TEXT TO PRAXIS

Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue

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Pericopal Theology and Application

By engaging hermeneutics and homiletics in dialogue, this work seeks to establish a means to validate the move from Scripture to sermon. The metaphor of language-games serves as a foundation for such an assessment. Chapter 1 outlined the language-games played by biblical texts, primary and secondary genre, and explored the manner in which texts project worlds in front of themselves (secondary reference). Chapters 2 and 3 listed the Rules of Genre that help identify this projected world. Rules for Primary Genre were enumerated in Chapter 2: the categories of texts considered there were narrative, prophecy, law and hymnody. Chapter 3 proposed the Rules of Secondary Genre: the Rules of Structure mould and shape the source material for the world projected by the text; the Rules of Function regulate the textual sources of the projected world and their reading; and the Rules of Content highlight the canonical properties of the world in front of the text.[1] Interpretation of the scriptural text is conducted under the auspices of these Rules of Genre, enabling the theologian-homiletician to discern the world in front of the text. The Rules of Primary Genre play a direct and active role in this transaction, discovering the individuality of the various biblical genres in their framing of this projected world; the Rules of Secondary Genre take on the indirect status of umpire and operate on a more general level of supervision, correlating and coordinating the entire interpretive undertaking, and creating the broader context for reading the canonical text.

The final chapter of this work concentrates primarily upon the homiletical contribution to the dialogue between hermeneutics and homiletics. Chapter 4 therefore necessarily deals with the textual object of sermonic focus, the biblical pericope. The utilization of pericopes in an ecclesial setting will be considered first, drawing upon the concept of covenant renewal as a paradigm for the homiletical enterprise. Such a programme, it will be proposed, is mediated by the segment of the world projected by the pericope, to which world readers are bidden to align their lives. Generated as it is by a theological interpretation of

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1. All such rules, it will be remembered, are of the nature of counsel and caution rather than imperative and injunction. These rules are not creations *de novo*; rather, they are fairly self-evident and reflect the established practices of the Church in reading Scripture.

the text employing the Rules of Genre, this pericopal sector of the canonical world is, in fact, the theology of that particular pericope – *pericopal theology.* This entity will be shown to serve as the intermediary between Scripture and sermon that gives validity to the homiletical transaction. A bipartite transaction is thereby envisaged in exposition: the task of the theologian-homiletician consists in moving from pericope to theology, and subsequently from theology to application. Such a passage from text to praxis via theology is directed by the Rules of Genre; under the governance of these rules, valid application is enabled that retains the authority of Scripture and remains relevant to the audience.

In operating by these Rules of Genre in the homiletical enterprise, the expositor will have accomplished the translation of the rhetorical objective of the text (the *textual* intention), via the *transhistorical* intention borne by pericopal theology, to arrive at the sermonic terminus of application, the response of readers to the text (the *homiletical* intention). Thus this last chapter will complete the construction of the bridge between ancient text and modern audience, a credible causeway that may be crossed confidently by a theologian-homiletician.

Pericopes

'Pericope' (περικοπή = section, passage) refers to a portion of the biblical text that is of manageable size for homiletical and liturgical use in an ecclesial setting. Though traditionally applied to segments of the Gospels, the term in this work will indicate a slice of text in any genre, as it is customarily utilized in Christian worship. It is through pericopes, read and exposited in congregations as fundamental units of the scriptural text, that the community of God corporately encounters the Bible. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of a communal gathering of the faithful that does not implement such a reading of biblical pericopes.

At first glance, the reason for the serviceability of pericopes might appear simple: the impossibility of grasping the entirety of the magnificent breadth of canonical thought on any single occasion, within the constraints of time spent in the corporate assemblies, dictates the employment of a smaller quantum of text that may be conveniently read and adequately exposited. Justin Martyr reports on a Sunday gathering of Christians where the Gospels and the Prophets were read 'as long as time permits' (μέχρις ἐγχωρεῖ; *1 Apol.* 66), suggesting that a relatively fixed period of time had been allocated for the weekly event. Pericopes are eminently usable, given this temporal restraint.

However, it is not merely the constraint of time that imposes a limit upon the length of the biblical text utilized in the liturgical setting. The function of a pericope as a coherent 'sense unit' must also be taken into consideration. While Scripture is considered as a singularity, exhibiting univocity and congruence in the main, it obviously does not comprise one unbroken, run-on thought. And, while its substantial content is ultimately grounded upon the person and work

of Christ, neither is Scripture a serialized and exclusive display of a single topic replicated in variegated fashion in multiple genres and in a multitude of pericopes. Instead, under the banner of the Rules of Singularity, Congruence, Substantiality and Primacy, sundry and diverse issues pertaining to the Christian's life and relationship to God are addressed; several distinct topics germane to the faith and practice of the community in its orientation to God are registered within the canon.[2] To this end, the polygeneric and transgeneric composition of the Bible plays a crucial role, drawing attention to the variety of its subject matter. Each genre, in its own particular manner and through its constituent pericopes, frames the world projected by the text, emphasizing one aspect or another of the plenary world projected by the canon as a whole. In other words, the canonical text projects a single world that comprises discrete segments featured by individual pericopes. A pericope therefore is essentially a self-intact sense unit bearing a relatively complete and integral idea that contributes to the whole, a defined portion of Scripture that reflects a unified span of thought and content.[3] In the periodic assemblies of the Church, the exposition of a particular pericope deals with the facet of life that is addressed by that pericopal sense unit. For the edification of believers, then, the employment of pericopal portions of the biblical text for preaching is of considerable significance.

Incontrovertible is the fact that no single sermon can capture and do justice to all the specific thrusts of all the pericopes in the canon, or even of all those smaller units within a single book. Instead, it is as individual pericopes that these portions of Scripture lend themselves to ecclesial use. The Rule of Substantiality, emphasizing the extraordinary content of the canon, prompts the interpreter, at any given gathering, to deal with the canonical text in small portions, densely packed as the whole corpus is with matters of moment and consequence. Considered one at a time, pericopes allow a more intensive exploration of the depth and force of the text, enabling the particularity and potency of each pericope to impact the congregation. Thus, sermon by sermon,

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2.   By the Rule of Singularity, the interpreter considers the canonical text as a single unit for application purposes; the Rule of Congruence bids readers assume broad coherence and consistency among the canonical witnesses; the Rule of Substantiality accords the content of Scripture the respect worthy of its priority and gravity; and the Rule of Primacy bases all biblical interpretation upon the person of Christ.

3.   Often, the text itself demonstrates internal demarcations corresponding to its divisions into these discrete sense units. Textual clues that serve to locate the exposed seams between pericopes include: repeated terms or phrases (e.g., καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς in Mt. 7.28; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1); significant discourse markers; rhetorical questions (e.g., וַאֲמַרְתֶּם, 'but you say …?' in Mal. 1.2, 6, 7, 12, 13; 2.14, 17; 3.7, 8, 13); changes in time, location, or setting, within narratives; thematic announcements (e.g., as with περὶ δὲ in 1 Cor. 7.1, 25; 8.1, [4]; 12.1; 16.1, 12); etc. See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), pp. 71–2.

pericope by pericope, the various aspects of Christian life, individual and cor-
porate, are effectively brought into alignment with the will of God. The goal of
a homiletical endeavour, after all, is not merely to explicate the content of the
chosen pericope, but to expound it in such a way that its implications for current
hearers are brought home with conviction, to transform lives for God's glory
(the Rule of Applicability).[4] Life change is not a one-time phenomenon, and
neither is it accomplished instantaneously; it involves a lifetime of progressive
reorientation and realignment to the world in front of the text. Such an approach
to the edification of God's people demands that a unit-sized pericopal block of
Scripture, incorporating a single thrust or theme capable of being assimilated
and applied, be the object of consideration in the weekly gatherings of the
believers.

The liturgical use of Scripture

An example of the reading (and exposition) of a pericope is found in Luke's
account of Jesus' activities in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4.16-30).[5] The
narrator is careful to demonstrate not only the handling of a precisely demar-
cated text but also the preacher's taking into consideration the concerns and
capacities of the audience. The unique situation of its auditors is reflected in
this narrative: the hometown synagogue setting, the expectations of the con-
gregation, the application to listeners' circumstances and the give-and-take in
the reading and the reaction thereto. The event is set within the social context
of a corporate gathering, and the evangelist describes in exquisite detail Jesus'
standing to read, his being handed the book, the opening, reading and closing
of the book before it is returned, and Jesus' resuming his seat at the conclu-
sion of his exposition (4.16-20). It is a clear account of the homiletical utiliza-
tion of a pericope in a very specific ecclesial environment and in a markedly
liturgical format. This episode may validly be considered a paradigm of the
sermonic undertaking in a defined setting of real life – the periodic assembly
of the faithful.

The particulars of the process create a nearly perfect chiasm, emphasizing as
its centrepiece the actual reading of Isa. 61.1-2 by Jesus.[6]

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4.   Tertullian stated: 'We assemble to read our sacred writings, … with the sacred words we
nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by
inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits' (*Apol.* 39). Such practices of reading
for application were prevalent in the Jewish context as well. Philo observed that on the Sabbath
people were taught lessons of virtues 'by which the whole of their lives may be improved' (*Spec.
Laws* 2.15.62; also see *Creation* 128; and Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.18).

5.   This was probably not an isolated instance; Lk. 4.15, 16 and 31 indicate Jesus teaching in
local synagogues with some frequency.

6.   Jeffrey S. Siker, ' "First to the Gentiles": A Literary Analysis of Luke 4:16–30', *JBL* 111
(1992), pp. 73–90 (77).

4.16a   *A* Jesus enters the synagogue

4.16b   *B* He stands to read

4.17a   *C* He is handed the book of Isaiah

4.17b   *D* He opens the book

4.18-19   *E* He reads

4.20a   *D'* He closes the book

4.20b   *C'* He returns the book

4.20c   *B'* He sits down

4.20d   *A'* Those in the synagogue look at Jesus

The placement of the reading of the scroll of Isaiah in the crux of the chiasm emphasizes the importance of that event. The centrality of Scripture has always been integral to the corporate activities of the community of God. For instance, Timothy is enjoined in 1 Tim. 4.13 to give attention to the public reading of the Scriptures.[7] The corpus attended to there was, of course, the OT. With time, these communal transactions came to utilize every major portion of the Christian canon. That the Law and the Prophets were in use in the early Church is evident from Acts 13.15; Paul's sermon at Antioch is said to have commenced after the readings from these two sections of the OT. By the time of Justin Martyr (c. 150 CE), a weekly worship service in Rome also included readings of 'the memoirs [ἀπομνημονεύματα] of the apostles' along with the writings of the Prophets (*1 Apol.* 67).[8] Thus it appears that, by the mid-second century, at least some of the Gospels had also achieved authoritative liturgical status. In addition, even towards the close of the NT canon, the letters of Paul were beginning to be considered alongside the 'rest of the Scriptures' (2 Pet. 3.15-16).[9] Polycarp, late in the second century, asserts the pedagogical value of the Pauline Epistles, which 'if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you' (*Phil.* 3.2). In time, these missives also came to be included in the essential readings at corporate assemblies. Though of later origin (about the fourth century), the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* includes information about the lections of Scripture; the Clementine Liturgy therein (8.5) appears to call for several biblical readings in ecclesial gatherings – from the Law and the Prophets, the Epistles and the Gospels.[10] The historical evidence amply attests to the utilization of every major

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7.   This public undertaking is clearly distinguished from the private study of the sacred writings that Timothy was said to have been immersed in from his early days (2 Tim. 3.15).

8.   In *1 Apol.* 66, Justin asserts that these memoirs were called 'gospels' (εὐαγγέλια).

9.   Paul, himself, appears to have anticipated the authority of his writings; see 2 Thess. 2.15; 3.14.

10.   *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* has another description of the liturgy that prescribes

section of both Testaments for reading and exposition in the Church (as called for by the Rules of Completion, Singularity, Exclusivity and Applicability). The practice of reading from the various parts of the canon in the *same* gathering is the outworking of the Rules of Secondary Genre – those of Organization, Congruence, Intertextuality and Sequentiality.[11]

   In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus proceeds to read Isa. 61.1-2, a defined pericope that Luke quotes in full, and upon which Jesus bases his homily. This reading of a pericope from the prophets functioned as the *haftarah* (הפתרה, the recitation of dismissal taken from the prophetic corpus including Joshua, Judges and Samuel-Kings) and followed the reading of the Pentateuch. The latter was ordered to be read consecutively in a three-yearly cycle, and so it is conceivable that the reading of the prophets, too, had been seriatim when Jesus opened the scroll of Isaiah.[12] While most of the evidence about the liturgical practice of the synagogue comes from the second century and later, it is clear that quite early on this pattern of communal utilization of Scripture in measured doses came to be directed by a lectionary. Appropriately divided sections of the text (pericopes) were read in continuous fashion (*lectio continua*), each subsequent reading taking up from where the previous reading had left off. This was the oldest approach to readings of the canonical text, and it was the standard practice on non-festival Sabbaths in Jewish synagogues.[13] In all likelihood, the protocol of continuous reading was bequeathed to the Church, and this mode of contact with Scripture appears to have been the norm for most of early Church history.[14]

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readings from the OT, Acts, Epistles and Gospels, in that order (2.57). Also see F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church* (2nd rev. edn; London: SPCK, 1912), pp. 257, 283.

   11. The Rules of Completion and Exclusivity delimit the form and the books of the canon that may be productively employed for ecclesial purposes; the Rule of Singularity considers the canon a single integral unit and, with the Rule of Applicability, ensures that no part of the canon is neglected for application. The Rule of Congruence mandates a coherent and unified reading of Scripture. The Rules of Organization, Intertextuality and Sequentiality bid the interpreter respect the temporal and logical arrangements of the included texts and their contents, permitting dialogue between the components of this coherent canonical corpus, and thus justifying readings from different portions of the canon on the same occasion.

   12. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C– A.D. 135)* (eds Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 450–4; and Asher Finkel, 'Jesus' Sermon at Nazareth (Luk. 4,16–30)', in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel* (eds Otto Betz, Martin Hengel and Peter Schmidt; Leiden: Brill, 1963), pp. 106–15 (107). The wear and tear on scrolls would prob- ably have been considerable had readers been skipping discontinuously from text to text (Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures* [4 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 1: 100 n. 109).

   13. See the tractate *b. Meg.* 4; skipping passages of the Torah was looked upon with disfavour. Also see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 208–11, 217.

   14. Among others, Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom,

In weekly expositions of pericopes of Scripture for the community, espe-
cially with a hiatus of several days between these corporate encounters with the
Bible, there is always the danger of dislodging a narrow sliver of text from its
broader context. This threat is attenuated, no doubt, by the necessary explana-
tory glosses within the sermon that clarify and explain the textual locus and
logical environs of the pericope. However, particularly effective for maintain-
ing the continuity of the subject matter of the text from week to week, and for
respecting its trajectory (its world projection) from reading to reading, is *lectio
continua*. A tacit assumption operates under the practice of continuous reading:
individual pericopes find their proper position in the context of the rest of the
book and the canon, for there is an integrity to the whole that must not be
fragmented – the 'Bible's own canonically organized patterns and internal rela-
tionships'. *Lectio continua* thus respects the Rules of Organization, Singularity
and Congruence.[15] Preaching passages of Scripture that he suspected would be
considered offensive to his listeners, Chrysostom pleaded, 'I have no wish to
violate decency by discoursing upon such subjects, but I am compelled to it';
he was led perforce by providence to preach through all of the text.[16] Such an
approach also reflects the Rule of Applicability that calls upon the interpreter to
seek application in every portion of the canon.

By the time of the fifth century, however, the proliferation of feasts in the
calendar and the allotment of specific biblical texts for each of those days ren-
dered readings almost entirely *lectio selecta* ('reading selectively'), the textual
assignment for an occasion being based upon the significance of a saint or that
special feast. The complexity of the festal calendar required that texts allocated
for particular occasions be listed formally, and lectionaries configured for this
purpose came into existence.[17] Unlike for most of Church history, the Middle
Ages, therefore, demonstrate a dearth of *lectio continua* sermons. It was not
until the Reformers that this practice returned to popularity in churches. Martin

Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine abided by *lectio continua*, as evidenced in their methodical
production of sermons from biblical books. See Old, *Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 1:
344; 2: 36, 51–2, 83, 105–6, 173–4, 327, 345–68.

  15. Christopher Seitz, 'The Lectionary as Theological Construction', in *Inhabiting Unity:
Theological Perspectives in the Proposed Lutheran-Episcopal Concordat* (eds Ephraim Radner
and R.R. Reno; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 173–91 (179). Gerard S. Sloyan objects to a
lectionary that is not continuous: 'Congregations are being protected from the insoluble mystery
of God by a packaged providence, a packaged morality, even a packaged mystery of Christ' ('The
Lectionary as a Context for Interpretation', *Int* 31 [1977], pp. 131–8 [138]). The Rule of Orga-
nization, in particular, affirms the need for the interpreter to pay heed to the arrangement of the
Testaments and the individual books of the canon, as well as the ordering of time in Scripture.

  16. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* 8 (on Col. 3.5-7).

  17. See Old, *Reading and Preaching of the Scripture*, 3: 85, 289; and John Reumann, 'A
History of Lectionaries: From the Synagogue at Nazareth to Post-Vatican II', *Int* 31 (1977), pp.
116–30 (124).

Luther advised: 'one of the books should be selected and one or two chapters, or half a chapter, be read, until the book is finished. After that another book should be selected, and so on, until the entire Bible has been read through.' Huldrych Zwingli explained to the bishop of Constance in 1522 that he followed *lectio continua:* Matthew for a whole year, then Acts, then the letters to Timothy, the letters of Peter and Hebrews.[18] Martin Bucer, too, was an avid proponent of *lectio continua*, calling for such a practice among all pastors, a reversion to the custom of the ancient Church.[19] In sum, continuous reading and exposition emphasizes the relationship of the part to the whole: while the pericope is the smallest quantum of text attended to in a given gathering, the community affirms its indissoluble unity with its textual neighbourhood. Such an approach to Scripture also propagates the conviction that every part of the canon is worthy of exposition; the Rule of Applicability explicitly makes this assertion. As will be discussed later, a pericope frames a segment of the larger world projected by the canon, offering this segment for appropriation by the people of God. The sequential employment of contiguous pericopes thus enables the full breadth of the canonical world to be appropriated over time.

In Luke's report of the visit to the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus commences his 'sermon' proper at 4.21 – the narrator notes that 'he began to say to them'. While the Lukan précis of the homily has Jesus only announcing the fulfilment of the Isaianic prophecy, it seems fair to assume there was more to the exposition than that brief comment; an extended discussion appears to be implied. Of particular interest to this work is Jesus' affirmation of the text's applicability in a day several centuries distant from the time of its original inscription – '*Today* this Scripture has been fulfilled'. The declaration marked the prophetic fulfilment of an ancient text; however, it is valid to see in this transhistorical use of Scripture an underlying affirmation of the implicit and potential contemporaneity of the text – its perennial significance that transcends the circumstances of its provenance.[20] What was written *then* is rendered effective *now*; properly

18. Martin Luther, 'Concerning the Order of Public Worship (1523)', in *Liturgy and Hymns* (vol. 53 of *Luther's Works*; trans. Paul Zeller Strodach; rev. Ulrich S. Leupold; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), pp. 7–14 (12); Gottfried Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 27.

19. Martin Bucer, *Martin Bucers Deutsches Schriften* (14 vols; ed. R. Stupperich; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1960–75), 7: 281. The Strasbourg Church Service (1525) promoted *lectio continua* rather than the preaching of 'chopped-up fragments' (*stuckwerk*) (Friedrich Hubert, *Die Strassburger Liturgische Ordnungen im Zeitalter der Reformation* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900], p. 79). Calvin, too, preached slowly and surely through most of the books of the Bible, meticulously abiding by *lectio continua*. See T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), p. 80.

20. This perennial character of its writings, a property of the secondary genre of the canonical classic, is reinforced as Jesus urges the disciples of John, in Lk. 7.22, to report back to the latter (in prison, 3.20) that they had witnessed the blind receiving sight and the poor having the gospel

expounded, any text of Scripture is applicable in any particular 'present'. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the Bible itself consistently asserts the relevance of its message for subsequent generations (the thrusts of the Rules of Substantiality and Applicability).[21]

Actualizations or realizations of Scripture in the 'here and now' – the application of the text to the circumstances and contexts of the current auditors of the word – is the ultimate end of all exposition of biblical pericopes in the ecclesial setting.[22] In achieving this goal of application, the formal utilization of a pericope in the context of the Church gathering plays a crucial theological role. Pericopes are not merely conveniently packaged textual units suitable for weekly uptake. Rather, their self-contained and defined nature, their potential use in *lectio continua* fashion, and their regular and periodic employment in Church assemblies for application, all render them agents of a unique and momentous phenomenon that serves to align the faithful with their God – the transaction of covenant renewal. This is the theological function of these units of Scripture in the life of the Christian community.

Theological function of pericopes

The theological role played by pericopes and their exposition in the worship of the Church has not been a matter that has attracted much academic interest. While attention has been lavished upon the theology of individual books and upon that of the canon as a whole, consideration of the theology of these liturgically and homiletically critical tracts of Scripture, the functional units of the canon that confront the people of God weekly in formal fashion, has languished. Such a neglect is all the more regrettable since it is by these regular encounters with demarcated entities of the biblical text that life change is addressed, so that individual and community may abide in the will of God. This work proposes that the central theological function of pericopes is the facilitation of covenant renewal, the restoration of God's people to a right relationship with him. Due respect for this instrumentality of pericopes is therefore essential for proper homiletical practice. Such an understanding of the role of pericopes is illustrated by the account of the prototypical transaction in Nehemiah 7–8.

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preached to them; both events were actualizations of Isa. 61.1, the text that had been read in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4.18-19).

21. See Deut. 4.10; 6.6-25; 29.14-15; 2 Kgs 22–23; Neh. 7.73b–8.18; Mt. 28.19; Rom. 15.4; 1 Cor. 10.6, 11; 2 Tim. 3.16-17; etc. The Rule of Substantiality calls for the canonical text to be given the consideration due its materiality. Unaffected by the passage of time and the vagaries of culture, the canon sustains its substantiality across temporal spans and spatial boundaries.

22. The delivery of the sermon does not complete the event of the text-congregation encounter; integral to such an understanding is the element of actual praxis, of lives changed in response to the word preached, as God's people respond to him in worship, witness and service (Isa. 55.10-11).

Covenant renewal in Nehemiah 7.73b–8.12

The paradigmatic notion of God's people as 'purchased and delivered' by him reflects not only the primeval event of the exodus from Egypt but also all acts of deliverance that God performs for his people, especially the redemption wrought in Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb.[23] The redeemed of God of all time thus become citizens of God's kingdom, for liberation by God involves a change of master – 'a passage from a distressing, foreign and arbitrary yoke to contentment and security under rightful authority'.[24] This extraordinary relationship between Creator and redeemed stipulates that the maintenance of such a filiation be given significant and constant attention in the corporate life of the people of God. The transaction of covenant renewal provides the perfect occasion for the community to focus jointly and formally upon its unique status under God. Reminding itself of the responsibilities of that privileged station, the community, in covenant renewal, commits itself to abiding by the will of its divine sovereign. Just as clauses of contemporaneous ancient Near Eastern treaties, repeatedly and publicly spelled out at recurrent intervals, helped preserve relationships between clients and overlords, regular and frequent readings of their foundational text played a critical role in the Israelites' covenant relationship with Yahweh, the one to whom they owed ultimate allegiance.[25] However, distinct from every other secular enterprise of this sort, Israel's covenant renewal was Torah centred, as she pledged loyalty and swore fealty to her Lord. In doing so, the nation placed itself under obligation to abide by the revealed will of God, implicitly acknowledging the Rules of Substantiality and Applicability that presume the gravity of Scripture and its potential for universal application. Historically, therefore, the reading of Scripture was always intertwined with this principle of covenant renewal; it is particularly exemplified in Ezra's proclamation of the law in c. 444 BCE.[26]

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23. Moses' and Miriam's Song of the Sea (Exod. 15.1-21), that was considered in Chapter 2, clearly marked out the Israelites as having been bought and redeemed by Yahweh (Exod. 15.16). This theme is also reflected in the NT in 1 Cor. 6.20; 7.23; Tit. 2.14; 1 Pet. 1.18-19; 2.9; Rev. 5.9; etc.

24. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), p. 273. For this concept of servanthood under God, see Lev. 25.55; Isa. 43.1; and, in the NT, Rom. 6.17-23; 1 Cor. 7.22; Col. 4.7; etc.

25. Ancient Near Eastern documents attest to the readings of treaties and the transactions of covenant renewal on a periodic basis to remind subjects of their responsibilities to their sovereign. It is conceivable that such practices as classically flourished in the environs of Israel influenced that nation's concept of her relationship with God and her dealings with him. See Robert H. Pfeiffer, *One Hundred New Selected Nuzi Texts* (trans. E.A. Speiser; New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1936), p. 103. Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), pp. 42, 47, 76 and 86, details treaties that mandated repeated reading. See also Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 64–5.

26. Deuteronomy 31.10-13 reports on a similar transaction under Moses.

The reading of the law in Neh. 7.73b–8.12 is considered one of the oldest descriptions of a 'liturgy of the Word'.[27] This event was the watershed phenomenon in the life of the postexilic community of Israel: it forms the climax of the Ezra-Nehemiah joint corpus. The missions of the two protagonists, Ezra and Nehemiah, converge precisely within this enterprise, and for the first time they are mentioned together in this section (8.9). Within the larger body of the account (6.1–12.47), the renewal of covenant forms the centre of a chiasm.

6.1–7.4	*A* Completion of the city walls	
7.5-73a		*B* List of ancestral inhabitants
7.73b–10.39		*C* Covenant renewal
11.1–12.26		*B'* Repopulation of Jerusalem
12.27–47	*A'* Dedication of the city walls	

The location of the chiastic convergence is significant. The interpolation of covenant renewal within the broader undertaking that restored the Holy City signified the importance of this transaction as the singular event that definitively reconstituted the children of Israel. It provided both the pivot for the account of rebuilding and the prerequisite for the successful re-emergence and refounding of the nation after years of having been wrenched into exile. With this milestone, the identity of the nation was rediscovered, and its standing before God re-established.[28] In the accounting of this drama, the book of the law, rightly, occupied centre stage; indeed, covenant renewal is always Scripture centred and forms the basis of all realignment to God's will. Noteworthy in this regard is that of the twenty-one references to תּוֹרָה in Nehemiah, all but two are found in the section containing the covenant renewal account (7.73b–10.39). One might go so far as to assert that Scripture-centring always leads to covenant renewal, in that the priorities and purposes of God are established and realized in the life of the community. Bounded as it is between the detailed accounts of the rebuilding of the fortifications of Jerusalem, the act of covenant renewal under Nehemiah has wider theological ramifications for the community of God of all time. Covenant renewal, at the core of communal restructuring and reorientation to the will of God, may be considered the paradigm for the reading and exposition of Scripture undertaken in corporate contexts for the people of God.

The account in Neh. 7.73b–10.39 is itself tripartite, each portion involving an assembly for the reading of the Torah (7.73b–8.12; 8.13-18; and 9.1–10.39). Of particular interest is the first reading of the law, with its details of how the process was carried out. Nehemiah 7.73b–8.12 is bracketed by a gathering of

27. Old, *Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 1: 95–6.
28. Michael W. Duggan, *The Covenant Renewal in Ezra-Nehemiah (Neh 7:72b–10:40): An Exegetical, Literary, and Theological Study* (Atlanta: SBL, 1996), p. 73.

'all the people' (כָּל־הָעָם, 8.1, 12). This assemblage of God's people, rather than Ezra, is the focus throughout the account, being mentioned sixteen times.[29] That Ezra was responding to the request of the people for the Torah to be read (8.1, 2) again indicates the leader's subordinate role as the 'minister' who merely mediated the book of the law to the community of God; it was for the benefit of the latter that the entire transaction was entered into.[30] The balanced cascade of five verbs each for leader and community (in 8.4-6) further emphasizes this occasion as having been for the whole body: Ezra stood, opened the book (× 2), was standing above and blessed God; 'all the people' had made the podium, they stood, answered, bowed low and worshipped. One led, the others responded. Flanked by thirteen 'lay' leaders (8.4), Ezra does not act unilaterally – this is a joint event of leaders and the led, affirming the importance and communal nature of this significant episode in the life of the people.[31]

What is actually read on the occasion fails to be mentioned. However, the liturgical responsibilities of the actants and the formality of the whole enterprise cannot be missed: the priest-scribe in solemn procession with the Torah scroll (8.2); his formalized, ritualized position at the forefront and above the assembly (8.4); the stationing of other leaders on either side of him (8.4); the unrolling of the scroll before the assembly (8.5); the people's rising to their feet in response (8.5); Ezra's invocation of a blessing (8.6); the people's responding in unison with 'Amen', while raising their hands and worshipping (8.6; Deut. 27.15-26 notes the covenantal connotations of this particular response); the presider's reading of the text to the assembly (Neh. 8.3); the Levites' interpreting the text to the people (8.7-8); and the leaders' instructing the people concerning the celebration of a subsequent festive meal (8.9-12). This was, indisputably, a liturgical gathering of the people of God before God. Notable, also, is that the reading was conducted in an easily accessible public place away from the temple precincts: none was barred from attending, hearing, understanding, or obeying. The parallels between this operation of covenant renewal and the

29. The community as a whole is indicated by 'sons of Israel' (7.73b); 'all the people' (8.1, 3, 5 [× 2], 6, 9, 11, 12); 'as one man' (8.1); 'the assembly' (8.2); 'men, women, and all who could listen with understanding' (8.2); 'men and women, those who could understand' (8.3); and 'the people' (8.7 [× 2], 9). When the covenant was renewed at Shechem, Joshua's address to the Israelites, likewise, designated the audience כָּל־הָעָם (Josh. 24.2, 27). Also see the renewal of the covenant in the time of Josiah (2 Kgs 23.1-3; 2 Chron. 34.30).

30. Neither was this an activity conducted impromptu, conjured up at the spur of the moment: Neh. 8.4 indicates planning in the construction of Ezra's podium, and 8.10 suggests that food preparation had also been going on in anticipation of the gathering.

31. Hittite treaties in the ancient Near East were also characterized by an evident 'democratization' of submission to the sovereign that devolved not only upon the vassal but also on the whole populace, a collective responsibility to maintain a right relationship with the suzerain. See John S. Holladay, Jr., 'Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel', *HTR* 63 (1970), pp. 29–51 (38, 44, 49–50).

weekly worship of the Church with its formal encounter with Scripture are immediately noticeable.[32]

Especially pertinent to this work is the activity of the Levites in Neh. 8.7-8. Their task was to facilitate comprehension by the community of what God required of them. By the Rule of Substantiality, any reading of Scripture is to respect the immense significance of its content. It must therefore be ensured that such content is understood and its application apprehended by the auditors; this was the responsibility of the Levites (and continues to be that of theologian-homileticians today). The Levites' giving the sense of the reading involved an 'explanation' (מְפֹרָשׁ), the outcome of which was 'understanding'.[33] The root בין ('to understand') occurs six times in the account (8.2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12), dramatizing the spiritual formation of the community through the comprehension of the Scriptures. Psalm 119.34 ('Give me understanding [בין], that I may observe your law, and keep it with all my heart') indicates that the end-point of such understanding is obedience.[34] The exertions of the Levitical mediators of Scripture also bore fruit in the Israelites' subsequent response. Comprehension by the congregation included application of Scripture to their lives: an epistemological movement from worship, to hearing, to provisional understanding, to full cognition, to prompt and precise application – the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8.9-12, 16-18). The fundamental thrust of Nehemiah 8 is that Scripture reading with explanation leads to understanding, which in turn issues in joyful obedience (8.10-12, 17).[35] This is at the core of covenant renewal; the reading and exposition of the biblical text in a corporate, ecclesial context, an event mediated by the theologian-homiletician, culminates in application that readjusts the congregation to the covenant and restores them in it, thus reaffirming their status as those purchased and delivered by God.

Occurring as it does centuries removed from the giving of the law, covenant renewal in Nehemiah is an archetype of the hermeneutic of application and recontextualization espoused in this work. The Israelites in their restored post-exilic circumstances under Ezra and Nehemiah would no doubt have wondered how ancient Mosaic regulations pertaining to a theocratic state in which the will of God was law could have any commerce under the monarchical rule of the

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32. See Duggan, *Covenant Renewal in Ezra-Nehemiah*, p. 110. In these transactions of the people of God, the Rule of Applicability is brought into prominence in that it accords the ancient writings universal validity for contemporary application. Such use of Scripture is to be conducted under the patronage of the community of believers (Rule of Ecclesiality).

33. The Aramaic term מפרש used in a document of c. 428 BCE denotes 'plainly, exactly, or separately set forth' (see A.E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923], pp. 51–2). The root of the word (פרש) in Lev. 24.12 and Num. 15.34 refers to legal judgements awaiting clarification.

34. The use of בין in the hiphil in Nehemiah 8 corresponds to its utilization in that stem in Prov. 28.7 – 'He who keeps the law is an understanding son': obedience is intrinsic to comprehension.

35. See H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC; 16; Dallas: Word, 1985), pp. 286, 299.

Persian Empire of their time. It was the renewal of covenant that demonstrated how 'the principle of the Law could continue to be observed even when its letter was deadened by changed circumstances'.[36] The account in Nehemiah 7–8 was thus canonically intended to function as a prototype for all future communities that desire to orient themselves towards God and align themselves to his word. The ancient text is still capable of speaking to a modern audience with perennial significance for application; this is an intrinsic characteristic of the canonical classic. The Rule of Applicability renders the universal significance of the text a potential reality awaiting actualization. Such a conception of the role of pericopes of Scripture must necessarily result in a response to the demands of the text (application), without which, covenant renewal, the terminus of every biblical exposition, remains unrealized and inchoate.

Pericopes as literary instruments of covenant renewal
As the progenitor of the theological operation of pericopes regularly employed in an ecclesial setting, covenant renewal may be considered the conceptual model for all sermonic exposition of the Bible: it is a summons to God's people to return and renew a Scripture-centred relationship with the one who is truly their sovereign. The account of covenant renewal in Nehemiah 7–8 does duty as an outstanding exemplar of this endeavour. Set in a liturgical context, the entire event – the reading of Scripture, its subsequent exposition and the response of the congregation – serves as a helpful device for reflecting upon Scripture-centred transactions in the ecclesial context, activities that also comprise the same elements of reading, exposition and response. Pericopes of the biblical text, handled weekly in homiletical exercises, are therefore best construed as literary instruments of covenant renewal. A pericope performs its crucial function by featuring a segment of the canonical world projected by the text of Scripture. It is to this segment that individuals are bidden, in each homiletical event, to orient themselves. In so doing they align themselves to the particular aspects of the will of God prescribed by that pericope. Covenant renewal thus forms the permanent backdrop to all homiletical utilization of Scripture in the Church setting. It is an acknowledgement of the humanity of God's people and their tendency to drift away from the will of God; a periodic renewal of their standing with their Creator is therefore necessary. It is also a recognition of the distanciation of texts that necessitates its renewal for (reapplication to) a contemporary audience.

The goal of regular reading and exposition of pericopes of Scripture in the gathering of the Church, then, is application; at each such event a particular aspect of the life of the individual and community is addressed, as the pericope of that day dictates. Such an interpretive undertaking reflects the hermeneutic of covenant renewal and transformation, as readers respond to the text by 'inhabiting' the pericopal segment of the world projected in front of the canonical text.

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36. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp. xxxiv, 303–4.

In that each pericope considers only a specific facet of life lived in relationship with God, covenant renewal is the cumulative outcome of expositions of pericopes conducted over time. The culmination of these ecclesial transactions is the reorientation of the Church to the plenary world projected by the canon. This canonical world depicts a mode of existence in which God's priorities are supreme, where his principles operate and the practices of his Kingdom are enacted. Such a world is a potential way of life open to those who, in obedience to Scripture, choose to live in the will of God by aligning their lives to that world. As biblical pericopes are applied in the lives of readers and hearers, the projected world is appropriated by God's people, and covenant relationship is renewed, week by week. Needless to say, the facilitation of covenant renewal is the responsibility of the preacher, the one in the community of God entrusted with the task of interpretation and application of the text, the chaperone of the move from text to praxis. The mediation of covenant renewal between God and his people, between sovereign and subjects, is a duty of immense gravity for the theologian-homiletician, as emphasized in the mandate to Timothy: 'I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus … preach the word' (2 Tim. 4.1-2).[37]

The manner in which this preaching movement from Scripture to sermon may be undertaken, in order to arrive at the destination of valid application to accomplish covenant renewal, is at the heart of this work, and particularly of this final chapter. It is in this transaction that world-projection achieves its greatest utility. The world in front of the text, bearing a transhistorical intention, and standing between ancient inscription and contemporary application, forms the intermediary by which the reader is enabled to respond to the text. Distanciation and the ensuing decontextualization, a property of textuality, does not quarantine the dated text from fruitful employment; rather, by world-projection, conditions are created for recontextualization and application of the text to proceed in the current circumstances of its readers. The *projection* of the world, therefore, generates *projects* for action. In following this projected trajectory of application, the dynamic course of the text is extended beyond itself and covenant renewal is affected through the instrumentality of the pericope.[38]

What the regular utilization of pericopes is intended to achieve in a *general* sense was the object of scrutiny in the last section – the concept of pericopes

37. Similarly, Ezra's reading and proclamation of the Law was an undertaking of great moment, executed by one 'skilled in the law of Moses' (Ezra 7.6, 10), and one commissioned by Artaxerxes to teach the 'law of your God' (7.25-6). See Duggan, *Covenant Renewal in Ezra-Nehemiah*, p. 67.

38. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (ed. and trans. John B. Thompson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 143; also see Charles E. Reagan and Paul Ricoeur, 'Interviews: Châtenay-Malabry, June 19, 1982', in Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Work* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 100–9 (108).

as agents of covenant renewal in the setting of the Church assembly. The theologian-homiletician must also recognize how, in a more *specific* sense, each individual pericope contributes to covenant renewal. It is by the determination of the theology of that pericope and the derivation of valid application therefrom that covenant renewal is initiated. Pericopal theology and its application will therefore be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Theology of pericopes

The biblical pericope is not only a literary object but also an instrument of action that projects a world that, when inhabited, renews God's people in a right relationship with their sovereign. As the *object* of a creative literary enterprise, the text must be investigated for what is 'behind' and 'within' the text (its rhetorical situation, linguistic particulars and specific content). Interpretation, however, must not cease with the elucidation of these essential entities, but, considering the text as an *instrument* of action, must proceed further to the discernment of the projected world 'in front of' the text in order to derive valid application of the text and accomplish covenant renewal.[39] This phenomenon of world-projection reflects the essential and crucial function of pericopes as 'concrete universals'.[40] As literary objects they depict what is concrete, specific, and particular; as literary instruments, the world they project gives pericopes their universal and transhistorical characteristic (perenniality). This section will explore the operation of pericopes as concrete universals. Furthermore, I shall argue that the portion of the world projected by the pericope (the universal) is the theology of that unit of text – *pericopal theology*, derived by a reading superintended by the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre.

Concrete universals, projected world and theology

Given that a pericope is both an object and instrument of action, it has a twofold thrust: it is best considered a concrete universal – a 'plurisign' whereby it signifies a first-order referent that is 'close, immediate, and relatively obvious', as well as a second-order referent that possesses 'a universal and archetypal character' (the world in front of the text bearing a transhistorical intention; see Chapter 1). This is the mark of a classic text – its ability to function with this dual focus, concrete and universal. A concrete universal subsists in the particular and specific *qua* concrete, while it simultaneously yields a snapshot

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39. Thomas G. Long stresses the need for homileticians to consider not only what the text says, but also what it does, for it is in the interplay between its saying and doing that 'the key to building the bridge between text and sermon' may be found (*The Witness of Preaching* [2nd edn; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005], p. 106).

40. Fred B. Craddock observed that 'it is in the particularity of a text that its universality lies' (*Preaching* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1985], p. 130).

of what is transcendent and general. In such texts, often, 'the universal is not announced explicitly, but stays implicit in, and yet is strongly affirmed by, the very individuality of the individual'.[41] It is this universal aspect of a text (its projected world) that generates a future-directed trajectory (its transhistorical intention). As a concrete universal, the classic text is thus rendered perennially significant: it now has potential for application across the temporal and spatial gulf created by distanciation. The Rule of Substantiality, in particular, affirming the gravity of the content of Scripture, directs a reading that recognizes, in the concrete particularities of the text, the canon's universally significant subject matter – God and his relationship to his creation. Moreover, in deference to the Rule of Ecclesiality, the people of God of *all* time have commissioned the reading and exposition of the Scriptures in the corporate setting, presuming upon the universal validity of its content. The legitimacy of such a hermeneutical enterprise that leads readers and hearers in every age from ancient text to contemporary praxis is therefore a given – an understanding further endorsed by the Rule of Applicability. These rules jointly accord Scripture the ability to speak its weighty matters to audiences and situations far removed from the circumstances of its provenance. It is as a concrete universal with world-projecting capabilities that a pericope overcomes the distanciation intrinsic to textuality.

The projected textual world (the universal) is the second-order pragmatic referent, unique to the text and derived from the particulars of its first-order referent. Such secondary referents of Scripture display to readers a world of divine values and demands, and offer to them the possibility of appropriating that world by subscription to those values and obedience to those demands. A new way of living – God's way – is depicted by the world projected by Scripture, and it is in the habitation of this world by the people of God that the text effects covenant renewal. The biblical canon as a whole projects a single world in front of itself, the canonical world. However, in the weekly homiletical transaction that moves the Church towards application, it is the pericope that remains the

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41. Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism* (rev. edn; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 83. The concrete universality of Shakespearean writing, for instance, is widely acknowledged. The bard, Coleridge declared, could effect a 'union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular', characteristic of 'all works of decided genius and true science' ('The Friend: Section the Second, Essay IV', in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [ed. Barbara E. Rooke; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969], pp. 448–57 [457]). Goethe asserted that the poet 'should seize the Particular and…thus represent the Universal' (J.W. Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann (1823–1832)* [trans. John Oxenford; San Francisco: North Point, 1984], p. 95). A philosopher, Philip Sidney claimed, provides only the abstract and general precept; the historian, in contrast, gives only the concrete and particular. 'But both, not having both, do both halt', insufficient as they are to 'make men good'. Only 'doth the peerless poet perform both', supplying the general precept *and* the particular example – the concrete universal ('An Apology for Poetry', in *Criticism: The Major Statements* [2nd edn; ed. Charles Kaplan; New York: St. Martin's, 1986], pp. 108–48 [118–19]).

most basic textual component comprising the duality of concrete and universal elements. As the fundamental scriptural entity in ecclesial and homiletical use, and as the relatively irreducible textual element composing a single sense unit, each pericope projects a segment of that broader world projected by the canon. It is in, with and through an individual pericope (the concrete), that this specific segment of the canonical world (the universal) is revealed. The cumulative world-projections of all the individual pericopes of Scripture therefore constitute the plenary, singular world in front of the canonical text.[42] While the Rules of Primary Genre enable the identification of those pericopal sectors of the canonical world (see Chapter 2), the Rules of Secondary Genre beckon the interpreter to employ a reading that portrays the unity of the canonical world comprising the contributions of individual pericopes (see Chapter 3). It is the projected world that imbues a classic text with its prescriptive, perennial, and plural significance and it is to this world of Scripture that Christians are called to align their lives to accomplish covenant renewal.

The task of the theologian-homiletician, therefore, in interpreting a pericope for applicational purposes, is to move from the concrete biblical text via the intermediary of the universal (the world in front of the text) to arrive at another concrete element – relevant application in the modern day for specific listeners. Therein lies the genius of the projected world, for it is this entity, with its transhistorical, future-directed intention, that makes possible valid application in contexts far removed from those of the original utterance or discourse. Such a move from text to praxis involves the unfolding of a notion of transcendence, inherent in the world projected.[43] Moral judgements, especially, presuppose such a transcendence or implicit universality. By their very nature, these ethical principles point beyond the particularities of the concrete as they are 'generalized, abstracted and enlarged, and extended to an ideal communication community'.[44] What on the surface is concrete in its particularity turns out to

42. Countering Popper's argument against inferring universals from concrete statements or from singular ones – 'no matter how many instances of white swans we may have observed, this does not justify the conclusion that *all* swans are white' – Todorov replies that, though the hypothesis may be based on the observation of a limited number of the birds, it would still be 'perfectly legitimate' to so conclude, for cygnean whiteness is an organic and constitutional characteristic. Similarly, the universal is an intrinsic characteristic of the concrete text of the classic, and it can justly be derived therefrom. See Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 27; and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (trans. Richard Howard; Cleveland, OH: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 4.

43. 'Essentially cognition is always oriented toward this essential aim, the articulation of the particular into a universal law and order' (Ernst Cassirer, *Language* [vol. 1 of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*; trans. Ralph Mannheim; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953], p. 77).

44. Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* (trans. Ciaran Cronin; Cambridge: Polity, 1993), pp. 50, 52. For instance, the specific statement 'The car stopped because it ran out of petrol' implies the truth that 'All cars that run out of petrol will stop'.

be universal, subsuming large tracts of human life within itself. It is because of such inherent universality that a pericope, a literary instrument projecting a particular segment of the canonical world, can invite readers to consider this world and to organize their lives in accordance with it. Insofar as this move from text to praxis is accurately accomplished, and to the degree that the community, in obedient response, inhabits the world so projected, it participates in the ongoing and dynamic relationship between God and his creation – covenant renewal in operation.

What is proposed in this work is that the world projected in front of the text, the universal-in-the-concrete, is the theology of the text inasmuch as it portrays God and the covenantal relationship he intends to have with his people through the instrumentality of the text. It is a world wherein the economy of God is displayed, where kingdom priorities, principles and practices are portrayed. 'The proposed world that in biblical language is called a new creation, a new Covenant, the Kingdom of God, is the "issue" of the biblical text unfolded in front of this text.' Therefore it can rightly be called 'theology' – 'that skein of thought and language in which Christians understand themselves, the Bible, God, and their everyday world'.[45] Speaking as it does of God and his relationship with his creation, considering as it does the transcendentals of the universe – God (the divine attributes and Trinitarian nature; his purposes and plans), his creation (humanity; the community of God; and the *cosmos*, including sin and redemption) and the interaction of these actants between the two poles of eternity past and future – this projected world is the concern and focus of theology as a discipline. The theology projected by a pericope is a specific segment of the larger canonical world, and all such segments together compose a holistic understanding of God and his relationship to his people. This composite and integrated canonical world is the basis of biblical faith and the ground of cov-

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Likewise, 'He should be punished for his theft' signifies that 'All who steal deserve punishment'. This, in the field of ethics, is called the principle of generalization, a process of justification or validation. '[A]n ethic without universals would be no ethic, a series of disconnected, arbitrary imperatives' (Oliver M.T. O'Donovan, 'The Possibility of a Biblical Ethic', *TSF Bull.* 67 [1973], pp. 15–23 [18]). Also see Marcus George Singer, *Generalization in Ethics* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), pp. 13–33, 34–46; and R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 4–5, 10–13. 'The value of a generalization is that while it leaves out the specific features that are of the individual or of the moment, it expresses features that are general to a class' – the loss of specificity is a gain in applicability (Richard M. Weaver, *Language Is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* [eds Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland and Ralph T. Eubanks; Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1970], pp. 125–6). An example where Jesus himself sought to generalize a transhistorical intention from a narrative text is found in Mk 2.25-6 (employing 1 Sam. 21.1-7).

45. Paul L. Holmer, *The Grammar of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 9; Paul Ricoeur, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), pp. 73–118 (103).

enant renewal.[46] Thus *pericopal theology* by definition is the theology specific to a particular pericope, that represents a segment of the plenary world in front of the canonical text, and that, bearing a transhistorical intention, functions as the crucial intermediary in the homiletical move from text to praxis that respects both the authority of the text and the circumstances of the hearer. It is such a world, projected by the pericope and unique to that text, that the congregation is invited to inhabit; by so doing, the ecclesial community renews its covenant relationship with God.

Pericopal theology as intermediary

The interpretation of a pericope at any gathering of the community of God, then, must discern the particular portion of the canonical world featured by that pericope; in other words, every homiletical undertaking must delineate the theology of the pericope. A reading of a pericope employing the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genres elucidates the segment of the canonical world framed by that given pericope; such a theological interpretation reflects what that specific text affirms about God and his relationship to mankind (an example is worked out below). What the pericope so affirms in its theology forms the basis of the subsequent homiletical move to derive application. As propounded herein, pericopal theology is a form of biblical theology and, as the theology of the specific pericope under consideration, it forms the station from which the interpreter may move on to the destination of application.[47] Pericopal theology is, therefore, neither the imposition of a systematic or confessional grid on textual data nor the result of an exclusively historical or sociological focus on the subject matter. Rather, it elucidates the textually mediated theological truth

46. Mudge likens the world in front of the text to a model in the natural sciences which functions as a heuristic device; in similar fashion, the projected world redescribes reality enabling readers to discover how that new world, a world according to God, may be actualized in their lives (Lewis S. Mudge, 'Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation', in Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* [ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], pp. 1–37 [25]). Richard B. Hays suggests, likewise, that one mode of ethical discourse in the NT is the display of a symbolic world that creates perceptual categories for interpreting reality (Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vison of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], pp. 208–9).

47. Biblical theology has been considered a thick description of the canon, an integrative accounting of the text as a divine, intentional act of communication. It is an interdisciplinary interpretive practice that emphasizes the unity of the canon, the 'work' of specific genres and the theological dimension of the hermeneutical undertaking. Such a 'redefined' biblical theology will gratefully mine the wisdom of the past, but will seek additional insights from contemporary hermeneutics as well, as this work attempts to do. See Francis B. Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 8, 26; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Exegesis and Hermeneutics', in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (eds T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), pp. 52–64 (53, 63).

of the pericope at hand, attending to the contribution of that particular quantum of text to the plenary canonical world that displays God and humanity rightly related to him. The cumulative integration of the theology of all the pericopes of Scripture thus constitutes the biblical theology of the canon – the plenary canonical world in front of the biblical text. In any gathering of the faithful, however, it is by the mediation of the theology of an individual pericope that the Scriptures may be brought to bear upon the situation of the hearers, thereby aligning the congregation to the world in front of the text. Week by week, and pericope by pericope, the community of God is progressively and increasingly reoriented to the will of God, gradually implementing covenant renewal.[48] The vector of such an interpretive transaction leads the theologian-homiletician from the text, via the posited world (pericopal theology) bearing a transhistorical intention, to arrive ultimately at application – the inhabitation of that projected world. Therefore in each expository undertaking geared for application, the theologian-homiletician sets the interpretive focus upon the theology of the particular text utilized. It is that one pericope chosen for the specific occasion in the gathered Christian community that must be applied via pericopal theology. As far as producing valid application is concerned, then, biblical interpretation that does not elucidate this crucial intermediary of pericopal theology is de facto incomplete.[49]

The theology of the pericope, generated by an interpretation supervised by the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre, thus functions as the bridge between text and praxis, between the circumstances of the textual inscription and those of the reading community.[50] The utility of such a disposition of pericopal theol-

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48. The Rule of Substantiality, asserting the density and wealth of material in all of the canon's constituent texts, promotes the handling of Scripture in smaller pericopal sizes for homiletical purposes. The Rules of Ecclesiality and Application also endorse this notion for implementing covenant renewal.

49. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), pp. 147–8, 173. David Buttrick agrees: 'The odd idea that preachers can move from text to sermon without recourse to theology by some exegetical magic or a leap of homiletic imagination is obvious nonsense' ('Interpretation and Preaching', *Int* 35 [1981], pp. 46–58 [57]).

50. Theology stands 'midway between the Bible and actual church preaching' (Heinrich Ott, *Theology and Preaching* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], p. 17). Scobie, similarly, sees an intermediary role for biblical theology (Charles H.H. Scobie, 'The Challenge of Biblical Theology', *TynBul* 42.1 [1991], pp. 31–61 [49–51]; also see idem, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 46–9). The concept of theology as a bridge between text and sermon has oft been proposed in the past, although how exactly it performs this role has not been explicated. See John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1981), p. 43; John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 137. For an insightful apprehension of the potential of this concept for preaching, see Timothy S. Warren, 'A Paradigm for Preaching', *BSac* 148 (1991), pp. 463–86; and idem, 'The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation', *BSac* 156 (1999), pp. 336–56.

ogy between text and praxis is in its facilitation of the interpretive move from canonical inscription to valid sermonic application.[51] What was there-and-then is thereby permitted to speak validly in the here-and-now. Divine discourse is thus forward looking, for the world in front of the text is the world that God is inviting his people to inhabit. This world is not necessarily the way the world actually *is*. Rather, it depicts God and his covenant relationship to his creation – a world that *should be* and *would be*, were God's people to align their lives to it: in a sense, an eschatological world. This eschatological world in front of the text guides believers to future action, to fresh appropriation of the pericope into their own particular contexts. Pericopal theology thus bears potential for the realization of God's kingdom; an eschatological concept, it is not yet completely fulfilled or operative until actualized in the future. It calls the Christian to a life lived in accord with the demands of God and to participate in the future endeavours of God, with God. The appropriation or application of the theology of the pericope is the remaking of the reader's world after the fashion of the world in front of the text, as 'the strange new eschatological world being created by the Spirit' is rendered real.[52] To this possibility, this potentiality, God's people are bidden to make their lives congruent, for application involves discovering the world projected in front of the text and aligning oneself to that world. Such an alignment restores the relationship between God and his community. A pericope, by way of its theology, thus contributes to the corporate mission of covenant renewal.

The explication of pericopal theology by the employment of the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre enables the preacher to derive valid application. The resultant transformation of lives, as pericopal theology is applied and the projected world inhabited, reflects an alignment to the values of God's

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51. J.P. Gabler also appears to have proposed such an intermediate position for biblical theology as early as the eighteenth century. Under biblical theology, he subsumed a 'pure' (*reine*) biblical theology that comprised an examination of texts for their 'universal ideas' that form 'the unchanging testament of Christian doctrine, and therefore pertain directly to us'. See his *Oratio de justo discrimine Theologiæ biblicæ et dogmaticæ regundisque recte utriusque finibus*, in John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, 'J.P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality', *SJT* 33 (1980), pp. 133–58 (134–44; especially see 141–2, and 157 n. 1).

52. See Richard Briggs, *Reading the Bible Wisely* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 111; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005), pp. 111, 318, 420. Ricoeur, too, acknowledges this eschatological nature of religious language. What is poetical in religion is, according to him, 'a capacity to create a new way of life and to open my eyes to new aspects of reality, new possibilities. You may call that eschatology in the sense that it's the horizon of another world, the promise of a new life' (Paul Ricoeur, 'Poetry and Possibility', in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* [ed. Mario J. Valdés; Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991], pp. 448–62 [455]). This eschatological potential does not vitiate the veracity of textual assertions. Indeed, second-order referents, as was noted in Chapter 1, assume the validity of, and are built upon, such first-order referents without negating them.

kingdom. On a weekly basis in the ecclesial setting, as pericopes are sequentially preached from, the theology elucidated from each such textual unit contributes to the overall transaction of covenant renewal and the maintenance of a right relationship with the divine sovereign. This manner of 'doing' theology is integral to a proper homiletical approach to Scripture – one that seeks to move validly from text to praxis. Utilizing the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genres, the derivation of the theology of a specific pericope, 2 Sam. 11.1-27, will be demonstrated next.

Text to theology: 2 Samuel 11.1-27

Identifying the segment of the world projected by the pericope is an important goal of biblical interpretation, for it is via this critical intermediary that the theologian-homiletician can move from text to praxis, from inscription to application. An essential element of the sermonic undertaking in the ecclesial context is, therefore, the determination of pericopal theology. This section will attend to the theology of a particular pericope, 2 Sam. 11.1-27, a well-defined and self-contained quantum of the biblical text and potentially a prescribed lection in Church assemblies. The Rules of Genre (particularly those of the primary genre of narrative, Rules of Plot and Interaction) will be employed to unfold the theology inherent in the pericope.[53]

This accounting of the theology of 2 Sam. 11.1-27 will be conducted in the context of the theology of 1–2 Samuel as a whole.[54] While acknowledging the importance of the pericope as a fundamental textual unit of preaching and its singular role as the instrument of covenant renewal, the theologian-homiletician may not deny the unity of the wider text of which the pericope is part. Indeed, the theology of the pericope can be grasped only in light of the theology of the broader context; the segment of the world projected by the pericope is an integral element of the world projected by the larger body of text. The Rules of Singularity and Congruence explicitly assert the coherence of the biblical data, requiring the interpreter to reflect upon the relevance of the pericope in its wider literary and theological context.

In considering the entire corpus of 1–2 Samuel, the theme of faithfulness to Yahweh is found to be dominant. For instance, the two hymns that

53. The Rule of Plot enjoins a reading of the narrative that attends to the emplotted sequence of events revealing the moral framework of the story; by the Rule of Interaction, the interpreter examines the interpersonal transactions of the actants in the narrative to discern the projected world of the pericope.

54. In the choice of this canonical text for analysis, the following Rules of Secondary Genre are heeded: Rule of Completion (that respects the final form of the text); Rule of Exclusivity (that permits interpretation only of canonical texts); Rule of Applicability (that bids the interpreter heed all of Scripture and seek its application for all); and Rule of Substantiality (that recognizes the momentous nature of the content of Scripture).

bracket 1–2 Samuel (1 Sam. 2.1-10, Hannah's song; and 2 Sam. 22.1–23.7, the concluding hymn of David) emphasize this key principle of the world in front of the text: in both, Yahweh is exalted for his exploits and his excellence; the blissful lot of the faithful is extolled, while dire consequences are predicted for unfaithfulness. This characterization of God implicitly affirms that the one who rewards faithfulness with blessing must be trusted; the one who repays unfaithfulness with retribution must be feared (the operation of the two Rules of Hymnody).[55] As 2 Samuel 11 is exposited, these foundational assertions of who God is and what he expects from his people (faithfulness) will also undergird the sermon. Respecting the broader context of the pericope, the theologian-homiletician must attend to these larger themes as well, even though the sermonic undertaking focuses upon a narrower text.

Second Samuel 10–12 is structured by the framework of the Ammonite War that forms an *inclusio* for this section; it is within this plot enclosure that the shocking story of David is planted. The phrase וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵן ('now it happened afterwards') begins both 2 Samuel 10 and the next section in 2 Samuel 13, isolating chapters 10–12 as a unit. The curtain falls on the narrative of 2 Samuel 10–12 with an obvious closure at 12.31 – 'then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem' – marking an end to the hostilities, as victor and army return in triumph to the capital. Though 2 Samuel 10–12 forms an integral narrative unit and part of a larger whole that spans chapters 9–20, for the purposes of this analysis the focus will be upon the specific pericope dealing with David's adultery and the murder of Uriah (11.1-27; the prophet Nathan's subsequent denunciation of David's unfaithfulness to God, in 2 Samuel 12, was considered separately in Chapter 2).

A striking feature of the opening episode of the narrative (2 Sam. 11.1-5) is the recurrence of the verb שׁלח ('to send'). Altogether in 2 Samuel 10–12, this term appears twenty-three times, while in the larger unit of 2 Samuel 9–20, it is utilized forty-four times; only thirteen instances occur in the rest of 2 Samuel. By the Rule of Congruence, the complementarity of the various parts of the canonical text points to the intentional inclusion of this conspicuous detail: the focused use of the term is clearly significant. For the most part, it is the king who does all the sending. This repeated element, then, appears to be a motif indicating regal power and authority, as David, supreme in his kingdom, sends people hither and thither; they all jump to do his bidding. The theologian-homiletician could therefore conceivably paint, in the sermon, the picture of a potentate abusing his power in the service of his immoral sensual desires. The

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55. The Rule of Portrayal calls for an examination of how God is depicted in the hymnic text, and the Rule of Perspective urges the interpreter to seek the direction offered by the pericope on how the complexities and intricacies of daily life ought to be viewed, in the light of how God has been portrayed.

fateful sending, however, occurs when David decides to 'send' for Bathsheba (11.4), signalling the start of an uncontrolled downward spiral.[56]

The employment of the Rule of Plot reveals the thrust of the narrative and lays down an ethical framework upon which the narrative is constructed, a thrust that the sermon must not neglect. To appease his incontinent fleshly appetites, the king was abusing his power; indeed, this was power that was not inherently his, but that had been granted him in the first place. Yahweh, exercising his sovereignty, had chosen David from being a 'nobody', to replace a predecessor who had himself been warped by his own fantasies of omnipotence. David, exercising *his* 'sovereignty', had chosen to have his own way, not God's. The Rule of Interaction points to the conflict that is thereby generated between the two regents, divine and human. Such a conflict, developed further in the pericope, eventually forms a significant part of the theology of the text (and potentially of the sermon as well), portraying what readers and hearers should eschew at all costs. In the world projected by the pericope, a divine–human conflict has no place; instead faithful obedience and allegiance to God are the priorities to which believers are called to be aligned. The world in front of the text is gradually assuming shape as the Rules of Genre are employed; the interpreter is progressively discerning the various aspects of that world, the pericopal theology.

The Rules of Singularity and Congruence beckon the homiletician to attend to the similar theme of fidelity that is constantly in the background of the larger context of 1–2 Samuel: God's commission of his human agents entails, on their part, the responsibility to be faithful in their respective offices to the divine sovereign who appointed them. This principle was concretely (mis)represented in the lives of the two kings, Saul and David, whose individual dramas unfolded in 1 Samuel 13–2 Samuel 24. The first turned out to be unfaithful and, as a result, the Holy Spirit departed from him to come upon faithful David who then

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56. John I. Lawlor, 'Theology and Art in the Narrative of the Ammonite War (2 Samuel 10–12)', *GTJ* 3 (1982), pp. 193–205 (195–6); Uriel Simon, 'The Poor Man's Ewe-Lamb: An Example of a Juridical Parable', *Bib* 48 (1967), pp. 207–42 (209). Bailey considers the ascription of the verb שׁלח to Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11.5) significant; apparently she wielded some authority as well. He notes that the only other women within Deuteronomic History who are subjects of this verb all exert influence of some sort (Rahab helps the Israelite spies escape, Josh 2.21; Deborah summons Barak to battle, Judg. 4.6; Delilah invites the Philistines to capture Samson, Judg. 16.18; and Jezebel plots against Elijah and Naboth, 1 Kgs 19.2; 21.8). The Rule of Singularity (seeing the canon as a single metanarrative) and the Rule of Intertextuality (respecting canonical citations and allusions) are thereby attended to in this reading. In addition, the threefold verb pattern of David's actions in 2 Sam. 11.2 and 11.3 is mirrored by a parallel array of three verbs with Bathsheba as subject in 11.5. Similarly, both David and Bathsheba are allotted two verbs each in 11.27. Some complicity on Bathsheba's part is perhaps being implied by the depiction of her actions in congruence with those of David (Randall C. Bailey, *David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10–12* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1990], pp. 85–8, 99).

became Israel's anointed king (1 Sam. 16.13-14). The ark was subsequently returned to the nation, and blessing upon the land ensued (2 Samuel 6–8) – the projected world's principle of reward for faithfulness. But those halcyon days were not to last; Saul's flawed performance would not serve as a warning to David. Indeed, the catastrophic consequences of David's own subsequent transgressions would prove the principle of divine recompense for unfaithfulness. Whereas 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 8 lauds David's character and rule, 2 Samuel 9–20 laments its corruption and collapse – the regrettable, but not unexpected, consequence of the earthly king's infidelity towards the one who is truly king.[57] These principles of the projected world will doubtless make their appearance in the sermon, as the theologian-homiletician prepares to focus on the specifics of the pericope.

Though the presence of Yahweh is, undoubtedly, an established feature of biblical narrative by the Rule of Interaction (the Rule of Substantiality, attributing to Scripture a profundity of content, also recognizes the omnipresence of deity), the major interpersonal dealings in 2 Samuel 11 are between David and Uriah.[58] The Rule of Interaction is used to advantage here by the homiletician as further aspects of plot and conflict are unveiled. Uriah now becomes the subject of David's 'sending' (שׁלח, three times in 11.6; also see 11.12, 14), another victim of the king's power play, as David attempts to conceal his act of adultery.[59] Rather than taking Bathsheba for himself the moment she conceived, and immediately seeing to it that Uriah was disposed of, David concentrates, instead, on painting this elaborate façade of a paternity switch (it consumes a third of the chapter, 11.6-13). Clearly, his indulgence had been nothing more than a one-night stand to satisfy his own pleasures, a tryst that went awry. Engaged now in an ego-driven cover-up to defend his own name, he was more than willing to denigrate God's name in the process (12.9-14). The Rule of Interaction emphasizes David's selfish transactions with Uriah (and with Bathsheba who belonged to Uriah), callously undertaken and with an utter disregard for

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57. The result of David's unfaithfulness was the dissipation of his authority, both over family and over nation, and attendant discord at home and disorder in the land. David's adultery and murder consumes significant textual space (2 Samuel 10–12), denoting its essential status as the *fons et origo* of the subsequent complications: incest, fratricide, rebellion and civil war (2 Samuel 13–20).

58. Bathsheba does not utter a word in the entire chapter; Joab and his messenger simply round out the story as David's agents. For God as a character, see below.

59. The leitmotif of שׁלח resurfaces in 2 Samuel 13 as well. It is David who *sends* Tamar to Amnon (13.7; she is the victim in an illicit sexual encounter); and it is he who *sends* Amnon with Absalom (13.27; Amnon is killed). In distinction to 2 Samuel 11, where David sends for the victims of his predatory actions, in 2 Samuel 13 he unwittingly sends his own children as victims, to have visited upon them the evils he perpetrated upon Bathsheba and Uriah (James S. Ackerman, 'Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2', *JBL* 109 [1990], pp. 41–64 [48–9]).

consequences.[60] This is clearly not what God expects from his chosen; neither is the world in front of the text one that condones such odious behaviour – the shameless flaunting of power and the total contempt for the victims of abuse. This *negative* image of the projected world serves the homiletician well in the move towards praxis: already it is apparent what must be avoided by contemporary auditors who would be faithful toward God.

Markedly different are the reciprocal dealings of Uriah with David. Significant contrasts emerge between the Jewish king and the Hittite warrior as the narrative negotiates its nuanced turns. The Rule of Plot exposes the pungent irony. Uriah, at the battlefront with the army, was engaged in war; David, at home, was engaged in illicit pleasure, lying (שׁכב) with another man's wife (11.4). Uriah refused to succumb to the joys of rest and relaxation at home while his compatriots (and the ark) were encamping on open ground. This loyal soldier, instead, chose to lie (שׁכב) at the door of the king's house (11.9), rather than go home to lie (שׁכב) with his wife (11.11), as David was manipulating him to do. Later, even while inebriated, Uriah opted to 'lie' (שׁכב) with the servants of the king (11.13). Here, then, was the king of Israel, unfaithful and disloyal; deliberately and wilfully he had engaged in adultery with the spouse of one of his warriors, while those dedicated fighters, exemplified by the non-Israelite Uriah, were sacrificing themselves for their king and nation.[61] The Rule of Plot displays besotted Uriah emerging more faithful to Yahweh, liege and comrades, than does the sober and scheming David. Uriah is driven by loyalty, abstinence and self-sacrifice; David's actions, in contrast, are marked by disloyalty, indulgence and self-interest. Through the depiction of the contrast between the two, the faithful soldier is requisitioned as a foil for the unfaithful king. The overarching moral fabric of 1–2 Samuel – commending faithfulness and condemning unfaithfulness – is discernible in this particular portrayal of the protagonists of 2 Samuel 11. This framework, which helps construct the theology of the pericope, beckons the attention of the homiletician time and again in this narrative. The sermon cannot but be propelled along the trajectory that this theme sets up. What does it mean to be faithful to God, especially in the station of one whose resources, power and reputation are considerable?

In the narrative background of 1–2 Samuel, the Rule of Primacy points to a positive model in one greater than King David.[62] Integral to the broader account and the world it projects is a perceptible focus upon the eschatological reign of the anointed one of Yahweh; the Nathan Oracle and its promise of an everlasting kingdom and a glorious future were explored in Chapter 2. While the Davidic line would ultimately lose the throne with the fall of Jerusalem,

60. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 210.
61. Lawlor, 'Theology and Art in the Narrative of the Ammonite War', p. 198.
62. The Rule of Primacy draws attention to the Christotelic orientation of biblical texts.

the fulfilment of an eternal kingdom would come to fruition with Jesus Christ, the king of the eschaton who would never be unfaithful (Heb. 3.5-6). This righteous king, whom the OT adumbrates in this very corpus (2 Sam. 7.12-16), and whom the NT calls in its very first verse 'the Son of David' (Mt. 1.1), would be a marked contrast to his eponymous ancestor, flawed and fallible. The Messiah alone would perfectly exemplify faithfulness to Yahweh.[63] Any sermon fashioned from this pericope must therefore proffer Christ as the paragon of fidelity. This grand theme of the faithfulness of the coming king forms the constant, albeit latent, background of the sorry story of 2 Samuel 11 (the application of the Rules of Singularity, Organization, Congruence, Sequentiality and Primacy). It must be remembered that, in the broad context of 1–2 Samuel, it was not only the nation's kings who were unfaithful. Even before the regents manifested their infidelity, the people, in calling for a monarchy, had themselves rejected Yahweh (1 Sam. 8.7). Therefore, for ruler and ruled – both unfaithful to the divine sovereign – the faithfulness of Christ serves as the model of fidelity to God.[64] Inhabitation of the world this pericope projects is clearly part of what it means to be Christlike.

The narrative plot thickens as Uriah refuses to succumb to David's stratagems. Evil is perpetrated upon evil, and David has Uriah killed in the frontlines of the ongoing war – another selfish 'interaction' with the soldier. David's fornication under cover of darkness ('evening', 2 Sam. 11.2) had now become cold-blooded murder in daylight ('morning', 11.14). Wanton sexual morals, rooted in base self-indulgence, had culminated in a tyrannical unconcern for the wounded 'third-party'. Uriah was heartlessly slaughtered, the culmination of an unbroken sequence of escalating malignity. Indeed, this last act succeeds in getting not just one man killed, but many, some of them the nation's best warriors ('valiant men', 11.16). By the Rule of Plot the irony of the narrative is again made palpable. The very loyalty of Uriah that had frustrated the king's machinations in the previous section was itself the instrument of this dedicated soldier's murder: Uriah faithfully bears the letter carrying his own death sentence, and his faithfulness

63. Significant is the fact that the elements associated with kingship as the monarchy was established in 1 Samuel – sovereign choice, divine anointing and Spirit gifting, and mighty deeds – reappear again together only in the ministry of Jesus Christ (all three are co-located in Mark 1). For Saul these regal elements are found in 1 Sam. 9.16; 10.1-13; and 11–15. For David, they occur in 16.1, 16.13; and 17.1-58. See William J. Dumbrell, 'The Content and Significance of the Books of Samuel: Their Place and Purpose within the Former Prophets', *JETS* 33 (1990), pp. 49–62 (54–5).

64. The Rule of Singularity sees the canon as an integral whole; the Rule of Organization respects the chronological arrangement of books within the canon; the Rule of Congruence recognizes the coherence of the discrete parts of the canon; the Rule of Sequentiality considers the temporal sequence of revelation in the canon. Together these rules integrate and interpret the canonical data as depicting Christ, who alone fulfilled all the demands of the Father in the power of the Spirit (the Rule of Primacy).

to his king, army and nation gets him killed on the battlefront.[65] Even after he is
disposed of, the storyteller does not allow Uriah to vanish from the narrative: in
11.26, the awkward recurrence of that soldier's name in 'the wife of Uriah' and
'Uriah her husband', and the repeated assertion in the same verse of Bathsheba's
marital status (אִשָּׁה and בַּעְלָהּ, 'her husband') keep the focus unwaveringly upon
the innocent victim of David's egregious actions.[66] The Rule of Plot helps the
homiletician uncover the moral structure reinforcing this section of the story.
He who ought to have been, as Yahweh's earthly representative, the guardian of
the people's rights and the upholder of their justice, murders his loyal servant
and causes the death of several other faithful soldiers. The condemnation of
David's deeds is almost palpable; unfaithfulness to Yahweh could not be more
starkly depicted, and the attendant theology of the pericope could hardly be more
explicit. The extremes to which one will go to protect one's own name will
surely be a grim reminder in the sermon of the dangers inherent in such an utterly
self-focused and ego-serving abuse of God-given responsibilities. The Rules of
Genre have thus furthered the homiletician's task by displaying cumulatively,
facet by facet, the pericopal theology.

In light of the theology of 1–2 Samuel, one would expect this evil perpe-
trated by David to incur the wrath of Yahweh. However, quite strikingly, the
narrative has thus far failed to make any mention of the divine sovereign. As the
sin increases, so does the suspense – when will Yahweh intervene? That there is
no explicit interaction between God and the human actants within the pericope,
does not, of course, imply the absence of God as a character; unique to biblical
narrative is an assumption of the constant presence of God permeating its every
episode, whether such ubiquity of deity is expressed or not (the Rule of Interac-
tion and the Rule of Substantiality).

At last, the final character in the dramatis personæ makes his appearance –
Yahweh intervenes in 11.27b. Following right after David has just cavalierly
remarked to Joab (through a messenger, 11.25), 'Do not let this thing be evil
in your eyes' (בְּעֵינֶיךָ), the impact of Yahweh's riposte here could not be more
striking. In the narrator's voice, divine disapprobation is registered in no uncer-
tain terms (11.27b): 'But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of
Yahweh' (בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה). There appears to have been a major discrepancy between
what David was 'seeing' and what Yahweh was 'seeing'. Already the larger
plot had presented the symptoms of David's ophthalmic deficits: in contrast
the Ammonites who saw firsthand the (mis)fortunes of war (10.6, 14, 15, 19),

65. J.P. Fokkelman, *King David (II Sam. 9–20 & I Kings 1–2)* (vol. 1 of *Narrative Art and
Poetry in the Books of Samuel*; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1981), p. 60.

66. The child that is born to this illicit union is also referred to as 'the child that *Uriah's widow*
bore' (2 Sam. 12.15). Uriah reappears at the conclusion of the book as well (in 23.39). The nar-
rator does not intend that the reader forget this shocking episode and, to the very end, this brazen
malfeasance blacklists David.

David had not seen; he had only heard, secondhand, the news from the front (10.5, 7, 17).[67] God and the king were not seeing eye to eye: what David considered 'not evil' was being expressly condemned as 'evil' by Yahweh. For the development of pericopal theology, this is an essential concept, a definite hint to the homiletician regarding the priorities of the projected world that must be displayed in the sermon: faithfulness to God involves recognizing evil for what it is, seeing sin as God does, and fleeing from such reprehensible behaviour – unfaithfulness. David, instead, had despised God's word and denigrated God's name (12.9, 14).

The conflict between David and God reaches its zenith at this juncture. Resolution is demanded by the Rule of Interaction: who would emerge victorious? If David imagined that God was nowhere present, he was deluding himself – God is one character that cannot be written out of the narrative script. Not only was Yahweh implicitly present as David went about his nefarious activities, but Yahweh had also seen! There is no deed so shrouded in darkness that it will be invisible to an all-seeing, omnipresent God. As if to rectify any misconception about the presence of deity on stage, from this point onwards, Yahweh, 'absent' in the previous scenes, becomes almost tangible: the Tetragrammaton occurs thirteen times in 2 Samuel 12, the section that details the judgement, sentence and punishment of the king. A reading of the text by the Rule of Substantiality (asserting that the matter of a biblical text is of moment and import – God himself) concurs with this observation of God's presence. He himself would now take action to bring justice and closure to this sinister episode; punishment was now inevitable. The final verse of the pericope, 11.27, turns out to be the focal point of the chiastic structure of 2 Samuel 10–12, emphasizing the crux of the narrative – what God considered 'evil in his eyes'.

10.1-19	*A* War – partial victory over the Ammonites
11.1-5	*B* Sin; Bathsheba conceives
11.6-13	*C* Concealment of David's sin
11.14-27a	*D* Murder of the innocent Uriah
11.27b	*E* Evil in the eyes of Yahweh
12.1-6	*D'* Murder of the lamb
12.7-15a	*C'* Exposure of David's sin
12.15b-25	*B'* Death; Bathsheba conceives
12.26-31	*A'* War – complete victory over the Ammonites

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67. See Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (trans. Lenn J. Schramm; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 95. Such a coordinated reading, which sees a notable connection between these seemingly disparate details, respects the Rule of Congruence that asserts the complementarity of the various parts of the biblical texts to one another.

That the climax of the narrative has been reached in 11.27b is also indicated in the very next verse that has, for a change, Yahweh doing the sending (שׁלח), as Nathan is commissioned to play the prosecuting attorney (12.1). The tables had been turned! Resolution was forthcoming. The Rule of Interaction portrays a God who always sees; even when he is seemingly absent, this is a God whose presence is assured, whose eyesight never fails, whose judgement is sure. In the world in front of the text, the corollary to the priority of faithfulness to God is the principle that unfaithfulness will always get its just deserts. Therefore, in the movement from Scripture to sermon, this facet of the projected world must also be declared by the theologian-homiletician.

In summary, the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre help frame the segment of the world projected by the pericope, a world that reflects – negatively, in this narrative of 11.1-27 – the same theological elements projected by 1–2 Samuel as a whole. Positively, a world is projected that endorses God's right to reign over his people through his chosen representatives, underscoring, in turn, the priority of subjects remaining faithful to their divine ruler. In its depiction of God as one who sees and labels evil for what it is, the pericope also virtually guarantees that punishment for unfaithfulness will follow. Specifically, the plot points to one sovereignly chosen by God, who developed a crack in the foundation of his character – unrestrained sexual desire that became a runaway disaster accumulating evil upon evil, and that resulted in his disparaging God's word and dishonouring God's name (as Nathan's accusation specified in 2 Sam. 12.9-14). God's reputation was no longer the pre-eminent priority; instead it was unbridled passion and abusive power that reigned supreme. The subsequent drive to protect self-honour without an iota of repentance demonstrated a descent to the depths of depravity, culminating in murder. Instead of demonstrating loyalty to God, subordinates and nation, here was a leader disloyal to all. The consequences would be severe; unfaithfulness would not remain unpunished; its ramifications would echo across generational divides: a period of blessing ends and an inexorable decline begins.[68] The pericope is thus a negative model of what the world in front of the text demands. However, implicit in the pericope, as the Rule of Substantiality and Primacy contend, is also a positive model. The theme of the righteous reign of Christ overarches 1–2 Samuel: this one alone would be absolutely faithful to his God, his comrades and his community; he was the one who kept God's word and glorified his name, and who would 'lay down his life for his friends' (Jn 8.55; 15.31; 17.4, 26); he is the only one able to inhabit perfectly the world in front of the text. In other words, to inhabit that world is to be Christlike.

Considering the narrative in its broader context, the theology of the pericope (the segment of the world in front of this text) may be summarized both

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68. Forgiveness, though available, advanced by God and accepted by sinner, does not completely erase the consequences or the sentence of justice. Yet to the penitent and contrite, God offers restoration (as the events in 2 Samuel 12 prove).

negatively and positively: *Unfaithfulness to God, the true sovereign, negates blessing and promises punishment with tragic consequences for individual, family, community and society; such faithfulness as God demands – perfectly modelled by Christ, the Son of David, the righteous King – embraces an utmost regard for the word of God and the reputation of God, and is manifested in the restriction of sensual desires and in the reined exercise of power*. Borne by this world projected by the pericope is the implicit transhistorical intention that calls upon God's people everywhere to demonstrate faithfulness towards him in such matters as are dealt with in this text.

A key task of the homiletician in the move from text to praxis is the depiction, in the sermon, of this world in front of the text with its principles, priorities and practices – that is, pericopal theology. To be sure, the Rules of Genre need not be enunciated, nor do their actual operations need to be demonstrated, in the delivered sermon. However, the importance of elucidating the theology of the text cannot be underestimated: the Rules of Genre, as has been emphasized before, serve to focus the interpreter's attention upon the entity of pericopal theology. These rules are deployed for the analysis of the text with this particular end in view. Of note, in this analysis, almost all of the Rules of Genre were utilized in the derivation of the theology of 2 Sam. 11.1-27. It is only by discerning the pericopal theology that the theologian-homiletician can commence the final phase of the sermonic endeavour, the generation of valid application.[69]

As is evident in the analysis and summary of 2 Samuel 11, pericopal theology imparts to the textual particulars a significance that transcends their historical circumstances of origin. The semantic potency of a work of literary art, especially of one that is a classic and a concrete universal, causes it to go through a 'reversal', a movement from '*individual to universal* which constitutes the text's relevance' for its readers, rendering its significance perennial.[70] This is the function of the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre operating upon the concrete universal of a pericope, enabling the discovery of a universal theme (pericopal theology) from concrete particulars, and thereby permitting the appropriation of the work's perennial meaning into the lives of readers (i.e., application, for which, see below). Ultimately, 2 Sam. 11.1-27 (and, indeed, the entire Davidic saga in 1–2 Samuel) is more than a narrative about a historical personage, 'but about the highest values in the narrated David (as shown or as violated by him) which are the same as those of our own human existence'. This work suggests that the proposed world in front of the text – the theology of the pericope – is the background in which these 'highest values', the priorities, principles and practices operating in the projected world, are propounded for appropriation by those readers who allow the transhistorical intention of the pericope to be

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69. The next section deals with this aspect of interpretation. The derivation of application from this particular pericope (2 Samuel 11) will be considered there as well.

70. Fokkelman, *King David*, p. 421.

inscribed on their souls.[71] 'The David of the narrative is an artistic masterpiece of universal and transtemporal value and is a figure which through the reader's attention repeatedly rises up again in the Here and Now.' This was not merely history that was being written; the author was after 'psychagogy', adapting his material in such a way that the universal human value would be emphasized, allowing the past to flow over into the present.[72] It is, therefore, pericopal theology that mediates the ancient text's contemporary appropriation, and it is in such appropriation that that text becomes life in the one who reads.

Divine discourse projects a world in front of the text into which readers are called to enter. The same God who has thus discoursed yesterday is the same God of the Church today. It is in his presence, in the presence of one who is the same forever, that cultural dissonances and discrepancies between the times of the ancient text and those of the modern reader begin to fade in significance, and movement from text to praxis begins. Application can now be undertaken in the sermon: the people of God are urged to align their lives to the specificities of the world projected – the theology of the pericope – in order to accomplish covenant renewal. The final section of this chapter (and work) will therefore attend to application, the culmination of the homiletical endeavour.

Application

That theology involves praxis is undeniable. James 1.22-5 emphasizes the importance of application – 'prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves'; the one who applies the text is 'an effectual doer … blessed in what he does'. It is not enough to *know*; one must also *be*. Only in personal appropriation or application does the text accomplish its meaning; therefore, Gadamer could assert that application was an integral part of the hermeneutical process.[73] A response to the text from readers is thus essential, for

71. Borrowing from Socrates, Fokkelman notes that the goal of such a discourse written in the soul of the learner (γράφεται ἐν τῇ τοῦ μανθάνοντος ψυχή) is to provide guidance by means of words (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων) (Plato, *Phaedr.* 261a, 276a, 278a). This goal is achieved insofar as the 'soul-inscription' is appropriated/applied by the learner. The particularly local significance subsides, but without being lost, as it makes room for its 'universal human significance'. See Fokkelman, *King David*, pp. 423–4.

72. Fokkelman believes that the writers of such texts were aware of the transtemporal values embedded in their work – the transhistorical intention of texts awaiting appropriation by the reader (Fokkelman, *King David*, pp. 424–5).

73. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2nd rev. edn; trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Continuum, 2004), p. 307. 'Appropriation' was Ricoeur's translation of *Aneignung*. He notes that *aneignen* means to 'make one's own what was alien', the struggle to overcome distanciation. 'This goal is attained only insofar as interpretation actualizes the meaning of the text for the present reader' (*Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 85, 159). Also see Paul Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann', in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (trans. Peter McCormick; ed. Don Ihde; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 384–401 (392).

the segment of the world projected by the pericope (and its future-directed intention) beckons and awaits an answer. Indeed, the text demands to be appropriated in this fashion, for Scripture is not content with its claim to be merely a historic reality; rather, its projected world is 'destined for autocracy', and, unlike other worlds spun to enchant or flatter, this world seeks the readers' subjection. Overcoming their reality, it calls individuals to fit their own lives in accordance with it, to align their days with the *chronos* of God's world projected before the text, thereby themselves becoming 'elements in its structure of universal history'.[74] A text thus projecting the possibility of praxis is more than informing; it is potentially transforming, for application of pericopal theology aligns lives with God's will, effecting covenant renewal within the community of saints. 'We may reject it. We may say, It is nothing; this is imagination, madness, this "God". But we may not deny nor prevent our being led by the Bible "history" far out beyond what is elsewhere called history – into a new world, into the world of God.'[75] It is as auditors accede to the demands of the text, inhabiting the world in front of the text, that covenant renewal becomes successful in the ecclesial setting.

   Therefore, it is not enough to elucidate the theology of a text and the transhistorical intention therein; it is also incumbent upon the theologian-homiletician to approach, in each sermon, the intersection of that theology with the faith and practice of God's people – how exactly pericopal theology shapes and changes the lives of hearers. In the regular preaching of pericopes, the renewal of the covenant relationship between God and community is accomplished by a consistent, sequential projection of segments of the canonical world (pericopal theology) to which listeners are enjoined to orient themselves. The crucial nature of this transaction charges the preacher to generate, from theology, application that is valid, that is, exemplification, the specific response to be undertaken by hearers to the expounded pericope – what they must do to 'inhabit' its projected world. There is, thus, a twofold aspect to the overall homiletical undertaking: the exposition of the theology of the unit text, and the delineation of how the latter may be applied or appropriated in real life. The first move, from text to theology, draws meaning *from* the biblical text with authority; the second, from theology to praxis, directs meaning *to* the situations of listeners with relevance.[76] In so actualizing theol-

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74. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. Willard R. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 14–15. Also see Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 60.

75. Karl Barth, 'The Strange New World Within the Bible', in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (trans. Douglas Horton; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), pp. 28–50 (37). 'It is not out of order for theology to ask of preaching, What ultimate vision is held before us?' (Craddock, *Preaching*, p. 49).

76. 'The honest rhetorician therefore has two things in mind: a vision of how matters should go ideally and ethically and a consideration of the special circumstances of his auditors. Toward both of these he has a responsibility' (Weaver, *Language Is Sermonic*, p. 211).

ogy in the latter move into the discrete and specific circumstances of believers, the values of the cosmos are gradually subverted and undermined, and those of God's world are progressively established in the life of the community: covenant renewal is achieved. This is part of what it means to acknowledge, 'Thy kingdom come'.[77] The interpretive advance from pericopal theology to exemplification will be the focus of the remainder of Chapter 4. The discussion of this phase of the sermonic move from text to praxis will conclude the hermeneutics–homiletics dialogue.

Pericopal theology to exemplification

From the early days of the Church, Scripture was envisaged as a single, universal, but unfinished, story, the continuing relevance of which was to be explicated by the theologian-homiletician. A reading of Scripture by the Rule of Applicability countenances such an understanding of the contemporaneity of the ancient text. The language of the Bible enables a whole field of possible future meanings such that applications falling within that specific terrain of the theology of the pericope may be considered legitimate extensions of the meaning of that pericope, the continuation of the biblical story into the life of the current community of believers.[78] It is this layered sense of Scriptural meaning – original textual sense, theology of the pericope bearing a transhistorical intention and exemplifications (the tripartite scheme of meaning introduced in Chapter 1) – that enables the canon to be applied in later circumstances by its readers, giving it prescriptivity, perenniality and plurality of meaning. The concern of interpreters, both ancient and modern, has never simply been the reconstruction of the *Sitz im Leben* of the text but also the elucidation of its *Sitz in unserem Leben*, its situation in *our* life, in the situation of current readers of the text and hearers of the sermon. This is the process of generating valid application, a recontextualization of pericopal theology into the faith and practice of the community of God. Theology, Vanhoozer notes perceptively, 'is less a matter of *in*doctrination than it is of *ex*doctrination: the living out of Christian teaching'.[79]

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77. The world projected in front of the text comprises strategies for believers to be Christlike in their own contemporary situations. The life of Christ alone perfectly fits the world projected in front of the text and perfectly conforms to the theology of the pericope. The world in front of the text may, therefore, be considered a theologically thick description of Jesus Christ, the one who fulfilled the Father's will and the demands of the projected world. Thus, if the canon is faith's *norm*, then Christ is faith's *form*. Appropriating the theology of scriptural pericopes and indwelling the projected world is to participate in the drama of God's economy by which the Holy Spirit conforms readers to the image of Christ. See Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, p. 229.

78. The Rule of Substantiality also affirms the critical importance of this ongoing narrative for every generation of the Church.

79. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, p. 400. Also see N.T. Wright, 'How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?' *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991), pp. 7–32 (27–8); David C. Steinmetz, 'The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis', *ThTo* 37 (1980), pp. 27–38 (32); and Brian E. Daley, 'Is Patristic

The second half of the interpretive move – from theology to praxis, from the universal back to the concreteness of auditors' lives – is rendered faithful to the text insofar as the particular exemplification generated is within the boundaries of the theology of the pericope (and the transhistorical intention it bears), the essential intermediary between inscription and application. Application, while beholden to the text, however, is not an attempt to repeat what is in the text or to reiterate the historical event that stands behind it. 'Rather, creativity must be involved as we seek to mediate, translate, interpret its meaning – the meaning in front of the text – into our own horizon.'[80] This is a call for application that is relevant to the contemporary community of hearers. *Fidelity* to what has gone on before is essential, for the Church remains under the authority of the text of Scripture and seeks to be faithful to it in its application. This is the restraint imposed by pericopal theology that is grounded firmly upon the text and derived therefrom. In contrast, *novelty* is also called for in the fresh context of current auditors, as the Church recontextualizes an ancient text to its own modern setting. This is the release afforded, in that there is liberty to render pericopal theology and its transhistorical intention into application that is relevant to the particularities of the hearers' circumstances. Fidelity and novelty are, thus, at the heart of exemplification, endowing it with both authority and relevance.

Verbatim and unimaginative imitation of what transpired in the previous acts of the drama is inadequate and inappropriate in the new context of the present troupe of performers.[81] Instead, a novel reading of the unchanged (and unchangeable) text has to occur in a changed context in order to maintain fidelity to the normative text – 'a kind of relativism, to be sure, but one that *establishes* rather than undermines biblical authority'. For instance, to disregard the change in the context of the text '2/12/1991' written in the UK, but read in the USA, would thoroughly mislead the reader: that sequence of digits, depending on one's location, could either stand for 2 December 1991 or 12 February 1991. In America, the British text '2/12/1991' must be read as '12/2/1991' in order for the reading

Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms', in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (eds Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 69–88 (77–8).

80. David Tracy, 'Creativity in the Interpretation of Religion: The Question of Radical Pluralism', *NLH* 15 (1984), pp. 289–309 (298); also see Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), p. 159, who advocates preachers exhibit creativity that is constrained by rigorous exegesis.

81. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, pp. 260–1. In Vanhoozer's concept of the theo-dramatic rendition of the script (Scripture), the Father is the playwright and producer of the play, the Son the principal actor and the Holy Spirit the director. Pastors and homileticians, and elders and Church leaders are assistant directors, with the theologian taking the role of the dramaturge, a technical adviser to the dramatic company that is the Church, the troupe of actors (106, 244, 247).

to remain faithful to the originary transhistorical intention ('the second day
of the twelfth month of the year 1991 CE'). Obviously, classic and normative
texts cannot themselves be altered, but readings can and should be changed, to
maintain fidelity to the thrust of the original utterance. Such a reading is not an
option; it is necessary *in order that* the interpretation may remain faithful to the
original in a new reading context.[82]

   As the end of the Gospels and the beginning of Acts make clear (Mt. 28.18-
20; Acts 1.8), God desires to involve his people in the ongoing drama of cre-
ation and redemption. Believers are to undertake their own 'improvisations'
that demonstrate faithfulness to the past and newness towards the future – not
the aping of deeds once done, nor the repetition of words once uttered, but a
rearticulation and representation of the ongoing saga with fidelity and novelty.
The entire operation, from text to theology and from theology to praxis, is the
task of the Church in every age, and pericopal theology is the authoritative
guide for this faithful-yet-new performance of the text in unprecedented situ-
ations. It is this theology that ensures the bidirectional congruity in this move
towards exemplification: congruity to the word of Scripture that maintains the
authority of the text (fidelity), and congruity to the world of the hearer that
manifests the relevance of the text (novelty).

   Fidelity in this transaction involves sustaining the identity of exemplifications
with the original textual sense. As was noted in Chapter 1, it is the preservation
of *ipse*-identity between text and exemplifications that credits the latter with
fidelity. While maintenance of *idem*-identity calls only for slavish imitation,
ipse-identity calls for skilful improvisation. One is passive, the other demands
training and a developed sensibility for what is fitting in a given situation, a
transaction best directed, in biblical exposition, by those who 'by practice have
their senses trained to discern good and evil' (Heb. 5.14). It requires of the
theologian-homiletician attentiveness to new contexts of interpretation, sen-
sitivity to the unfolding continuities of the work, and responsibility for, and
accountability to, the particular community of co-performers, fellow-improvis-
ers, and auditors.[83] However, the creativity of the expositor in generating such
exemplifications must be exercised with due respect for the original work, lest
'[t]he license to create-to-preserve quickly becomes indistinguishable from the
license simply to create'.[84] Exemplification is not an act of creation *ex nihilo*,

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82. See Lawrence Lessig, 'The Limits of Lieber', *Cardozo L. Rev.* 16 (1995), pp. 2249–72
(2258, 2260, 2262); idem, 'Fidelity in Translation', *Texas L. Rev.* 71 (1992–93), pp. 1165–1268
(1170); and idem, 'Fidelity and Constraint', *Fordham L. Rev.* 65 (1996–97), pp. 1365–1434
(1370).

83. Titus 2.1 appropriately urges that a Church leader is to 'speak what is fitting for sound
doctrine'. In the same vein, Thucydides lauded Themistocles: '[He] was of all men the best able
to extemporize the right thing to be done' (αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὰ δέοντα) – improvisation upon
principle (*History* 1.138.3).

84. Lessig, 'Fidelity in Translation', p. 1206. Utilizing the same Ricoeurian concept of *ipse-*

but rather a *re*creation, an application of the text to the fresh context of current hearers. Scripture is the plenary source, the authoritative playbook of action, with each pericope contributing specific instructions for the 'performance' of the segment of the canonical world it projects. Valid exemplification is generated from the text by a reading characterized by fidelity and novelty. For the maintenance of fidelity and novelty, pericopal theology is critical; it is this intermediary that enables the sermon to be both authoritative and relevant, as the preacher moves from text to praxis.

In sum, the task of the theologian-homiletician is to improvise, delving into the past and suggesting in the present how the past may be creatively exemplified in the future. Keith Johnstone's analogy is apt: 'The improviser has to be like a man walking backwards.'[85] This is one who, with eyes on the past, must be guided by it – the canonical Scriptures. Yet the improviser, it must be remembered, is also headed 'forwards', away from the past of the text, transposing it into the future of hearers. Thus the situation of the auditors must also be an important parameter that governs the activities of the interpreter. When the same text is 'performed' in different contexts to produce discrete improvisations on the same theme, the same pericopal theology is brought to bear upon those different reading situations in order to generate faithful applications, exemplifications that are relevant to each individual context. Such exemplifications, though administered by the same theology, may – and, indeed, should – look different, for each reader, hearer, congregation and context is different. However, insofar as these varied applications fall within the bounds of the same pericopal theology, they are but instances of a single type, exemplifications of a single transhistorical intention, and therefore all such improvisations remain faithful to the text.[86]

identity, Vanhoozer characterizes these improvisations as 'creative fidelity' or 'ruled spontaneity' (*Drama of Doctrine*, pp. 128–9). Also see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 155–6.

85. Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 116.

86. For an insightful analysis of improvisation in jazz, with clear parallels for the present discussion, see James O. Young and Carl Matheson, 'The Metaphysics of Jazz', *J Aes Art Crit* 58 (2000), pp. 125–33. Musicians performing this genre recognize 'jazz standards' as providing instructions for improvising. Such operations are not *totally* spontaneous for, to be an instance of a jazz standard, the performance has to be in accord with a given set of guidelines embodied by the standard. Young and Matheson discuss what they call the 'canonical model' of such tacit rules that constitute a standard: introduction, head (statement of the melody), improvisations, recapitulation of the head and ending. According to the model, two jazz performances are instances of the same standard if their heads utilize the same melody and their improvisations are grounded on the chord patterns of the head ('theology'? the 'transhistorical intention' it bears?), while yet being obviously very different from each other. Indeed, many of these performances are based on *The Real Book*, a set of unauthorized, but ubiquitous, volumes (there are recent legal versions as well [3 vols; Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006]), scoring the melody and chord changes of an exhaustive listing of jazz standards. All paginated identically (chapter and verse?) and coming in

To arrive at praxis that is faithful to text and relevant to auditors is the goal of the homiletical undertaking. The burden of the theologian-homiletician is, therefore, to move validly from Scripture to sermon, enabling the community of God to align itself to the world in front of the text and thus enact covenant renewal.

Generating exemplifications

This notion of exemplification pertains not only to religious literature but to legal literature as well, ancient texts that homiletician and jurist seek to apply to their contemporary eras. There is much that may be learned by comparing theological and legal hermeneutics, for the tasks of practitioners in both fields are conceptually parallel. Therefore, before illustrating the derivation of exemplifications from the theology of specific pericopes, exemplification in judicial interpretation will be briefly surveyed.

Exemplification in legal hermeneutics

It has been observed that interpretation of legal texts, such as the *US Constitution*, is 'bringing into the present a text of the past', a straddling of two worlds simultaneously.[87] The continuing life of a binding legal or religious classic depends on ongoing recontextualization in new circumstances. Like the Scriptures, a constitution, too, is 'intended to endure for ages to come, and, consequently, to be adapted to the various *crises* of human affairs'.[88] The similarity between the hermeneutics of law and Scripture are considerable: both judge and preacher are hermeneuts handling classic texts; both mediate those texts for their hearers and readers; and the literature of both fields exists to be actualized in specific situations in subsequent time, one to serve the execution of justice through pronouncing verdicts, the other to serve the exercise of faith through preaching sermons. Generating exemplifications is the task of the judge who moves from the text of law to judicial philosophy and thence to the adjudication of the case currently at the bar; the homiletician, this work proposes,

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editions to suit B♭, E♭ and C instruments (multiple translations/versions?), these tomes, in a sense, form the 'canon' of jazz.

87. James Boyd White, 'Judicial Criticism', in *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader* (eds Sanford Levinson and Steven Mailloux; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 393–410 (403).

88. US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, *McCulloch* v. *The State of Maryland*, US Reports 17 (4 Wheaton) (1819): 316–437 (415). 'They are not ephemeral enactments, designed to meet passing occasions. They are, to use the words of Chief Justice Marshall, "designed to approach immortality as nearly as human institutions can approach it" … In the application of a constitution, therefore, our contemplation cannot be only of what has been but of what may be' (US Supreme Court Justice Joseph McKenna, *Weems* v. *United States*, US Reports 217 [1910]: 349–413 (373); the citation of Chief Justice Marshall is from *Cohens* v. *Virginia*, US Reports 19 [1821]: 264–448 [387]).

generates exemplifications similarly by moving from the pericope of Scripture to theology before arriving at application for the congregation currently in the pews.[89] 'This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly – i.e., according to the claim it makes – must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way', the novelty of interpretation that, at the same time, maintains fidelity to the text.[90] Of particular interest, then, is this congruence between exemplifications in legal and scriptural interpretation.

Legal literature is replete with examples of such a movement from original textual sense through transhistorical intention to future exemplification. The passage of time introduces new conditions and contingencies and, therefore, legal classics are constructed (and construed) to be perennially relevant. Textual distanciation renders necessary the movement to generate future exemplifications with validity in situations and circumstances distant from, and unforeseen at, the event of the original inscription. For instance, the *US Constitution* empowers Congress '[t]o raise and support armies', '[t]o provide and maintain a navy' and '[t]o make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces' (Article I, ¶8, clauses 12 and 13). As written, this edict is silent about any support for an air force. However, despite the absence of any explicit reference in the *US Constitution* to this branch of the armed forces, the US government continues to raise and support, provide and maintain, govern and regulate an air force. Presumably, the concrete terms 'army' and 'navy' in that late eighteenth-century document were comprehensive universals signifying the broad categories they attempted to particularize, namely, all manner of national defence undertakings. The transhistorical and pragmatic intention of the declaration was, clearly, to designate any conceivable military force as worthy of establishment and maintenance by Congress; such an intention would necessarily include an air force and, potentially, even a space force as future exemplifications.[91] An interpretation that moves in this fashion from

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89. Upon the jurist falls 'the task of translating the majestic generalities of the Bill of Rights [a component of the *US Constitution*], conceived as part of the pattern of liberal government in the eighteenth century, into concrete restraints on officials dealing with the problems of the twentieth century' (US Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, *West Virginia State Board of Education et al.* v. *Barnette et al.*, US Reports 319 [1942]: 624–71 [639]). Likewise, upon the theologian-homiletician is the onus of deriving application from the ancient text of Scripture for contemporary auditors of the sermon who have to struggle with real-life issues of their current day.

90. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 307–8, 325–6, 328. Also see Frederick Schauer, 'An Essay on Constitutional Language', in *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader* (eds Sanford Levinson and Steven Mailloux; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 133–53 (137–8, 141–3).

91. See Lessig, 'Fidelity and Constraint', pp. 1376–77. Within such a transhistorical intention, perhaps even a robotic force could be imagined as a valid application (exemplification)!

original textual sense to exemplification via transhistorical intention is essential for the interpretation of a distanciated text, especially one that falls into the category of the classic. No canonical corpus can be expected to bear the burden of explicitly expressing *all* possible future exemplifications: 'A constitution, to contain an accurate detail of all the subdivisions of which its great powers will admit, and of all the means by which they may be carried into execution, would partake of the prolixity of a legal code, and could scarcely be embraced by the human mind'.[92] In the Christian canon, it is the theology of the pericope (and the transhistorical intention it carries) that implicitly encompasses every legitimate option of exemplification and thus oversees what may be considered faithful to the particular portion of Scripture exposited in the ecclesial setting. The original words of such texts as the *US Constitution* or the Bible establish the direction of meaning of what is written therein, and this trajectory functions as the standard by which the validity of all subsequent interpretive endeavours must be gauged.[93] For biblical hermeneutics the trajectory of the pericope is captured in its theology which thereby becomes the arbiter of the legitimacy of the praxis proclaimed and preached by the theologian-homiletician.

Exemplification in theological hermeneutics
The final homiletical move, from theology to praxis, is the culmination of the preacher's undertaking that began as an encounter with a pericope of Scripture in an ecclesial context. Whereas the first interpretive movement (*theological*: text to pericopal theology) takes the hermeneut from the concrete to the universal, the second movement (*homiletical*: pericopal theology to praxis) brings the interpreter back to the concrete. In this latter stage, the particular cares of the day are to be diligently considered by the theologian-homiletician, as the universal is now couched in the concrete, the transhistorical in the timely context of the hearers. Such a move is, in effect, a return to the lingua franca, '[f]or what else is good preaching but vernacular theology?' This is the re-expression of an ancient text in the language and circumstances of contemporary time, without which the antiquarian interest is simply a futile endeavour 'to massage the dead'.[94] The theologian-homiletician must grap-

92. Marshall, *McCulloch* v. *Maryland*, p. 407.

93. The interpreter's goal is 'never … to copy what is said, but to place himself in the direction of what is said (i.e., in its meaning) in order to carry over what is to be said into the direction of his own saying' (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* [trans. and ed. David E. Linge; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976], p. 68).

94. Holmer, *Grammar of Faith*, pp. 14, 16. Only historical ignorance or cultural chauvinism, notes Hays, would lead one to presume that no such hermeneutical operation – 'metaphor-making' – is required for the meaning of the ancient text of Scripture to be carried into the contemporary context of the Church (Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* [New York: HarperCollins, 1996], p. 6).

ple, therefore, with both the canon of God and the concerns of mankind, and employ pericopal theology (with its transhistorical intention) as a mediator between the two, maintaining the dialectic of improvisation between fidelity and novelty, sameness and change. Not only must the sermon expound theology but also it must express exemplifications that are specific and concrete, tailored to the congregation to whom the message is delivered.[95] '[T]o make a general principle worth anything, you must give it a body; you must show in what way and how far it would be applied actually in an actual system'.[96] The 'embodiment' of pericopal theology in exemplification is the ultimate goal of the homiletical undertaking.

The terminus of exemplification renders possible the transaction of covenant renewal between God and his people, as lives are transformed according to the will of God. It is therefore critical that this move be performed in a manner that guarantees the validity of application. In that exemplifications are instances subsumed by the theology and transhistorical intention of the text, *ipse*-identity between original textual sense and the different exemplifications is preserved, rendering these applications faithful to the text, and therefore authoritative. In that exemplifications are appropriate for the specific circumstances of the community being preached to, these applications are relevant. Applications that are both authoritative and relevant are, by definition, valid.

In all such transactions, however, it must be borne in mind that it is the scriptural text that ultimately remains normative for the community of God's people. Therefore the authority behind exemplifications depends upon the cogency of the interpretive process by which they have been generated – primarily upon the careful and correct employment of the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre to derive pericopal theology. To the degree that these hermeneutical operations upon the text have been performed with due diligence, the triadic components of textual meaning (original textual sense, theology/transhistorical

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95. Exemplifications may operate with different trajectories. Classical rhetoric knows of three directions of audience responses sought by a rhetor: a *judicial* assessment of past events (for instance, the goal of Paul's apologetic for his early ministry in Corinth, in 2 Corinthians), a *deliberative* resolve with regard to future actions of the audience (e.g., parabolic teachings that call for explicit responses), or an *epideictic* appreciation of particular beliefs or values in the present (as put forward by Jesus in his farewell discourse in John 14–16). See Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7-9; Anaximenes, *Rhet. Alex.* 1421b; also see C. Clifton Black, 'Rhetorical Criticism', in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 256–77 (261). Application, in parallel to this threefold shape of rhetorical purpose, may also be considered broadly as responses culminating in a change of mind (a response of cognition), a change of action (a response of volition) or a change of feeling (a response of emotion).

96. Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Use of Law Schools', in *Speeches by Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934), pp. 28–40 (34–5); this oration is dated 5 November 1886.

intention and exemplifications) bear the vigour of the text itself in its prescriptivity, perenniality and plurality.[97]

The analysis of two pericopes, Eph. 5.15-20 and 2 Sam. 11.1-27, for the derivation of their exemplifications will conclude this final phase of the dialogue between hermeneutics and homiletics.

Ephesians 5.15-20. Ephesians 5.18 is an integral part of a discrete pericope, 5.15-20, itself embedded in the larger context of the letter to Ephesus.[98] While a pericope must be considered on its own merit to discover its unique theology and to generate specific exemplification, its membership in the larger body of the surrounding text must never be overlooked. The Rules of Singularity and Congruence, in particular, but all the other Rules of Secondary Genre as well, sponsor the reading of the canon as an integral whole; therein is a unity of thought that is not dissolved in the individuality of pericopal content. For the purposes of ongoing covenant renewal, such unity and continuity of matter is a given, especially when pericopes are handled sequentially in regular and frequent assemblies.

In considering the imperative, 'be not drunk with wine' (Eph. 5.18), one might ask what transhistorical intention is conveyed by 'wine' and what exemplifications are possible therefrom. Are all alcoholic concoctions subsumed by that intention, or would it be acceptable to be drunk with an alcoholic beverage other than wine? Distanciation of the text and the resultant change in context call for that imperative to be recontextualized in order to generate valid application, a transaction engaged in by the theologian-homiletician, employing the Rules of Genre. Though the particular rules of epistolary literature might be operative in this instance, considering that Eph. 5.18 is an imperative, the rules employed here are those of the primary genre of law – the Rules of Directive and Rationale.[99]

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97. It may be noted here that the concept of inspiration implies that the entirety of the canonical speech act – including all the components of meaning – is attributed to divine authorship and is therefore authoritative (see Gregg R. Allison, 'Speech Act Theory and Its Implications for the Doctrine of the Inerrancy/Infallibility of Scripture', *Phil. Christi* 8 [1995], pp. 1–23). Poythress also agrees that authority attaches to valid applications generated from the text (Vern Sheridan Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture', *WTJ* 48 [1986], pp. 241–79 [251]). Yet, the hermeneut must grasp all these interpretive results with a degree of humility, for they are derivations from the normative text and no interpreter is infallible. 'Our metaphorical readings must be tested prayerfully within the community of faith by others who seek God's will along with us through close reading of the text' (Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, p. 304). This is also the demand of the Rule of Ecclesiality.

98. Hymnic material has just closed out the preceding paraenetic section, and this pericope, Eph. 5.15-20, transitions seamlessly into a relatively newer topic – submission – in a new pericope bookended by 'fear' (5.21-33). Thus, 5.15-20 is itself a well-demarcated pericope. See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC, 42; Dallas: Word, 1990), p. 338.

99. The Rule of Directive urges the interpreter to attend to both the content of the law and

Community governance is in view in the latter half of Ephesians, with guide-lines for living embedded in a cascade of contrasts between the dynamics of the 'new self' and the 'old self' (4.17–5.14).[100] The pericope of 5.15-20 itself contains three contrasts (μὴ…ἀλλὰ): between those who are wise and those who are not (5.15-16), between being foolish and understanding the will of the Lord (5.17) and between being drunk with wine and being filled by the Holy Spirit (5.18-20). Drunkenness is thus paralleled with walking unwisely and being foolish, and is explicitly labelled ἀσωτία ('dissipation'), used elsewhere in the NT only in Tit. 1.6 (1.7 mentions addiction to wine) and 1 Pet. 4.4 (4.3 has drunkenness).[101] Wine, while its use is not condemned in the NT (see 1 Tim. 5.23), is clearly not to be abused (1 Tim. 3.3, 8; Tit. 1.7; 2.3). The Rule of Directive thus marks inebriation as folly and as a characteristic of those who operate in the lifestyle of the old self. Filling by the Spirit, in contrast, is a characteristic of the wise, those displaying the lifestyle of the new self.[102] The consequences of such a filling and such a walk – speech, singing and thanksgiving appropriate to 'spiritual' worship (Eph. 5.19-20) – are explicitly delineated by the Rule of Directive.

Instead of being drunk, therefore, the Ephesians are enjoined to be 'filled by the Spirit' (ἐν πνεύματι). The injunction is clarified in the instrumental use of the preposition that indicates that the Holy Spirit is the means by which this presence is mediated, just as the instrumentality of wine mediates the state of inebriation.[103] Spiritual filling, therefore, refers to the presence and control of God in Christ mediated by the Spirit with, in and among his people (also see Eph. 1.23; 3.19; 4.13). With the thrust of the passage upon the conduct of the

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its literary context; the Rule of Rationale calls attention to the motive or justification operating behind the imperative.

100. Timothy G. Gombis, 'Being the Fullness of God in Christ by the Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 in Its Epistolary Setting', *TynBul* 53 (2002), pp. 259–71 (265); Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 379–81.

101. Rogers considers the possibility that the drunken fertility practices of Dionysian worship, widespread over the Roman Empire and established in every stratum of society, may have formed the cultural background for Eph. 5.18. There appears to have been a cult of that god extant at Ephesus: Plutarch describes Mark Antony's entrance into Ephesus in 41 BCE celebrated by Dio-nysian cultic ceremonies (*Ant.* 24.3). The inebriation, frenzied dancing and uncontrolled ravings that accompanied these bacchanalia were intended to lead Dionysius to 'possess' the worship-per with the 'enthusiasm' of the god. See Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., 'The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18', *BSac* 136 (1979), pp. 249–57 (250–2, 254); Stanley E. Porter, 'Ephesians 5.18–19 and Its Dionysian Background', in *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in Its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu* (eds Jiří Mrázek and Jan Roskovec; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), pp. 69–80 (72–9); and Peter W. Gosnell, 'Ephesians 5:18–20 and Mealtime Propriety', *TynBul* 44 (1992), pp. 363–71 (366).

102. Interestingly enough, in the book of Acts, the ministry of the Spirit was mistaken for drunkenness (2.4, 13, 15).

103. Also see Eph. 2.22 and 4.30 for similar instrumental uses of ἐν. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit percolates throughout this letter: 1.3, 13, 14, 17; 2.18, 22; 3.16; 4.30; 5.18; 6.17-18.

community that distinguishes it from the world around them, this focus upon God's indwelling through the Spirit enables the Rule of Rationale to discover the motive behind the proscription of wine-induced drunkenness. In exhorting the Ephesians to be filled by the Spirit rather than be drunk with wine, Paul is essentially commanding them to become, corporately, the unique temple of God, the dwelling place of God in Christ, by the Spirit, and to exhibit the Spirit's control. Corresponding to the πλήρωμα language of the OT that depicted the glory of God in the temple, in Ephesians, the Church is the new temple of God serving his presence, where the fullness of Christ dwells (1.23) – the new body comprising both Jews and Gentiles, 'a holy temple in the Lord', 'a dwelling of God in the Spirit' (2.19-22; also 3.16-19).[104] Remaining filled in this fashion, the Christian community is to engage in spiritual worship.

The theology of the pericope, derived by the Rules of Directive and Rationale; might be summarized thus: Rather than remaining under the control of alcohol – unwise and foolish – members of the Christian community live wisely, understanding God's will and in a manner befitting the temple of God, controlled instead by the presence of God in Christ mediated by the Spirit, the consequence of which is spiritual worship. In this projected world, in particular relation to Eph. 5.18 and wine, an embedded transhistorical intention may be discerned: where the original textual sense considers *wine* (concrete), the transhistorical intention accounts for *all alcoholic beverages capable of rendering one intoxicated* (universal).[105] Wine, then, is a 'concrete universal' – concrete in its label of a particular drink of certain alcoholic content, and universal in its tagging of any alcoholic potion capable of rendering one drunken when it is abused. The consequences for application are evident: drunkenness is proscribed, whether it be with vodka, whiskey or any conceivable ethanol-containing concoction.[106]

104. Isa. 6.1-4; Ezek. 10.4; 43.5; 44.4; Hag. 2.7; etc. See Gombis, 'Being the Fullness of God', p. 268; and Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 348.

105. One could hypothetically broaden this transhistorical intention to 'all *drugs* capable of rendering one intoxicated', thereby encompassing other ingested, inhaled or injected substances as its exemplifications. However, in the light of the considerable focus on 'filling' (a fluid-related phenomenon), and on the contrast between the results of Spirit-filling and the manifestations of wine-filling – manifestations that are generally more common with the abuse of alcohol than that of other chemicals – it seems prudent to restrict the transhistorical intention to 'alcohol'. There is clearly a degree of interpretive freedom here.

106. It is worth considering, in the case of Eph. 5.18, what might constitute 'significance' – application that is *not* bounded by the transhistorical intention and therefore *not* part of the 'meaning' of the text (see Chapter 1). If one were addressing, for instance, recovering alcoholics, one might suggest that those prone to the addiction should not even enter an establishment that sells liquor, lest temptation overwhelm them. Such an application is obviously not subsumed by the transhistorical intention of 5.18, which simply proscribes drunkenness with alcohol. Disbarment from entry into liquor stores would therefore be a significance, clearly outside the broad concept of the meaning of the text. However, that is not to deny that such sermonic application may be sensible or appropriate, for, as in this case, the 'invalid' application (significance) of

The transhistorical intention embedded in the pericopal theology thus forms the basis for the derivation of these exemplifications.

Second Samuel 11.1-27. The elucidation of theology from the particulars of the pericope was demonstrated earlier in this Chapter with 2 Sam. 11.1-27: Unfaithfulness to God, the true sovereign, negates blessing and promises punishment with tragic consequences for individual, family, community and society; such faithfulness as God demands – perfectly modelled by Christ, the Son of David, the righteous King – embraces an utmost regard for the word of God and the reputation of God, and is manifested in the restriction of sensual desires and in the reined exercise of power. The theology of this quantum of text warns against unfaithfulness to God manifesting in uncontrolled desire and sexual incontinence, combined with an outrageous abuse of power. Unchecked, such a disregard for God's reputation and the demands of his word only leads one deeper into a maelstrom of misdeeds. Even human life becomes of dubious value in the eyes of one who is more interested in preserving his or her own reputation, rather than God's. Faithfulness to God clearly involves a vigilant, tenacious and unyielding commitment to the values of God for the sake of his reputation. Implicit in the narrative of 1–2 Samuel is the perfect model of faithfulness to God – the Son of David, Jesus Christ. In contrast to the unfaithful human king, the divine regent is the exemplar of absolute faithfulness, fulfilling God's word and glorifying God's name. Therefore, part of what it means to be Christlike is to be faithful to God in this fashion.

The specific exemplification of this theology in the lives of hearers will, of course, be determined to a great extent upon characteristics of the congregation. The case study of King David is a dramatic example of how discontent and concupiscence, abetted by power run amok, when unrestrained by a respect for God's word or name, can plunge one deeper into the abyss of transgression (the brunt of Nathan's accusation, 2 Sam. 12.9, 14). This drama of David (and its dire consequences) serves, in its theology, as an unmistakable deterrent for the one tempted to slide in that downward direction of unfaithfulness to God. Considering the position of the king as one wielding considerable authority, the thrust of this narrative may also be brought home effectively to those who are in positions of leadership and authority. If one would live faithfully under the hand of God in such situations, one must be resolute about exercising power with utmost responsibility, with great care and concern for one's subordinates, especially when tempted by lusts of the flesh to fall into dissolution and debauchery. Obviously not all in a congregation are heads of state or those who administer the kind of power that was wantonly abused by David. Nevertheless, whether in the workplace or at home, among classmates or coworkers, in the field or in the marketplace, most individuals exercise some degree of authority by virtue

keeping away from businesses purveying alcohol may indeed be a means of actualizing the *valid* application (exemplification) of remaining sober.

of official capacity, social standing or organizational membership. Even for one who might not be part of any such hierarchy, the lesson of turpitude degenerating into further baseness, when uncurbed by the moral demands of God to honour his name and his word, is one to be taken to heart, for many a Christian has fallen – and, sadly, many continue to fall – prey to such licentiousness. No doubt, 2 Sam. 11.1-27 bears potential for general application to all readers, the specificities of exemplification being governed by the situation of address and the station of the addressees.[107]

A controlled exercise of passion and power as demanded by the theology of this pericope necessitates accountability to God (and to his agents) as the one with authority strives to 'see' things the way God does, to live humbly and contentedly under him who alone holds supreme power, and to recognize immoral behaviour as evil in the eyes of God. The theologian-homiletician might therefore consider proposing, as significance (application outside the realm of meaning; see Chapter 1), the setting up of an accountability group of godly, responsible people that, corporately personifying the prophet Nathan's office, would be granted the freedom and authority by individual Christians to proffer them counsel, as well as to provide correction, when necessary. Such a significance, when put into practice, is a means of realizing the valid application of living faithfully unto God, under God.

In sum, the move from original textual sense to exemplification is made possible by the transhistorical intention borne by pericopal theology; thereby improvisation is undertaken with fidelity and novelty. Exemplifications subsumed by pericopal theology demonstrate fidelity to the text of Scripture under consideration; the novelty of improvisation is reflected in the relevant adaptation of application to the specificities of auditors' contexts. The theologian-homiletician thus serves as the conscience of application for the community of God, with the dual responsibility to understand what God has said (text), and to generate valid application (praxis) in order that God's people may be aligned to the world projected in front of the text. Covenant renewal is thus accomplished in the Church. The task of the theologian-homiletician is therefore one of great moment and consequence for the community of God's people. John R.W. Stott charged preachers with this solemn duty:[108]

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107. While 1–2 Samuel appears to deal primarily with the iniquities of two Israelite kings, the lessons therein for the people of the nation (and for subsequent readers and hearers of the text) must not be neglected. In opting for monarchy, the people had themselves rejected God (1 Sam. 8.7). The misdoings of their rulers reflected the people's own unfaithfulness to God; this endows the text with potential for universal applicability – for both crown and commoner.

108. John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 145. '[T]ruth and timeliness together make the full preacher' – fidelity to the text and novelty towards audience (Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching, Delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College in January and February, 1877* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1877], pp. 220–1).

> Our bridges … must be firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm, by refusing either
> to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in
> which it has to be spoken. We have to plunge fearlessly into both worlds, ancient and
> modern, biblical and contemporary, and to listen attentively to both. For only then
> shall we understand what each is saying, and so discern the Spirit's message to the
> present generation.

Thus the theologian-homiletician (whose role conflates the crucial responsibilities of both theologian and homiletician) is a mediator between the text and Church, script and actors. It is this one's task to interpret the text for the community and to propose how it may be applied in valid praxis. Combining canonical script analysis and contextual situation analysis – the dialogue between hermeneutics and homiletics – the sermon bridges text and praxis via theology, in an operation governed by the Rules of Primary and Secondary Genre. It is the resulting *ipse*-identity of text and praxis made possible by pericopal theology that renders application both authoritative and relevant. By such valid application, the Church renews its covenant with its God. The pericope has, thus, performed its role as an instrument of covenant renewal in the ecclesial context, and the theologian-homiletician has fulfilled the mandate to mediate this crucial undertaking to the people of God.

Summary: pericopal theology and application

The final chapter of this work has concluded the engagement of hermeneutics with homiletics, focusing upon the move made by the theologian-homiletician from text to praxis – the passage from pericope through theology to application. The function of pericopes in ecclesial settings was established as promoting covenant renewal, the restoration of a right relationship between God and his people. In the weekly employment of pericopes in the life of the Church, these assimilable portions of the canon function as concrete universals, projecting, in and through their concrete particulars, segments of the universal canonical world projected by Scripture. Each such segment constitutes the theology of that particular pericope. It is pericopal theology that serves as the intermediary in the movement from text to praxis, bidding readers inhabit the world so framed. Such an understanding of the role of pericopal theology calls upon the theologian-homiletician to expound that entity in every sermonic proclamation.

That theology has been long considered a key intermediary in this undertaking is acknowledged; this work has sought to further that understanding and to enable that concept to be utilized more precisely by a narrower definition of the theological entity as pericopal theology, by hermeneutically following its derivation *via* the Rules of Genre, and by delineating the potential for the employment of pericopal theology in discovering application. Interpretation, to be sure, is not complete with the discovery of pericopal theology, the move from text to theology. The theologian-homiletician must also consummate the

hermeneutical and homiletical undertaking by proceeding further, from theology to praxis. The former undertaking (text to theology) sustains the authority of the text in the sermon; the latter (theology to praxis) endows the sermon with relevance. Under the auspices of pericopal theology, authority and relevance are thus maintained in balance, as valid application is generated. The people of God are now enabled to obey Scripture, implementing covenant renewal and aligning individual and community to the will of God for the glory of God.

This work has described a means to move validly from text to praxis by engaging hermeneutics and homiletics in dialogue. Chapter 4 has taken the final step towards that end, proposing the critical intermediary, pericopal theology, as the guardian of the sermonic move from ancient inscription to contemporary application. Derived from the pericope in question, pericopal theology grounds the entire hermeneutical and homiletical operation in the particulars of the text – the restraint. At the same time, by means of the transhistorical intention it bears, pericopal theology grants release by allowing the theologian-homiletician to tailor application to the specific circumstances of hearers. Insofar as the sermon affirms the theology portrayed by the pericope, and insofar as the applications proposed lie within the boundaries of its transhistorical intention and are appropriate for the particular audience, the passage from Scripture to sermon has been validly conducted; the journey from text to praxis has been successfully undertaken. The dialogue between hermeneutics and homiletics has borne fruit.