

**Teaching the Bible as Holy Scripture,  
or, Not Making Our Proselytes Twice the Sons of Hell that We Are<sup>1</sup>**  
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*Our contested Bibles.* Stanley Hauerwas posed a question at my dissertation defense: “Given the theological account of the Bible you have developed, what should seminaries do differently?” I responded with stunned silence. It had simply not occurred to me to entertain that question. Of course I should have known Stanley would pull something like that, but I still didn’t see it coming. Seven years later, I want to offer something a bit more substantive.

Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Polanyi show that rationality is constituted within traditions – and the Bible is ecclesial shorthand for a set of traditions – “the set of canonical textual, oral, practical practices created by and constitutive of the community of God’s chosen people” (Work 2002, 319). Yet the term’s simplicity is deceiving. The Bible is also what Walter Bryce Gallie called an ‘essentially contested concept.’ We manage to use the word with others who still radically disagree with us, because both our agreements and our disagreements go to the core of what the Bible is and how it works.

The Bible’s essentially contested character is especially visible in the contemporary academy. Consider its places in the fields of literature, philosophy, history, gender studies, biology, sociology, comparative religion, psychology, and physics! All these “Bibles” and more intersect at the crossroads of contemporary biblical studies.

Academic biblical scholarship has accumulated a stunning list of achievements. However, both it and its disciplinary sibling academic theology have done so at a growing distance from the *specific* traditions that have been the Bible in the lives of Christian churches.

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These academic disciplines have in effect become traditions of their own in which the Bible lives differently than “at home,” so to speak, in its original communities of faith.

***Tradition as revolution and reaction.*** In *After Virtue* (MacIntyre 1984) Alasdair MacIntyre complains that modern ethicists have used prooftexts and technical terms of classical ethics selectively, from a great conceptual distance, and without a real understanding of the roles they played in their original worlds. John O’Keefe and R.R. Reno show that the theological academy treats the Christian Bible at a similar distance from its first generations of readers (O’Keefe and Reno 2005):

We tend to think that the Bible is important because of the *x* that it represents: historical events, ancient religious sensibilities, ideas, doctrines, and so forth. For this reason, we adopt disciplines that help us get from the scripture to the *x*. For example, if we think that the book of Leviticus represents the taboo system of ancient Israelite religion, then we might use a sociological theory of taboo to organize our reading of the text. We discipline our reading in order to bring out what we imagine to be the proper subject matter of the text. The same holds if we are convinced that the gospel of Luke reveals the truth about Jesus Christ as a report on the events that occurred. We then adopt historical methods to weigh the evidence that the story represents, trying to bring what actually happened into focus by screening out the obvious ways in which the author’s faith colors the telling of the story. In each instance, the exegetical discipline flows from a perceived need to focus and concentrate attention on the subject matter of the text. ...

For the fathers, the scripture text itself is the subject matter of interpretation; it is not the means to that subject matter. ... The scriptures are the *x*, and the interpreter’s job is to adopt the disciplines and methods suitable to drawing ever closer to the ‘language of God,’ for the mind that conforms to the specificity of the scriptures is shaped in a divine fashion. To think in and through the scriptures is to have a sanctified vision (116).

David Kelsey’s analysis of modern Christian theological education describes a similar irreducible tension between two dominant traditional models of the Christian theological school. First, there is education as *paideia* that emphasizes moral training in order “to know God by *gnosis*, an immediate intellectual intuition” (Kelsey 1992, 72). It aims at a better understanding of God through the divinely assisted conversion of the learner through exposure to publicly available material, conceives of the teacher as “midwife” (since knowledge of God cannot be

given directly), and focuses on the student as personally shaped by the subject. Following Werner Jaeger, Kelsey claims that *paideia* was the original model for excellence in schooling, and the most influential one from the patristic age through the Renaissance and Reformation (Kelsey 1992, 72-75, citing Jaeger 1961, 100). Second, there is education according to the agenda of the modern European research university, emphasizing *Wissenschaft* or orderly and disciplined critical research (Kelsey 1992, 83). Faculty produce professionals who are taught critical historical research methods and trained in the scientific use of reason as the final arbiter of all questions about truth. These disciples then join their *Doktorvatern* – their academic parents – in the shared enterprise of original research protected by traditions of academic freedom, which subject all other authorities to reason (Kelsey 1992, 78-81). The goal is transformation of the character “upon the basis of the unity of human civilization and scientific work, the unity based on the modern ideal of humanity” (Paulsen 1906, 44-50, quoted in Kelsey 1992, 81).<sup>2</sup> Kelsey sees theological education as shifting from “Athens” toward “Berlin,” rather as O’Keefe and Reno see the Bible’s contemporary readers engaged in fundamentally different pursuits than the Bible’s original readers.

Theological educators live in some confusion over whether and how we can arrive at Athens’ conclusions through Berlin’s techniques. Our theological schools’ curricula generally center on teaching material content (what O’Keefe and Reno would call “an *x*” that stands in for Kelsey’s “Athens” but is really one sector of “Berlin” – the assured results of scientific research) and then interpretive techniques (ways toward that *x* that proceed through the other sector of “Berlin”). What’s wrong with that? It still treats the Bible as a repository of something called “content” that is distinguishable from the Bible itself and recoverable through scientific methods.

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<sup>2</sup> See Work, “Education as Mission: The Course as Sign of the Kingdom,” *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* (Spring 2007).

It treats scripture as something other than subapostolic readers and even the New Testament writers did, so it imposes a distance between the Bible and its original ecclesial context. What we want from it must somehow travel that distance, and it doesn't really arrive intact.

Training leaders to prefer academic biblical traditions to ecclesial biblical traditions – and we do this in so many ways that it would be tedious to list even the most important examples – amounts to catechizing them in still another confession and culture that asserts primacy over all others. Our churches *have* found a place for it, though. They are already divided confessionally and increasingly marginal culturally, and so we are protective of our past exegetical judgments. Our situations tempt us either to give in to anti-intellectualism or to 'play it safe' with scholarship, using academic theology and hermeneutical technique to reproduce predictable moral, experiential, or theological results that are congenial to our traditions. William F. Abraham argues in *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* (Clarendon 1998) and *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Eerdmans 2006) that over the centuries the desire to justify doctrinal positions over against other positions has driven Christian communities to treating their canons, including the canon of Scripture, 'epistemologically,' as mere means and objects of rational justification. They no longer function as canons in the earlier and proper sense. Across our confessions and across the modern spectrum of 'liberal'-to-'conservative' schools of churchly biblical practice, our Bibles are essentially reactionary. We use them for maintenance, replication, and colonization.

That defensiveness has encouraged academic theology and biblical studies to go on the offensive. The incentive structures of the research university system and a culture of what Peter Berger calls "the heretical imperative" (Berger 1979) reward sovereign individual choice through "openminded encounter with other religious possibilities on the level of their truth-claims"

(Berger 1979, 167). These *x*'s amount to a proliferation of new proposals, idiosyncratic syntheses, and fashionably revisionist readings. These in turn raise armies of traditionalists to respond to the latest controversies. Reactionaries and revolutionaries have thus become cottage industries that depend on one another as much as their own constituencies.<sup>3</sup>

*Tradition as apostleship.* Kelsey sees theological education as torn between Athens' classicism and Berlin's modernism. However, there is a Christian way of teaching and learning that better honors the spirits of both: cultivating truly apostolic judgment that serves its original ecclesial end. Heretical imperatives and rear-guard reactionism distract us from apostolic mission. In *The Open Secret* (Newbigin 1995), Lesslie Newbigin describes this as a three-way exchange between the acculturated missionary, the cultural mission field, and scripture. All three are susceptible to being transformed in the course of their conversation as the Spirit guides the Son's disciples into all the truth, showing the Church and ultimately the world that all that the Father has belongs to the Son (John 16:12-15). The Spirit's power converts both the herald and the audience of the good news to bigger and better visions of God and God's new creation that show Scripture in their new light (1 Thess 1; see Work, "Converting God's Friends," *Word & World*, forthcoming).

The letters and gospels of the New Testament itself are the fruit of such mission, as are the holy traditions of every ecclesial culture in which the good news has taken root and yielded a harvest. So the very practices that gave rise to the Bible and first discerned and respected its canonicity are neglected and driven to the margins in the disciplines of contemporary academic

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<sup>3</sup> I even wonder whether the establishing of academic culture in America over the twentieth century stole the initiative from cult leaders in biblical ingenuity. Earlier Americans had developed transcendentalism, Mormonism, Christian Science, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostalism, and the Worldwide Church of God. By contrast, the most popular twentieth-century revisionists have been the Jesus Seminar and the Elaine Pagels school of Gnostalgia. These academic movements have readers but not congregations and our churches' idiosyncratic interpreters are mostly retrofitting nineteenth century Dispensationalism and reusing the Social Gospel rather than starting new mass religious movements. (I guess that is progress of a sort.)

*and* churchly theology and biblical studies. Rather than honoring the unpredictable consistency of apostolic faith as it takes shape in new cultures and eras, our constituencies tend to reward the predictable consistency of replication and colonization and the unpredictable inconsistency of innovation and revolution. ‘Scientific’ hermeneutical technique supposedly controls the reading process, but in fact the overriding goals of interpreters put the interpreters themselves in a more central role – glorifying them, so to speak – than in the truly apostolic tasks of *paideia* and missional exegesis. As evidence, contrast the biblical interpreter as hero and celebrity in contemporary biblical studies and the theologian as creative genius in theology to the biblical translator as mere mediator and witness in cross-cultural mission (Anderson and Moore 1992) and the biblical teacher as midwife in *paideia*.

We who owe our scholastic formations as scholars to these academic disciplines rather than to traditional apostolic biblical practices live something of a contradiction. In his chapter on Scripture in James J. Buckley’s and David Yeago’s *Knowing the Triune God* (Eerdmans 2001), David Yeago argues that interpreting texts requires readers to make judgments that cannot arise from within the text:

“Understanding” in any full sense involves ... appreciating the *force and implications* of what the text says, its relation to our beliefs and its bearing on our thought and action. ... This generates interpretive questions that can neither be settled *a priori* by appeal to method, nor answered in any immediate way by the text itself. The answers seem inevitably contingent ... on particular interpreters and what they bring with them to the interpretive enterprise.... The different ways in which interpreters are “situated” will bear unavoidably on the conduct of the enterprise of understanding (52).

Wise interpretation involves wise judgments from a wise community of interpreters. Are we scholars properly trained and situated in the wisdom proper to our disciplines? That is a question I have increasingly been asking myself.

***Two schools of interpretation.*** In the spirit of theological interpretation of the Bible, diagnostic reading of Jesus' encounter with the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 22-23 seems in order. It is not entirely encouraging.

In Matt 22:23-46, Jesus' rivals offer him pointed questions on the scriptures to discredit him. He answers with astonishing exegetical wisdom, then explains that "you are wrong because *you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God*" (22:29). His three replies regarding the resurrection, the greatest commandment, and the Messiah as David's son and Lord all interpret Israel's scriptures according to that power of God. Conversely, he complains in Matt 23 that the scribes and Pharisees interpret the scriptures according to their own power. This is the fundamental contrast throughout the passage.

It is tempting to read "scribes and Pharisees" in the literal sense of the institutional authorities of second Temple Judaism, especially if one is reading Matthew through the lens of later Jewish-Christian rivalry. Yet the discourse has an important and even primary figural meaning. Jesus speaks "to the crowds *and to his disciples*" (23:1). His warnings are directed not just at the rivals of his day (or the next generation) but also at the teaching authorities of Jesus' own movement.

The scribes and Pharisees teach out of pride and methodological elitism, twisting the Bible into a means of gaining status for themselves. By contrast, Jesus commands his disciples to brotherly service under his Father. They are not teachers but *taught*, not masters (let alone doctors) but *mastered* (23:4-12).

These hypocrites are controlling rather than liberating. They pursue their goals by relying not on providence but on their own social power. They intervene to prevent others from crossing into heaven, while crossing great distances themselves to usher a single pupil into Gehenna

(23:13-15). (Here we might ponder the character and the cost of university and seminary and the lengths to which our institutions go to recruit desirable applicants.)

These fools make exegetical judgments and distinctions that are abstracted from the God who gives all things their significance. They are focused on the gold of the Temple but not the one who dwells in it. Lost in what becomes a maze of details no longer properly related in their original metanarrative, they cannot see the way even as they “guide” others (23:16-22).

Having destabilized the scriptures by displacing the power of God as interpretive principle and asserting their own, the hypocrites attend to the objects of their own fascination and concentrate on difficulties they find manageable. Their judgments thus privilege textual margins at the expense of weightier centers, and their proposals bog down in insuperable difficulties and insoluble dilemmas. The false teachers deconstruct their covenant of divine justice and mercy and faith to construct one of tithing their herb gardens. Like mechanics that wash their customers’ cars but refuse to change the oil, they constantly clean but never clean up. (Am I referring to the latest iteration of the historical Jesus or the first Christians, liberation theology’s latest war on some newly discovered form of oppression, or evangelicalism’s latest ‘battle’ to shore up another disintegrating historical commitment? Take your pick.) They heap up plaudits for their tireless work but in the end accomplish little. By ignoring the power of God, their readings only perpetuate the conditions condemned by the Bible’s God of exodus and resurrection (23:23-28).

The corollary of imposing futile eisegesis through one’s own power is suppressing truthful exegesis in the power of God. Rather than engaging better interpreters, the hypocrites persecute them. Here their hypocrisy is most blatantly exposed. Because the violence of the biblical text plays itself out between the contending camps of its contemporary readers, the text



judges its own interpreters. One camp will inherit resurrection, love of God and neighbor, and the fulfilled promises to David's son and Lord. The other will inherit Gehenna (23:29-36).

Matt 22-23 shows two opposing ways for us to read. We may read and teach the scriptures according to the power of God revealed in Jesus' surpassing love, resurrection, and glorification – and we will suffer with him for it. Or we may ignore it and read and teach according to some other power, chiefly our own – which we will find a glamorous, difficult, and finally deadly struggle.

If I may put my thesis as a slogan: the disciples of Matthew 23 *teach the Bible as Holy Scripture* – as the Church's inspired Word of the powerful God of Jesus Christ – whereas the passage's scribes and Pharisees do not.

***Retraining for the Kingdom of Heaven.*** Ann Monroe's travelogue of Bible study in various Christian circles in America, *The Word* (Monroe 2000), describes a kind of death-by-liberal-neglect and death-by-conservative-torture of the Bible in American churches, schools, and individual lives, and concludes:

There are a lot of ways of managing the Bible, but the most common, at least among religious people, is to run it through a theological filter: to declare, up front, that the Bible is a road map to heaven, or a user-friendly operator's manual, or the action plan for God's domination-free order. Liberals hang their hats on the Gospels and the prophets, dodge a lot of the epistles, and run screaming from Revelation; conservatives flip the image upside down (209).

To read the Bible with integrity, we need in some way to answer the question, "Who's in charge here?" Far more than interpretation, this is the subject on which conservatives and liberals are at loggerheads. ... For conservatives, the Bible is in charge: beyond argument, beyond question. ... Liberals take the opposite tack. For them, the Bible is whatever the reader makes of it: not a source of truth, but a taking-off place in the search for truth beyond it. ... There has got, I kept thinking, to be a better way (212).

Having grown up a liberal Protestant and become a conservative evangelical, I can personally confirm her findings. Like Matthew's scribes and Pharisees, the figures in her pages fall short in

substituting their – *our* – power for God’s and our wishes for the scriptures, our theological filters rather than the Father’s. In our teaching we subordinate the Bible to our own theological and political agendas, our epiphanies, our fascinations, and our expertise. Since the Bible does not cooperate, our incompetence shows up in implausible arguments, trivial points, sheer speculation, and frankly embarrassing mistakes. My students and I regularly encounter these in some of the biblical and theological literature – from leading academics and publishers – that we read together. It puzzles and discourages us to see such low standards in what they expect to be such a serious profession.

Yet Monroe’s book also visits a few communities that know the Bible and the power of God; and I too see better in some of my students, colleagues, and pastors. They are not without failings or exegetical mistakes, of course, but they get the big things right. Some have more formal training than I do, though many have less. Jesus’ replies in Matt 22 about the resurrection, greatest commandments, and David’s Lord make *intuitive* sense to these people, and they retain a deep sense of confidence in that intuition despite all the warnings they have heard from academics about the methodological pitfalls and potential abuses of apostolic exegesis. They have learned the Bible *as Holy Scripture*.

Where do such people come from? Matthew’s Jesus has already referred to “scribes disciplined to (*mathêteutheis*) the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 13:59). Jesus will ultimately charge his disciples to make more disciples with baptism *and* teaching *and* discipline (Matt 28:19-20). So that is where they come from: evangelism, conversion, catechesis, and obedience.

Since this presentation concerns *teaching* the Bible as Holy Scripture, I will focus on resources for catechesis. Historical reconstructions of the Bible’s own readings of scripture such as C.H. Dodd’s *According to the Scriptures*, Donald Juel’s *Messianic Exegesis*, and Richard

Hays' *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* and *The Conversion of the Imagination* are useful bridges back into the world of the first Christian interpreters of scripture. Patristic analyses such as John O'Keefe's and Rusty Reno's *Sanctified Vision* and Ellen Charry's *By the Renewing of Your Mind* reintroduce us to the reading practices of the Christians who took their insights to heart. Primary sources such as Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* and commentaries on them such as Mary Ann Donovan's *One Right Reading* (Donovan 1997) can teach us to structure our theology to serve exegesis, and to discern the *oikonomia* of God's story that centers in Israel, Jesus, and the Church. Interdisciplinary dialogues such as David Ford's and Graham Stanton's *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom* (Ford and Stanton 2003) can help make biblical scholars and theologians into family again. And a number of contemporary projects, such as Ephraim Radner's *Hope among the Fragments* (Radner 2004), are worth reading simply because they read Scripture well.

Long expository sermons seem to survive mainly in fundamentalist and (to a lesser extent) charismatic churches. They are a continuing education in Bible content, hermeneutics, theology, and ethics all at once. My students who have grown up with expository preaching are way ahead of those who have grown up with primarily topical, critical, or liturgical exposures to the Bible. Expositions of scripture come not only in so-called "Bible churches" but also in podcasts, in precritical biblical commentaries from the Church Fathers through the Reformers, in contemporary treatments such as Lesslie Newbigin's *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Eerdmans 1982), and even in the Bible itself – for instance in Hebrews 7-10's startling exposition of Jeremiah 31.

All these remedial resources can help retrain us as academics to respect the power of God in our readings of scripture. Yet I still wonder how far they can take us. I fear that I may belong

to a “lost generation.” My own middle-aged mind has adapted and conformed to years of training that made Jesus’ exegesis in Matt 22 seem forced, or methodologically naïve (if not inept), or at best inimitable. I have learned to be patient with, if not admiring of, theologians who sometimes mistreat or dismiss biblical texts that get in the way of their systems. My time in the academy has left me reticent to speak with the forthrightness I enjoy in my students. I cannot help but embody and pass on the very vices and temptations of academic theology and biblical studies I want to warn my students against, and I cannot help but worry that I am somehow even slightly ruining the bright and faithful students I teach and send along to graduate school.

*The One who comes.* These hesitations return me to Matthew 23. In the climactic resolution of the passage (37-39), Jesus’ categories shift. His opponents are no longer “scribes and Pharisees” but “Jerusalem.” He speaks no longer as just a critic but as the powerful God who has longed to gather unwilling children. Forsaken yet lamented, they, God’s rivals and persecutors, are the objects of God’s mercy. And in the most remarkable transformation of all, they – we – become the psalmists who will see Jesus again when we sing words Jesus alludes to from Psalm 118:

Let Israel declare, his steadfast love is eternal  
[though the nations seek the ephemeral love of others’ deference and praise]. ...  
It is better to take refuge in YHWH than to trust in humanity  
[in its blindness, distraction, and hypocrisy].  
It is better to take refuge in YHWH than to trust in nobles  
[and those who sit in the prophets’ seats while persecuting them]. ...  
You pressed me hard, I nearly fell; but YHWH helped me  
[gathering Jerusalem to himself].  
YHWH is my strength and might; he has become my deliverance  
[and defeated hypocrisy and lawlessness]. ...  
I shall not die but live and proclaim the works of YHWH  
[the God not of the dead but of the living].  
YHWH punished me severely, but did not hand me over to death  
[but raised Jesus on the third day]. ...  
I praise you, for you have answered me, and have become my deliverance  
[and seated him at your right hand, exalting the humble].

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone  
[of God's eternal dwelling].  
This is YHWH's doing; it is marvelous in our sight  
[and we have become students of his Messiah]. ...  
*Blessed be the one who comes in the name of YHWH*  
[to bring justice and mercy and faith];  
We bless you from the House of YHWH  
[which will see him again in glory].

You see, the conflict of wills is reconcilable. Indeed, it is our reconciliation. Jesus has not been describing two classes of interpreters, but one readership with two incompatible perceptions. What changes perceptions is not our own effort but the Lord's coming. The most fundamental step in our hermeneutical transformation is to recognize the rejected stone as the cornerstone – as Jesus has already advised us to do in 21:42 – and read accordingly.

What are recovering Pharisees like me to do? Whether or not we are capable of a full recovery, we *can* still ground the *next* generation in practices that might better serve them.

This must mean more than just re-integrating systematic theology, biblical studies, church history, practical theology, and the many other humanities, arts, and sciences that bear upon biblical interpretation. As they now exist, these disciplines are not aspects of an otherwise intact framework, but new and sometimes renegade traditions that no longer comprise a coherent whole. What our discipline needs is more far-reaching: to scrutinize generations of practices that have kept, or even made, the Bible an alien thing even in its own communities and submit them to the practices that gave rise to those communities in the first place.

This does not mean abandoning many of the things we work so hard to teach our students: critical thinking, close reading, attention to contexts, historical literacy, issues of genre, theological implications, sheer familiarity with the sources, and the like. These aspects of Holy Scripture are not artifacts of modernity. They were already taken seriously by interpreters from Origen to Augustine and even more seriously in the Reformation. However, the *way* we teach

them today, even in contexts of Christian college and seminary education and despite our best intentions, still tends to distance our students from the Bible as Holy Scripture. We make them part of a modern university research agenda or co-opt them to serve our ideological or political purposes. We disorient them with complexities and difficulties without re-orienting them to the faith that has respected and accommodated those complexities and difficulties. Our students learn not just the techniques and literacies we seek to teach them but the ends to which our professions put them, and so they find themselves alienated from the very traditions they may have come to us to learn.

Where we recovering Pharisees fear we are compromised, we can at least commend to our students what we say but not what we do (Matt 23:3). As Karl Barth and so many others have from within the corrupt circumstances of their ages (see, *e.g.*, Richard E. Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis*, 2004), we can point from where we are to the goal we cannot yet see but from whose direction we have heard God's address. Rather than indulging in the proud academic myth of maturation and individuation only through higher education, we can help our students stay rooted in the traditions and congregations that gave them faith and entrusted them to us. We can go off the academic offensive and ease them off the ecclesial defensive. We can even take more seriously and appreciatively the biblical frameworks of the people we sometimes dismiss as "fundamentalists," helping them dwell in their "familiar old world of the Bible" (apologies to Barth) more truly and fruitfully rather than trying to tear them away from it, and even acquiring from them some greater familiarity for ourselves. We can encourage relatively healthy churches and families to retake the initiative in shaping our students even while they are studying with us. We can locate our whole teaching focus in holy apostolic tradition. And we can

reformulate curricula better to respect apostolic canons, cultivate apostolic judgment, and practice apostolic mission.

This will help us take the academy as such off its pedestal without enthroning anti-intellectualism or even abandoning our painstakingly learned critical techniques. After all, the exegetical skills of the scribes and Pharisees lend brilliance to the Apostle Paul's messianic exegesis. Rather than finding our prized hermeneutical and theological training forsaken and desolate, we will likely find it more powerful than ever.

We can also *practice what we preach*, namely reading the Bible as Holy Scripture. As we do, we will discover that it is not as hard as it looks, because the power to do it is not ours in the first place. In a recent class of mine on theological interpretation of the Bible, students delivered theological exegeses of Old Testament passages that made for the best month of preaching I have ever witnessed. Our class's intimidation turned to joy as we learned that reading this way is actually doable. As I have worked on a theological commentary on Deuteronomy, my intimidation has turned to joy too (except for the looming deadline). Judging from the comments of my colleagues who are writing other volumes, I predict there will be quite a few chastened but energized theologians when this series is complete, and fewer cheap shots at biblical scholars coming from our side of the interdisciplinary divide.

One last thing: we can realize the promise of Matt 23 whenever we teach by pointing out the one who comes in the name of the Lord. I do not just mean this as a nice Pietistic concluding flourish; if I am right, witness is a key to faithful interpretation. "*Behold*," Jesus told his corps of teachers, "I am with you to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). I call myself a Pentecostal, but I had never considered until now that his presence should be something for us actually to behold. I have a long way to go.