hebrews uses Genesis 21:12 in a more straightforward way than Paul does. When the use of Genesis 21:12 in each case is viewed on its own, Paul's message seems to divert more widely from that of the original context of Genesis specifically with regard to the use of Genesis 21:12. Paul's focus is on exclusivity, and is more closely tied to the exclusion of Ishmael in favor of Isaac. He makes the point that Ishmael, a physical descendant of Abraham, was nevertheless excluded from the Divine promise made to Abraham (despite the fact that Ishmael received a separate promise of his own, making no mention of the fact that Ishmael received this blessing specifically "because he is [Abraham's] descendant" [Genesis 21:13]). The overall contextual message of Genesis seems to focus on the national identity of Israel as descendants of Jacob and therefore inheritors of the Abrahamic promise. Indeed, Jacob's name is changed to Israel, and the whole point is that descent from Jacob forms part of a national identity that descendants of Ishmael and Esau, for example, do not have. Paul, however, uses this to speak of exclusion of certain Israelites from the new covenant of God. Paul's theology does not contradict the message of Genesis, but it does seem to vary from it contextually in its focus.

Hebrews, on the other hand, uses Genesis 21:12 in a more straightforward way. Genesis 21:12 identifies Isaac as the child of the promise. There is no possibility of Ishmael playing a part in fulfilling the promise, a fact which perhaps serves as the basis for Isaac being identified three times as Abraham's "only" son in Genesis 22. This is notwithstanding the LXX which speaks of Isaac merely as "beloved" on all three occasions, where in this instance Hebrews seems to prefer a version containing "only." As such, there is contextual precedent within Genesis itself for the way in which Hebrews emphasizes the Divine statement in Genesis 21:12: Isaac is the sole heir. It is this intra-Genesis precedent which Paul's usage of the verse seems to lack.

However, the use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18 should not be separated from its immediate context. This use of Genesis 21:12 forms an integral part of a tightly packed argument about Abraham's sacrifice in light of Isaac being the child of promise *a la* Genesis 21:12. This argument does contain something of a departure from the contextual message of Genesis in that the author of Hebrews speculates about Abraham's belief that if Isaac was killed he would in fact be resurrected. The author has reasons for such speculation, as has already been discussed, but this does represent something other than historical-grammatical exegesis. The Genesis account of Abraham's life alone does not appear to demand reasoning about resurrection as a solution to the faith-problem posed by Isaac's sacrifice. This demand stems from a concern external to Genesis itself, perhaps the desire of the author of Hebrews to connect Abraham's experience of awaiting a promised hope to the similar experience of his readers, whose future hope focuses much more directly on the promise of eternal life and resurrection. It is necessary to deal with the use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18 on two levels: first on the granular level of Hebrews 11:18

alone, and then on the level of Hebrews 11:18 within the context of the statement about Abraham's faith exhibited in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

When viewed this way, differences between Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 and that of the author of Hebrews become even more apparent. Both raise hermeneutical questions, Paul's through his departure from the specific message of Genesis 21:12 about Israel's national/ethnic identity and Hebrews' through a more direct usage of Genesis 21:12 within the context of a larger argument that imports external concerns into that usage. The questions raised by each respective passage, however, are not the same questions. Paul's use of Genesis 21:12, while not immediately contradictory to the meaning of Genesis 21:12, runs in practically the opposite direction of the contextual message of Genesis regarding Isaac as Abraham's seed. Nothing about Isaac being the child of promise and the patriarch of a national identity for Israel indicates that God's future new covenant must include all of ethnic Israel, but the Abrahamic promises of Genesis, in the context of its overall message, are for descendants of Jacob even if Ishmael and Esau are specifically excluded. Hebrews seems to run with the grain of Genesis, even though it branches off with regard to concerns that are not part of the Genesis context itself (i.e. hope of resurrection). Hebrews 11:18 raises questions about whether or not it is hermeneutically appropriate, for the author of Hebrews or for modern readers, to extrapolate about the thoughts and beliefs of biblical characters when they are not clearly stated. Romans 9:7 raises perhaps a more difficult question about whether or not biblical passages can be used in ways which, while they may not directly contradict, nevertheless run counter to the general thrust of the overall message of the context of those passages. Both Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 raise certain

hermeneutical questions with regard to their use of Genesis 21:12, but they each use the Genesis passage in different ways, and therefore raise different questions.

Hermeneutical Issues Arising from the Differences in use of Genesis 21:12 between Romans 9:7
and Hebrews 11:18

The fact that Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 use Genesis 21:12 differently raises questions in and of itself. It is these questions with which this study is primarily concerned. Does the presence of two inspired New Testament texts which interpret an Old Testament text in different ways, both of which carry their own difficulties, require as an explanation some sort of *sensus plenior*? Perhaps two different usages of a text imply at least two different meanings for that text. Perhaps each usage presents its own *sensus plenior* for Genesis 21:12 so that there is more than one. Presumably, if the Spirit is capable of embedding a hidden meaning in a text he is capable of embedding more than one hidden meaning in that text. With that in mind, it seems that *sensus plenior* would be able to account for these different ways of using the same text. However, this study will argue that it is not necessary to resort to *sensus plenior* in order to explain the phenomenon of multiple, different usages. It will propose a solution which does not require *sensus plenior*: the hermeneutical methods exhibited in both New Testament texts are simultaneously valid in their own right and in a way which does not rely on a fuller sense, even when the contextual meaning of Genesis 21:12 is taken into account.

There is another issue which is raised by the presence of two differing inspired interpretations of Genesis 21:12. The question “what is the right way to interpret this text?” seems to falter at the point where the same passage is interpreted in two different ways within the New Testament. There can no longer be a single answer to that question, but if the New

Testament is held to be inspired, then each of these different ways of interpreting must be somehow valid as well. The particular passages under scrutiny here not only question whether straightforward historical-grammatical exegesis is the only way to read an Old Testament text, but they also question whether there even is a single “correct” way. There is a need for consistency. This study will attempt to show that such consistency is still possible, but it requires taking into account additional nuance in the form of an acknowledgement of situational factors which are at play when a particular way of interpreting the Old Testament is put forward. When these factors are taken into account, there are still “right” and “wrong” ways to use the text, but the scope of what is right and wrong depends on a variety of situational factors external to the text itself. Nevertheless, within this context there can still be consistency and a firm interpretive foundation. It will be argued that speech act theory furnishes an approach which enables this consistency to be explored across multiple situational contexts.

This question leads to a somewhat related one concerning replication. Should modern readers replicate the interpretive methods of the New Testament authors in light of multiple, different ways in which Old Testament passages are used, and if so, how? This study will again turn to situational factors for an answer. By taking these into account, a foundation can be established for defining proper and improper interpretation within the context of modern situational factors. To ask whether an interpretation is right or wrong in a given situation is, of course, more complex than simply asking whether a particular way of interpreting is right or wrong, but it will be argued that this is more akin to the actual way in which the New Testament authors approached Scripture. Furthermore, the approach furnished by speech act theory provides

a way to consistently apply the same criteria to both the New Testament's usage of Scripture and usage by modern readers.

Conclusion

There are important hermeneutical differences between the use of Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18. These differences seem to further complicate the usual slew of hermeneutical questions which arise from the New Testament's use of the old. Issues of hermeneutical validity and replication are muddied when two passages seem to use the same passage in ways which are differently problematic. This study will suggest that a situational hermeneutic rooted in theological beliefs about Scripture can help answer some of these questions, and that identifying the speech acts at work in the relevant passages is a key to unraveling this. Having examined these three interrelated passages in terms of their individual messages and contexts, it is now possible to discuss the speech acts being performed in each of them.

CHAPTER THREE:

SPEECH ACTS IN GENESIS 21:12 / ROMANS 9:7 AND HEBREWS 11:18

Introduction

Having looked at Genesis 21:12 and its use in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in the more traditional manner, the way is open to begin identifying the speech acts present in each of these texts. The next chapter will argue that speech act theory provides a way to evaluate the usage of Scripture in terms of its hermeneutical validity that can be applied consistently across a variety of situational contexts. This includes the situational contexts involved in the New Testament's usage of Scripture, but it also includes those of modern readers. The final chapter will argue that this, therefore, provides a way to evaluate modern replication of the New Testament's methods that better accounts for the New Testament's situation-bound hermeneutical variety. In order to make those arguments with respect to Genesis 21:12 and romans 9:7/Hebrews 11:18, however, it is necessary first to discuss speech acts as they appear in those respective passages. The current chapter will devote itself to this task. On this foundation, further arguments about how speech acts interact with situation and hermeneutical validity can be made in the following chapters. First, a discussion of speech act theory in general will be offered. This will take the form of an examination of prominent contributors in the field of speech act theory and its historical development.

In order to maintain relative brevity in discussing the backgrounds of speech act theory, this study will begin with the work of J. L. Austin. Although the conceptual roots of speech act theory can be traced back farther, Austin is perhaps the earliest modern philosopher to describe it

in the form which is best known today.¹ This will be followed by some methodological comments concerning specifically the identification of speech acts in the biblical passages under scrutiny in this study. Once some methodological parameters have been set, this chapter will be set to the task of identifying the most relevant speech acts occurring in Genesis 21:12, Romans 9:7, and Hebrews 11:18. Of course, identification of the speech acts present in a particular biblical passage is by no means a simple task. This will require the identification of multiple possible accountings of the speech acts present in a passage, followed by an attempt to determine which ones are most satisfying within the context of each book. The inclusion of Genesis 21:12 in this process is important, as the speech acts performed in the New Testament texts may be performed on or in light of the ones performed in Genesis. Questions about the relationship between the authorial intent of the New Testament authors and that of the Genesis author necessitate an understanding of the speech acts performed in Genesis.

Speech Act Theory

Before embarking on the task of identifying speech acts present in the biblical passages under scrutiny here, it is perhaps necessary to briefly summarize speech act theory itself so as to ensure that the argument of this study is properly communicated. Speech act theory is a theory within philosophy of language which seeks to understand language in terms of actions which go beyond merely declarative actions. It focuses on the multitude of types of action which are involved with or performed through speaking. In order to provide an overview of speech act theory as it relates to this study, the work of some major contributors will be addressed. These

¹ Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 31-33.

will include J. L. Austin and John R. Searle, as well as some authors who have applied speech act theory to biblical interpretation.

J. L. Austin

While speech act theory builds upon the contributions of numerous earlier scholars, its essential ideas found their genesis in the work of J. L. Austin. Austin's work on speech act theory arises as part of his larger contribution to ordinary language philosophy. Austin argued for an understanding of speech as action that went beyond just the idea of assertion. He was responding, in part, to a more purely positivist view of language which sought to see language as comprised of the making of truth claims. Austin saw this as too reductive and argued that it failed to account for the full range of uses to which language might be put.² He outlines some of the shortcomings of these positivistic views in his discussion of sense-data theory as it relates to language in *Sense and Sensibilia*. Specifically, he points out that this positivistic view falls short in its ability to account for the normal, everyday uses of words which allow for or imply some degree of uncertainty about whether what is experienced is actually the way things are, such as "perceive."³ In short, he argues that the way in which words such as "perceive" or "seem" are used in ordinary language points to flaws in the claim that the best way to understand language is in terms of fact-assertions which are either true or false. There are significant aspects of statements containing these words which are neither properly described nor accounted for by the positivist understanding. Austin instead proposes a much more varied way of understanding the

² J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 102.

³ Ibid.

actions involved in speaking. Rather than just stating a truth-claim, speakers can “promise,” “name,” “bequeath,” etc.

In order to account for these kinds of statements in his description of language, Austin proposes what he calls “performative statements.” Such statements are involved in the performing of some type of action and do not necessarily have a truth value. Rather than merely stating a fact (either true or false), they perform some action. Austin offers as examples the naming of a ship with the statement, “I name this ship...” or marrying a woman: “I take this woman...” as such performative utterances. He clarifies that such actions properly account for circumstantial factors which affect whether or not a particular act is being performed, such as the fact that the one naming the ship is the person with the authority to do so and that the man marrying the woman is not already married, and that the woman has agreed, and so on. He points out that these instances of speech can involve actions other than stating a truth-claim and cannot be said to have a truth value themselves in that simple and direct sense.⁴ So, Austin sees speech acts as the actions which are carried out in the utterance of performative statements, and these acts encompass much more than just the stating of claims with a truth value. Ultimately, these performative actions are termed speech acts.

Austin argues that any given performative statement involves multiple speech acts, and places these speech acts in three different categories, although he acknowledges that there are likely other types of acts involved which could be pointed out. These categories are formed around the ontological relationship between the speech act and the speech itself. The first of

⁴ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 8-9.

these categories, locutionary acts, contains those which involve the physical or modal aspects of the act of speech such as the making of sounds (which Austin calls phonetic act, a subset of locutionary act), the act of uttering words conforming to a particular grammar within a particular understood language (phetic act), and the act of doing the previous two “with a certain more-or-less definite sense and reference”⁵ (rhetic act). Essentially, locutionary acts describe the functional act of saying something, in all its parts.⁶

Austin also identifies illocutionary acts, which are acts performed “*in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something.”⁷ Whereas locutionary acts involve *saying words*, or even just *making sounds*, illocutionary acts involve things like *asking a question* or *warning someone*. Interestingly, Austin points out the importance of context with regard to illocutionary acts. The same locutionary act could be made in two different situations (same sounds made), and yet the illocutionary acts involved might differ based upon that situational context.⁸ This will be of particular importance in this study, which will seek to point out the effect which situation has on the speech acts involved in New Testament texts as they use the Old Testament.

Austin points out a third category of speech act: perlocutionary acts. These acts concern the consequences or effects produced by speech on the audience, the speaker themselves, or

⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁷ Ibid, 99-100.

⁸ Ibid, 100.

others, insofar as those effects are intended by the speaker when speaking.⁹ An example of such an act might go as follows: if a person is about to be hit by a bus and a bystander shouts “watch out!” A locutionary act would be the shouting of those words, and an illocutionary act would be that the bystander warned the person about to be hit. Assuming that the person got out of the way of the bus in time, a perlocutionary act in this scenario would be that the bystander got the person to move out of the way. In short, locutionary acts in Austin’s view are acts *of* speaking, illocutionary acts are acts performed *in* speaking, and perlocutionary acts are acts performed *by* speaking.

John R. Searle

John R. Searle takes Austin’s work on speech acts and develops it further. He focuses primarily on illocutionary acts in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.¹⁰ In this work, Searle seeks to more closely define what is meant by illocutionary force as Austin initially described it. While Austin pointed out the existence of such a concept, he did not fully explore how it could be understood. Searle focuses primarily on the speech act of promising as a test case for his analysis. His method involves asking questions related to what criteria specifically must be met in order for an illocutionary act such as promising to be successfully carried out. His goal in doing this is to determine a set of rules which can be used to identify illocutionary force.¹¹ Searle explores more deeply the details of reference and predication as illocutionary speech acts.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰ John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

In *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*,¹² a later work, Searle explores speech acts again as part of his larger focus on the philosophy of intent. He sees speech acts as parallel to states of intent within the context of the philosophy of intent which he seeks to put forward. As part of this discussion, Searle asserts that illocutionary acts, like intent-states, have conditions by which they can be satisfied or left unsatisfied. A promise, for example, can be kept or broken, or a command can be obeyed or disobeyed. He speaks of the concept of “direction of fit” as an attribute of illocutionary acts which speaks to their intentionality and determines how their truth value is defined. Typical propositional statements, and others which Searle calls part of the “assertive class” have a “word-to-world” directional fit. They are true insofar as they match an external and independently existing world, and false insofar as they do not. Other speech acts, however, such as promises, requests, or commands, have a “world-to-word” direction fit, and are kept/fulfilled/obeyed not insofar as they match the world but insofar as the world matches them, and broken/denied/disobeyed insofar as it does not.¹³

Within the context of this study, Searle’s contribution is important in that it provides some starting points for analyzing the nature of the speech acts involved in a text. Perhaps identification of the satisfying conditions or direction of fit involved in biblical texts can provide some insight into the numerous speech acts which may be being performed in a particular text. Searle’s contributions will be discussed further in the context of the methodological section of this chapter.

¹² John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation

Following its beginnings in the domain of philosophy of language, speech act theory has been taken up within the study of hermeneutics, and of biblical hermeneutics specifically. While this study focuses on speech act theory as it specifically applies to questions about New Testament use of the Old, it is important to understand the background of how speech act theory has been applied to biblical hermeneutics in general. The main contributors that will be addressed here are Nicholas Wolterstorff, Anthony C. Thiselton, and Richard S. Briggs, as well as some comments by Brevard Childs that seek clarify the differences in approach between Wolterstorff and Thiselton.

Nicholas Wolterstorff

Perhaps Wolterstorff's most important contribution to the use of speech act theory in biblical hermeneutics appears in his book *Divine Discourse*. Wolterstorff sees in speech act theory an opportunity to understand in a new way the claim the God speaks. He argues that the distinction proposed by speech acts theory between locutionary and illocutionary acts opens the door to the possibility that the idea that God speaks "... should be understood as the attribution to God of *illocutionary actions*, leaving it open how God performs those actions."¹⁴ As such, someone hearing the Bible read aloud and feeling as though the message of Scripture were meant for them can rightly understand that God is indeed speaking directly to them. Furthermore, this can be understood without the need for some special revelatory incident, because God's speaking

¹⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995

), 13.

to that person can be seen as an illocutionary act already embedded in, perhaps, the much earlier locutionary acts involved in the writing of that Scripture. Wolterstorff argues that what people perceive as God speaking can indeed actually be God speaking, even in the absence of some additional locutionary act (such as an audible voice or some other special mode of revelation). To him, Divine speech is in fact Divine appropriation of human speech.¹⁵

It is important to note that Wolterstorff's approach does not insist that the Bible itself is Divine speech in the inerrantist sense. Indeed, he argues that it is not necessary for the Bible as a human-authored text to be inerrant in order for the Divine discourse which comes from it by way of illocution to be perfectly true and loving. He acknowledges that this leads to questions regarding the authority of Scripture, which he refers to as the "wax nose" anxiety. This is the concern that one's interpretation is wrong, either in failing to recognize what God says or otherwise believing that He says something He does not say. Wolterstorff argues that, on a practical level, even the inerrantist cannot escape this anxiety. His answer to this problem is that readers should approach the task of interpretation with a great deal of humility, because the risk cannot be completely avoided.¹⁶

Anthony Thiselton

Anthony C. Thiselton further develops speech act theory within the domain of biblical hermeneutics. He draws upon the work of Wolterstorff, but does not necessarily mirror his approach. Whereas Wolterstorff sees speech acts as a primary vehicle for Divine discourse,¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., 223-237.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 13.

Thiselton understands speech act theory as an interpretive tool for understanding the text. He sees speech act theory as “one of the many ways of understanding the language of the New Testament.”¹⁸ In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Thiselton particularly emphasizes the benefit of examining scriptural rhetoric in its perlocutionary context. He argues that rhetoric, insofar as it seeks to produce certain effects in the audience, can be better understood by viewing such effects as perlocutionary speech acts. Thiselton sees speech acts as important for complete understanding of biblical texts because performativity is simply a property of the text. In many cases, biblical authors do not simply say something, they do something in saying and also by saying. Thus, speech acts are in fact a feature of the text itself. Thiselton does not seem to mean this in a Wolterstorffian sense (i.e. that the Divine discourse is contained in illocutionary acts which extend to today), but rather seems to be simply stating that the Bible is the performance of speech acts, and that failing to recognize this in favor of seeing it only in terms of its truth-claims is to miss out on a hermeneutically useful dimension of the Scriptures.¹⁹ As such, speech act theory is “one tool among many” for scriptural interpretation.²⁰

Brevard Childs on Wolterstorff and Thiselton

Brevard Childs offers a critique of Wolterstorff’s approach in which he elucidates the differences in approach between Wolterstorff and Thiselton. He criticizes Wolterstorff’s departure from the traditional understanding of biblical interpretation as seeking to understand the meaning

¹⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-52.

²⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton, “Speech-Act Theory as One Tool Among Many: ‘Transforming Texts,’” in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 71-74.

of the text exegetically. He sees Wolterstorff's approach as failing to address the problem of the divide between faith and reason which Wolterstorff seeks to address. Instead, it separates the content of Divine revelation from the original meaning of Scripture itself. Childs contrasts this approach with that of Thiselton, who he says utilizes speech act theory within the context of exegesis. Thiselton seeks to understand the text in the more or less typically exegetical way, but sees speech act theory as a tool which can be used toward that end in certain situations. Childs cautions modern scholars to take care when addressing the topic of speech act theory in biblical interpretation, because this is not in fact a unified topic, but rather involves wildly disparate approaches.²¹

In agreement with Childs, the approach of this study will be most like that of Thiselton. It will be argued that speech act theory is a useful interpretive tool, in this case especially when it comes to answering hermeneutical questions about the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. Like Thiselton, this study will emphasize the importance of speech acts. Speech acts are in fact a feature of the text, whether they are recognized or not, and therefore they are hermeneutically significant. However, this study will not seek to place the locus of meaning for the biblical text in speech acts. Speech acts may be part of a text's context and therefore affect its meaning, or understanding them may help to clarify that meaning, but speech acts are not themselves a source of additional meaning that is independent from the text or from the intent of its human authors.

²¹ Brevard S. Childs, "Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* vol. 58 no. 4 (2005), 375-392.

Richard S. Briggs

Building on the earlier work of Wolterstorff and Thiselton, Richard S. Briggs contributes to the topic of speech act theory in biblical hermeneutics in his volume *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation*. Briggs does not see the role of speech act theory as being relegated only to certain categories of so-called performative utterances, nor does he see it as totally revolutionizing the way in which language is understood when it comes to hermeneutics. Rather, he proposes that speech act theory opens up a new hermeneutical category which he terms a “hermeneutic of self-involvement.” Briggs differentiates this from a reader-response hermeneutic and does not seem to claim that meaning is derived from one’s subjective response. Rather, he sees certain theological concepts as best understood in the context of one’s own involvement in them. Indeed, to separate that self-involvement from one’s understanding is perhaps to miss something.²² One example which Briggs offers is that of forgiveness. He discusses the construal of forgiveness as a performative speech act and argues that this construal has significant advantages over others. Seeing forgiveness, for example, as simply reporting an inner cognitive state fails to account for the fact that cognitive states can fluctuate. Seeing it as a “strongly self-involving illocutionary act,” he argues, accounts for forgiveness within the context of theological beliefs about sin, atonement, etc.²³

Briggs seems to see the strong self-involvement in illocutionary acts as central to interpretation precisely because these acts are a feature of theological concepts dealt with by the

²² Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action*, 296-298.

²³ *Ibid.*, 253-255.

biblical texts, and because the texts also deal with issues related to that involvement. Like Thiselton, he sees speech acts as a feature of the text which interpreters ought to take into account, although he is focused specifically on his hermeneutic of self-involvement whereas Thiselton is simply concerned with speech acts in the biblical text generally. This study will follow their example. If speech acts are indeed a feature of the text, then they ought to be examined as part of the task of exegesis. In the case of New Testament use of the Old, the argument being made here is that such examination has something to contribute to the discussion of hermeneutical issues which arise when the New Testament uses Old Testament texts.

John Walton and Brent Sandy

In *The Lost World of Scripture*,²⁴ John Walton and Brent Sandy discuss ancient ideas concerning scriptural authority and their basis in oral culture. As part of their larger argument, they discuss the concept of Divine accommodation of human authors. Speech act theory plays an important role in their understanding. They employ speech act theory to argue that usage of a text does not guarantee illocutionary endorsement of all that the appropriated speaker expresses or believes. Whether or not that endorsement is present with regard to any particular point depends on additional factors, such as cultural genre conventions.²⁵ With regard to this argument, Walton and Sandy present some ideas that come close to the argument being presented this study. Like Walton and Sanders, this study will focus on circumstantial factors which have an impact on the nature of illocutionary acts being performed. This study will apply a similar idea

²⁴ John H. Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

²⁵Ibid., 41-47.

within the context of the New Testament's use of the Old to form a criterion for hermeneutically justified usage of a text.

Speech Act Theory and New Testament Use of the Old Testament

The preceding overview of the development of speech act theory and its use in biblical interpretation has been necessarily brief. A more thorough canvass of all the various contributions to the topic would be too large for the scope of this study. Having discussed the development of speech act theory as an interpretive tool, it is now possible to focus on its role specifically with regard to understanding how New Testament texts use the Old Testament. Here, the argument will be made that identification of speech acts which take Old Testament texts, authors, meanings, or assertions as their object provide a way of addressing hermeneutical issues caused by the New Testament's use of the Old Testament with some additional clarity.

To state this argument simply, when discussing the hermeneutical issues raised by the New Testament's use of the Old, it matters what the New Testament authors *do to* (and with) the Old Testament text. It is important, however, to spend some time explaining precisely what this means. Perhaps it is best to do so with the help of a well-known example. In this way, the approach presented here may be described as it relates to what are perhaps somewhat familiar arguments. Matthew's quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15 has become something of a prototypical example of a hermeneutically problematic instance of the New Testament's use of the Old. Matthew's claim that Jesus' departure from Egypt as a child somehow fulfills Hosea's statement raises certain questions. The foremost, perhaps, stems from the fact that Hosea does not appear to be making any sort of predictive prophecy in the quoted text, but rather seems to

simply be referring to God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt during the exodus.²⁶ In what sense can Jesus fulfill a statement that does not, on its own, appear to be a predictive prophecy? Does this not seem to indicate that Matthew is quoting Hosea with little respect for the original meaning of the text, and is in fact simply finding in Hosea some convenient wording which he can apply to an event in Jesus' life? Far be it from modern historical-grammatical interpreters to use the Scriptures this way! And yet, what of the fact that such loose hermeneutical moves are ostensibly practiced within inspired Scripture? Does that mean that such methods ought to be replicated today? In short, all of the typical difficult questions about the New Testament's use of the Old are raised.

Of course, there have been a variety of answers to these questions, even with regard to this passage in particular. It is not necessary to catalogue them here, nor to argue for any particular solution to this problem. It has already been dealt with extensively. Instead, an attempt will be made to show how this problem and its proposed solutions can be seen in terms of speech act theory. One author who has addressed the problem of Matthew 2:15 at length is G. K. Beale. He lists among the problems he sees in this passage Matthew's apparent reference to Hosea 11:1 as though it were a predictive prophecy to be fulfilled when it is not. Beale's solution to this problem is to argue that Matthew is not in fact claiming that Hosea 11:1 is predictive prophecy at all, at least not in that simplistic, problematic sense. He argues instead that Matthew is combining a historical-grammatical reading of Hosea 11:1 with a concern for a larger biblical

²⁶ G. K. Beale provides a more detailed summary of the issues raised by this text and offers solutions. G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 55 no. 4 (Dec 2012), 697-700.

theology within Hosea itself which focuses on the exodus as a prototypical pattern for a future reentering of Israel into Egypt and a subsequent eschatological return. Matthew then sees this as “fulfilled” in Jesus as a Messianic representative for corporate Israel. For Beale, Matthew’s usage of Hosea 11:1 is theologically foreshadowed in the larger context of Hosea 11, even if it is not clearly expressed in Hosea 11:1 specifically. The idea which Matthew keys upon is not alien to the Hosea text, but it is present in a sophisticated way in the overall biblical theology of the book.²⁷

A key feature of Beale’s response to the problem of Matthew 2:15 is that it resolves the problem by envisioning Matthew’s use of the Hosea text in a new way. One way of looking at both the problem and Beale’s solution is to observe that they concern what Matthew *says about* Hosea 11:1. In fact, the problem itself can be seen as a problem of *saying about*. The hermeneutical issues raised by Matthew 2:15 arise from the fact that Matthew seems to be *saying about* Hosea 11:1 that it is a prophecy awaiting fulfillment when, on its own, it does not appear to be. In other words, Matthew seems to be *saying something about* Hosea 11:1 which, according to historical-grammatical methods, does not appear to be true. And thus, “What of inerrancy?” etc., etc. Beale’s answer to this problem sees Matthew’s *saying about* differently. Instead of seeing Matthew as *saying about* Hosea 11:1 that it is a straightforward predictive prophecy that God’s son (in the sense of Jesus) would one day exit Egypt (as He did in Matthew 2), Beale sees Matthew as saying something much more complex about Hosea, specifically that it is a reference to the first exodus, but in light of the biblical theology of Hosea that has implications regarding

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 700-709.

an eschatological exodus involving the Messiah.²⁸ It is by viewing differently *what Matthew says about Hosea* that Beale is able to resolve the problem posed by Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1.

Perhaps there is, however, a more precise way of characterizing arguments such as Beale's with regard to how they seek to re-envision what the New Testament text says about the Old Testament text. It is at this point that the relevance of speech act theory can be brought into focus. When the situation of Matthew 2:15 is viewed in terms of speech act theory, it becomes apparent that the *saying about* is an illocutionary act. In the locutionary act of penning the words of Matthew 2:15, Matthew *says about* Hosea something or other. Since this act of *saying about* Hosea 11:1 is performed *in* writing the words of Matthew 2:15, it is illocutionary in nature. The relevance of speech act theory to situations such as the one which Beale addresses can be stated thus: the problem posed by Matthew 2:15 as well as the solution proposed by Beale hinge upon the precise way in which Matthew's illocutionary act of *saying about* Hosea is understood. The problematic understanding of Matthew 2:15 sees Matthew performing the illocutionary act of claiming that Hosea is a simplistically predictive prophecy about an event in the life of the Messiah. The way Beale characterizes Matthew, however, paints him as performing a different illocutionary act: referencing a biblical theology already present within Hosea as a whole and represented in Hosea 11:1 and its immediate context. As such, the problem of Matthew 2:15 can be framed as a misconstrual of Matthew's illocutionary act with the text of Hosea 11:1 as its object, and Beale's solution to that problem can thus be framed as a correction of that misconstrual which involves offering a correct envisioning of that illocutionary act.

²⁸ Ibid.

It may well be the case that all instances of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament can be viewed this way. The hermeneutics employed by New Testament authors using the Old are, perhaps by definition, properties of their illocutionary acts with regard to the Old Testament text. The question of what hermeneutical methods they use is a question about the specifics of what they are doing *in* quoting or alluding to that text. This study will not seek to test, however, whether every instance of the New Testament's use of the Old can be characterized this way, but it will seek to show that it is a useful approach at least in some cases, particularly when it comes to understanding the situational aspects of the New Testament's use of the Old. It is not necessary to make use of speech act theory to solve hermeneutical problems raised by the New Testament's use of the Old. Indeed, Beale's argument seems to resolve the problem and does not mention speech act theory. However, the argument of this study is that speech act theory provides a useful framework of understanding in which to clarify and answer these problems, particularly in a generalized way that can be applied to other instances of the use of scripture, including modern usage. Questions about situational rightness or wrongness seem to be questions that are primarily concerned with the rightness or wrongness of actions. The hermeneutical methods of the New Testament authors in some sense boil down to hermeneutical actions performed in the writing of their texts, and speech act theory stands as a ready-made framework in which these actions which are performed in speaking (or writing) can be understood and described. In other words, these illocutionary speech acts are simply a feature of the text. Speech act theory provides a way to properly describe them and discuss them within the context of questions about the use of scripture as a whole. The prototype of Matthew 2:15 has been used here as a way to explain with a concrete example how speech act theory fits into

questions about the New Testament's use of the Old. The purpose thus far has merely been to set the stage. The true test of this methodology will be to apply it more fully in the context of Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18.

Multiple Layers of Speech Act in Genesis 21:12

The primary focus of this study will be on the speech acts performed in the two New Testament passages under scrutiny with Genesis 21:12 as the object of those acts. However, it is necessary to first briefly discuss the speech acts involved in Genesis 21:12 itself. The purpose of this is to provide some parity between the discussion of the New Testament passages and how Genesis 21:12 is understood. Since the use of Genesis 21:12 will be framed in terms of speech acts, it seems useful to be able to speak of Genesis 21:12 in the same conceptual language.

Genesis, being a narrative, puts forward an additional layer of complexity with regard to speech acts which may be somewhat (though not totally) unique to narrative text, one which is indeed exhibited in Genesis 21:12 specifically. Any text involves speech acts being performed by the author in and by authoring the text. However, the text itself can also contain depictions or descriptions of speech acts being performed. This is in some ways similar to the complexity introduced by one text's use of another insofar as it involves depiction of or reference to some other instance of speech, but in the context of narrative it is simplest to frame this complexity as involving two layers of speech and therefore of speech acts: the author's speech and character speech within the narrative. Moreover, when God Himself is seen as an author of Genesis 21:12, there is the somewhat odd situation of authorial speech acts on one level and in-narrative character speech acts by the same person on another level, acts which although they are performed by the same person are nonetheless logically distinct. As such, it is necessary to

explore the speech acts being performed at both of these levels within Genesis 21:12, since the New Testament passages will likely interact with both in some way.

In addition to the authorial and in-narrative layers of speech and speech act involved in Genesis 21:12, there is another layering of speech acts which ought to be considered. Speech acts performed by the human author of the Genesis text may not be identical to those performed by the Divine author. This may seem to invoke the specter of *sensus plenior*, and if there is a *sensus plenior* there are almost certainly differences of speech act related to differences between Divine and human authorial intent and meaning. However, setting *sensus plenior* aside there may still be at least the potential for a distinction between Divine and human layers of speech act even if there are not multiple layers of meaning. It will be necessary to discuss this issue in some detail in order to determine whether, firstly, the Divine-authorial layer of speech acts is indeed distinct from the human-authorial layer, and secondly whether this can be understood in a way that does not invoke *sensus plenior*. It will also be important to interact with Wolterstorff's theory of Divine discourse with regard to this point, since he focuses on speech acts which are unique to the Divine author of Scripture.²⁹

In summary, three potential layers of speech acts in Genesis 21:12 have been identified. First, there is the in-narrative layer, which involves speech acts which are depicted within the narrative of the text as characters within that narrative speak (in the case of Genesis 21:12, God). Then there is the authorial layer, which is further subdivided into the human and Divine authorial

²⁹ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 13.

layers, which involve speech acts performed by the human and Divine authors of the Scripture in and by authoring that Scripture. Each of these layers will now be examined.

In-Narrative Divine Speech Acts

The in-narrative layer of speech act, in the context of Genesis 21:12, deals with God as a character speaking within the narrative: “But God said to Abraham...” It seems best to consider the short statement made by God in verses 12-13 in its entirety:

Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.

Perhaps one way to characterize the focal speech acts here would be to say that be that God *comforts* and *commands* Abraham concerning the situation between Sarah and Hagar/Ishmael. This comforting aspect is tied to God’s “Do not be distressed.” The commanding aspect can be seen in “whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her.” Abraham is in the midst of a distressing situation: some serious family drama. God reassures Abraham and provides him with a Divinely-commanded course of action which fits in with an overall Divine plan, which God reveals.³⁰ Abraham can be comforted because this course of action (sending Hagar and Ishmael away) does not interfere with God’s prior promises. Instead, it furthers those promises, because as God again *promises* Abraham (here is another speech act), Abraham’s descendants with regard to the promise will come through Isaac, not Ishmael. As such, sending Ishmael away does not hinder those promises.³¹ Abraham is further *comforted* concerning Ishmael himself, as God *promises*

³⁰ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994), 87.

³¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 81.

him that his larger plan also involves making Ishmael into a nation, separately from that core promise. God's *comforting* of Abraham is performed in an illocutionary way as God simply states "Do not be distressed," and again in a perlocutionary way as God *promises* Abraham concerning his differing plans for both Isaac and Ishmael (that is, God comforts Abraham *by giving him promises*). Perhaps there is an even more important speech act at play here, however. God does not simply inform Abraham about His plans for Isaac; He also *commands* Abraham to do as Sarah says, specifically to send Ishmael away and disinherit him. This speech act is of particular importance because it brings a piece of God's plan to fruition. God has chosen Isaac as the recipient of the promise, and in *commanding* Abraham to send Ishmael away and make Isaac his sole heir, God in some sense enacts a part of that promise.

There are, of course, other nuanced ways in which these speech acts could be described. For example, instead of simply *promising* Abraham that Isaac is the child of promise in Genesis 21:12, perhaps God might also be described as *reminding* or *reiterating*, since Isaac's status as the child of promise has already been established in the book through God speaking to Abraham (cf. Genesis 17:19). Exploring the myriad ways in which these speech acts could be characterized is a rather large task indeed, but it should suffice for the moment to use *inform* as a basic working description for the purposes of understanding the relationships between these speech acts and those performed in the New Testament texts that cite Genesis 21:12.

Authorial Divine Speech Acts

Having discussed the in-narrative layer of speech acts in Genesis 21:12, it is possible now to examine the authorial layer. This will begin with a focus on the human-authorial layer followed by a discussion of whether and in what ways the Divine-authorial layer might differ.

The way in which Genesis 21:12 functions within the larger context of Genesis itself, as discussed in a little more detail in the previous chapter, involves primarily the seed-promise made to Abraham by God. The theme which runs throughout Genesis of a chosen, righteous seed-lineage which had a special place in the plan of God finds its culmination in Abraham's family. God promises to make of Abraham a blessed and great nation, and therefore to give him a child in his old age in order to accomplish this.³² Taking into account the circumstances of the authorship of this book and of its audience, and its canonical context within the *Torah*, this is deeply, thematically tied to the national identity of Israel.³³

In terms of speech acts, there is of course the fact that author is *claiming* in Genesis 21:12 that Isaac is part of a Divine plan to fulfill the seed-promise made to Abraham. This is too simplistic, though. One of the major contributions of speech act theory is its ability to look beyond the purely positivistic truth-value-based understanding of what is done when speaking. The author's point in claiming this special status for Isaac involves a revelatory aspect. He is, after all, depicting God as speaking in the text. Perhaps it is useful to see the author as *revealing* this truth about Isaac in the sense that he is revealing a Divine plan. Perhaps there is not much difference between claiming and revealing. Both involve communicating or imparting some piece of information, but *revealing* connotes more than that. In this case, the focus is on revealing a Divine plan, and specifically on revealing that a particular event (Isaac's birth) has

³² T. D. Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," in *Tyndale Bulletin*, 44 no. 2 (November 1993): 257-260.

³³ James McKeown, *Genesis, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 219.

some special significance as part of that Divine plan.³⁴ Isaac's birth is not merely the birth of a child; it has a special "because." Isaac exists because God has some special intention connected to him.³⁵ Taking into account the author's purpose in revealing this Divine plan, he can also be seen as *grounding the national identity of Israel in Divine promise*. The nation of Israel is set apart as a people (certainly a major theme throughout the entire Old Testament), and the author of Genesis *grounds* this identity in a historical event with special significance tied to Divine purpose. From a perlocutionary perspective, the author in turn might be *grounding* his audience (the immediate audience) in their own national identity as Israelites.

Do Authorial Divine Speech Acts Imply *Sensus Plenior*?

At this point the question can be asked: does the Divine-authorial layer of speech act differ from the human-authorial layer, or is the same set of speech acts merely performed by both the human and Divine authors? If the two can indeed differ, questions arise as to whether this implies *sensus plenior*. It has already been hinted that a difference between these two in the realm of speech acts does not necessarily equal *sensus plenior*, but this begs further investigation. This question is highly relevant here, as this study will proceed to concern itself closely with hermeneutical justification, a realm in which *sensus plenior* must be confronted.

Does a difference between speech acts performed by the Divine author and those performed by the human author imply *sensus plenior*? While *sensus plenior* deals with differences of meaning and intent (specifically intent with regard to meaning), speech acts deal

³⁴ T. D. Alexander, 257-260.

³⁵ McKeown, 212.

with the actions performed in and by some instance of speech. While the two can certainly interact, they are logically distinct particularly with regard to illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. To illustrate this distinction, perhaps it is best to begin by envisioning a construal of the Divine layer of speech act in Genesis 21:12 which would imply *sensus plenior*. This construal can then be juxtaposed with one which does not seem to imply *sensus plenior*. A fairly straightforward way to do this might be to conceive of the Divine author as performing an illocutionary act of *revealing* a future intra-Israel new-covenant exclusivity. This is merely translating into the language of speech act a way of seeing Romans 9:7 from a perspective which involves *sensus plenior*. This would mean that that God is saying in Genesis 21:12 precisely what Paul says in Romans 9:7, though in a “fuller sense” than that meant by the human author of Genesis. God would be performing this illocutionary act off revealing in the locution of Genesis 21:12. Perhaps a construal of Divine speech acts which differ from human ones in authoring a biblical text, given *sensus plenior*, could be stated thus: God’s speech acts in authoring an inspired text differ from those of the human author in that they include those speech acts associated with the speaking of the text’s “fuller sense.”

However, there is an alternative way to envision this situation involving differing Divine and human authorial speech acts which does not imply *sensus plenior*. In the example of Romans 9:7, the locutions associated with God’s speech act of *revealing* new-covenant exclusivity need merely be located within the New Testament text rather than in the Old Testament text. If God is *revealing* the exclusivity of the gospel within Israel, but He is doing it *in* authoring Romans 9:7 rather than *in* authoring Genesis 21:12, then the relationship between the New and Old Testament texts should not be understood as involving *sensus plenior*. What matters in this

regard is not necessarily what God does, but how and when (and in the authoring of what text) He does it. That is to say that it matters where the locution is located, whether it is located in the Old Testament text or in the New.

Here again Wolterstorff's theory of Divine discourse might become relevant. Wolterstorff argues that the biblical text has ongoing effects, and that these effects are attributable to actions which can be characterized as illocutionary speech acts that originate with the authoring of the text and extend into the present day. In his theory, God, in authoring the biblical text, is aware of how it will be read, used, and interpreted in the future and indeed He intends for this to occur. Thus, in some very real sense, God not only spoke but continues to speak in an illocutionary way.³⁶ This view seems somewhat parallel to the way in which speech acts might be understood given *sensus plenior* which has been proposed here, insofar as these illocutionary acts (which do seem to impart something like a "fuller sense") are in Wolterstorff's view rooted in the authoring of the original text rather than in a later instance of speech which might use or refer to that text. Of course, Wolterstorff's main focus is on how God might still be speaking today rather than on intertextual dynamics specifically, and so his theory must enable God to speak in situations that do not involve the authoring of new, inspired Scripture, which makes it necessary for him to root his illocutionary acts of Divine discourse in the text as he does. The upshot of all of this is that, unfortunately, Wolterstorff's theory does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question at hand: if *sensus plenior* is indeed jettisoned, can the Divine

³⁶ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 13.

layer of speech acts still be seen as diverging from the human layer? Perhaps it is necessary to look again at the fundamental concepts of speech act theory to find an answer.

J. L. Austin's notion of performative statements may indeed have some relevance here. At the core of Austin's insight into the nature of language is the idea that some statements perform actions which go beyond simply stating something. Austin's example of the naming of a ship may be particularly apropos, because he observes that the performative aspect of such a statement as "I name this ship..." depends not only on the uttering of the words themselves but upon surrounding circumstances, such as the speaker being such a person as has the right and authority to name the ship, the ship not having already been named, etc.³⁷ Perhaps most crucially, in Austin's example the speaker's identity deeply impacts what actions are actually being performed. The speaker's identity as one having the authority to name the ship makes all the difference between *claiming* or *pretending* to name the ship and actually, performatively, *naming* it.³⁸ Here there is, perhaps, a mechanism whereby there can be a layer of Divine-authorial speech act which is distinguishable from the human-authorial layer without invoking *sensus plenior*. Might God's unique identity and authority make His speech as author of Scripture performative in ways in which the same speech by the human author is not performative, or differently performative?

Crucially, this understanding of separation between the Divine-authorial and human-authorial layers of speech act does not open the door to *sensus plenior*. The distinction lies not in

³⁷ Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 14-15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

the speech itself, nor in its meaning, nor in how it should be interpreted, but only in the identity of the speaker. The fact that God is speaking does not make the meaning of His words different than the meaning of the human author's words or provide a "fuller sense," rather it changes only the performative impact of those words. As such, Divine and human authorial speech acts, even when they differ in some way, do not necessarily imply *sensus plenior*.

Speech Acts in Genesis 21:12

So, what might be unique about the Divine-authorial layer of speech act present in Genesis 21:12? The author of the text in general has already been spoken of as *grounding Israel's national identity*. This speech act very much involves communication, and thus it is not too far from simply stating a truth. This speech act of grounding is perhaps really a specific type of promising. By grounding the identity of Exodus-era Israel, Genesis connects the Abrahamic promises to them. The promise that was previously made to Abraham is revealed to carry forward to a specific group of people contemporary to the authoring of the Genesis account. As such, Exodus-era Israel is promised anew the promises given to Abraham. Thus, the speech act of the Divine author in Genesis 21:12 is one of promising which occurs by way of grounding the identity of the recipients of that promise in a way which ties them to a promise spoken in the past (to Abraham).

The speech acts performed by the Divine and human authors differ according to their "direction of fit."³⁹ The human author's statement about God's intentions for Isaac and Israel's

³⁹ Searle proposes the concept of "direction of fit" as a way to evaluate the truth-value of speech acts, given that they do not fit into the positivist concept of truth-value. John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6-7.

national identity obtain if God has in fact made those promises, that is, if Israel's identity is indeed what the author says it is. This seems to be a word-to-world direction of fit. The Divine author, being the promisor in this scenario, speaks with an element of world-to-word direction of fit, as His statements obtain if indeed the promises to Israel regarding their identity and future are fulfilled. To put it differently, the human author cannot make promises to Israel on behalf of God. He can only report or reveal those promises, and comment upon how they impact Israel's national identity. When God speaks on those promises, however, He is actually making them. The crux of all this is that it seems to be the case that the Divine author is doing something which the human author is not, without invoking *sensus plenior*. The human author does not stand able to make such promises and thus can only be seen, from a speech act perspective, as reporting on what God is doing performatively. God, however, is *promising* to Exodus-era Israel. Even though those promises were spoken in the past (to Abraham, for example), God is promising it to the nation anew by specifically drawing their attention, in a revelatory way, to the past promises made to Abraham and to the fact that these promises extend to them by virtue of the fact that descent from Isaac forms part of their national identity.

The authorial speech acts which have been spoken of in Genesis 21:12 thus far have been illocutionary in nature, but before proceeding it is necessary to say a word about the perlocutionary acts involved in this passage. It will suffice to briefly suggest a few possibilities just to give an idea of how perlocution can be understood in this context. As a message to the early Israelites, Genesis 21:12 speaks of the identity of the nation. By doing so, it may perform acts such as *encouraging*, *establishing*, and *revealing* to them the truth about their own identity. These actions center around the effects which the message of Genesis 21:12 might have upon the

original audience. There is always a little speculation involved in attempting to draw conclusions about a biblical author's purpose, but the perlocutionary acts that have been suggested will, perhaps, be enough to go on for now, until it becomes necessary to look more deeply into how these speech acts may interact with the New Testament's use of Genesis 21:12.

To sum up, three distinct layers of speech act have been suggested for Genesis 21:12. First, God performs speech acts as a character within the narrative, *comforting* Abraham concerning the familial strife between Sarah and Hagar and *commanding* him to send Ishmael away and *promising* to fulfill the Divine promises through Isaac specifically. At the human-authorial layer, the human author *reports* upon God's promise to Exodus-era Israel. The human author is reporting on what is occurring at the Divine-authorial layer of speech act, wherein God *promises* to Exodus-era Israel the same promises made originally to Abraham by grounding their national identity in Isaac, with special focus on the fact that Isaac is the past recipient of that promise.

Speech Acts in Romans 9:7

Having discussed the multiple layers of speech acts involved in Genesis 21:12 and investigated the relationship between Divine-authorial speech acts and *sensus plenior*, it is now possible to begin examining the speech acts involved in the New Testament texts which quote Genesis 21:12. Although it may be necessary to speak somewhat of speech acts in general that are exhibited in these passages, primary focus will be placed upon those speech acts which involve the New Testament text as their object. In other words, special care will be taken to identify what the New Testament authors are doing (in a speech act sense) to or with the Old Testament text.

As a starting point for Romans 9:7, perhaps it is best to observe that Paul is in the process of *defending* the truth of the gospel of salvation “by grace through faith.” Thus, *defending* can be seen as a larger speech act which characterizes the context of Romans 9:7, but it may be possible to find something a little more granular in terms of speech act involved with Romans 9:7 specifically. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Paul offers a series of such defenses, the one most relevant to Romans 9:7 being a defense against an objection claiming that, under Paul’s gospel, God is unfaithful to His promises to Israel since most Jews seem to fall outside the gospel covenant since they do not believe in Jesus.⁴⁰ Part of this defense is the assertion that God’s promise to Abraham, and therefore to Israel, was not solely based upon physical descent from Abraham, as evidenced by the fact that Ishmael did not inherit that promise. Paul seems to be arguing that the objection is based upon a misrepresentation of the Divine promise, namely that it automatically extends to all physical descendants of Abraham, or to put it as Paul puts it, that all physical descendants of Abraham are his children as far as the promise is concerned.⁴¹

Paul is not concerned here with what the promise says so much as he is concerned with what it does *not* say. Paul turns to Scripture in order to support his correction of this misrepresentation of the promise to Abraham. Thus, even though the overall thrust of Genesis focuses on Jacob as the patriarch of national Israel, Genesis 21:12 shows that physical descent from Abraham is not sufficient to guarantee covenant membership. This is a technicality which Genesis itself is not contextually concerned with, but it is nonetheless a valid technicality. So,

⁴⁰ Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 364.

⁴¹ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 374-376.

what does Paul *do* with regard to Genesis 21:12? One way to characterize it would be to say that he *appeals to its authority*. This, of course, fits into the larger contextual speech act of *defending*. Appeal to scriptural authority has been recognized as a way in which the New Testament uses the Old in many contexts, but the focus here is placed upon that appeal to authority as an illocutionary act rather than as a description of hermeneutical purpose or method. That is to say that aside from Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 potentially fitting into the hermeneutical category of "appeal to authority," that appeal is also an illocutionary act carried out by Paul in writing what he writes in Romans 9:7. The contrast between this act and the speech acts involved in Hebrews 11:18 will serve to provide a window into the situational factors involved in the New Testament's use of the Old.

Speech Acts in Hebrews 11:18

As has already been discussed, Hebrews 11:18 uses Genesis 21:12 in different way than Romans 9:7 does. Thus, it is necessary to discuss the speech acts exhibited in Hebrews 11:18. The focus of Hebrews 11 is on offering Abraham as one among a "cloud of witnesses" whose faithfulness in light of God's promises serve to testify in turn of the faithfulness of God.⁴² The author's purpose in Hebrews 11:18 seems to be centered on exhortation. Thus, a speech act which is at work here might involve the author of Hebrews *exhorting* his audience. He does this in part by tying the experiences of his audience to those of Abraham. The insistence upon the role of resurrection in Abraham's actions seems to make this clear, as resurrection plays a central role in the future hope of the audience of Hebrews. By citing Genesis 21:12, the author of

⁴² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 556.

Hebrews draws attention to the centrality of Isaac to the promise made to Abraham, underscoring the complete faith exhibited by Abraham in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. In his use of Genesis 21:12 and his treatment of the surrounding context, the author of Hebrews performs a speech act of *testifying* to God's faithfulness by way of relating the testimony implicit in the actions of Old Testament saints.

Differences Between Speech Acts in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18

Central to the argument being made here is not only the idea that speech acts are an important way to look at the relationships between Old and New Testament authors when the New Testament uses the Old, but that New Testament authors perform different speech acts which lead them to use the Old Testament differently in different situations. As such, it is important to look closely at how Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 perform different speech acts even while using the same Old Testament passage. Paul's speech acts in Romans involve an overall act of *defending* the Gospel message, with a specific act of appealing to authority in his use of Genesis 21:12. Hebrews 11:18 involves *exhorting* by way of *testifying*, taking Abraham's actions in Genesis 21-22 as a testimony that can in turn testify to the audience of Hebrews alongside other, similar testimonies from the Old Testament.

It is important to take note of the differing flavor between these two instances of speech act. Paul's speech acts, in this instance, are more logical whereas the ones in Hebrews are more personal. This is not to say that Paul, here, is totally logical or that Hebrews is totally personal, but that each has a particular general thrust. Examination of these speech acts provides a clearer way to frame this point, as this "general thrust" is reflected in the differing objects of these speech acts. The object of Paul's *defending* is the Gospel message itself, whereas the object of

Hebrews' *exhorting* is the text's audience. The object of Paul's speech act is a message, and for the purposes of defense can be characterized as a set of truth-claims. The object of the author of Hebrews' speech act is a group of people. This study will argue that these differences provide a pathway to additional clarity in understanding how these two passages use the same Old Testament text differently, and in understanding how their differing hermeneutical methods can both be justified in light of their respective situations.

Conclusion

Much more could be said concerning the speech acts involved in the texts which have been discussed here. It is likely that there are some variations in terms of how these speech acts have been characterized here that could be argued for. Nevertheless, the speech acts that have been identified are, it is to be hoped, sufficient to adequately put forward the argument which will follow: that the differences in speech act between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 can serve to elucidate and define differences in situation which must be taken into account when discussing whether the varying hermeneutical methods at play in these passages in their use of Genesis 21:12 is justified. It is to be hoped that this approach can provide some additional clarity when answering questions about how the New Testament authors' hermeneutical methods can be replicated.

CHAPTER FOUR:
SPEECH ACTS AND HERMENEUTICAL JUSTIFICATION
IN ROMANS 9:7 AND HEBREWS 11:18

Introduction

Thus far, the three related texts that have served as an example in this study have been examined hermeneutically with particular focus on the dynamics of the use of Genesis 21:12 in the two New Testament texts. Some differences between the usages of Genesis 21:12 in those respective texts have been noted and some hermeneutical issues associated with the usage of Genesis 21:12 in these New Testament texts have been discussed. Initial forays have been made with regard to characterizing the speech acts represented in each of these texts and analyzing the relationships between them. The focus of this chapter will be to discuss the issue of hermeneutical justification with regard to how Genesis 21:12 is used in each of these two New Testament texts. It will be argued that a certain relationship exists between hermeneutical justification and speech acts in these New Testament texts. The purpose of this is to establish the relationship between speech acts and hermeneutical justification, particularly in the context of the New Testament's use of the Old. This approach, in turn, furnishes a method of evaluating the usage of Scripture across a variety of situational contexts. The two New Testament texts will be contrasted in terms of their respective hermeneutical justifications. In light of this contrast, this study will argue that these differences point away from a monolithic picture of New Testament hermeneutics while possibly pointing the way toward a more nuanced understanding.

In order to accomplish this, an approach to hermeneutical justification with regard to New Testament use of the Old will be laid out. This approach will involve forming a criterion for hermeneutical justification which is furnished by speech act theory. Each of the two New Testament texts will be examined in turn with regard to hermeneutical justification according to this criterion. Various approaches to each text's hermeneutical justification will be discussed, and an attempt will be made to understand how the text's speech acts relate to that justification. The previous chapter's discussion of speech acts represented in the passages which are in focus here will prove useful in applying this approach to those passages. The two texts will be contrasted with regard to their hermeneutical justification in an attempt to draw out some salient points for discussion in the final chapter of this study. The final chapter will explore the nuanced hermeneutic of the New Testament, arguing that it might be productively characterized as a situational hermeneutic. It will also argue that speech acts offer some clarity concerning the relationship between the situation of a text and the hermeneutics it employs. Importantly, speech acts serve to provide a consistent approach to evaluating hermeneutical validity across a variety of situational contexts, including not only those represented in the New Testament but also those experienced by modern interpreters of Scripture.

Intertextuality

Before discussing hermeneutical justification directly, something should be said about intertextuality. This work will make certain underlying assumptions about the nature of intertextuality in light of which the proceeding arguments should be understood. While a complete defense of these assumptions is beyond the scope of this study, a brief discussion of

intertextuality will reveal that they are not unprecedented and will hint at some of the reasons why they might be valid.

Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

A somewhat reductive way to describe intertextuality might be to say that it refers to the interrelationships between texts. The term *intertextuality*, however, should be understood within the context of the post-structural milieu in which it was born.¹ Postmodern theories of hermeneutics deconstruct the text and the author on the basis of the inherent subjectivity of reading (in indeed of language itself and of all knowledge). Derrida's deconstructionism, for example, argues against the traditional notion of text as a method of transferring meaning intended by the author to the reader and locates meaning within reading as opposed to writing or text.² Ultimately, postmodernism points out the subjectivizing effect which these forces have upon all "truth," rendering it, for all practical purposes, merely one's experiential perception of truth. Within this framework, it is impossible (so postmodernism says) to locate the concept of meaning, for hermeneutical purposes, in the intent of the author. While this early postmodernism focused on these subjectivizing forces in a very general way, intertextuality focuses specifically on this relationship with regard to other texts. This postmodern concept of meaning is divorced from the text itself by virtue of the inherent subjectivity of reading, and intertextuality recognizes

¹ This holds true regardless of whether one agrees with post-structural positions, or alternatively holds to a different understanding of intertextuality which responds to and opposes them. In either case, this term cannot be used responsibly without addressing its background.

² Jaques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 20-21.

the prominent place of other texts within that subjectivizing backdrop. Meaning resides outside of the text and floats somewhere among that text and other texts to which it is related.³

The term “intertextuality” has, however, grown fraught with ambiguity in its usage, and has been employed by different scholars to mean rather different things. Graham Allen groups these approaches into two broad categories: structuralist and post-structuralist.⁴ The structuralist employment of intertextuality is, interestingly enough, somewhat of a reaction to post-structuralist theories, and uses the relationships between texts to assert the opposite of what post-structuralism asserts: that it is possible to say objective things about a text’s meaning.⁵

One of the most prominent voices in the world of post-structuralist intertextuality has been Roland Barthes. He argues that the various intertextual threads which ultimately contribute to meaning only come together in the reader, not the author. As such, he states that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of author.”⁶ In this way, Barthes indicates that intertextuality itself bolsters the post-structuralist and postmodern approaches to meaning since it is in the reader that the locus of intertextuality is found. Locating meaning in the author cannot account for this. However, there appears to be a degree of circularity here. Barthes’ post-structuralist idea of intertextuality is itself founded upon the postmodern approach which he claims it supports. Is it not possible for an intertextual relationship to be included in an authors’ intent? Is it necessary to adopt a post-structuralist approach in order to properly account for

³ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

⁶ Roland Barthes, *Image - Music - Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 148.

intertextuality? While this study will assume a structuralist stance, it is hoped that it will contribute some support toward the internal consistency of a structuralist approach to intertextuality.

A proponent of such a structuralist approach can be found in Gerard Genette. In the course of his study of poetics, he asserts that a structuralist approach to intertextuality is still valid and valuable. He proposes what he calls *transtextuality*, which includes the whole variety of relationships between texts.⁷ Although Genette describes several different categories of transtextuality, he does not understand any of them to be purely at the mercy of the reader as a post-structuralist approach would. Genette sees “the relationship between the text and its reader as one that is more socialized, more openly contractual, and pertaining to a conscious and organized pragmatics.”⁸ In contrast to Barthe, Genette sees intertextual relationships as involving rules and norms that exist outside of the reader. His approach can perhaps be seen as an evolved approach to intertextuality. It is not a return to a naïve structuralism but rather a more disciplined structuralism that acknowledges the complexity of intertextual realities but still maintains a place for objective meaning.

Riffaterre, though not necessarily a strict structuralist, makes a move that is analogous to that made by Genette. With regard to poetics, he sees a semiotic layer of meaning underneath the mimetic (referential) layer which is usually the focus of post-structural intertextuality. While he acknowledges the presence of mimetic relationships, he argues that these are not sufficient in

⁷ Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

order to understand a text in its totality.⁹ Instead, texts regularly depart from what can be understood mimetically, a phenomenon he refers to as ungrammaticality. In other words, texts are not wholly comprised of references to other texts or signs. They are unique in that they depart from and subvert these signs, forcing the reader to examine them from a semiotic perspective in order to fully understand their meaning.¹⁰

What the post-structuralist and structuralist approaches to intertextuality have in common is that they deal with the relationships between texts, and especially with how the meaning of a text can be understood in light of other texts. A postmodern view of meaning (and therefore of hermeneutics) is not required in order to speak about intertextuality, though the term arguably means different, though related, things in a structural and a post-structural context. Absent the assumptions of postmodernism which locate meaning in the space between texts, the relationships between texts are still important when it comes to meaning. After all, even authorial intent must involve other texts of which the author was aware, a point of particular salience here because that is precisely the situation at play when speaking about instances of New Testament use of the Old such as the ones under scrutiny in this study.

More recently, McKay has examined the state of this debate as it has taken shape within the world of biblical interpretation. He notes that, strangely,¹¹ the concept of intertextuality was initially brought to bear on the reading of the Bible primarily in the form of a structuralist

⁹ Michael Riffaterre, "The Self-Sufficient Text," *Diacritics* 3, no 3 (Autumn 1973), 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

¹¹ This is strange because of intertextuality's theoretical roots in a purely post-structural framework, yet its initial application to New Testament studies was mostly from a structural perspective.

approach centered on historical criticism. This approach was concerned with establishing the historical intertextual context of texts and with a quest for the true historicity behind biblical texts which often involves intertextual clues. On the other hand, postmodern ideological interpretation of the Bible has involved the more traditional post-structuralist notion of intertextuality. McKay laments that these disparate spheres have largely operated in isolation from one another.¹² This study does not take either approach. Instead, it seeks to reconcile a structuralist approach to intertextuality with creative usage, specifically in light of the multiplicity of creative ways in which the New Testament uses the Old.

The issue at hand deeply concerns hermeneutical justification. The post-structuralist approach to intertextuality raises an important question when it comes to the New Testament's use of the Old: does that usage itself represent a non-structuralist reading? Are the New Testament authors appropriating texts in ways which lend support to the post-structuralist view and cannot be properly justified from a structuralist standpoint? If the New Testament authors use the Old Testament text in a variety of ways, then it would suggest that, at the very least, they do more than just parrot the straightforward meaning of the text. This study will argue that New Testament usage does not lend credence to post-structuralism with regard to biblical interpretation. Various texts can interact with one another, to be sure, but it is not necessary to place the locus of meaning outside each individual text or in the intertextual interaction between them. External texts can contribute, but in a structural way which impacts and comes by way of internal meaning.

¹² Niall McKay, "Status Update: The Many Faces of Intertextuality in New Testament Study," *Religion & Theology* 20 (2013), 87-100.

Structuralism and Hermeneutical Justification *vis a vis* Intertextuality

As noted previously, there is a deep relationship between structuralism and the concept of hermeneutical justification when it comes to interactions between texts. It is worth saying a little more about this, as it will provide some insight into how hermeneutical justification can be understood specifically. Particularly when it comes to direct quotations, a structuralist approach to intertextuality introduces the need for hermeneutical justification. That is to say that if, in the case of an interaction between texts, meaning is located within the texts themselves rather than suspended somewhere in between them, the later text ought to be justified in its way of interpreting the older text. A structuralist approach implies that there is a meaning attached to the text itself in some objective way. An interpretation is justified if it understands the text to have the meaning which it really does have and not some other meaning. In the context of this study, this meaning is assumed to be the meaning intended by the text's author, or authorial intent. This simply means that the newer text which is interpreting the older text ought not interpret it incorrectly, claiming that the older text means something that it does not mean, and that the older text's author did not intend it to mean. Under a post-structuralist approach, whether or not the newer text correctly interprets the older text is irrelevant, since the meaning does not reside within the text itself. Given structuralism, the newer text needs to interpret the older text in a way that can be shown to be correct or justified.

A Speech Act Approach to Hermeneutical Justification

This study intends to keep its approach to the New Testament's use of the Old Testament anchored in a structuralist understanding of meaning while allowing for the creative uses of the

Old Testament which the New seems to exhibit. It argues that defining how hermeneutical justification functions in terms of speech acts can help to provide unifying criteria for evaluating hermeneutical justification in light of passages which take different hermeneutical approaches in their usage of other texts. If the hermeneutical methods employed by New Testament authors are not uniform (and the differing ways of using Genesis 21:12 imply that they are not), then the criterion for hermeneutical justification must exist outside of hermeneutical method. Yet, the structuralist approach to meaning implies a need for hermeneutical justification. There has been plenty of scholarly discussion on the various ways in which the New Testament's creative usages of the Old are justified.¹³ This study attempts to locate a unifying thread, particularly one which might enable replication of the New Testament authors' creative methods overall. What is needed here is a shared criterion which can apply to a variety of ways of using Scripture. Speech act theory supplies a useful way to talk about this criterion for hermeneutical justification.

A criterion for hermeneutical justification can be used to judge texts as to whether or not they are warranted in their usage of another text. An example of such a criterion could simply be whether or not an author interprets an Old Testament text in a straightforward historical-grammatical manner. On such a criterion, any author would fail the test of hermeneutical

¹³ For example, Beale's approach, which focuses on the NT writers' awareness of the OT context and their usage of that context in nuanced ways. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 22. See also Kaiser's characterization, which seeks to view NT usage as completely in line with the OT message. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 228-235. Also Bock, who sees the NT use of the OT as valid in light of typological modes of usage and the theological presuppositions of the NT writers. Darrel L. Bock, "Scripture Citing Scripture: Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2006), 255-276.

justification if they did anything more than simply state the correct historical-grammatical meaning of the Old Testament text, perhaps then applying that meaning in some way. Ultimately, there would be only one “right” way to interpret a text. Walter Kaiser espouses something like this view insofar as he argues for a strong identity between what the New Testament authors assert and what the Old Testament authors intend. In his view, usage of the Old Testament is on a comparatively short leash.¹⁴ Under a strict historical-grammatical rubric, two texts could not both be justified in interpreting an Old Testament text in different ways, since there would be only one “right” answer. This definition does not seem to account very well for the creativity with which the New Testament seems to use the Old, and of course this study’s use of two texts which seem to interpret a single Old Testament text in somewhat different ways would appear to be quite incompatible with such a strict construal of hermeneutical justification.

Darrel Bock provides an approach which treads the middle ground between strict historical-grammatical interpretation and creative interpretation. He argues for a view of the New Testament’s use of the Old which understands the New Testament to be using the Old in creative ways which are nevertheless not divorced from the Old Testament’s meaning. In his view, both Old and New Testament texts have their own, stable meaning, but that meaning is applied to new situations, or referents. However, that Old meaning is still active and intact within the context of that usage, and usage in that new context can give it new depth.¹⁵ This study is generally in

¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 228.

¹⁵ Darrel L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 146.

agreement with Bock when it comes to the idea that such ways of using the Old Testament are justified. They do not violate the Old Testament's meaning even when they do more than parrot it. Bock goes on to assert that the methods of the New Testament authors can be replicated,¹⁶ which stands to reason if those methods are indeed valid. This study, however, aims to go a little further. Bock argues that New Testament usage respects Old Testament meaning because Old Testament meaning remains intact and active in that usage. There is more to be said concerning how exactly this can be evaluated, particularly in a way which can account for both the multiplicity of ways in which the New Testament uses the Old and the multiplicity of ways in which modern readers might hope to use Scripture. Bock argues convincingly that such a criterion exists, but this study argues that speech act theory can furnish a more detailed understanding of it, in particular one which can provide more clarity on questions about modern usage of Scripture.

So, on the one hand there is a post-structural approach to intertextuality which is more than willing to seek meaning outside the realms of text and of authorial intent and find it instead in a middle-space which ultimately resides in the mind of the reader. This means that any use of the Old Testament text is hermeneutically justified even in such a way as to render the very concept of hermeneutical justification more or less irrelevant. On the other hand, there is a strict, historical-grammatical idea of hermeneutical justification which uses as its sole criterion whether or not a text expresses only the single, "correct" meaning of the Old Testament text. It is crucial to the argument of this study, however, that speech act theory suggests another criterion for

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

hermeneutical justification which is simultaneously broader than the strict historical-grammatical approach and able to account for a variety of interpretive methods while also remaining grounded in structuralism.

This criterion focuses on hermeneutical justification in terms of the illocutionary acts involved in the usage of a text. Its purpose is to serve as a unifying criterion which can apply to a variety of usages of Scripture, including more creative usages and including usages by modern readers as well as the New Testament authors. This study argues that usages which may be allowable in certain circumstances may not be allowable in others, and that New Testament usage exhibits this phenomenon. Chapter five will go into more detail on this, calling it a situational hermeneutic. In order to build toward that argument, it is important now to establish a unifying criterion which can apply across these varying usages. This criterion must be able to answer the question of what is allowable in a way that takes situational factors into account. Speech act theory is well-suited to supplying such a criterion, because its concept of illocutionary acts already adequately describes the manner in which situational factors can alter the nature of a speech act.

In quoting, alluding to, or otherwise using a text, the author may perform an illocutionary act that consists of the making of a claim about that text. In other words, what the author does to the older text in using it serves as a focal point for the issue of hermeneutical justification, and this criterion can be applied within the context of multiple hermeneutical methods while accounting for situational factors which may excuse or disqualify particular ways of using a text in that situation. Such a criterion based upon speech act theory could be construed in this way: *a text is hermeneutically justified in its use of an Old Testament text if it does not, when taking*

situational factors into account, perform an illocutionary act of making a claim that the Old Testament text means something that it does not mean. This criterion maintains structuralism in its commitment to the meaning of the text being used, but it accounts for how a variety of creative usages can still respect that meaning structuralistically when situational factors are considered. Moreover, it can apply equally in a variety of situational context and to a variety of ways of using Scripture. It is even possible for an author to use a text in a creative way that diverges from the text's meaning while being completely aware of that original meaning. This opens the door to a wide variety of creative uses of the text.

An Illustrative Example: T. S. Eliot's "The Hippopotamus"

How can a text be used situationally in a way that diverges from its meaning without being misused? Perhaps it is best to offer an explanatory example here. In the interest of avoiding a further complication of the discussion of the New Testament's use of the Old, an extra-biblical example will be offered. That is to say that in order to illustrate this point about the Bible's use of the Bible, the use of the Bible by other literature will be offered in order to show how this definition of hermeneutical justification can function from a literary perspective. In the poem "The Hippopotamus," T. S. Eliot begins with an epigraph quoting Colossians 4:16: "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans."¹⁷ The poem itself satirizes the worldliness of the church, comparing it to a hippopotamus. The epigraph, in this context, seems to be an oblique reference to the "lukewarm" Laodicean church

¹⁷ T. S. Eliot, "The Hippopotamus," In *Poems* (A. A. Knopf: New York, NY, 1920).

in Revelation 3:14-22.¹⁸ However, nothing in the quoted verse from Colossians, or its context, deals directly with this lukewarmness as it is construed in Revelation 3. Colossians 4:16 seems simply to be a rather straightforward request by Paul to have the Colossian letter read there. Eliot seems to be making a somewhat subtle reference to the lukewarm reputation of Laodicea stemming from the well-known passage Revelation 3, and he is using Colossians 4:16 to do so simply because the very mention of Laodicea brings Revelation 3 to the reader's mind. In short, Eliot's intended meaning here has little to do with Colossians 4:16 beyond the mere mention of Laodicea, and yet his meaning has much to do with the lukewarmness mentioned in Revelation 3, which he does not quote in the poem.

Is Eliot hermeneutically unjustified in his use of Colossians 4:16? Certainly "The Hippopotamus" is a poetic work, and a large degree of creativity can be allowed when taking the genre into account, but why precisely does this excuse Eliot from the charge of lack of hermeneutical justification? What is it about certain contexts and genre-rules that allows authors like Eliot to "get away with it?" It is being argued here that viewing hermeneutical justification as a matter involving illocutionary acts provides a satisfying answer to this question. Eliot is not making a claim that Colossians 4:16 speaks directly to the spiritual state of the Laodicean church; rather, he is merely trusting in the reader's familiarity with Laodicea as a stand-in for the idea of lukewarmness, an association which originates from Revelation 3. This type of maneuver, making an oblique reference to something that can be expected to have a certain understood significance in the mind of the reader, does not imply that the author is claiming the

¹⁸ David Fuller, "T. S. Eliot," In *The Blackwell Companion to The Bible in English Literature*, eds. Rebecca Lemon, et. al. (Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, UK, 2009), 668.

author of the quoted text to have intended that meaning, nor even that the quoting author is not aware of the original meaning of the quoted text, even if that original meaning stands quite apart from how it is used.

Evaluating Hermeneutical Justification

Under this criterion for hermeneutical justification, the claims made by one text about another's meaning are central to the question of whether or not a text is hermeneutically justified in its use of the other text. It is not enough simply to point out that a newer text quotes an older text. The relevant question is: in its own context, what if anything is the newer text claiming about the meaning of the older, and are those claims true? The answer to this question depends on contextual and situational factors relating to the newer text. This study argues that these claims about the older text which become the center point of hermeneutical justification are a type of illocutionary speech act, performed in the quoting or usage of the Old Testament text, and that a broader understanding of the functioning of speech acts within the New Testament text provides a way to understand these claims across multiple genres, situations, and types of usage.

The criterion that has been offered here suggests a certain methodology in determining whether or not a New Testament text is hermeneutically justified in its use of the Old. This methodology is focused on answering a simple question: does the New Testament text claim that the Old Testament text means something that it does not mean? Since such claims are seen as illocutionary acts, the approach of this study is to seek out the illocutionary acts present in the New Testament text's use of the Old, then to identify among those acts which, if any, constitute claims about the meaning of the Old Testament text. Having done this, evaluating hermeneutical justification is a relatively straightforward matter of determining whether any of those claims

diverge from the historical-grammatical meaning of the Old Testament text. If they do not, then the New Testament text is hermeneutically justified, no matter how creative its usage of the Old Testament may be.

This study will seek to evaluate Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 with regard to whether or not they are each hermeneutically justified in their respective uses of Genesis 21:12. The methodology for this evaluation will be to take what has already been discussed about the speech acts present in these passages and seek to determine whether they involve the illocutionary making of any claims about the meaning of Genesis 21:12. Then, any such claims can be evaluated to determine whether or not they are true with regard to the actual meaning of Genesis 21:12. The nature of this hermeneutical justification will then serve as a basis on which to develop some larger discussions around the New Testament's use of the Old and what the limitations of that usage might be, both for New Testament authors and for modern readers.

Hermeneutical Justification in Romans 9:7

At this point, it is necessary to apply what has been discussed so far regarding hermeneutical justification to Romans 9:7 and its use of Genesis 21:12. A few different explanations of the hermeneutics of Romans 9:7 will be discussed in preparation for a consideration of the relationship between hermeneutical justification and speech act. In order to examine various approaches to hermeneutical justification here, the hermeneutical issues raised by Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 should be summarized briefly. In the second chapter of this study, some such issues were discussed in more detail. These issues can be seen as potential obstacles to justification of Paul's hermeneutics. The first of these issues which was discussed previously is that there seems to be a certain contextual disparity between Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 and

the overall thrust of that passage in the context of Genesis. Genesis is about the special identity of Israel as descendants of Abraham, and Paul's focus on non-inclusiveness within that chosen lineage seems somewhat discordant with the contextual message of Genesis 21:12. While the first issue deals with the scope of the Divine promise in terms of the contextual message of Genesis, the second deals with its content. Specifically, Paul uses Genesis 21:12 to speak about a promise which, though it could be related to the Abrahamic promise of Genesis, is nonetheless logically distinct. In other words, Genesis does not seem to speak directly, in its own context, to the New Covenant promise to which Paul speaks. This is not a contradiction, but it does represent a divergence from the sort of emphasis on the original context upon which historical-grammatical exegesis or biblical theology might focus. Answers to these questions have already been discussed in chapter two, so attention will be turned here toward dealing with various interpretive approaches to Romans 9:7 and what they say about hermeneutical justification. The aim here is not to repeat earlier discussion showing that Paul is justified in his use of Genesis 21:12, but to more closely examine how he is justified. This will pave the way for some discussion of how the criterion for hermeneutical justification that has been suggested here can interact with Romans 9:7.

With a view toward understanding various possible approaches to hermeneutical justification within Romans 9:7, some interpretations of that passage will be discussed with regard to how they might interact with these hermeneutical issues. B. J. Oropeza suggests that "seed" functions as a sort of midrashic catchword in Romans 9. He points to Romans 4:17, which he sees as connected to Paul's argument about the inclusion of the Gentiles in Romans 9. Specifically, the operation of God's covenant of grace toward Gentiles serves as a fulfillment of

God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations.¹⁹ Oropeza seems to see Paul as expressing continuity with the Abrahamic promise of Genesis. The promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations is connected to the inclusion of the Gentiles, meaning that the application of the seed-promise to Jewish and Gentile believers is already latent in the theological context of Genesis. However, this approach does not necessarily prove out how that concept can be located within Genesis itself, as that context already shows Abraham becoming the father of many nations in the sense that his descendants become the various nations descended from Jacob, Esau, and Ishmael.

G. Kruse provides another approach. He sees Paul's interpretation as being based upon a concept of exclusivity that was already extant within Judaism. God exercised His "sovereign choice" from the very beginning in choosing Isaac over Ishmael, something with which every Jew was familiar and which therefore would serve as an effective retort against the argument which Paul seeks to refute.²⁰ How might such an approach answer the hermeneutical issues which have been identified? Kruse seems to regard the sovereign-electoral exclusivity evidenced in the choice of Isaac over Ishmael as sufficient to account for Paul's usage of Genesis 21:12. Indeed, there is something of a contextual departure between the overall message of Genesis and the way in which Paul uses the verse. Nevertheless, the exclusivity is present within Genesis itself in a way that makes Paul's argument work. Paul is not parroting the overall message of Genesis, but pointing out something that is nonetheless a truth internal to Genesis itself: God's

¹⁹ B. J. Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007), 61.

²⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 376.

choice was always preeminent (and exclusive) with regard to receipt of covenantal promises. The issue of Paul's use of Genesis' discussion of Abrahamic promises to talk about a new (though not entirely unrelated) set of promises might be dealt with by pointing out that the initial objection does concern the Old Testament Abrahamic promise. The exclusivity which Paul defends concerns the New Covenant, but the objection is based upon the promise made to Abraham's "seed."

Richard B. Hays' approach to hermeneutical justification is quite different from that of Kruse. He sees Paul's use of the Old Testament as somewhat appropriative. Scriptures, in Hays' mind, can be interpreted anew in light of the changing needs of the church. While this task of interpretation carries with it the risk of departure from the historical faith, Hays argues that it is nevertheless necessary. He characterizes this as a sort of "dialectical engagement" which characterizes Paul's use of Scripture and is also prescriptive for modern readers. In Hays' words: "the ideal of a perspicuous authoritative text that contains an unchangeable meaning is untenable because it denies the necessary contribution of the reader and the readers' community in the act of interpretation."²¹ He applies this to Romans 9:7 specifically by pointing out the parallels between that passage and Galatians 4:21-31, which deals with the Genesis concept of "seed" from the pericope which contains Genesis 21:12. He argues that while the audience of Romans may not have been aware of Galatians 4, modern readers cannot help but read Romans 9 in light of Galatians 4.²² Hays has a rather different understanding of Paul's hermeneutic overall than

²¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 189.

²² *Ibid.*, 187-189.

what has been offered here so far, and the final chapter this study will deal with Hays' view more directly. Here it is sufficient to look simply at his approach to hermeneutical justification, which seems to be, in essence, to see Paul as appropriating and somewhat reinterpreting Old Testament Scripture in order to address the needs of his community. In Hays' view, hermeneutical justification is a matter of community under the New Covenant. It is a function of "law written on our hearts" that gives both Paul and modern readers the right (and responsibility) to do hermeneutics in ways such as those exhibited by Paul in Romans 9:7.

Under the rubric of Hays' approach to hermeneutical justification, the answer to the hermeneutical issues raised in Romans 9:7 is fairly straightforward. Paul is justified in interpreting Genesis 21:12 not strictly in light of its historical-grammatical meaning in its own context, but in light of the needs of his community. As such, the disjunction between the contextual focus of Genesis 21:12 and Paul's focus in using it does not by itself cause any problems in terms of hermeneutical justification under Hays' view. The ease with which this view answers such hermeneutical issues does come at a cost, though. It diminishes the importance of the meaning of the Old Testament text in its own context, and it allows for a type of appropriation which undermines structuralist meaning. It will be argued in this study that speech acts can open the window on a better way of understanding the interpretive freedom which Paul seems to exhibit, and its limits.

Ben Witherington offers somewhat of a counterpoint to Hays' understanding of Romans 9:7, particularly in light of its relationship to Galatians 3:15-16. He asserts that Paul's reference

to “seed” in Genesis 9:7 is evidence of a rather different understanding on Paul’s part than the one exemplified in the Galatians passage, a fact which leads Witherington to conclude that Paul has Genesis 17:6-7 in mind in Galatians as well. Galatians 3, he argues, brings in the concept of “seed” as a Messianic king by way of the royal-seed promise of Genesis 17:6: “... and kings will come forth from you.” The upshot of this is that Paul’s understanding of the “seed” as referring to covenant exclusivity regarding Isaac in Romans 9:7 does not need to be understood differently in light of the fact that he finds a more Messianic significance in the “seed” concept in Galatians 3. His view on hermeneutical justification, therefore, would seem to lean more toward that of Kruse: that Paul is calling upon an concept of exclusivity already present in the Genesis text itself, but not simply parroting the overall contextual and biblical-theological message of Genesis which involves Israel’s (in some sense) ethnic identity. However, whereas Kruse focuses more on the exclusivity already present within Genesis 21:12 specifically, Witherington takes a more canonical approach.²³

Hays’ idea of what is required for hermeneutical justification seems to be somewhat different than that of Kruse or Witherington. The criteria which he offers come from internal evidence found in Paul’s writings themselves. Specifically, Hays points to faithfulness to God’s covenant promises and testifying of Christ as Paul’s two main hermeneutical criteria.²⁴ Since these are drawn from internal evidence within the text itself, it is difficult to see how there could

²³ Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 46-47.

²⁴ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 191.

ever be any problem of hermeneutical justification in the New Testament's use of the Old. The criteria for hermeneutical justification are founded upon the content of the text itself, and therefore the hermeneutical methods expressed in that content cannot help but be justified. Hays' approach is not to hold New Testament interpretation accountable to modern historical-grammatical standards but to take the New Testament "as it is" and simply understand that to be the standard of hermeneutical justification.

The approach of Kruse and Witherington, by contrast, looks to understand how Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 fits with its meaning. They see Paul as making a specific point about covenant exclusivity contra an opposing view which would see the fact that there are many non-believing Jews as problematic for the Gospel message from the standpoint of the Abrahamic promise specifically. In other words, Kruse and Witherington take an understanding of Romans 9:7 which sees no hermeneutical issue after taking into account the particulars of Genesis 21:12 and Paul's usage of it. Unlike Hays, they turn to a more traditional way of providing hermeneutical justification, examining the texts involved and arguing that Paul's use of the Old Testament text is justified because it does ultimately adhere to some external standard of interpretation. Indeed, the message of Genesis 21:12 might even inform how Romans 9:7 can be understood.

Michael Wolter offers an account of Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 which is similar to Kruse and Witherington in terms of his approach to hermeneutical justification. That is to say that, like them, he sees Paul's usage as based upon concepts already latent in the Genesis text itself. However, his understanding of the way in which Paul uses Genesis 21:12 in this instance differs from theirs and merits interaction here. Wolter argues that the Genesis account of Isaac

and Ishmael and the later account of Jacob and Esau to which Paul refers in Romans 9:12-13 do not depict exclusivity within Israel. Instead, they depict actions and declarations by God which have the effect of making some “Israel” and others “not Israel.” This restriction, to him, exists in the Genesis account and is picked up by Paul. He sees Paul as picking up on the idea not that the details of the Genesis text allow for exclusivity within Israel, but that they allow for restriction on the part of God as to who is Israel and who is not, regardless of descent from Abraham.²⁵

Speech Acts and Hermeneutical Justification in Romans 9:7

Having discussed some varying approaches to hermeneutical justification in Romans 9:7, it remains to examine how they might interact with speech acts. It will be argued here that as these approaches to hermeneutical justification are discussed in light of speech acts, a certain relationship between issues of hermeneutical justification and speech act begins to show itself. This relationship, in turn, becomes suggestive of the particular way of understanding hermeneutical justification that has been offered here, and in turn the hermeneutics of the New Testament as evidenced in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18.

In the previous chapter, the focal speech act with regard to Paul’s use of Genesis 21:12 was identified as *appealing to authority* as part of a larger performative act of *defending*. Importantly, this appeal to authority, from the perspective of speech act theory, must be seen as an illocutionary act and not merely as a description of hermeneutical method. This difference may seem subtle, but it is an important distinction with regard to properly understanding speech acts as they relate to hermeneutical justification. It is now necessary to examine how this

²⁵ Michael Wolter, “It is Not as Though the Word of God Has Failed,” in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9-11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 36.

understanding of the speech acts displayed in Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 interact with his hermeneutical justification in using the Old Testament in the way he does.

In the second chapter of this study, certain hermeneutical issues with regard to Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 were identified. These can be seen as potential obstacles to justification of Paul's hermeneutics, and by examining how these issues can be answered from a speech act perspective should provide some clarity with regard to the relationship between speech act and hermeneutical justification. The first of these issues which was discussed previously is that there seems to be a certain contextual disparity between Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 and the overall thrust of that passage in the context of Genesis. Genesis is about the special identity of Israel as descendants of Abraham, and Paul's focus on non-inclusiveness within that chosen lineage seems somewhat discordant with the contextual message of Genesis 21:12. In the study of the New Testament's use of the Old, the use of specific Old Testament passages with their larger theological (and even canonical) contexts in mind has been widely recognized.²⁶ Paul does not seem to be doing this in Romans 9:7, however, at least not in a way which focuses on Genesis' message concerning Israel's national and ethnic identity. So what exactly is it that Paul's speech act of appealing to authority in order to defend his gospel message does? It seems that Paul's appeal to authority focuses on specific details of the Old Testament message. The fact that Ishmael and Esau are excluded from the Abrahamic promise countermands an erroneous notion concerning Paul's message: that it must be invalid or incorrect in some way if it does not effectually include all of ethnic Israel in the New Covenant which Paul preaches.

²⁶ For example, G. K. Beale, "The use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 4 (2012): 700.

Paul's appeal to authority involves certain truth-claims about the Old Testament text, namely that the text indeed says what Paul's argument depends upon it to say. This is, specifically, that Ishmael, though son of Abraham, was not included in the covenant promise. Though Paul builds a larger argument upon this claim, this does not imply that he is claiming anything more than this of Genesis 21:12 specifically. If this is indeed the case, that Paul's illocutionary act of making claims about the meaning of Genesis 21:12 is limited in scope to only what Genesis 21:12 does indeed mean, then Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 passes the test of hermeneutical justification. In order for Paul's appeal to authority to work, all Paul needs is for it to be true that the Abrahamic promise was indeed exclusive in some sense among Abraham's descendants. The fact that it is exclusive even among Isaac's descendants only further proves Paul's point. It is not necessary for Paul's statement to completely mirror, in a biblical-theological way, the overall thrust of the Genesis message in order for Paul to be hermeneutically justified according to the broad definition offered here. This approach achieves roughly the same conclusion as those of Kruse and Witherington which were discussed earlier. Both see something of what Paul says in Romans 9:7 as already being present in Genesis 21:12. However, understanding hermeneutical justification in terms of illocutionary acts of truth-claiming seems to provide a criterion that could be consistently applied elsewhere.

This is all well and good, and more or less in line with what has already been discussed concerning Paul's use of Genesis 21:12, but there is an important and even more relevant observation to be made here: Hermeneutical justification is parallel in this example to Paul's speech act successfully obtaining. Paul's speech act obtaining and his being hermeneutically justified go hand-in-hand. If Paul is not hermeneutically justified, he fails in appealing to the Old

Testament's authority, and he also fails in defending his message against the hypothetical objection which is in focus in Romans 9:7. If Paul is claiming that Genesis 21:12 is saying something that it does not say, his appeal to its authority is inherently flawed and unsuccessful insofar as it depends on an understanding of the Old Testament text which is not actual. In order for Paul's appeal to authority to succeed, that authority must indeed support what he is saying in the way that he claims. If Paul's hermeneutic is not justified, then his illocutionary speech act of appealing to authority (and then defending) does not obtain. This speech act is broken according to its word-to-world direction of fit, because Paul's claim that the Old Testament authority establishes his particular point does not match the world. If, on the other hand, Paul's hermeneutic is justified, the speech act does obtain. Thus, it can be observed that hermeneutical justification seems to go hand-in-hand with speech act obtainment in this passage. This is, perhaps, indicative of a close relationship between the two. It will be argued that such a relationship does exist, and that it forms the basis of speech acts serving to provide special insight into situational factors which are at play with regard to hermeneutics in the New Testament.

The second major hermeneutical issue which has been identified in Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 is the fact that the Genesis text deals with the Abrahamic promise, which is not identical to the New-Covenantal promise under discussion in Romans 9. These two promises are not identical, for example, in that Gentile believers under the New Covenant are not promised things like the land of Canaan. They don't simply take over the Abrahamic promise from the Jews. Thus, Paul applies statements about the Abrahamic promise directly to a different promise. However, although the two covenants are not the same covenant, the New Covenant is

nevertheless tied to the Abrahamic promise. The Gentile inclusion under the New Covenant can be seen as flowing out of the promise that Abraham would serve as a blessing to the nations.²⁷ Further, Oropeza argues that Paul also sees the inclusion of the Gentiles as fulfilling the promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations.²⁸ In light of the connection between these two covenants, perhaps this issue is not a problematic one. There is another answer to this question which is perhaps even more effective. Although Genesis 21:12 does not speak directly to the New Covenant and its presumed exclusivity, the hypothetical objection with which Paul contends is likewise concerned more or less with the Old Covenant. The hypothetical objection deals not just with New Covenant exclusivity but specifically with that exclusivity in light of Abrahamic promises. As such, by answering this objection based upon Abrahamic grounds, Paul answers the objection to the New Covenant itself. If this is the case, then Paul remains hermeneutically justified, because it is not necessary to see him as claiming that Genesis speaks directly to the New Covenant. Rather, Paul can be seen as speaking directly to Abrahamic promise, albeit in a way that is relevant to the New Covenant.

The relationship here between speech act and hermeneutical justification is similar to that relationship as it stands in light of the first hermeneutical issue discussed. Paul is hermeneutically justified because his speech act obtains. He succeeds in performing the illocutionary act of appealing to authority, which he could not do if he were hermeneutically unjustified in speaking of the Abrahamic promise in relation to New Covenant exclusivity. This

²⁷ Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 167.

²⁸ Oropeza, 61.

close relationship between hermeneutical justification and speech act obtainment will serve to provide a bridge to the concept of situation, which will help answer questions about speech act and hermeneutical justification in light of the fact that Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 use Genesis 21:21 differently and are differently justified.

Hermeneutical Justification in Hebrews 11:18

While Romans 9:7 presents certain hermeneutical issues in its use of Genesis 21:21, Hebrews 11:18 presents its own set of issues. These will only be briefly restated as they have already been discussed in greater detail in chapter two. The hermeneutical issues present in Hebrews 11:18 with regard to its use of Genesis 21:12 mainly center on the larger contextual argument of the Hebrews passage, which seeks to tie Abraham's faith and experience to that of the audience of Hebrews, particularly by way of expectation of resurrection. Hebrews considers the sacrifice of Isaac pericope contextually, hence the quotation of Genesis 21:12, but adds to this some reasoning about Abraham's hope that God could even resurrect Isaac which does not seem to be in contextual focus within Genesis. So, Hebrews uses Genesis 21:12 to speak about the "chosen-ness" of Isaac in a fairly straightforward way, but it does so as part of a larger rhetorical move that may seem to "read into" the story something about Abraham's thoughts concerning resurrection at the time, something which does not seem to be in focus within the Genesis text. As such, it is necessary to speak about hermeneutical justification at two levels: the granular level of the Genesis 21:12 quotation itself as well as at the level of this larger resurrection argument.

At the first and more granular level, it appears that hermeneutical justification can be fairly straightforwardly addressed. The Genesis passage speaks to Isaac's chosen-ness and

Hebrews echoes that sentiment in order to emphasize that which Abraham stood to lose in sacrificing Isaac. Alan Mitchell comments upon Hebrews 11:18 to this effect, stating that the binding of Isaac put not only Isaac himself but also the Divine promise that was attached to him in jeopardy. Mitchell also notes that the idea of Abraham's hope lying in God's ability to resurrect Isaac does not come from the Genesis itself.²⁹ His explanation for it is that, in the mind of the author of Hebrews, this hope in the possibility of a resurrection accounts for Abraham's willingness to go through with the sacrifice. More importantly, according to Mitchell, this account of Abraham's hope serves to invite the audience of Hebrews to identify with Abraham's struggles as their own faith is tested.³⁰ While Mitchell acknowledges that the idea of Abraham hoping in a resurrection for Isaac as an idea that is external to the content of the Genesis text itself, he seems to see the conclusion drawn by the author of Hebrews as valid. While Genesis does not mention Abraham expecting Isaac to be resurrected, such a hope is an adequate and reasonable account of Abraham's unwavering trust in God. DeSilva's comments on this issue are similar to those of Mitchell,³¹ as are those of Cockerill. Cockerill, however, explains the logic in more detail. To him, Hebrews is saying that if Abraham believed Isaac to be the seed of the promise and also believed that God had commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, then indeed Abraham must have concluded that God would raise Isaac if the sacrifice were to be completed.³²

²⁹ Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 246-247.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 404-405.

³² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 556-557.

All three of these commentators seem to view the conclusion of the author of Hebrews about Abraham's trust in a resurrection for Isaac should he be sacrificed as a conclusion drawn from the data available within Genesis itself, even if the concept is not dealt with directly by the author of Genesis. Furthermore, the discussion of this issue in chapter two, while it did not find a theology of resurrection in Genesis, nevertheless found latent threads which feed into such a theology. They do not, however, seem to deal directly with the hermeneutical implications of this. The fact remains that the author of Hebrews seems to be making a statement about Abraham's beliefs which is not clearly borne out within the context of Genesis itself. This may be viewed as "reading into" Genesis something about Abraham's beliefs and attitudes which characterizes the story in a way other than the way in which Genesis presents it. Of course, the characterization of Abraham's beliefs in Hebrews is not directly contradictory to the Genesis depiction, it simply adds something to it that seems alien to the Genesis text. The manner in which these commentators deal with this issue leaves something to be desired. A modern reader, perhaps, ought to feel uncomfortable drawing similar conclusions about the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of biblical characters when those are not expressed in the text itself.

To say that there can be a certain amount of discomfort in what the author of Hebrews does with the Genesis account is not to say that Hebrews is necessarily being hermeneutically disingenuous. The facts upon which the author Hebrews bases the statement about Abraham's belief in the potential for Isaac to be resurrected are true to Genesis, and Genesis itself contains threads which later develop into a fully-fledged resurrection theology. Abraham believes that Isaac is the promised seed and yet his trust in God is great enough that he is still willing to go through with the sacrifice. Particularly from a canonical perspective that takes into account the

Bible's overall emphasis on Divine sovereignty over death, the idea of Abraham trusting that God would resurrect Isaac should he die is not unreasonable. This study is concerned with understanding in a more detailed way how the usage of Genesis 21:12 in this way is hermeneutically justified. It now remains to examine how an approach which takes speech acts into account can provide some clarity on this point.

Speech Acts and Hermeneutical Justification in Hebrews 11:18

At this point it is necessary to apply the speech act-based criterion for hermeneutical justification to the use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18. The relevant question here is whether or not Hebrews makes an untrue claim about the meaning of the Genesis text, but any such act of claiming must be viewed in relation to the larger speech acts in the passage. The focal speech act here was identified in the previous chapter as one of *testifying*, by way of Abraham's faith, about the faithfulness of God. The hermeneutical difficulty with this particular example arises mainly from the construal of Abraham's mindset when sacrificing Isaac which is not discussed directly in the Genesis text itself. The author of Hebrews is certainly going beyond the contextual meaning of the Genesis text itself, but does this constitute a hermeneutically unjustified usage of the text?

The Hebrews text certainly performs illocutionary actions that involve the making of claims. With regard to the quotation of Genesis 21:12 specifically, Hebrews makes the claim that the text asserts Isaac's status as the chosen seed. This act is implied in the quotation of the text and its usage in the overall argument in Hebrews. Isaac's seed-status is necessary to the contextual Scripture-based argument of Hebrews, and therefore its usage constitutes a claim about its meaning. This particular claim is tied to the larger act of testifying insofar as it forms a

part of the content of that testimony. Isaac's seed-status is critical to the characterization of Abraham's actions and the testimony about God's faithfulness which those actions imply. This claim, however, is not particularly problematic from a hermeneutical perspective. The claim that Genesis 21:12 means that Isaac is the chosen seed, the one through whom the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled, appears to be a true claim in keeping with the contextual meaning of that verse. If this is indeed the case, then the usage of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews 11:18 passes the hermeneutical justification text with regard to this particular claim. This claim, though, is not what is at the center of the issue with Hebrews' use of Genesis 21:12.

The statement in Hebrews about Abraham's trust in God's ability to resurrect Isaac even if he were sacrificed is a claim which seems to cause more difficulty. While it is not centered on the quotation of Genesis 21:12 itself, it is relevant to the way in which that verse is used. In quoting Genesis 21:12, the author of Hebrews has in mind a wider argument which takes into account the context of the Genesis passage and makes a claim about Abraham's mindset within the context of that overall narrative. Hebrews seems to be positing this belief that Isaac would be resurrected as Abraham's reason for being willing to sacrifice him in spite of his status as the promised seed.³³ As such, there does indeed appear to be a claim about Abraham's reasons for acting as he does in Genesis. So, there is a claim that can be stated along these lines: Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac at least partially because he believed Isaac would be resurrected if sacrificed. In much the same way as the earlier claim, this claim supports the larger speech act of

³³ Ibid., 556.

testifying. Using this claim, the author of Hebrews emphasizes the absoluteness of Abraham's trust in God.

What of the meaning of the Genesis text? Does it mean something along the lines of this claim being made in Hebrews 11? It would seem that it does not, and herein the hermeneutical difficulty with Hebrews 11:18 manifests itself. As has already been stated, this conclusion about Abraham's mindset seems to be alien to the direct message of the text, regardless of its plausibility. It simply is not expressed in the text itself, its context, nor in the themes of that context. However, this is not enough to make Hebrews 11:18 fail the test of hermeneutical justification. Certainly, it makes a claim, and that claim deals with content that is not the result of mere exegesis of the Genesis text. In order to fail the test, however, that claim must be about the meaning of the Old Testament text. It seems that it could be said that this claim is about Abraham's mindset and not about the meaning of the Genesis text itself. In other words, Hebrews may be drawing conclusions about Abraham as he stands within the context of the Genesis narrative, but it is not necessarily claiming that the Genesis text *means* that conclusion. This conclusion, of course, can be evaluated on its own merits as an argument, but it does not violate hermeneutical justification since it does not make a false claim about the meaning of the Old Testament text.

Under this approach which understands hermeneutical justification in terms of speech acts, the use of Hebrews 11:18 can be said to be hermeneutically justified. This hermeneutical justification is related to factors which influence and determine the nature of the speech acts performed by the author of Hebrews in using Genesis 21:12. The context of the Hebrews passage and the structure of its argument, along with other factors, form a *situation* in which the author

acts, one in which speech acts performed with regard to Genesis text can be understood as hermeneutically justified. There are differences between Hebrews 11:18 and Romans 9:7 in how they use Genesis 21:12 and in how their respective hermeneutical justifications function. The remainder of this chapter will explore those differences and begin to explore how these situational factors serve to justify different ways of using the Genesis text.

Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 Differently Justified in Situational Context

An examination of the hermeneutical issues stemming from the use of Genesis 21:12 in both Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 reveals that the two passages use the Genesis verse in distinct ways. As such, each of these two verses has its own distinct hermeneutical difficulties which require a certain degree of explanation. It may be intuitively clear to some that the New Testament uses the Old in a variety of ways, and this study seeks to better understand that variety and hermeneutical implications. By comparing two different passages which use the same Old Testament verse, this study is able to avoid much of the complexity which might otherwise arise in a comparative study of how multiple passages use the Old Testament. After removing the variables which would be associated with the usage of differing Old Testament passages, this study is able to focus on only those differences which relate to the New Testament passages and the manner in which they use the Old.

This study argues that speech act theory provides a useful approach to hermeneutical justification that can accommodate the differences in hermeneutical method between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in a way that takes situational factors into account. The fact that two New Testament passages use the same Old Testament verse differently shows that the New Testament

uses the Old in a variety of ways. Speech act theory provides a way to measure hermeneutical justification across a variety of ways of using Scripture. More specifically, it helps answer the question of whether or not a particular way of using Scripture is allowable in a given context, especially when certain methods may not be allowable in all contexts. Much has already been said by others about the features of the New Testament's use of the Old, but this study argues that speech act theory can provide some insight with regard to hermeneutical limitations within varying situations.

The manner in which these two passages can be hermeneutically justified in their use of Genesis 21:12 has been discussed and viewed through the lens of speech act theory, but what does this contribute to the discussion of hermeneutical variety in the New Testament's use of the Old? By examining two passages which use the same Old Testament verse differently, this study has shown that differences between the Old Testament texts being used cannot wholly account for this hermeneutical variety. This means that, at least in part, this variety must stem from something to do with the New Testament texts. If it is to be assumed that the New Testament authors do not simply misuse the Old Testament text, then something in the context of the New Testament passages must serve to justify these varying usages. How can that something be explored? What is it that limits what hermeneutical methods are acceptable within a particular context, since a single hermeneutical method and the Old Testament text itself are both insufficient in this regard? This study argues that speech act theory can be of help here. Proper and improper use of an Old Testament text both involve illocutionary acts performed in the usage of that text. Under speech act theory, situational context coupled with the rights and statuses of the speaker have a profound impact on the nature of the acts being performed. This

holds true for acts which involve use or misuse of a text. Situational factors and the rights and statuses of the speaker (in this case the New Testament author) could make all the difference between use and misuse. Different New Testament texts involve different situational factors, and this can account for the justifiability of different hermeneutical methods, ones which may be more loose or more strict depending on situational context. Speech act theory may not be the only way to approach these issues, but it is a theory that is especially well suited to describing issues concerning the interaction between situation and the nature of an act.

This argument can be applied to the differences between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in terms of how they are hermeneutically justified in their use of Genesis 21:12. Romans 9:7 has been shown to be somewhat straightforward when it comes to hermeneutical justification. This study has already examined how the illocutionary claims about the meaning of Genesis 21:12 do not actually depart from the contextual meaning of the Old Testament text. Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 is in some ways more straightforward than that found in Hebrews 11:18, as Paul more or less just references a fact about the Abrahamic promise while Hebrews goes on to make a comparatively speculative observation about the narrative.

Speech act theory posits that factors surrounding but external to a locutionary instance of speech itself have a profound impact on the nature of the illocutionary acts performed in that speech. This study has chosen to refer to these external factors collectively as *situation*. Importantly, situation includes other speech (and other speech acts) in the context of the speech in question. Indeed, when it comes to New Testament texts, there is often little information available other than the internal evidence of the text itself. The rights and statuses of the speaker are also important, but this study will focus on situation as it is found within the context of the

text itself. While the rights and statuses of the New Testament authors present an intriguing line of inquiry, so little is known (particularly about the author of Hebrews) that it is doubtful whether this would be as fruitful as simply focusing on textual context.

The relevant situational factors in Romans 9:7 involve a contextual speech act which has already been discussed: Paul's defending of his construal of the gospel against a particular objection. It is this defense which defines Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 as the introduction of a fact which he then uses in a larger argument. This defines the nature of Paul's act of making a claim about the Old Testament text and also plays a role in defining what that claim is. Hebrews 11:18, on the other hand, involves an act of testifying. This contextual situation includes a list of Old Testament saints, and the author of Hebrews makes assurances about the faithfulness of God on the basis of the actions of these saints. In other words, he is asking the question "what to the actions of these saints say about God's faithfulness?" and by extension, "Why did they do what they did?" This overall argument is sort of an inductive one, including numerous examples from the Old Testament. All of these statements about the motivations and reasons of the Old Testament saints are somewhat speculative in the sense that they often go beyond what the original texts explicitly state. Nevertheless, within this context the statements about Abraham are justified. The claim made about Abraham's belief in a resurrection for Isaac is not a claim about the meaning of the Genesis text, but nevertheless the argument obtains especially in the context of this larger evidential argument. The varying situations of these two texts play a role in their hermeneutics by serving as a backdrop for the speech acts being performed with regard to the Old Testament text. The final chapter of this study will seek to explore this relationship in

greater detail, and will attempt to understand the nature and limitations of this situational hermeneutic.

Conclusion

The study of intertextuality has led to a variety of approaches to understanding the relationship between the New Testament and the Old. This study has chosen to take a structuralist approach which locates meaning with the texts themselves rather than in a middle-space among the milieu of texts residing in the mind of the reader. With this in mind, an attempt was made to define an approach to hermeneutical justification which maintains a structuralist approach to meaning but might allow for the creative usages which the New Testament seems to exhibit. An approach to this task based upon speech act theory rendered the following as a criterion for hermeneutical justification: a text is hermeneutically justified in its use of an Old Testament text if it does not make an illocutionary claim that that text means something which it does not mean. Both Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 were discussed in terms of how they interact with this broad-but-structuralist criterion for hermeneutical justification, and both were found to be justified based upon the claims made about the Old Testament text. However, both texts do not use Genesis 21:12 in the same way, and so this study has concluded that contextual differences in the New Testament texts themselves must be taken into account in order to understand what is hermeneutically acceptable. Speech act theory provides some insight into this, since use or misuse of a text are both illocutionary acts, and their nature is deeply affected by external factors such as context. Speech act theory describes the relationship between use/misuse and the situational factors surrounding a particular usage of Scripture, and it offers a way to evaluate such usage that takes such factors into account. The final chapter of this study

will address this in more detail, hoping to arrive at some understanding of the situational nature of the hermeneutical methods exhibited in the New Testament's use of the Old, and of what limits those hermeneutical methods.

CHAPTER FIVE:
A SITUATIONAL HERMENEUTIC

Introduction

The hermeneutical methods practiced by the New Testament authors when they use the Old Testament are certainly deep and complex in character. Despite much existing scholarship, they still present a rich field available for study. It seems clear that the New Testament's use of the Old cannot be characterized in a few sweeping generalizations. Indeed, this study has drawn particular attention to this fact by pointing out the differences between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in their usage of Genesis 21:12. The hermeneutical methods of the New Testament authors are varied, and they vary according to more than just what is contained within the Old Testament text itself. These variations cannot, then, be attributed solely to differences in content or genre between various Old Testament texts. They arise, at least in part, from the New Testament author and the New Testament text. Furthermore, these New-Testament differences play a part in making the respective hermeneutical movements performed by the New Testament authors justifiable. Speech act theory has been posited as an avenue of insight into this relationship, hinging upon the fact that use or misuse of an Old Testament text are by nature illocutionary acts. The upshot of all this is that the hermeneutical methods practiced by the New Testament authors are situational just as the performative impact of any speech act (and indeed any act in general) is situational. Speech act theory furnishes an approach to consistently evaluating all of this, particularly in light of the variety of situational factors presented in the New Testament as

well as in the context of modern interpretation. In this final chapter, this concept of a situational hermeneutic will be explored in detail.

This chapter will begin by further developing the evidence from the texts themselves that has been discussed in the previous chapters. This discussion will focus primarily on the hermeneutical differences between these two texts. The significance of these differences with regard to hermeneutical justification will be discussed with particular focus on the impact which this has with regard to the larger argument of this study. A conclusion will be offered that a good way to reconcile all of this data is with the concept of a situational hermeneutic. This idea will be defined and developed. It will then be discussed in light of its relationship to the theological dimension of the New Testament's usage of the Old. This will culminate in an examination of whether or not this situational hermeneutic can be reproduced by modern readers, followed by some final concluding remarks.

Evidence from the Texts

This study argues that the New Testament's use of the Old exhibits a situational hermeneutic. The general flow of this argument had already been stated here, but it is necessary to examine it in greater detail. The approach to this task will begin with the evidence stemming from the two New Testament passages that have been in focus thus far. The relationship between Romans 9:7 and Hebrew 11:18 will serve as a basis for an argument that the concept of situation has value in understanding the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament writers. The evidence from the texts will focus on differences in usage of Genesis 21:12 as well as the differences in hermeneutic implied by those differences in usage.

Differences in Usage of Genesis 21:12

The first relevant observation concerning Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 is that both texts use Genesis 21:12 differently. Paul uses Genesis 21:12 as an Old Testament example of covenant exclusivity in order to defend against a charge that the gospel's exclusivity violates Old Testament promises. Hebrews uses it to hold Abraham up as an example of faithful and determined hope in a promised future for God's people that involves resurrection. Both of these passages, in concert with Genesis 21, assert the absolute faithfulness of God and his willingness and ability to fulfill his covenant promises, but ultimately there are differences in the way they approach the text hermeneutically.

What requires greater scrutiny at this stage of the argument is the precise nature of the differences in how these two passages use Genesis 21:12 and the significance of those differences. Paul's use of Genesis, for example, is in a sense somewhat straightforward. Although Paul does use Genesis 21:12 to make a point that is outside the concerns of Genesis itself, his appeal is nonetheless to the face-value meaning of Genesis 21:12 itself. Isaac's chosen status is the contextual point of Genesis 21:12, and Paul appeals directly to it and uses that point as a premise in his larger argument about Old Testament precedent. Hebrews, on the other hand, strays further from the contextual message in that it is concerned not with Isaac's status for its own sake but for the sake of what Hebrews makes it out to imply regarding Abraham's thoughts and intentions as he sacrifices Isaac. Both appeal to the simple fact of Isaac's chosen status, but Paul does not comment upon the significance of that fact within the narrative of Genesis. In a way, the fact that his argument has little to do with the context of Genesis 21:12 makes his usage of the verse more direct. Hebrews, on the other hand, deals not only with the fact of Isaac's

status presented in Genesis 21:12 but also comments upon its significance in the contextual narrative of the binding of Isaac. Paul touches less of the contextual narrative, but as a consequence he meddles less with meaning of the Genesis text even though he is not simply performing exegesis.

Romans and Hebrews both exhibit creative usage of the Genesis text in their own ways. This creativity, which seems to be characteristic throughout the New Testament, raises certain hermeneutical questions. These problems are closely related to questions about to what degree New Testament interpretation represents legitimate exegesis by modern standards and, therefore, to what degree they can be replicated by modern readers. Are the New Testament authors wrong? Are modern hermeneutical approaches misguided? Or are the New Testament texts simply able to take liberties that others cannot, perhaps due to their status as inspired Scripture? This study hopes to add to the discussion by providing an approach to understanding New Testament hermeneutics that accounts for the apparent creativity with which the New Testament authors use the Old while maintaining hermeneutical integrity under a structuralist approach to intertextual meaning. The next step in this process will be examine the differences in usage which have been highlighted here in terms of their hermeneutical import.

Differing Hermeneutics in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18

It has been pointed out that Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 each use Genesis 21:12 in different ways. This study will now argue that this difference in usage also translates into a difference in hermeneutical method. This will serve develop the argument of this study around the concept of a situational hermeneutic, that is, a hermeneutic which allows for a variety of hermeneutical methods used situationally. In order to proceed to that discussion, though, it is

necessary first to discuss the concept of variety among New Testament hermeneutical methods on its own. Of course, Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 can serve here as the test case. Since both deal with the same Old Testament verse, the task is simplified. It is unnecessary to account for differences in usage which might arise from differences between multiple Old Testament texts.

The interpretive variances between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 have already been analyzed at some length, but thus far the discussion has not focused closely upon hermeneutical method. It is important to establish that there are indeed real differences in hermeneutical method between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 in their usage of Genesis 21:12. The comparative looseness with which Hebrews uses Genesis 21:12 relative to Romans 9:7 has already been observed, but how can this be classified hermeneutically?

Hermeneutics in Romans 9:7

Since this study has begun with Romans 9:7 thus far, it seems appropriate to continue that pattern here. One place to begin is to ask whether typology might be a good way to characterize Paul's use of Genesis 21:12. Paul points out an Old Testament pattern involving covenant exclusivity among Abraham's descendants and then applies that pattern to a similar salvation-historical reality in his own day: the fact that a large number of Paul's countrymen are not receiving the blessings of the new covenant. Certainly, this interpretive move seems to exhibit the application of historical patterns to modern realities that characterizes typology. Does Romans 9:7 show how something in the New Testament fully embodies a pattern expressed in the Old? Typology often (though not always) involves something that is fulfilled in or by Christ. Furthermore, Romans 9:7 in context has more of the character of a legal defense than of a statement about typological fulfillment. The focus is on theodicy, and on appeal to the Old

Testament as a source of authority. It seems better to take Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 as being more or less directly concerned with the technicalities of that passage than with its potential as a pointer to an historical pattern in the Old Testament. Perhaps Paul could have used it typologically if he wanted to, but the focus on theodicy in Romans 9 seems to diminish the potential role of typology and call instead for Paul's hermeneutic to be a more direct appeal to the Old Testament text. There exists an analogy between Isaac/Ishmael and believers/nonbelieving Jews in Paul's day, but it is not typological in nature. In order for Paul's argument to work, he needs legal precedent for the covenant exclusivity which he advocates. The pattern exists because it is necessary from the perspective of legal precedent, not because Paul wishes to make the Isaac-Ishmael story out to be typological, at least in this case.

Another important reason for which Paul's use of Genesis 21:12 might not be best understood as typological is that typology relies upon historical pattern which relates to the present, but Paul's argument does not relate immediately to the present. Rather, his theodicy is in answer to a question about the Abrahamic promise of the past and the impact of the Gospel upon it, specifically whether the exclusivity of the gospel violates the Abrahamic covenant itself. In other words, Paul's defense is against the charge that his gospel directly contradicts Old Testament teaching regarding God's promises to Israel, and he answers that charge on the basis of the Old Testament evidence. The situation of Paul's present only comes into logic of his argument after he has established the precedent for covenant exclusivity among Abraham's descendants. In short, the question at hand is one of whether or not Old Testament teaching, within its own context, has been contradicted. The connection here is direct rather than being based upon historical pattern.

With this in mind, Paul's hermeneutic in his use of Genesis 21:12 can perhaps be characterized to a useful degree. Paul is concerned with the facts of the Abrahamic promise: what it does and more importantly does not entail. He appeals to the Old Testament text in for its theological authority in order to answer the question of theodicy concerning the faithfulness of God toward Israel. This appeal implies a certain exegetical rigor. If Paul claims the Old Testament to say something that it does not say, then he fails in answering his detractors. Moreover, a straightforward reading of the Genesis text reveals Paul's usage to be in line with Genesis text's contextual meaning. As such, Paul's use of Genesis 21:12, in terms of hermeneutics, seems to be fairly straightforward. Paul may not be simply parroting the Genesis passage in terms of its biblical theology, but he does seem to be utilizing its theological content in a way that is direct with regard to its immediate context.

Hermeneutics in Hebrews 11:18

It remains now to analyze whether Hebrews exhibits a similarly direct hermeneutic in its use of Genesis 21:12. Certainly, the use of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews is direct, in a sense. The quotation itself is, like Paul, concerned with the fact of Isaac's seed-status. Hebrews, of course, parleys this into a larger statement about Abraham's mindset as he sacrifices Isaac. Paul likewise uses the quotation and the fact of Isaac's seed-status as part of a larger statement. From this perspective, it might seem that the hermeneutics exhibited in Hebrews 11:18 can be characterized in much the same way as Paul's hermeneutics in Romans 9:7.

There is an important difference, however, between the larger argument to which Hebrews applies Genesis 21:12 and the larger argument made by Paul. Paul's larger argument focuses neither on the Genesis text, its wider narrative, nor its contextual concerns. Paul is

focused on a theological issue concerning the gospel and external to the Genesis text. He employs Genesis as part of his argument, but his argument does not comment further upon Genesis itself. The way in which Hebrews uses Genesis 21:12 as part of a larger argument, on the other hand, does comment upon the Genesis text. Hebrews uses not only Genesis 21:12, but the entire contextual pericope of the binding of Isaac. The wider argument, comprised of a commentary upon Abraham's mindset as he sacrificed Isaac, is not external to the Genesis text but rather intimately attached to it. This wider argument, in fact, constitutes continued usage of the Genesis text. Furthermore, this wider argument comments upon Genesis in a way that does seem to differ from the more direct usage in Romans 9:7. What Romans 9:7 has to say in terms of interpretation of Genesis 21:12 is more or less direct, but this is not the case for Hebrews 11:18. The usage in Hebrews is, by comparison, much more creative as it speculated upon Abraham's thought and beliefs which are not mentioned within Genesis. Therefore, the hermeneutic exhibited in Hebrews 11:18 ought not to be characterized in the same way as that exhibited in Romans 9:7.

The Use of Scripture in Hebrews

In order to proceed further, however, it is necessary to first discuss the issue of Hebrews' use of Scripture overall. Hebrews 11:18 does not stand alone, after all. Hebrews as a whole exhibits some interesting features in its use of the Old Testament, and the hermeneutics it employs in 11:18 function within that larger context. It is crucial to acknowledge in this regard the sermonic nature of Hebrews. The view that Hebrews is a sermon turned into a letter has

become common.¹ Regardless of whether and to what degree Hebrews should be understood as a spoken or a written work, the presence of this debate testifies to its oral character.² Gabriella Gelardini goes so far as to liken Hebrews to a proto-rabbinic homily, seeing in its use of the Old Testament a sermonic exposition of two main texts and other supporting texts. This form, she argues, likens it rabbinic preaching.³

In his article, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” Luke Johnson explores the relationship between the oral nature of Hebrews and its use of the Old Testament. He argues that Hebrews invites the reader into a conceptual world and that the way in which it employs Scripture plays an important role in the construction of that world.⁴ Specifically, he focuses upon the way in which Hebrews presents scriptural quotations. He notes that Hebrews citation formulae speak almost exclusively of Scripture as something oral. That is, Hebrews speaks of God speaking presently to the audience when it quotes the Old Testament rather than simply of Scripture.⁵ According to Johnson, however, Hebrews goes beyond this in its creative interpretation of Scripture in light of a contemporary experience. One of the examples which he deals with is Hebrews’ use of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1-10. By drawing a series of connections between Melchizedek and Jesus, the author of Hebrews applies Genesis 14:18 and Psalm 110:4 to Jesus.⁶

¹ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 80.

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 11.

³ Gabriella Gelardini, “Hebrews, Homiletics, and Liturgical Scripture Interpretation,” in *Reading the epistle to the Hebrews*, eds. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCrudden (Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), 142-143.

⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” *Interpretation* 57, no. 3 (July 2003), 239.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 242-244.

Ultimately, he also applies those texts to his audience as he uses them to prove the “superiority of God’s speech through his son.”⁷ This speech is part of the scriptural world which the author of Hebrews builds for his audience to inhabit, and he calls upon them to heed it.

Matthew Easter builds upon this concept further, noting how the author of Hebrews’ claims about the faith of the heroes listed in Hebrews 11 center around not just a generalized trust in God, but specifically hope in resurrection and life after death.⁸ Easter sees this theme involving resurrection running throughout Hebrews, for example in the discussion of Jesus’ faith in Hebrew 5:7-9.⁹ He concludes that the motivation for faith in God in the context of Hebrews always involves trust that he will resurrect. In his words, “this connection between faith in God and the hope of life after death provides a pastoral word to the hearers of Hebrews.”¹⁰

Easter’s work points to the pastoral, hortatory focus of Hebrews in a way that is intimately linked with the references to Abraham in Hebrews 11 as well as the larger context of Hebrews and its use of the Old Testament. This seems consistent with Johnson’s conclusions about the manner in which Hebrews views Scripture as speaking in some sense directly to its audience, because resurrection is the hope of the Christian audience of Hebrews, a hope to which he exhorts them to continue to hold fast in faith. Resurrection hope is arguably not the focus of these Old Testament texts. They have their own contexts apart from the experience of the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁸ Matthew C. Easter, “Faith in the God who Resurrects: The Theocentric Faith of Hebrews,” *New Testament Studies* 63, no. 1 (Jan 217), 87-88.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

audience of Hebrews. This does not mean that Hebrews misuses these Scriptures, but it does mean that they are used and applied creatively.

Hermeneutics of Hebrews 11:18 in Contrast to Romans 9:7

How, then, should the hermeneutic exhibited in Hebrews 11:18 be characterized? Since that verse is part of a larger passage dealing with Abraham, it seems prudent to include at least the commentary upon the binding of Isaac in that characterization, since the quotation in Hebrews 11:18 is part of that commentary. Here also the possibility of typology ought to be discussed, as some features of typology seem to present. The comment in Hebrews upon Abraham's hope in a resurrection seems to bear correspondence to the situation of the audience of Hebrews. Abraham, like them, hoped in a resurrection. This correspondence even has the feature of the New Testament situation being greater in scope, something which is also common in typology.¹¹ While Abraham hoped in the possibility of a temporal resurrection for Isaac alone, the audience of Hebrews hopes in an ultimate and eternal resurrection for all believers.

On the other hand, the concept of Abraham's hope in a resurrection comes not from the Genesis text. It is speculation on the part of the author of Hebrews. It is well-founded speculation, perhaps, but Genesis does not state it. This idea is certainly useful in relating Abraham's experience to that of the audience of Hebrews, but the fact that it is speculative in nature casts some doubt upon the idea of an historical pattern or correspondence founded in the Old Testament text itself. Furthermore, the broader context of Hebrews 11:18, the 11th chapter,

¹¹ David L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian use of the Old Testament," In *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 317.

repeats again and again this process of relating the experiences of Old Testament figures to the struggles of the audience. With this in mind, it seems that Abraham is not a type of the audience, but a member of the cloud of witnesses. These two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but this wider contextual view accommodates everything Hebrews says about Abraham without the need to appeal to typology for explanation. The relationship between the experiences of the Old Testament saints and those of the New Testament believers is not typological but direct. Perhaps the same sort of thinking that forms the basis for typology in the first place informs the hermeneutic of Hebrews 11:18, but it does not seem necessary to characterize that hermeneutic as typological in nature.

Although there is a speculative element in Hebrews' statements about Abraham's mindset, the idea that God could resurrect Isaac is by no means an imposition on the Old Testament from a canonical perspective. John Levenson points to Daniel 12:1-3 as one of the clearest and earliest references to resurrection theology in the Old Testament. He argues that this, as well as later rabbinic teachings on resurrection, find their roots in latent foreshadowings that occur much earlier, including within Genesis.¹² N. T. Wright agrees with the assessment that later fully-fledged resurrection theology grew organically out of theology expressed as early as Genesis and is inseparable from it.¹³ On the other hand, while Wright argues for these deep links between earlier and later theology, he still maintains that this theology transitioned through

¹² Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 44.

¹³ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 127-128.

several stages of thought about life after death, with the idea of resurrection being characteristic of only the later stages.¹⁴

The continuity between that earlier theology and later resurrection theology implies that Hebrews is not imposing some alien theology on Genesis, particularly from an Old Testament canonical perspective. The fact remains, however, that Hebrews is not merely speaking to the canonical reality of resurrection. It seems to state that Abraham himself acknowledged it, yet Abraham ostensibly inhabited that earlier time during which resurrection theology was not fully developed. Given what Genesis itself reveals about God's sovereignty and faithfulness within the Abrahamic narrative, as well as other latent seeds of resurrection theology in Genesis, it is not so much of a stretch to say that Abraham could indeed have come to such a conclusion based upon only his own knowledge of God of his situation. However, the fact that Hebrews not only reads Genesis in light of resurrection theology present in the canon but posits such a belief on behalf of Abraham means that canonical reading alone is not sufficient to explain the hermeneutical issues raised in Hebrews 11:18.

So, the hermeneutic exhibited in Hebrews 11:18 does not seem to be straightforward in the way shown in Romans 9:7. There are also reasons not to classify it as typological, and therefore another avenue must be sought. Hebrews 11:18 seems to exhibit a certain degree of creativity in its larger speculations upon Abraham's mindset in terms of how it related that mindset to the experience of the audience of Hebrews. Hebrews provides a speculative narrative as the basis for this relatability. As has already been argued, Hebrews is concerned with an

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

exhortative application of Old Testament Scripture to its audience. Hebrews aims to encourage them to hold fast to a resurrection hope, and this leads Hebrews to adapt its usage of Old Testament texts to focus on this hope in creative ways. Calling this presentation of the narrative speculative is not to say that it is necessarily inaccurate or even unlikely. It is merely to say that it is based upon conclusions drawn about the original Old Testament narrative which are not stated within that original narrative and which go beyond its immediate contextual concerns. This speculation deals specifically with Hebrews' statement about Abraham's belief in a possible resurrection for Isaac, but the core of Abraham's relatability to the audience of Hebrews still rests upon what is explicitly stated in the Genesis text: Abraham's complete trust in God and willingness to act on that trust. The speculative resurrection hope of Abraham does not alone comprise this relatability, it merely enhances it. Therefore, the basic hermeneutical movement being made in Hebrews 11, which relates the actions of Abraham to the argument about God's faithfulness, is well founded in the Genesis text, but a further speculative move regarding a resurrection hope serves to strengthen the relatability of Abraham's experience for the readers. The hermeneutic employed in Hebrews 11:18 can be characterized as a sort of semi-speculative narration. It is not entirely speculative because, by and large, its major point deals with what is stated in the Genesis text. However, the author of Hebrews is willing to speculate beyond what is stated to a degree in order to enhance the argument. The author narrates the experience of Abraham as depicted in Genesis, adding some speculation concerning Isaac's potential resurrection.

It is difficult to classify the hermeneutics of the New Testament. It would be quite difficult indeed to make them fit neatly into modern categories. An attempt has been made to

describe the hermeneutical methods exhibited in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 with some degree of accuracy. Much more could be said, of course, about these hermeneutical methods, but the focus here has been to describe them at least well enough to point out more clearly their significant differences. Paul's hermeneutic in using Genesis 21:12 has been characterized as an appeal to fact for the purpose of theodicy, and that of Hebrews 11:18 has been characterized as semi-speculative narration. These are characterizations, not categories, and they should not be expected to correspond to any system of categorizing hermeneutical method. They are merely an attempt to describe the hermeneutical methods of these two passages well enough for the task at hand, which is to establish that there are real hermeneutical differences between these two passages in the way that they use Genesis 21:12. It remains now to discuss the significance of these differences for the argument of this study.

What Different Hermeneutics means for Hermeneutical Justification

Hermeneutical justification was discussed in the previous chapter. It argued that hermeneutical justification is an important concept in reconciling a structuralist approach to intertextual meaning with the creativity exhibited in the New Testament's use of the Old. Within this context, it is important how hermeneutical justification is defined and what its criteria are. Too strict a criterion will become discordant with the creativity exhibited by New Testament usage, but if the criterion is too loose the structuralist approach to meaning will be undermined. The argument was made that speech act theory furnishes an approach that is useful in navigating these waters, particularly in a way that is capable of evaluating a wide variety of situational usages, including usages by modern readers. Here, this study will expand upon that argument,

and will place special focus upon its significance in the context of the fact that Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 exhibit real hermeneutical differences in how they use Genesis 21:12.

Speech Acts and Hermeneutical Justification

In the previous chapter, this study argued that speech act theory furnishes an approach to hermeneutical justification that is able to navigate in a consistent way the tension between structuralist meaning and creative usage, specifically in the context of a variety of ways of using Scripture in a variety of situations. A criterion for hermeneutical justification was proposed which considers the speech acts involved in use and misuse of texts: *a text is hermeneutically justified in its use of an Old Testament text if it does not, when taking situational factors into account, perform an illocutionary act of making a claim that the Old Testament text means something that it does not mean.* This criterion is built upon the idea that use and misuse are essentially illocutionary speech acts. Hermeneutical justification, then, can be viewed as the absence of a speech act of misuse. Whether or not a particular usage of a text constitutes something hermeneutically unjustified, then, depends on whether or not an illocutionary act of misuse is performed.

Since Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 have already been evaluated under this criterion, no more needs to be said here about how it applies to those texts. There is one important point, however, that needs to be made in order to proceed with the current argument concerning a situational hermeneutic in the New Testament. Part of the insight of speech act theory involves the relationship between speech acts and factors external to the speech itself. Actions are by nature situational in terms of their significance. They have a context which can drastically impact the very nature of the acts being performed. Speech act theory recognizes that the identity of the

speaker as well as situational factors play a role in determining what illocutionary acts take place.¹⁵ The very nature of these acts can, in fact, be drastically changed by factors completely separate from the actual locution. This point serves to further highlight the benefit of approaching the question of hermeneutical justification via speech act theory. Speech act theory is well-suited to consideration of the manner in which external factors can alter the performative impact of an instance of speech, such that something said in one situation can have a different performative impact under different circumstances. This point has been hinted at before, but it is necessary to formally state it here: situational factors play a role in defining the nature of illocutionary acts that take place. This study argues that when this is applied to usage of the Old Testament, situational factors might even make the difference between an illocutionary act constituting misuse and one which does not. This means that situational factors can mean the difference between hermeneutical justification and the failure to attain hermeneutical justification.

Speech act theory formally describes the relationship between situational factors and hermeneutical justification. It provides a framework for discussing and evaluating that relationship as it applies to different instances of the use of Scripture. Perhaps even more importantly, it provides a bridge between a variety of instances. It is one thing to note how a particular text's situational context plays into its use of another text, but speech act theory supplies an overarching approach to this relationship between situation and hermeneutical

¹⁵ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 8-9.

justification that can aid in discussing disparate instances of the usage of Scripture together. This becomes particularly important when it comes to questions about replication of the New Testament's interpretive methods, since modern usage of Scripture presents its own, distinct array of situations.

The Significance of Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 being Differently Justified

The differences between Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 have been addressed at every stage of this study. These two passages are quite different in terms of the hermeneutics they employ, despite using the same Old Testament text. Romans 9:7 exhibits an appeal to fact for the purpose of theodicy while Hebrews 11:18 applies a semi-speculative narration. These terms are intended here to function solely as a way to describe the contrast between the two passages, but it is necessary now to expand upon the significance of that hermeneutical contrast.

This significance lies in the realm of hermeneutical justification. Specifically, Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 are not hermeneutically justified in the same way. They both meet the same criterion, but they do so by way of factors unique to each respective text and involving factors surrounding the usage of Genesis 21:12. To elucidate this point, the following question may be asked: how would it be if Romans 9:7 employed the same hermeneutical method as Hebrews 11:18? What if, in addition to quoting Genesis 21:12, Paul added some degree of speculation upon the Genesis narrative? Given that the context is a theodicy defending the gospel against an accusation of breaking God's word as depicted in the Old Testament promises given to Abraham, it would seem that the consequences would have been dire for the effectiveness of Paul's argument. He would have been including in his theodicy a premise based upon something the text doesn't say. More importantly, however, is what this would do to Romans 9:7 in terms of

hermeneutical justification. Since Paul is appealing to the Old Testament as an authority in the context of a theodicy, he is attaching the validity of his premise to that authority. By claiming that the Old Testament supports his argument in the way that he does, he is making a claim about the meaning of the Old Testament text. This is all well and good, since what Romans 9:7 actually claims is in fact in alignment with what the Genesis text actually says, but what if Paul had been speculative instead, as Hebrews 11:18 is? Paul would have been making an untrue claim about the meaning of the Genesis text. He would have failed the test of hermeneutical justification.

However, this same speculative move passes the test in Hebrews 11:18. The reasons for this have already been discussed, but they boil down to this: the context of the usage in Hebrews alters the nature of the illocutionary act such that when it speculates it is not in fact making a claim about the meaning of the Genesis text. This allows the usage of Genesis 21:12 in Hebrews to pass the test of hermeneutical justification where similar usage in Romans 9:7 would not. It has already been established that Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 represent different hermeneutics. At this point it is important to add to this the observation that what was justified in one passage is not necessarily justified in the other. As such, the New Testament is not merely exhibiting, for example, a restricted pool of hermeneutical methods which can be used in any situation. Rather, there is a complex relationship between context and which hermeneutical maneuvers are justified and which are not.

Since the hermeneutical method employed in Hebrews 11:18 has been discussed in terms of how it would operate in the context of Romans 9:7, the word should be said about the reverse. How would the hermeneutical method of Romans 9:7 function within Hebrews 11:18? Since Paul's usage involves appeal to fact drawn from the Old Testament meaning, it does not seem

that there would be a problem with hermeneutical justification even if a similar move were done in the context of Hebrews 11:18. Applying that hermeneutic in the context of Hebrews 11:18 would involve leaving out the statements about Abraham's hope in a resurrection, since those are speculative, and their inclusion would therefore change the nature of the hermeneutic. Hebrews' statements about Abraham's experience would not be as relatable to the Christian audience. However, hermeneutical justification is simply a matter of not making untrue claims about the meaning of the Old Testament text. It seems that the hermeneutic employed in Romans 9:7 would not be unjustified in the context of Hebrews 11:18, even if it were not as rhetorically effective. The point remains, though, that there exists a relationship between context and hermeneutical justification. What is allowable in one instance might not be allowable in another.

Situational Hermeneutic

Everything that has been discussed so far can now be brought together to argue for a particular characterization of the hermeneutics exhibited in the New Testament use of the Old. This study argues that the New Testament employs a situational hermeneutic. It also posits that speech act theory is a useful way to approach this idea, particularly when it comes to understanding questions about what may or may not be hermeneutically justified in a particular situation. It remains, now, to lay out the concept of a situational hermeneutic, beginning with a discussion of why this concept is needed based upon the observations that have been provided thus far. An attempt will then be made to clearly define the concept of situation and how that contributes to a definition of situational hermeneutic.

The Need for Situation as an Explanatory Device

In order to discuss the concept of a situational hermeneutic as an accurate characterization of the New Testament's use of the Old, it is necessary to begin by arguing that there is indeed a need for the concept of a situational hermeneutic. This argument flows from the points that have been discussed so far. The aim here will be to show that these points imply that there is a need for the concept of situation. This will serve as a basis for discussing how that concept can be clearly defined.

In order to accomplish this task, this study will begin with by stating a point from the preceding discussion in the form of two premises (1) Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 exhibit different hermeneutical methods. (2) Both Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 are hermeneutically justified in their use of Genesis 21:12. There is no need to repeat the argumentation behind these premises, but it is important to observe that they imply that (3) multiple hermeneutical methods can be hermeneutically justified. The logic here is fairly straightforward. If two different passages employ different hermeneutical methods that are both justified, then it stands to reason that more than one hermeneutical method can be justified. Hermeneutical justification is not, then, only a matter of using the right method, but rather there is more than one justifiable method. This is not meant to imply that any method is justifiable, but simply that there is more than one. Now the following premise can be added: (4) the hermeneutical method exhibited in Hebrews 11:18 would not be justified if it were employed in Romans 9:7. Again, the reasons for this have been discussed at length, but (3) in combination with (4) suggests the following conclusion: (5) hermeneutical methods that are justified in one context are not necessarily justified in all contexts. Since the method in Hebrews 11:18 would not be justified in the context

of Romans 9:7, it stands to reason that at least some hermeneutical methods are justified only conditionally. This implies that there is something beyond the hermeneutical method itself which affects hermeneutical justification. The fact that some methods are only conditionally justified implies the existence of a condition.

If a hermeneutical method is not justified in one context but is justified in another, this means that it is not the method itself which makes it inherently justified or unjustified. It must therefore be something about the context which makes the difference. There must exist a condition or set of conditions which affect whether or not some hermeneutical methods are justified. Speech act theory furnishes a way to understand and evaluate these conditions in terms of their effect upon whether or not a particular usage is justified. By recognizing the manner in which various factors can alter the performative impact of a speech act, speech act theory can adequately describe how factors other than hermeneutical method can make the difference between use and misuse, particularly in light of the fact that certain usages may be acceptable in some scenarios but not in others. This study chooses to refer to these conditions as situation for reasons which will be discussed, but it is sufficient for now simply to acknowledge that there is a need for such a concept in order to adequately account for the hermeneutical methods exhibited by the New Testament.

Definition of Situation

Walter Kaiser argues that while variety can be found in how the New Testament uses the Old, the arguments presented within the New Testament depend upon congruity with the Old Testament message for their authenticity. His argument in *The Uses of the Old Testament in the*

New focuses on passages which use the Old Testament apologetically.¹⁶ His argument hints at the relationship between the purpose of Old Testament usage and the need for hermeneutical rigor. Indeed, it is telling that he writes that, “while Jewish and Christian believers often would trifle with the Scriptures for devotional and meditative purposes, one would be hard-pressed to find any apologetic value in appealing to such procedures as *midrash*, *peshet*, allgory, or the like...”¹⁷ The implication here is that purpose can have a role in tightening or loosening hermeneutical requirements. Beale is more explicit in acknowledging that some instances of New Testament use of the Old are hermeneutically looser than others. Beale excuses these looser instances on the basis that they often involve “... an ironic or polemical intention.”¹⁸ Beale and Carson discuss this issue a little further in the introduction to their *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. They argue that the Old Testament may be used by the New in multiple ways. Importantly, some of these ways may be more hermeneutically demanding than others. For example, they ask whether there may be instances where apparent references to the Old Testament are simply the result of the author’s mind being steeped in scriptural language, alongside instances that involve claims of Old Testament prophecy fulfillment, or other instances that seek to teach a moral lesson by way of analogy.¹⁹

¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 13-14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁸ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 22.

¹⁹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), xxiv-xxv.

Beale, Carson, and Kaiser seem to express the idea that using the Old Testament for certain purposes allows for looser interpretations than other purposes might, though neither closely explores this relationship. This study seeks to answer more clearly the following question: what is it that allows looser interpretation in some instances but not in others? The idea that purpose or reason for usage of an Old Testament text can have an effect on the need for hermeneutical rigor is a clue to this relationship, but purpose of use alone is not necessarily adequate to account for it. This study argues instead for a concept of situation which takes into account more than just the purpose of scriptural usage. This section will discuss the reasons for which situation is a desirable term for this concept. Following this, an attempt will be made to clearly define the concept of situation as it is relevant here. This will lay the foundation for the introduction of the concept of a situational hermeneutic in the New Testament.

First, it is important to discuss why situation is a desirable term for this concept. The concept in question involves conditions which make hermeneutical maneuvers justifiable at times but not at other times. At first blush, it may seem simpler to understand this idea as context. What makes the difference between hermeneutical justification and the lack thereof, it seems, boils down to what is going in the text surrounding a usage of the Old Testament, and context appears to be an adequate way to refer to this. Context, however, is undesirable because it is too general. Everything surrounding a particular text, such as other text, the author, historical factors, etc. all fall under the label of context. Not all of these factors, however, necessarily play a role in determining the difference between use and misuse. A less broad term, if it can be found, would be desirable. That term may encompass a subset of context, but it would not necessarily be synonymous with it. Furthermore, context is a loaded term in a way which focuses

on text. Context, taken generally, applies to things other than texts, but in discussions of hermeneutics it may prove difficult to escape from its textual connotations.

Situation is offered here as a more desirable term. While context focuses on texts, situation focuses on action. This is of particular importance since hermeneutical justification has already been framed in terms of its relationship to speech acts. If use and misuse are actions, it makes sense to view the surrounding factors which play a pivotal role in creating use and misuse in terms of their relationship to action. The term situation is chosen because it is slightly different from context and connotes action as the thing being surrounded. This recognizes that it is not merely the text which is involved in use or misuse, but that use and misuse are both illocutionary acts, and that whether or not either has taken place depends on the situation in which the acts take place.

With all of this in mind, the task of defining situation is fairly straightforward. In the context of this argument, situation refers to factors surrounding speech acts involved in use of an Old Testament text which have some effect on the performative impact of those speech acts. Most importantly, situation involves things which surround the act of using the Old Testament text and in turn affect whether or not that use constitutes. Thus, situation plays into whether or not particular hermeneutical methods are justified. It comprises the things which affect the nature of speech acts related to Old Testament usage. Situation is closely related to context, and indeed any evidence useful in understanding the situation of particular text is likely to come from context, but it is best to view situation and context as logically distinct even though they are closely related.

Defining a Situational Hermeneutic

Having established the need for a concept of situation and provided a definition for it, it is now possible to get to the crux of the argument of this chapter. This study seeks to provide a useful characterization of the New Testament's hermeneutic, but it has shown that the New Testament's hermeneutic is not monolithic. The New Testament employs multiple hermeneutics. However, this study also seeks to remain true to a structuralist approach to intertextual meaning. That is to say that this study seeks to show how the multiple hermeneutics of the New Testament, some looser than others, can accommodate an approach which sees meaning as rooted in authorial intent. To clarify, the meaning of the Old Testament text is rooted in the intent of the author of that text, and the meaning of the New Testament text is in turn rooted in the intent of its own author. This commitment to a structuralist approach to meaning means that while multiple hermeneutical approaches may be allowable, they are not without restriction. Some hermeneutics may not be allowed at all, while others may only be conditionally allowed. The hermeneutical dynamics of Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18, in fact, exhibit this conditionality.

The upshot of this is that what is hermeneutically allowable is dependent upon external factors. This study has chosen to refer to these factors collectively as situation. As such, it makes sense to characterize the hermeneutic of the New Testament in its use of the Old as a situational hermeneutic. This is a hermeneutic which admits to a variety of hermeneutical methods, but these methods are restrained. They are not restrained simply as a static list of which methods are allowable and which are not.²⁰ Rather, whether or not they are allowable ultimately depends on

²⁰ Certainly, it is possible that some methods are always allowable while some never are, but the important thing is the recognition that situation must be considered.

situation. There is a dynamic but consistent relationship between hermeneutical justification and situation as situation forms the context of performative speech acts and plays a part in determining their nature. Therefore, it is not enough simply to say that the New Testament exhibits multiple hermeneutics. It exhibits a situational hermeneutic, employing different methods creatively as the situation allows, but within a framework that is dynamic but restricted by the contours of the situational backdrop.

This situational hermeneutic, then, is a dynamic and creative hermeneutic which respects the Old Testament's meaning, structuralistically construed, within the framework of the situation current to the New Testament text. By approaching this in terms of the effects which situation has upon the nature of speech acts, it becomes clearer how the manner in which this situational aspect of the hermeneutics found in the New Testament can be applied consistently. Having defined the concept of a situational hermeneutic, there is an important issue which needs to be briefly addressed before proceeding toward a discussion of the relationship between a situational hermeneutic and the theology of the New Testament authors.

Typology and a Situational Hermeneutic

If an attempt is to be made to characterize the hermeneutics exhibited in the New Testament, it is necessary to discuss how that characterization relates to typology. After all, typology is not simply one way in which the New Testament uses the Old. Some scholars have argued that it is in fact the primary way.²¹ As such, it is important to discuss the relationship

²¹ Baker, "Typology and the Christian use of the Old Testament," 317.

between a situational hermeneutic and typology. The concept of a situational hermeneutic is in no way an attempt to dethrone typology as an understanding of how the authors of the New Testament use the Old. Situational hermeneutic is an attempt to explain the New Testament's use of the Old from a hermeneutical perspective, with a primary focus on the issue of hermeneutical justification. Typology, on the other hand, describes a specific, though common, way in which New Testament uses the Old. Typology, in fact, fits within the framework of a situational hermeneutic. It is among the hermeneutical methods which a situational hermeneutic allows for. A situational hermeneutic is a framework that seeks to explain how the New Testament can use the Old in a variety of creative ways while respecting the meaning of the Old Testament text, structuralistically construed. Typology, on the other hand, is a particular understanding of a particular way of reading the Old Testament exhibited by the New Testament, and like any other particular way of using the Old Testament it can find a place within the framework of a situational hermeneutic.

So, situational hermeneutic and typology are not competing conceptions of how the New Testament uses the Old. If anything, they are complementary. What begs for further scrutiny at this point, though, is what guides and limits this situational hermeneutic from a theological perspective. The New Testament's use of the Old is highly theological, and in particular Christological. Therefore, the next step in this study is to explore how this concept of a situational hermeneutic interacts with theology.

The Role of Theology in a Situational Hermeneutic

The New Testament authors are creative and varied in their usage of the Old Testament. The concept of a situational hermeneutic that has been proposed here attempts to offer some

insight into the nature of this hermeneutical variety. However, any discussion of the hermeneutics exhibited within the New Testament as it uses the Old would be incomplete if it did not address the role of theology in the New Testament's use of the Old. Therefore, the theological dimension of the New Testament's hermeneutics will be explored here, particularly as it relates to the concept of a situational hermeneutic and acts as a guide and limiter within that framework. Commentators upon the New Testament's use of the Old often recognize theology as having a central role in how the Old Testament is used.²² Christology in particular colors how the New Testament authors utilize the Old Testament, even when it does not speak directly about Christ. The New Testament authors are affected by bibliology as well. It informs their views upon the nature of Scripture and by extension their usage of it.

Bibliology and a Situational Hermeneutic

The relationship between theology and the New Testament's use of the Old seems clear, and that relationship holds when the New Testament's use of the Old is framed as a situational hermeneutic. One of the major components of the concept of a situational hermeneutic that has been proposed here is a commitment to structuralist meaning. That is to say that the meaning of the Old Testament text is external to the New Testament author and the New Testament text. It resides within the Old Testament itself, in the form of the intent of the Old Testament author.

This commitment to structuralist meaning is not just a commitment to a particular literary theory,

²² See, for example, the presuppositions proposed by Beale which set Christian interpretation of the Old Testament apart of Jewish interpretation. Beale characterizes these presuppositions as a "redemptive-historical perspective." This perspective seems to be theological in nature. G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question: Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 391.

it is also a theological commitment. It implies a certain understanding about what the word of God is and how God communicates it. It is a bibliological position with bibliological ramifications.

This same commitment is evidenced by the New Testament authors themselves. In his recent book *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, Abner Chou argues for a hermeneutical continuity between the Old Testament prophets and the apostles of the New Testament. As part of his larger argument, he offers an investigation into the self-perception of the New Testament authors using internal evidence from the New Testament text. He argues that citation formulae, for example, evidence the dependency on the part of the New Testament text upon the contextual meaning of the Old.²³ The upshot of Chou's approach here is that it shows that the New Testament's apparent commitment to the contextual meaning of the Old goes beyond simply what is evidenced in the usage itself. Chou presents internal evidence that suggests that the New Testament authors were self-aware that they were using the Old Testament in a way consistent with this respect for its authoritative meaning. This suggests that what the New Testament authors believed about the Old Testament played a part, likely a large part, in determining how they used it. Their theology, and specifically their bibliology, is inseparable from their hermeneutic.

Richard B. Hays provides another relevant insight in *Conversion of the Imagination*. He argues for a "hermeneutic of trust" rather than a "hermeneutic of skepticism" which is focused upon trust in the God who is the author of Scripture. This hermeneutic of trust, in some ways,

²³ Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 123-129.

enables somewhat imaginative interpretation because it is trust-centered rather than focusing on hermeneutical method.²⁴ Perhaps Hays would see the concept of a situational hermeneutic and its attempt to describe the functioning of hermeneutical justification within the context of the creative usages found in the New Testament as the product of a hermeneutic of skepticism. Regardless, his insight makes an important point: whatever factors limit the hermeneutics of the New Testament are concerned with views about enScriptured revelation before they are concerned about commitment to a particular hermeneutical method. In some ways this echoes the concept of a situational hermeneutic. A situational hermeneutic does not question whether a hermeneutical method is the right or best method, but whether it constitutes misuse within a situation, whether it violates what is known or believed about the Old Testament text.

The simple fact that the New Testament authors appeal to the theological authority of the Old Testament shows that they consider it to have an authoritative meaning outside of themselves. When Paul turns to Romans 9:7 to argue about covenant exclusivity, he is appealing to a revealed fact, and the source of that revelation is the Old Testament text. His argument does not work if he is reading into the text something that is not there. Ultimately, a structuralist approach to meaning seems to be reflected in the bibliology of the New Testament writers. This in turn helps to form the foundation of the situational hermeneutic of the New Testament. The situational hermeneutic depends upon that particular bibliological idea. Without a commitment to structuralist meaning, a situational hermeneutic as it has been construed here would not exist.

²⁴ Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 197-198.

Even if it could be situational in the sense that situation might affect how an author chooses to read the text, it could not be situational in the sense that situation would play a role determining hermeneutical justification. Under a post-structuralist approach to meaning, the concept of hermeneutical justification loses relevance. As such, insofar as the concept of a situational hermeneutic is founded on a structuralist approach to meaning, it is founded upon a particular bibliological idea about the nature of God's word.

Bibliology is not the only area of theology that interacts with the concept of a situational hermeneutic, however. Discussions of the ways in which the New Testament reads the Old theologically often focus on Christology, and for good reason. Old Testament passages are frequently used in ways that highlight their significance with regard to Christ, even if they are not directly Christological within their Old Testament contexts. Further, the New Testament uses the Old not only to speak about Christ generally but about salvation-history as fulfilled in him. As such, this study will now turn to an examination of the Christological and salvation-historical dimension of the New Testament use of the Old and how that interacts with the concept of a situational hermeneutic.

Salvation-Historical Christology and a Situational Hermeneutic

While the bibliology of the New Testament authors is an important component of their use of the Old Testament, their Christology within the context of salvation-history is perhaps more important.²⁵ This aspect of the theology of the New Testament authors is, at least, far more directly evident in their writings. It is not unrelated to bibliology. It could be argued that one of

²⁵ David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 34.

the underpinnings of the bibliology of the New Testament writers is their belief that all of Scripture is Christological in a salvation-historical way. However, the relationship between this aspect of the theology of the New Testament writers and the concept of a situational hermeneutic differs from that of their bibliology. As such, the two deserve separate treatment.

N. T. Wright argues that Paul formed Christian theology in response to the practical needs of the community of faith which he served. This community lived within the new era of salvation history initiated by Jesus, and the need to preach and teach to that community necessitated Paul's application of the Old Testament Scriptures to this new theological reality. Moreover, the continuity between the Old Testament Scriptures and this new reality was assumed. Paul's task was not to appropriate these texts but to preach the new covenant in light of them.²⁶

Beale likewise emphasizes the continuity between the Old Testament and the new salvation-historical era initiated by Christ. Beale argues that New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament differ from Jewish interpretations not because the New Testament authors twist Scripture, but because they operate under a different set of presuppositions which inform their hermeneutics. He lists five presuppositions which relate to the New Testament's Christological reading of the Old. The New Testament's use of the Old relates to Christ, but it does so in a particularly salvation-historical way as it seeks to apply the Old Testament Scriptures to the stage of salvation-history in which the New Testament authors find

²⁶ N. T. Wright, *Thinking in a New Way: How and why Paul Invented Christian Theology* (2014) ntwrightonline.org, 15-16.

themselves.²⁷ As such, the New Testament era serves as a broader context in which to interpret the Old.

Beale shies away from affirming a *sensus plenior* because he feels it is a loaded term, but he sees room for Old Testament texts to have meanings and implications perhaps not entirely known to their original authors. There is an important distinction here, though. Beale argues that New Testament interpretations do not contravene Old Testament meaning, but rather expand upon it in light of salvation-historical developments. Importantly, they do so along lines already set forth within the Old Testament itself.²⁸ Christology, especially as it relates to salvation-history, forms an integral part of the theological backdrop of New Testament hermeneutics.

But how does this relate to the concept of a situational hermeneutic as it has been presented here? Beale seems to affirm that, in some sense, there are meanings in the Old Testament which the author is not aware of, but he qualifies that comment thusly: “I believe, however, that it can be demonstrated that this expansion does not contravene the integrity of the earlier texts but rather develops them in a way which is consistent with the Old Testament author’s understanding of the way in which God interacts with his people.”²⁹ In other words, while there is some sense in which an Old Testament text can have meaning of which its original author was unaware, that meaning is nonetheless not completely external to the Old Testament

²⁷ Beale, “Positive Answer to the Question: Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?,” 392.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 391-393.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 393.

author's intent. It is somehow incipient in the Old Testament author, taking into account the wider context of the God-human relational dynamic.

Both Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18 are good examples of this. In Romans 9:7, Paul is concerned with a question that is in a sense a question of salvation history. It concerns the reality of Christ's rejection by many Jews in Paul's salvation-historical era, and the potential problems this creates in light of earlier promises.³⁰ Even if the author of Genesis was not focused on the potential for covenant exclusivity among the chosen nation at a future stage long after the era of the patriarchs, the manner in which he presents the covenant promise nevertheless includes details that can be applied to that exclusivity. They are relevant to a later salvation-historical era. Likewise, Hebrews' reading of Abraham's life sees the original narrative involving Abraham's hope in light of the resurrection hope enjoyed by the audience of Hebrews.³¹ Importantly, these two hopes are not entirely distinct. The resurrection hope contemporary to Hebrews is viewed as a later development of the hope enjoyed by Abraham and not an entirely new and separate hope. In both cases, this connection serves to preserve the integrity Old Testament meaning in spite of its application in a new and different salvation-historical era.

Situational hermeneutic is concerned with hermeneutical justification from a speech act perspective. That is, misuse is an illocutionary act which is determined in part by situational factors. What is proper use in one situation might be misuse in another. The degree to which New Testament usages of the Old Testament in light of further-developed salvation-history

³⁰ Tom Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 305-306.

³¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 494-495.

constitute new or developed meanings attached to the Old Testament texts themselves might be debatable. However, Within the context of a situational hermeneutic, might these salvation-historical concerns form a part of the interpretive situation?

Situational hermeneutic deals with the question of whether a particular usage of Scripture claims that that Scripture means something it does not mean. Does usage of Old Testament Scripture in light of further salvation-historical development constitute misuse under this rubric? In order to answer this question, an important distinction should be pointed out. These new meanings to which Beale alludes do not arise from the Old Testament text alone nor from salvation-history alone. Rather, they arise from the combination of the two. It is Old Testament text in light of salvation-history that gives rise to these interpretations.

Does that indicate, as Beale argues, that the Old Testament text itself means these new meanings? If it does, then New Testament usage is simply claiming that the text means what it means, which does not constitute misuse under the rubric of a situational hermeneutic. On the other hand, what if Beale is wrong on that point? What if these meanings are not contained within the Old Testament text alone, but instead arise from the Old Testament text only in combination with salvation-history? In that case, then it would seem that the New Testament authors are still not making false claims about the meaning of the Old Testament text. Rather, they can be seen as making claims about the meaning of the Old Testament text in light of salvation history. That is, the meaning they are claiming exists lies in the combination of the text with salvation history and not solely in the text itself. Such claims, though related to claims about the meaning of the text, are logically distinct. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail whether Beale is right or wrong with regard to *sensus plenior*, but it appears that the

construal of hermeneutical justification under the rubric of a situational hermeneutic can function either way. Either the New Testament authors are simply saying something true about the text, or what they are saying is not directly and completely about the text on its own, but a comment upon both text and salvation-history in combination with one another.

For example, Romans 9:7 applies the logic of the Abrahamic promise to the reality of new covenant exclusivity in Paul's day. Paul makes no illocutionary claim that the Genesis text speaks to the new covenant. However, what the Genesis text does speak to, its own internal meaning, has certain implications within the context of that later salvation-historical reality. Hebrews 11:18 is an even better example in this regard. In chapter four, it was concluded that Hebrews' statement about Abraham's belief in a resurrection for Isaac does not constitute a claim about the meaning of the Genesis text, but rather a further comment upon Abraham himself as an historical person. In light of the resurrection hope that is a salvation-historical reality for the author and audience of Hebrews, which is of a single historical thread with Abraham's hope, it is not disingenuous to conclude, as Hebrews does, that Abraham believed God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. The fact that this conclusion is not expressed in the Genesis text taken on its own does not mean that Hebrews is making a false claim about the meaning of the Genesis text. The idea expressed in Hebrews arises from the combination of the Genesis text and a New Testament theology of salvation-history, and this does not constitute an illocutionary false claim about the meaning of the Genesis text.

Can Modern Readers Use a Situational Hermeneutic?

Having discussed the concept of a situational hermeneutic and how it interacts with the theological way in which the New Testament authors read the Old Testament, it is not possible to

turn to an important question which seems to arise in any discussion of the hermeneutic of the New Testament authors. Can and should their hermeneutical methods be utilized by modern readers? In the context of this study, the question can be framed as such: should modern readers use a situational hermeneutic like that used by the New Testament authors?

Longenecker and Beale weigh in with opposing answers to this question. Longenecker argues that the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament writers should not be considered normative practice for Christians today. While they made sense within their historical context, they do not necessarily make sense in all historical contexts. As such, modern Christians, while beholden to apostolic doctrine, are not required to use the same hermeneutics as the New Testament writers.³² This question, though, hinges somewhat upon how the hermeneutics of the New Testament are understood. Some degree of perceived invalidity on the part of those hermeneutical methods seems to be required in order to question whether they can be reproduced. If the hermeneutics of the New Testament are rather free in their reading of the Old, taking things out of context or generally misusing the text, then the danger is that anyone imitating their methods would do the same. Longenecker, for example, sees the hermeneutics of the New Testament primarily in light of their similarity to intertestamental Jewish practices that are often questionable by modern standards. While the Jewish background of the New Testament should not be ignored, when it comes to hermeneutics care must be taken not to overstate it either.

³² Richard N. Longenecker, "Negative Answer to the Question 'Who is the Prophet Talking About?' Some Reflections on the New Testament's use of the Old," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 384-385.

Beale's argument hinges upon the idea that the New Testament's use of the Old is not, in fact, non-contextual. He sees the New Testament writers as respectful of the Old Testament context, though they often use utilize that contextual meaning in ways that are complex. To him, this means that the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament writers can be reproduced today, and in fact they should be lest modern readers risk separating themselves from the apostles.³³

It seems that the question of whether or not the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament writers should be reproduced is closely related to the question of whether or not those methods can be considered valid.³⁴ Part of the goal of this study in arguing for a situational hermeneutic has been to argue that the New Testament writers can be seen as respecting the Old Testament's meaning under a structuralist framework while also accounting for their apparent creativity. Insofar as the concept of a situational hermeneutic succeeds in this endeavor, it also succeeds in showing that New Testament hermeneutics are valid. A situational hermeneutic is intended to be inherently a valid one since it comprises hermeneutical methods that can be considered valid situationally. It does not attempt to prove the validity of New Testament usage so much as it seeks to offer an explanation of how it can be valid when multiple hermeneutical methods are evident. If a situational hermeneutic is valid and the question of reproducibility largely hinges on validity, then it stands to reason that a situational hermeneutic can be

³³ Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question: Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," 399-403

³⁴ Although Hays is an example of someone who understands the New Testament's use of the Old to be fairly appropriative yet still advocates that modern readers can follow in the New Testament authors' footsteps through what he sees as community-forming theological hermeneutics. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 191-192.

reproduced. Just as the concept of a situational hermeneutic is a useful way to describe the multiplicity of New Testament interpretation, perhaps in the same way it can describe already-extant modern usages that are valid within different situational contexts. Thus, if a situational hermeneutic is valid (and this study has argued that it is), then it can and should be utilized today. It arguably already is. Modern readers just need to take into account situational factors which may affect the validity of a particular usage with a particular situational context.

Just like the New Testament authors, modern readers of Scripture may interpret and use Scripture in a variety of situational contexts. Modern readers exegete Scripture, use it to build theology, use it homiletically, apply it, and read it devotionally. The example of T. S. Eliot's "The Hippopotamus" discussed in the previous chapter is an example of Scripture being used as part of a modern creative work, and yet that particular work takes on aspects of homily and application in its message addressed to the church. Furthermore, all of these usages of Scripture are performed in their own particular cultural, historical, and community contexts. Even the genre of the Scripture being used may play a role. Each of these usages of Scripture forms its own situational milieu.

Importantly, the approach furnished by speech act theory can be applied to modern situations just as it can be applied to New Testament situations. Part of the advantage of this approach is that while it can accommodate the variety of situations represented in the New Testament as they relate to the New Testament's usage of Scripture, they can apply to situations experienced by modern interpreters in the same way. As long as the criterion for hermeneutical justification is satisfied, modern readers can use Scripture in situationally-appropriate ways. By recognizing use and misuse as illocutionary acts, this approach allows modern readers to

evaluate their own usage of Scripture according to the same standard that can applied to the New Testament. This goes beyond the question of whether or not modern readers are permitted to replicate New Testament methods of interpretation. It provides insight into the subsequent question of how they can go about doing so. Part of the answer to that subsequent question, it would seem, would be to evaluate one's own illocutionary acts in light of one's situational context.

New Testament authors and modern readers alike both operate within complex situational contexts and use Scripture in a variety of ways within those contexts. All of these contexts form a situational backdrop which has the potential to affect what does and does not constitute valid usage. The author of Hebrews exhibits this by applying Abraham's experience expressed in the Genesis narrative to that of the audience.³⁵ The concept of a situational hermeneutic means that when taking situational factors into account, this is not necessarily a misappropriation of the text, nor does it indicate a lack of respect for the Old Testament's meaning understood from a structuralistic perspective. By exploring situational factors, especially by using the tools provided by speech act theory, perhaps modern readers can better navigate what is and what is not acceptable in light of varying situational contexts.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to make a small inroad into the large task of characterizing the New Testament's use of the Old. It has sought to maintain the validity of that usage in the face of the evident creativity of the ways in which the New Testament uses the Old. It has recognized

³⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 494-495.

that there is not a single, overarching hermeneutical method which describes the New Testament's use of the Old, referring to two New Testament passages that both use the same Old Testament passage differently in order to elucidate this point. This study has discussed these passages in detail and sought to find a criterion of validity which can function within a variety of situational context and which might be used to argue in favor of the New Testament's hermeneutical integrity in light of this hermeneutical multiplicity. To that end, speech act theory has been employed, recognizing that misuse of Old Testament texts is an illocutionary act and that therefore a criterion for hermeneutical justification can be built around that approach. As such, speech acts were discussed within the context of the passages that served as the focus of this study.

This all led to the formation of a concept of a situational hermeneutic, which recognizes that the performative impact of speech acts is affected by situation, even to the degree that situational factors can make the difference between use and misuse of a text. As such, it is not enough to ask whether or not a hermeneutical method evidenced within the New Testament is valid, but it also needs to be asked whether or not that method is valid within the current situation. Some methods which might be invalid in some situations may well be valid in those situations in which they do appear in the New Testament. The evident creativity in the New Testament's use of the Old may well be accounted for as valid under this rubric. Moreover, speech act theory serves as a way to navigate this concept of situation from a theoretical as well as a practical perspective.

This concept of a situational hermeneutic was then discussed as it relates to the theological underpinnings of the New Testament's use of the Old. All in all, this study has

sought to show that the New Testament's use of the Old is not monolithic. While that particular point is not hotly debated, it has also sought to show how hermeneutical validity can be maintained given that interpretive variety. The New Testament authors utilize a situational hermeneutic, and that hermeneutic is valid. It can be reproduced by modern readers and probably already is in some form. Creativity can be employed in how the Bible is read, interpreted, and applied. Doing so does not necessarily imply misuse of the Scripture. Readers simply need to take into account situational factors which might make the difference between use and misuse, and the approach discussed here based upon speech act theory provides a way for them to do so.

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