

THE "ANALOGY OF FAITH" AND EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY: A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON RELATIONSHIPS

H. Wayne Johnson*

In evangelical hermeneutics today there is a continuing struggle to define the relationship between the "analogy of faith" and exegetical methodology.¹ Many are aware of the ease with which dogmatics may dominate and manipulate exegesis for its own purposes. There is also a general consensus that bringing the Scriptures to any external "rule" for harmonization ultimately subverts their final authority. On the other hand it is generally acknowledged that there is a certain harmony of fundamental doctrine that pervades the entire Scriptures and that this harmony should play some role in the exegesis of individual passages.

Dialogue between the various branches of evangelicalism depends closely upon a working consensus regarding exegetical methodology. Yet it is precisely in the exegetical application of the analogy of faith that theological disagreements often come to an impasse. It is therefore crucial that we attempt to define the role played by the analogy of faith in grammatico-historical exegesis.

The analogy of faith has been defined in modern hermeneutics as the "general harmony of fundamental doctrine that pervades the entire Scriptures."² Two closely related principles, the "rule of faith"³ and the "analogy of Scripture," help to define what we mean by the analogy of faith.

Historically, the rule of faith was first identified as the faith confessed by the apostolic Church and considered simultaneously to be the compendium of true Biblical teaching.⁴ Later this rule became an ecclesiastical tool with

*H. Wayne Johnson is a doctoral candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹See J. F. Johnson, "Analogia Fidei as Hermeneutical Principle," *Springfielder* 36 (March 1973) 249-259; D. A. Tappeiner, "Hermeneutics, the Analogy of Faith and New Testament Sacramental Realism," *EvQ* 49 (1977) 40-52; C. R. Schoonhoven, "The 'Analogy of Faith' and the Intent of Hebrews," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (ed. W. W. Gasque; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1978) 92-109; D. P. Fuller, "Biblical Theology and the Analogy of Faith," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 195-213; R. L. Thomas, "A Hermeneutical Ambiguity of Eschatology: The Analogy of Faith," *JETS* (1980) 45-53; W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?," *CTQ* 46 (1982) 167-180.

²M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968) 579.

³Literally *regula fidei* and the closely associated *kanōna tēs alētheias* and *kērygma tēs alētheias*.

⁴See Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.9.3; 1.10.1, 3; Tertullian *Prescription* 1.19 for some of the earliest statements in the fathers.

which to control exegesis and guarantee harmonization with Catholic orthodoxy.⁵ In the Reformation the rule of faith continued as an important interpretive principle, but its source and content was radically modified.⁶ With a new emphasis on *sola Scriptura* the rule was defined as the compendium of what Scripture and Scripture alone teaches. As a result exegesis under the Reformation rule was to be in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures rather than Catholic orthodoxy.

Because of the frequent association of the rule of faith with Catholic abuses, some evangelicals today prefer to use the term "analogy of Scripture." This emphasizes more explicitly that Scripture is consistent with itself and thus does not contain contradictions.⁷ Because of this consistency, obscure passages are to be interpreted by other clear and parallel passages in the Scriptures.⁸

Our working definition of the analogy-of-faith principle will include both the Reformation understanding of the rule of faith and the analogy of Scripture. In short, the analogy of faith is the harmonious relationship between the teachings of Scripture brought to bear on the exegesis of particular passages. It is the body of affirmations or doctrines that are considered to be clearly taught in Scripture and that as a result help inform our interpretation of other passages in the Scriptures. In the classic Reformation manner this lets Scripture interpret Scripture.

What then is the proper relationship between the analogy of faith and exegesis? Does the analogy of faith determine exegesis, or replace exegesis, or is it detached and subsequent to exegesis? Can it be allowed a place in exegetical methodology without overpowering all other elements of exegesis? Unfortunately the answers to these questions have often been assumed without explicit discussion. Recognizable patterns may nevertheless be discerned.

I. ANALOGY OF FAITH DICTATING EXEGESIS

At times the analogy of faith may be considered so important that it dictates exegetical method. When this occurs the analogy of faith is used as the criterion to choose the method of exegesis employed. The choice guarantees that the results of exegesis are in harmony with the analogy of faith. Stated inversely, if the results of a certain exegetical methodology are in conflict with the analogy of faith that methodology must be considered invalid and consequently changed.

⁵One can see progressive identification of the rule with traditions of the Catholic Church by examining Augustine *On the Creed* 1; *Sermons on New Testament Lessons* 1, 2; *On Christian Doctrine* 3.2; Vincent of Lerins, *A Commonitory* 27; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.9.

⁶Fuller, "Theology" 196-201; O. Hof, "Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith," *CTQ* 38 (1967) 242-257.

⁷Tertullian *Against Praxeas* 18 seems to be the first of the fathers to explicitly affirm this.

⁸See Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 2.27.1; 2.28.3; Tertullian *Against Praxeas* 18, 20; Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 2.6.9.

Augustine advanced the discipline of exegesis significantly with his emphasis on Biblical context. Yet the rule of faith for Augustine had priority over context as part of exegetical methodology. The context, in fact, needed to be consulted only when the rule of faith itself did not produce a satisfactory solution to a textual or interpretive problem.⁹

More significantly, Augustine used the analogy of faith to determine literal versus figurative interpretation. For Augustine "whatever in the divine word cannot be referred to a noble end or to the truth of faith is to be taken as figurative, and the norm for this is the rule of faith."¹⁰ Augustine did not depend primarily upon fixed exegetical principles tied to context or genre with which to control literal versus figurative interpretation. Rather, he determined literal versus figurative interpretation based upon the value of the results they produced. If the result of a literal interpretation led to ignoble (for whom?) assertions or assertions that conflicted with the analogy of faith, then the exegetical approach was switched to one of figurative interpretation. The analogy of faith ultimately dictated exegetical method.

Along this same line we may also mention the Alexandrian exegetes, who adopted or abandoned an allegorical interpretation because of the analogy of faith. Clement and Origen often appealed to allegorical exegesis primarily because a literal interpretation was not found to be "fitting and appropriate to the Lord and the Almighty God."¹¹ The analogy of faith was employed in this way to guarantee the use of an exegetical method that produced "proper" results.

Luther advanced the cause of Scriptural authority immensely. Yet he felt so strongly about the importance of the analogy of faith that it often dictated his methods of exegesis. For him, "every word [of Scripture] should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning, and that should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to it."¹² Luther here reveals that there might be occasions when the natural meaning of the text must be abandoned, and this only because the analogy of faith necessitates it.

Because of Luther's dedication to *sola Scriptura* he sought an analogy-of-faith principle that was equivalent to the clear teaching of Scripture. In practice, however, the centrality of Christ and *sola fide* became the overriding issues in his own analogy of faith. For Luther, all exegesis led to Christ. He wrote that

Scripture is to be understood not contrary to, but in accordance with Christ. Therefore Scripture is to be referred to him, or else we do not have what represents Scripture. . . . If adversaries urge Scripture against Christ, we will

⁹See Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 3.2. Augustine is also substituting the rule of faith for textual criticism.

¹⁰Ibid., 2.20.10.

¹¹Clement *On Spiritual Perfection* 16.96. See also Origen *De Principiis* 4.1.

¹²Luther, *Werken* 19. For an extended discussion of Luther's use of the analogy of faith see Hof, "Principle."

urge Christ against Scripture. . . . If it is to be a question of whether Christ or the Law is to be dismissed, we say, Law is to be dismissed, not Christ.¹³

This emphasis on the analogy of faith was also at the root of the great Reformer's tendency to prioritize certain books and passages in the Scriptures. Often what Scripture clearly teaches was found more clearly in certain places than others. As a result John's gospel and Paul's epistles could be considered books that "show Christ and teach everything which is needful and blessed for you to know." James, however, could be deemed an "epistle of straw."¹⁴ The underlying criterion for this evaluation was the degree to which the books supported the central tenets of Luther's analogy of faith—namely, the centrality of the work of Christ and salvation by faith.

These examples should not be smugly dismissed as unusually crude or arbitrary. Many today continue to use the analogy of faith as an excuse for methodological inconsistency in exegesis. For example, theologians in both covenant and dispensational camps continue to debate millenarianism using literal or figurative exegesis of certain key passages. Both sides, however, frequently appeal not to genre, context, syntax or other fixed exegetical principles to demonstrate the validity of their approaches. Rather, they adopt the exegetical methodologies that produce the result they desire. One therefore decides that the method to use is figurative or literal because the analogy of faith dictates it. Unfortunately, where there might have been constructive dialogue based on a mutually accepted exegetical methodology, we find instead insoluble conflicts between covenantal exegesis and dispensational exegesis.¹⁵

II. ANALOGY OF FAITH AS SUBSTITUTE FOR EXEGESIS

The analogy of faith can be used not only to dictate exegesis but also to replace it entirely. All exegetical discussions regarding context, semantics, syntax, textual issues, etc., are in this case deemed to be irrelevant. The analogy of faith alone is substituted to provide sufficient evidence for a certain interpretation of a passage.

Tertullian provides one of the earliest examples of this practice. He wrote against heretics who were claiming Scriptural support for their views. In reality, they were making involved exegetical arguments to support their heretical positions. He responded to them not by condemning or exposing erroneous exegesis but by affirming that all of their exegesis was irrelevant because its results contradicted the orthodox analogy of faith. He states that correct exegesis is assured for those with the orthodox analogy of faith and impossible for those without it.¹⁶

¹³See G. Ebeling, "The Meaning of 'Biblical Theology,'" *Word and Faith* (London: SCM, 1963) 82.

¹⁴See E. Reuss, *History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: Hunter, 1891) 322, 329.

¹⁵Thomas, "Ambiguity" 46–47, critiques L. Berkhof for this type of approach to Rev 20:1–4.

¹⁶See Tertullian *Prescription* 1.19. This prescription takes its form from Roman law in which a preliminary question is decided before a trial is granted. For Tertullian the trial of Biblical inter-

For Tertullian the true Church possesses the true analogy of faith and thus possesses the true exposition of Scripture. Where the analogy of faith is not upheld there is no valid exposition of Scripture. Thus Tertullian need not waste time discussing the relative merits of the heretics' exegetical method or arguments. The passage cannot mean what the heretics say because it is contrary to the analogy of faith. In this case the analogy of faith alone is sufficient to demonstrate the fact.

In the context of the early Church we can easily appreciate this approach. Strong confidence in the apostolic traditions led to a similar confidence that no passage of Scripture would contradict the teachings of the apostolic Church. Subsequent abuses of the principle, however, as well as the evolution and corruption of tradition led the Reformers to adopt a significantly modified analogy of faith. It became exclusively that which Scripture clearly teaches apart from Church authority or decree. Interestingly, this resulted in a more individualistic analogy of faith as each believer was allowed to ascertain the clear teaching of Scripture for himself. Yet the principle continued to play an authoritative role in Biblical interpretation.

Calvin occasionally appealed to the analogy of faith in place of exegetical argumentation.¹⁷ He is a significant example precisely because of his exegetical expertise. In his discussion of sacramental realism Calvin refers to Gal 3:27: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." He notes that the realistic connection between baptism and putting on Christ is weak. The reason is that "the uniform doctrine of Scripture, as well as experience, appear to confute this statement."¹⁸

Calvin does not argue here on the basis of exegesis in a grammatico-historical sense. Rather, he argues on the basis of his own understanding of the analogy of faith. He appeals to reason, the uniform doctrine of Scripture, and experience. While this is understandable we might easily place ourselves in an opponent's shoes and object that Calvin has not argued fairly. His use of the analogy of faith is so broad that no further debate can continue. Although much is being affirmed, little is being demonstrated. All that is really being said is that within Calvin's own system (what he perceives as the clear teaching of Scripture) this passage cannot mean what a literalistic interpretation would seem to imply.

Should we see value in using the analogy of faith in this way? There seems to be a certain validity and piety in saying, with Tertullian and Calvin, that no matter what exegetical arguments the heretics raise there are certain tenets of Biblical truth that are not negotiable. The difficulty of course comes in deciding what those nonnegotiables are.

When a certain cult suggests exegesis denying the virgin birth, we need not be overly concerned about refuting their exegesis in detail to decide the issue.

pretation must not begin because the preliminary fact is that the Bible is off limits to the heretic. It is only for those with the rule. See R. M. Grant and D. Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 76.

¹⁷For this example I am indebted to Tappeiner, "Hermeneutics."

¹⁸J. Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 111.

We may legitimately point out that this interpretation is contradictory to other explicit Biblical affirmations concerning Christ's conception. Although this may do little apologetically, the explicit contradiction in other clear passages on the same subject makes their interpretation clearly un-Biblical.

More often, however, when the analogy of faith is used as a substitute for exegesis it is used with all its theological and inferential subtlety. When Calvin talks about that which is reasonable and in accord with "the uniform doctrine of Scripture, as well as experience," he is referring to something significantly more extensive than explicit statements of Scripture on identical subjects. Even Luther's concern for *sola fide* and the centrality of Christology carries with it all kinds of inferred relationships that go beyond explicit Biblical affirmations.

It is this problem that frequently arises when an Arminian and a Calvinist apply their own analogy of faith to a debated passage. Even if they talk about something as centrally Biblical as grace, the Calvinist may have in mind God's predestining and unconditional choice of some to be saved while the Arminian may have in mind God's offer of salvation to all, appropriated by human free will.

We have already alluded to the increased susceptibility of the analogy of faith to subjectivism after the Reformation. With the return of the Scriptures to the people, the clear teaching of Scripture became influenced by an increasing number of diverse religious traditions, philosophies, and even conversion experiences. This observation need not lead us to skepticism, however, in the use of the analogy of faith today nor to an affirmation that there are no definite clear teachings of Scripture. We merely want to point out that our understanding of the clear teaching of Scripture is a matter of progressive and partial knowledge that can easily be dominated by pet ideas or hidden agendas. There is a subjective element to the evangelical analogy of faith that must be respected.

Because of this, one must ask if anything is actually being demonstrated when one substitutes the analogy of faith for exegesis. Again this difficulty surfaces in the debate between Calvinists and Arminians concerning the perseverance of the saints. Some Arminians affirm that passages such as Rom 8:33-39 and John 10:28 cannot mean what Calvinists take them to mean only because of the clear teaching of Scripture elsewhere on the conditionality of final salvation. Calvinists on the other hand continue to affirm that Hebrews 3, 6 and 10 cannot mean what Arminians take them to mean only because of the clear teaching of Scripture on the perseverance of the saints. In reality, both sides are prioritizing their own analogy of faith over the exegesis of the passage while radically disagreeing over what Scripture clearly teaches. Until each side appreciates the inherent subjectivity of its method and begins to dialogue based on what each considers valid exegetical method little progress will be made. Each side will continue to demand that the other make radical shifts in what it believes to be the clear teaching of Scripture rather than discussing individual exegetical issues in individual passages of Scripture.

We believe that there is a valid and important function for the analogy of faith but that it must not become an easy way out of the work and complexity of weighing exegetical issues.

III. ANALOGY OF FAITH AS SUBSEQUENT TO EXEGESIS

Many evangelicals have appreciated the dangers inherent in allowing the analogy of faith to dictate or be a substitute for exegesis. Daniel Fuller critiques both Calvin and Luther, affirming that their use of analogy of faith directly clashed with *sola Scriptura*.¹⁹ Walter Kaiser has also severely criticized the misuse of the analogy of faith in exegesis, preferring a tamer and more diachronic principle of the "analogy of antecedent Scripture."²⁰ Scholars in this camp have done us a great service by drawing attention to these abuses. In the process they have also suggested a common solution. It is to postpone the use of the analogy of faith proper until after the exegetical process is completed. This, it is felt, will serve to insulate exegesis from the overbearing influence of the analogy of faith and keep exegesis from becoming eisegesis. Robert Thomas is representative of this position when he writes:

Are we then suggesting a doing away with the analogy of faith? No. We are rather proposing a conscious effort to postpone its part in the interpretive process until a very late stage. In fact, we may even suggest that it not be a part of the exegetical process at all but that it be utilized as a double-check on completed exegesis. Its removal from among the hermeneutical principles could be a safeguard against abuses such as those mentioned earlier. Its value would thereby become of a negative type.²¹

Similarly, for Tappeiner the analogy of faith should begin at the point where the "hermeneutical spiral leaves off." For him "the analogy of faith is a construct which emerges from the application of systematic methods within a theological tradition to the data generated from the purely historical and exegetical efforts of the 'spiral.'"²²

There are certainly benefits to be realized from this type of approach. Most obviously, grammatico-historical exegesis is taken seriously and allowed to produce results that in theory may conflict with the existing analogy of faith. Exegesis is delivered from slavery to systematic theology and prevailing understandings of the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith can no longer dictate exegetical method or act as a substitute for exegesis. Doctrinal affirmations must be demonstrated based upon valid exegetical method. In theory, Scripture is allowed to speak with full authority to our limited understanding of Biblical revelation.

There are, however, nagging difficulties with viewing the analogy of faith as subsequent to exegesis. We have already suggested that the analogy of faith is in many ways a subjective and partial understanding of what the Scriptures clearly teach. If this is true, can we speak of doing exegesis without bringing to a text our own understanding of what the rest of Scripture clearly

¹⁹Fuller, "Theology" 200.

²⁰W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 82, 134-136.

²¹Thomas, "Ambiguity" 53. See also Kaiser, "Hermeneutics" 173.

²²Tappeiner, "Hermeneutics" 42-43.

teaches? Can we carry out exegesis without theological preunderstanding, as if to set aside our analogy of faith until exegesis is completed?

The rise of the "new hermeneutic" and of scholars like Hans-Georg Gadamer have challenged the long-standing objectivism of Turretin and others that has long been a traditional element of evangelical hermeneutics.²³ They have challenged the notion that interpretation can proceed in an objectivized manner by affirming that it is bound intrinsically to preunderstanding.²⁴ R. Bultmann started the ball rolling by affirming the naivete of believing that the exegete can operate devoid of presuppositions.²⁵ He affirmed that "there cannot be any such thing as presuppositionless exegesis."²⁶ "The demand that the interpreter must silence his subjectivity . . . in order to attain an objective knowledge is therefore the most absurd one that can be imagined."²⁷ "Pre-understanding', or a prior life-relation of the interpreter to the subject matter of the text, implies 'not a prejudice, but a way of raising questions.'"²⁸ More recently, G. Turner has addressed the relationship of NT interpretation and preunderstanding and concluded that systematic theology, as a group of theological assumptions, necessarily contributes to an exegete's preunderstanding and thereby affects the exegetical process.²⁹ Others in the evangelical camp have also begun to acknowledge the role of preunderstanding in the exegetical process.³⁰

While we do not adopt all of the affirmations of the "new hermeneutic" proponents and their existentialism, there is much to be appreciated in their observations on this point. Certainly Bultmann was at least partially correct in observing that exegesis is carried out with some kind of question in mind and that this question is tied to our preunderstanding. It seems reasonable that the agenda we set for ourselves, the problems for which we seek exegetical solutions, reflect our understanding of tension and harmony with the rest

²³Turretin wrote: "An empty head, if I may express myself, must be brought to Scripture: One's head must be a *tabula rasa* if it is to comprehend the true and original meaning of Scripture" (*Trajecti Thuviorum* [1728] 333).

²⁴See A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), for an excellent summary.

²⁵R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?", in *Existence and Faith* (London, 1964) 194-200.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 343-344.

²⁷R. Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM, 1955) 255.

²⁸Bultmann, *Existence* 346, quoted in A. C. Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," in *New Testament Interpretation* (ed. I. H. Marshall; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 313.

²⁹G. Turner, "Pre-Understanding and New Testament Interpretation," *SJT* 28 (1975) 227-242.

³⁰See for example D. A. Carson, "Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends," *Themelios* 5 (1980) 15; R. B. Gaffin, Jr., "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," in *Studying the New Testament Today* (ed. J. Skilton; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974) 3-18.

of what Scripture clearly teaches. And is not the exegetical question that we ask just as important as the exegetical means we use to answer that question? J. F. Johnson is therefore probably correct in understanding the analogy of faith as *Vorverständnis*.³¹

We can therefore say that although attempting to place the analogy of faith subsequent to exegesis is admirably motivated it is in reality an oversimplification of what it is possible for us to do. Exegetical questions are produced as a result of theological tension and harmony, which in turn come about as a result of a particular passage interacting with our own analogy of faith. We may avoid using the analogy of faith to arbitrarily dictate the meaning of the passage, but even in the normal process of exegesis the analogy of faith will influence which exegetical questions we deem important. We cannot separate ourselves from our preunderstandings, and this includes our Biblical-theological preunderstandings. The analogy of faith is therefore always with us, even in exegesis.

IV. ANALOGY OF FAITH AS ONE ELEMENT OF EXEGESIS

We have discussed the analogy of faith as preunderstanding and pointed to its inherent involvement in the exegetical process. It is important to note again that the analogy of faith is not a description of all preunderstandings that we bring to Scripture but rather those preunderstandings concerning what Scripture clearly teaches. As such the analogy of faith represents a system of relationships between Biblical texts and their affirmations. We read a passage of Scripture and perceive harmony or tension with our own analogy of faith. This tension or harmony is related to those passages that we perceive as being parallel in some way to the particular passage at hand. Thus we suggest that the role of the analogy of faith in exegesis can be best understood by examining how these perceived parallels play a part in the exegesis of any passage. This may best be pursued as an extension of the general methodology for the use of semantic parallels in exegesis.

In exegesis the use of parallels is a valid practice employed in stylistics, linguistics and semantics. For example, if one seeks to understand a particular conditional statement of Paul it is valid to assemble all of Paul's conditional clauses and study them comparatively. The same might be said for semantic parallels as long as the original contexts and authors are respected. But since semantic parallels, such as might be involved in word studies, are properly handled only in the context of larger semantic constructions such as sentences, paragraphs, and the like, we may also refer to semantic parallels in a broader sense. We suggest that these broader parallels are in reality theological parallels and are central to the analogy of faith. An example will illustrate the point.

Certain interpreters have recently suggested an understanding of Gal 3:6-9 that views Abraham not primarily as paradigmatic of Christian belief but of

³¹Johnson, "Analogia Fidei."

the faithfulness of Christ.³² In their argument they acknowledge that Abraham is used in Romans 4 as a paradigm for Christian belief but insist that Romans 4 should not exercise influence on the exegesis of Gal 3:6-9. These exegetes are intent upon letting Galatians speak for itself as independent from other Pauline material. But why should Romans 4 be prohibited from informing our understanding of Galatians 3? There is strong exegetical evidence that the passages are closely parallel in a number of ways. The reference in both passages is to Abraham's faith, there is an appeal to Gen 15:6 as a proof text, and the issue at hand is the paradigmatic value of God's justification of Abraham. If we were to do a careful word study of *pistis/pisteuo* in Gal 3:6-9 we would certainly be negligent if we ignored a usage in such a closely parallel context. Yet the same is true for broader semantic concerns. After careful consideration of individual contexts, we should affirm that Romans 4 and Gal 3:6-9 are more broadly theological parallels. Paul is, within limits, talking about the same thing.

But here is where the crucial issues come into focus. It makes sense to carefully consider theological parallels in the exegesis of a passage. On the other hand, the fact that Romans 4 is parallel with Galatians 3 should not be used to automatically impose a certain meaning upon Galatians 3. That would merely be a prioritization of Romans over Galatians. A more balanced approach is needed.

We suggest that, in using the analogy of faith, carefully assessed theological parallels should contribute to the exegesis of a passage. These parallels, when viewed as part of the exegetical process, should be considered as one significant element in a mass of exegetical evidence. The parallels are to be established carefully upon syntactical, textual, or semantic evidence. The fact that there is a valid theological parallel should not, on the other hand, be prioritized over against all other exegetical evidence. It acts as one of the contributing factors in a multitude of exegetical considerations.

There are many benefits to this type of approach. First of all, we do not necessarily limit the relevant context of a passage to the book at hand or to historically antecedent Scripture. In our example we are not limited by the fact that Galatians was written before Romans or vice versa. Rather we are allowed to carefully bring the fuller context of Pauline theology to bear on the exegesis of a Pauline passage. But even further, with due caution we are allowed to make use of parallels from other authors and passages that occur at later points in redemptive history, as long as the exegetical evidence warrants that they are true theological parallels. This is what should be expected if we take seriously that the Scriptures form a single canon from one divine author. As B. Waltke says, "the exegetical process is incomplete until it is exegeted in light of the entire canon."³³

³²See J. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Chico: Scholars, 1983); T. L. Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14," *NTS* 32 (1986) 94-112.

³³B. K. Waltke, "Grammatical Problems," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible* (ed. E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 122.

Yet we can continue to appreciate the concern of Kaiser, Tappeiner and others. Drawing theological parallels should not ignore the distinctiveness of Biblical authors and the real progression in redemptive history, as has often been the case. Just as semantic or stylistic parallels can be falsely identified, so also can theological parallels. Rather than being avoided, however, they should be carefully identified through the use of grammatico-historical controls similar to those used in stylistic and word studies. Also we may justifiably weigh antecedent theological parallels more heavily than subsequent theological parallels because they are more closely parallel in a grammatico-historical sense—that is, they directly contribute to the authors' historical and theological context. Ultimately it is these types of controls that ultimately guarantee that the parallel relationships assumed in the analogy of faith remain subject to exegesis.

Second, viewing the analogy of faith as one element of the exegetical process keeps it from arbitrarily dictating the meaning of other passages. In our example it remains a possibility that although every other use of the Abraham paradigm might support the traditional view, the strength of other exegetical evidence could outweigh these parallels and prove the exception in this passage. Since the analogy of faith is only one element of the exegetical evidence it is a distinct possibility that all other exegetical evidence will outweigh it. In such a case our passage would be allowed to stand against and modify the analogy of faith.

Third, this approach appreciates the subjective aspects of the analogy of faith as preunderstanding without falling into subjectivism.³⁴ It allows the analogy of faith to contribute to the "hermeneutical spiral"³⁵ rather than use it to produce a vicious hermeneutical circle. Although we all approach the Scriptures with a certain preunderstanding about theological parallels, there are nevertheless controls that we may apply to our preunderstanding. Not all assumed parallels will be shown to be parallels when context, author or redemptive history are taken into account. Our analogy of faith does influence the exegetical questions that we ask, but further evidence may always show us that the very questions we were asking were misplaced.³⁶

Fourth, the suggested understanding of the analogy of faith allows us to treat it as a model or paradigm of Biblical revelation rather than as a dogma set in concrete. As a result, the study of the analogy of faith may benefit from careful thought that has already been devoted to scientific theory as paradigm. The work of Thomas S. Kuhn,³⁷ if applied to the analogy of faith, may

³⁴E. D. Hirsch (*Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven: Yale University, 1967] 245-264) rightfully critiques Gadamer and the new hermeneutic for using preunderstanding as a door to uncontrolled subjectivism.

³⁵See Tappeiner, "Hermeneutics" 42.

³⁶The interpretation of Rom 7:7-12 is a case in point. Recent advances in the exegesis of this passage have occurred because of a willingness to allow context to redirect traditional interpretive questions. See D. J. Moo, "Israel and Paul in Romans 7. 7-12," *NTS* 32 (1986) 122-135.

³⁷T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

provide insights into how individuals or theological communities come to change accepted orthodoxy. This may be helpful in allowing us to remain true to Biblical authority rather than merely to our Protestant traditions. It may also reaffirm the cruciality of allowing exegetical evidence to produce tension with the analogy of faith leading to shifts in its larger framework and thus a more realistic model of the whole of Biblical revelation.

Finally, understanding the analogy of faith as one element of exegesis, subject to bias and therefore in need of continual modification, forces us to reconsider our own dogmatism and encourages us to approach the Scriptures and each other with a bit more humility and teachability.

V. CONCLUSION

We have argued that the analogy of faith should be used as one element in exegesis rather than as a tool to dictate, replace, or follow exegesis. All exegesis operates in the context of perceived tension and harmony with theological parallels. These perceived parallels are the content of our analogy of faith. Applying and extending the methodological controls of semantics provides the key to verifying these perceived parallels as well as evaluating their relative weight as exegetical evidence. Through these controls, an appreciation of the paradigmatic nature of the analogy of faith and its inherent subjectivity, it is hoped that this important principle will not be used as an excuse for avoiding the rich labor of exegesis but for more fully exegeting a passage in its full Scriptural context.