

## PATRISTIC BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN JOSEPH RATZINGER'S *JESUS OF NAZARETH*

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### Introduction

In the concluding chapter of his extensive study of Origen's exegesis, Henri de Lubac advocates the careful study of premodern Christian biblical interpretation both as an important component in the historical development of Christianity and as a theological practice, which "reaches ... to the permanent foundations of Christian thought."<sup>1</sup> For de Lubac, who wrote so extensively on the history and theology of Christian biblical interpretation, premodern exegesis, amidst its variety and periodic excesses, embodies a profound theological synthesis which is essential and thus permanently valuable to Christianity. This theological synthesis, expressed in the doctrine of the fourfold sense of Scripture, is an integration of Christian faith, practice, and spirituality, all of which are centered in Christ and grounded in the reading of Scripture. De Lubac encourages the *ressourcement* study of premodern exegesis in order to understand more deeply its "spirit" and integrate its theological principles with modern biblical criticism.<sup>2</sup>

One of the more prominent attempts in recent years to synthesize the theological principles of premodern Christian exegesis with modern biblical criticism for the theological interpretation of Scripture is Pope Benedict XVI/Joseph Ratzinger's *Jesus of Nazareth*.<sup>3</sup> Throughout *Jesus of Nazareth*, Ratzinger often

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- 1 Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Anne Englund Nash and Juvenal Merriell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007 [1950]), 431. De Lubac here references Johann Adam Möhler, *L'Unité dans l'Église*, appendix 7, *Unam Sanctam* (1938): 260–261.
  - 2 De Lubac writes (*History and Spirit*, 450), "Without either a return to archaic forms or servile mimicry, often by totally different methods, it is a spiritual movement that we must reproduce above all." Compare Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols., trans. Marc Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2009), 1.xix–xxi. The original French text is Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Senses de l'Écriture, I and II* [*Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*,"], *Théologie* 41–42 (Paris: Aubier, 1959–1964).
  - 3 Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Idem, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two—Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011). The author makes clear (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xxiii–xxiv) that this book is not a work of papal authority. Accordingly, I will refer to the author as Joseph Ratzinger rather than by his papal name Benedict XVI.

appeals to the biblical interpretation of various Church Fathers as a resource for drawing out the abiding theological significance of the Gospels. While he regards patristic exegesis as making a valuable theological contribution, his appropriation of it is neither uncritical nor nostalgic. This essay will offer some reflections on Ratzinger's retrieval of patristic biblical hermeneutics by focusing in detail on his interpretation of a specific biblical text: the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10:1–18.<sup>4</sup>

Ratzinger does not rely on patristic exegesis in his interpretation of this text in the same way that he does, for instance, in his treatment of the Our Father, which makes heavy and explicit use of Cyprian's *De dominica oratione* ["On the Lord's Prayer"].<sup>5</sup> However, a close analysis of Ratzinger's treatment of John 10:1–18 brings to light the ways in which principles and habits of patristic biblical hermeneutics inform his theological interpretation of the Good Shepherd discourse as Scripture. Moreover, even though Ratzinger is often critical of the methods of early Christian biblical interpretation, I will argue that in some instances, he actually provides helpful examples of retrieving patristic interpretive strategies for use in a contemporary context. Before turning to Ratzinger's biblical interpretation, I will first offer some brief remarks about the Good Shepherd discourse itself.

### *I. An Overview of the Good Shepherd Discourse (John 10:1–18)*

The Good Shepherd discourse (John 10:1–18) immediately follows the healing of the man born blind in John 9. The sequence of John 9 is a narrative demonstration of Jesus' identity and work as the Light of the World, whose actions as the Light include revelation, giving life, and judgment.<sup>6</sup> As the Light of the World, Jesus effects judgment in one respect by laying bare the distinction between believers and unbelievers. This work of judgment appears in the contrast between the Pharisees and the formerly blind man, which becomes increasingly sharp over the course of 9:8–34. While some Pharisees entertain a degree of openness to Jesus during the forensic proceedings (see 9:16b), those who do not figure most prominently in the narrative. Their resistance grows more adamant over the course of the chapter. By contrast, the man who begins the story with congenital blindness not only receives physical sight from Jesus, but he comes to acquire the spiritual sight of faith when he professes his belief in Jesus as the Son of Man, the One Who has come down

4 Ratzinger's interpretation of the Good Shepherd discourse appears in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.272–286. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the biblical text are my own from the Hebrew or Greek text.

5 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.128–168, especially pp. 131–132, 151–168.

6 See William M. Wright IV, *Rhetoric and Theology: Figural Reading of John 9*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 165 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 156–198; Josef Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* [*Judgment: Investigations into Johannine Christology and Eschatology*] (Freiburg: Lambertus, 1964), 252–263.

from heaven to reveal the Father (9:38).<sup>7</sup> The narrative sequence concludes with Jesus declaring the Pharisees who do not believe in Him to be spiritually blind and remaining in sin. Jesus continues to address these Pharisees in the shepherd discourse, but he shifts the predominant imagery from sight and blindness to the pastoral.<sup>8</sup> Aside from the shift in imagery, the Gospel narrative gives no indication that Jesus' audience in John 10 differs from that in 9:39–41.

The Good Shepherd discourse is often divided into two movements, and some scholars even classify these two movements as constituting two different literary genres.<sup>9</sup> The first movement (10:1–6) introduces the basic pastoral images of the discourse: the shepherd, his sheep, the sheepfold, the shepherd's opponents, as well as the theme of the mutual knowledge between shepherd and sheep. Jesus develops the distinction between himself and his Pharisee opponents, as rival religious leaders of disciples (suggested in 9:27–29), with the figures of "the shepherd" and the "thieves and bandits" (10:1–2). In 9:34, the Pharisees "drove out" the formerly blind man (Greek: *exebalon* ... *exō*) for boldly proposing to teach them, and the same Greek verb denotes the action of the Shepherd, who leads His sheep after he has "driven [them] out" (Greek: *ekbalē*) from the sheepfold (10:4).<sup>10</sup> The first part of the discourse concludes with the narrator's observation that Jesus' audience did not understand the meaning of his figurative speech (10:6).

Consequently, Jesus elaborates on many of the pastoral images and distinctions in the second movement of the discourse (10:7–18), while maintaining the same mode of figurative speech. Jesus develops the motif of the fold being opened for the sheep to be called out (10:2) with his self-identification as the "Door for the sheep" (10:7), for it is through him that the sheep go out to the pasture of eternal life (10:9, 28; compare 14:6). Jesus also contrasts himself as the "Good Shepherd" (10:11), who gives life to the sheep by laying down his own life, with a series of opponents—the thief (10:10), the hired man (10:12–13), and the wolf (10:14)—who are destructive, self-interested, or neglectful of the sheep. Moreover, Jesus relates the mutual knowledge between shepherd and sheep (10:3–5) to the mutual know-

7 Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology*, 183–187. For the association of the Son of Man with the Incarnation in John 9:38, see Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., *The Johannine Son of Man*, Biblioteca di Scienze religiose 14 (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1976), 155.

8 Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology*, 191–192.

9 Raymond Brown classifies 10:1–5 as parable and 10:6–18 as the allegorical interpretation of the parable. See his *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols., Anchor Bible 29–29A (New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1.390–399. This generic distinction rests on taking the mention of Jesus' "figure of speech" (Greek: *paroimia*) in 10:6 as a specific literary genre rather than a generic mode of figurative language. Against this generic division, see Robert Kysar, "The Meaning and Function of Johannine Metaphor (John 10:1–18)," in *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 161–182; reprint from *Semeia* 53 (1991): 81–112; William M. Wright IV, "Hearing the Shepherd's Voice: The *Paroimia* of the Good Shepherd Discourse and Augustine's Figural Reading," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* (forthcoming).

10 Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology*, 192.

ing between the Father and the Son (10:14–15). Although the narrative setting of the Gospel shifts to the Festival of Dedication in 10:22, the pastoral imagery reappears briefly in 10:26–30.

As readers of John 10:1–18 can observe, the discourse employs a mode of figurative language which John designates in 10:6 by the word *paroimia* (“figure of speech”). Elsewhere in the Gospel, John uses the term *paroimia* to refer to Jesus’ veiled speech which his audience (whether his disciples or others in the narrative) does not readily understand at that present moment (see 16:25, 29). Accordingly, the Good Shepherd discourse does not provide its audience with the clear meaning of many of the pastoral images. While the Gospel is clearer about the meaning of some images, for example, the door (10:2, 7, 9), the shepherd (10:2, 11, 14), the sheep (10:3, 14, 26–27) and the pasture (10:3, 9, 28), John’s audience is never told the specific meaning of the doorkeeper (10:3), the thief and robber (10:1, 10), the hired man (10:12–13), or the wolf (10:12). The discourse’s figurative language and elusive imagery call for its audience to interpret it in more-than-literal ways. This rhetorical invitation makes the Good Shepherd discourse a helpful test case for examining Ratzinger’s retrieval of patristic exegesis.<sup>11</sup>

With this overview in place, I will now turn to Ratzinger’s *Jesus of Nazareth*. First, I will discuss Ratzinger’s programmatic remarks about patristic exegesis and its hermeneutical value, and then I will focus more narrowly on his interpretation of the Good Shepherd discourse.

## II. Ratzinger’s Interpretation of John 10:1–18

### *Patristic Methods and Patristic Interpretations in Jesus of Nazareth*

Ratzinger’s *Jesus of Nazareth* displays a methodologically complex approach to biblical interpretation. In the Foreword to volume 1, he acknowledges the basic need for a historical-critical reading of Scripture.<sup>12</sup> He justifies this claim on theological grounds. The appropriateness of historical criticism for the interpretation of Scripture corresponds to the essential role played by real historical events, such as the life of Christ, in Christian faith.<sup>13</sup> But Ratzinger is also quick to point

11 I discuss the matters of this paragraph, including Augustine’s figural interpretation of the discourse’s rhetoric more fully in “Hearing the Shepherd’s Voice.”

12 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xv–xvi. Denis Farkasfalvy suggests, “The book’s success among students of the Bible and theologians will depend on the way its introductory twenty-four pages (i–xxiv) are received and evaluated” in Denis Farkasfalvy, “*Jesus of Nazareth* and the Renewal of New Testament Theology,” *Communio* 34 (2007): 438–453, at 439.

13 Ratzinger makes similar claims in volume 2: “The New Testament message is not simply an idea; essential to it is the fact that these events actually occurred in the history of the world: biblical faith does not recount stories as symbols of meta-historical truths; rather, it bases itself upon history that unfolded upon this earth” (2.103–104). That being said, Ratzinger goes on to discuss the limits of the historical knowledge of these events afforded by critical historiography (2.104–105, 111–112).

out methodological shortcomings of a historical-critical approach: its concern for the Bible as a past artifact; the treatment of history as a closed system without reference to the transcendent; its inability to let the voice of Scripture speak to the present; the neglect of the canon's unity as an interpretive principle; the hypothetical nature of many historical-critical findings.<sup>14</sup>

Referring to the Second Vatican Council's *Dei Verbum* [*The Word of God*] §12, Ratzinger argues that a truly theological interpretation of the Bible as Scripture must attend to it "in the same Spirit in which it was written," a phrase which comes from Origen and his spiritual exegesis.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Ratzinger adopts several theological principles for his interpretation of Scripture, many of which are consistent with patristic exegetical habits.<sup>16</sup> First, Ratzinger argues that the theological interpreter reads Scripture as a canonical whole with Christ as the principle of its unity—a hermeneutical principle which Ratzinger elsewhere calls "the fundamental concept of patristic exegesis."<sup>17</sup> Second, Ratzinger acknowledges that speech has the capacity to transcend its original circumstances. New meaning comes to light by subsequent consideration of those words over time. He relates this transcendent aspect of speech to biblical inspiration and the classic doctrine of the fourfold sense. He writes, "The four senses of Scripture are not individual meanings arrayed side by side, but dimensions of the one word that reaches beyond the moment."<sup>18</sup> Third, Ratzinger reads the Bible in relation to the believing community, for the Bible's status as Scripture is derived from its relation to the people of God. The biblical books were produced within the context of the believing community (involving both Israel and the Church as the people of God), and it is within the historically continuous faith community that these books are received and proclaimed as God's Word in the present.

When he turns to the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers, Ratzinger often distinguishes between their theological claims and the interpretive methods which they used to articulate those claims. This distinction comes to light in his interpretation of parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37). Ratzinger cites the patristic reading of this parable in terms of Christ's redemptive work to heal a wounded humanity. He calls this interpretation "an allegorical reading ...

14 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xvi–xvii.

15 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 2.xiv; cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xviii. Quotation from *Dei Verbum* §12 is mine from the Latin text available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_lt.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_lt.html). Accessed June 7, 2011. On the Origenian background of this phrase see de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 361–374; Ignace de la Potterie, S. J., "Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Spirit in Which It Was Written (*Dei Verbum* 12c)," in *Vatican II: Assessments and Perspectives—Twenty Five Years After (1962–1987)*, 3 vols., ed. René Latourelle (Paulist, 1988–1989), 1.220–266, at 223–233.

16 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xviii–xxi.

17 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 136.

18 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xx.

an interpretation that bypasses the text.”<sup>19</sup> Ratzinger likewise characterizes the Scholastic interpretation of the traveler’s injuries in terms of the twofold character of humanity’s fallenness as “allegory, and it certainly goes far beyond the literal sense.”<sup>20</sup>

Even though Ratzinger speaks of such interpretations as going beyond the text, he finds much that is theologically valuable in them. Consistent with his statements about the capacity of language to transcend its original circumstances, Ratzinger states that the patristic interpretation “reflects an inner potentiality in the text and can be a fruit growing out of it as from a seed.”<sup>21</sup> He later adds that the “great vision” of this interpretation ascertains “a deeper dimension of the parable.”<sup>22</sup> For Ratzinger, the more-than-literal patristic interpretation may go beyond the plain sense of the parable, but it develops a certain dynamic in the parable into a larger theological interpretation. It picks up on the narrative dynamic of the Samaritan’s generous action to heal the helpless, wounded traveler, and develops it theologically in terms of Christ’s gracious work to redeem humanity wounded by sin. For Ratzinger, this more-than-literal reading has interpretive viability in part because it develops something present in the text. This narrative dynamic, available in the plain sense reading of the text, provides a basis and tether for more-than-literal interpretation.

### *Placing the Good Shepherd Discourse in Context*

Ratzinger wants his study of Jesus to have a historical grounding. When he turns to the Good Shepherd discourse, he first places the shepherd image in its ancient Near Eastern and biblical contexts. He observes that in the ancient Near East the shepherd image was often associated with kingship, and that this imagery appears in biblical texts such as Psalm 23. The most prominent biblical precursor for the Good Shepherd discourse is Ezekiel 34, which speaks of God coming to shepherd

19 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.199. Instances of this patristic reading can be found in Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, 34.3; Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke*, 7.71–84. See Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 3, general ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 177–181.

20 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.200. As these statements suggest, Ratzinger operates with a conventional notion of allegory as a reading which abandons the plain sense for a textually unrelated and unfounded meaning. For a critique of this conventional notion of allegory as not actually corresponding to patristic interpretive practice see Henri de Lubac, S.J., “Typology and Allegorization” in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 129–164; Henri Crouzel, “La distinction de la ‘typologie’ et de l’‘allégorie,’” [“The Distinction of Typology and Allegory”] *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 65 (1964): 161–174; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 70–78; Peter W. Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 283–317.

21 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.199.

22 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.201.

His people in place of Judah's corrupt leadership. Ratzinger then links Ezekiel 34 to the chronologically later shepherd imagery in Zechariah 12–13, which speaks of the shepherd figure being killed—a text which Ratzinger also sees as resembling the vicarious death of Isaiah's Servant of YHWH. Ratzinger remarks that the distinctive use of shepherd imagery in Zechariah 12–13 is a “surprising and thought-provoking turn that leads directly to the mystery of Jesus.”<sup>23</sup> Ratzinger understands Jesus as standing within this unfolding trajectory of the shepherd image across Israel's Scripture. Situated within this theological trajectory, Jesus “takes upon himself all the historical associations of the shepherd image, which he then purifies, and brings to its full meaning.”<sup>24</sup>

Ratzinger uses Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 12–13 to chart an interpretive trajectory across the canon, which provides the biblical context for Jesus' use of the shepherd imagery. He sees the re-readings of the shepherd image across the biblical books as exemplifying an unfolding theological current, which finds its *telos* in Christ. This claim is not a historical-critical one, but it is informed by Ratzinger's adoption of the patristic hermeneutical tenet that Christ is the principle of the canon's unity. Ratzinger reads Ezekiel and Zechariah as having historical and literary integrity in their own rights (a historical-critical tenet) as well as pointing forward, in various ways, to Christ (a patristic-theological tenet). Ratzinger's interpretation of the prophets in this regard closely resembles the kind of Christological reading of the Old Testament discussed in the 2001 Pontifical Biblical Commission document *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.<sup>25</sup>

### *“I am the Door for the Sheep”*

Ratzinger divides his interpretation of John 10:1–18 into two sections. Whereas most Johannine scholars divide the text between 10:1–6 and 7–18, Ratzinger structures his interpretation around the discourse's two “I am + predicate” statements. He begins with the Jesus' self-identification, “I am the Door for the Sheep” (10:7). He connects this statement in 10:7 with the previous contrast in 10:1–2 between the thief and robber, who climb up into the fold, and the shepherd, who enters through the door. Ratzinger interprets the identification of Christ as both the Door and the Shepherd, who enters through the door, as instructions for those in the Church who lead Christ's sheep. He writes, “The proof of a true shepherd is that he enters through Jesus as the door.”<sup>26</sup> While Ratzinger does not reference any

23 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.274.

24 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.278.

25 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001), §21. The English edition is available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20020212\\_popolo-ebraico\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_en.html). See the quotation in note 51 below.

26 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.276.

patristic writer here, his interpretation of John 10:1–18 in terms of instruction for bishops and pastors is redolent of the Augustinian exegesis of this text.<sup>27</sup>

Ratzinger cites the dialogue between the Risen Jesus and Peter (21:15–19) as exemplifying what it is for a pastor to enter through Christ as the Door. He observes that Jesus calls Simon personally, by name, and Peter's installation as pastor of Christ's sheep is grounded in his three-fold profession of love for Jesus. As a faithful shepherd, Peter tends the sheep, knowing that they belong to Christ and are not his own private property. Peter's personal love for Christ and his selfless reception of Christ's sheep dispose him to serve as an instrument through whom Christ continues to lead His sheep. But Peter also remains one of the flock as indicated by Christ's command, "follow Me" (21:19). Peter is both a shepherd and one of Christ's sheep.

### "I am the Good Shepherd"

Ratzinger organizes his interpretation of Jesus' second self-identification, "I am the Good Shepherd" (10:11), around four thematic elements in the discourse. First, Ratzinger attends to the contrast between the shepherd and the thief (10:1, 8, 10). The contrast between these two figures turns on the dispositions and actions that each one takes towards the sheep. Jesus states that the thief "does not come except to steal, slaughter, and destroy" (John 10:10). Ratzinger interprets the thief's activity in terms of his exploitation of the sheep for his own personal profit. He does not make the connection explicit, but his characterization of the thief reflects those attributes which the pastor of Christ's sheep should not have: exploitative self-interest and possessiveness of the sheep.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the thief, the Shepherd does not use the sheep as objects for his personal gain. Instead, the Shepherd does the very opposite of the thief: He gives up His own life for the sheep's benefit. Ratzinger then asks, rhetorically, what life would be like "When we live like the thief and the robber, taking everything for ourselves alone?"<sup>29</sup> Ratzinger positions himself and his present readers so as to identify themselves with the individuals in the Gospel narrative and to interpret their own situations in its light. This kind of *mimetic* exegesis (interpretation having the exhortative purpose of *imitation*) is highly evocative of the patristic characterization of Scripture as a mirror (*speculum*) in which readers see their own situations reflected in and interpreted by the biblical text—an interpretive technique which I shall discuss in greater detail below.<sup>30</sup>

27 See Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel according to John*, 46.5–8 (Patrologia Latina 35: 1728–1730). See also Gregory the Great, *Homily 15*; Walafridus Strabo, *Glossa Ordinaria* (Patrologia Latina 114: 396–398); Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John*, §1398–1408.

28 Compare Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel according to John*, 46.5.

29 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.278 (my emphasis).

30 For example, see Athanasius, "A Letter to Marcellinus," in *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah:

Ratzinger links the abundant life with the “pasture” (10:9), which he in turn associates with the pasture in Ezekiel 34:14, “With good pasture I will tend them, and on the mountainous heights of Israel—there will be their grazing area.” Commenting on this text, Ratzinger cites the Augustinian interpretation of the good pasture and mountains in Ezekiel 34 as God’s Word.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation, Ratzinger states, “is not the historical sense of the text, [but] in the end the Fathers saw correctly and, above all, they understood Jesus himself correctly.”<sup>32</sup> Once again, Ratzinger values the theological substance of the patristic interpretation, while acknowledging that it does not correspond to the historical sense of Ezekiel. The theological point that Ratzinger draws from the patristic interpretation is that in feeding on the good pasture of God’s Word, “Man lives on truth and on being loved: on being loved by the truth.”<sup>33</sup> The basic sustenance for human beings is the truth and love which is God Himself. In leading His sheep to pasture and giving them abundant life, Christ gives nothing less than Himself as divine truth and love.

The second element which Ratzinger treats (albeit briefly) in connection with Jesus as the Good Shepherd is the Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. Ratzinger discusses this motif as constituting the exact opposite of the thief’s selfish and exploitative behavior. The Shepherd’s laying down of His life for the sheep is central to both the Shepherd’s own identity and the discourse proper. Ratzinger claims that the characterization of the Shepherd’s death as a free laying down of His life offers a new perspective on the cross. By speaking of His death in this way, Jesus reveals the cross as the radical, free gift of Jesus’ own life for the good of the sheep.

The third element concerns the Shepherd’s knowing. For Ratzinger, this knowing involves two connected aspects. First, the Shepherd’s knowing the sheep is related to their being His sheep: “I know mine and mine know Me” (10:14). In keeping with the selfless attitudes of the Shepherd(s) toward the sheep, Ratzinger defines the relationship between Shepherd and sheep as one of personal commitment, not the ownership of property. The thief and the robber view the sheep as things to be used for their personal gain. Ratzinger again brings the biblical text to bear on contemporary socio-political situations by identifying the thief and the

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Paulist, 1980), §12 (p. 111); Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 119.6; Idem, *Sermon* 49.5. For secondary discussion, see John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 82–84; Sister Ritamary Bradley, C.H.M., “Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum* in Mediaeval Literature,” *Speculum* 29 (1954): 100–115.

31 See Augustine, *Sermon* 46.24: “Gather yourselves to the mountains of holy scripture. There you will find your heart’s desire ... they are the richest pastures.” Citation from Saint Augustine, “Sermon 46” in *Sermons II* (20–50): *On the Old Testament*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., Works of St. Augustine 3.2 (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1990), 263–297, at 279. Ratzinger does not explicitly label this patristic reading as Augustinian.

32 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.279.

33 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.279.

robber as “the ideologues and the dictators [for whom] ... human beings are merely a thing that they possess.”<sup>34</sup>

The second aspect of the Shepherd’s knowing is the relationship between his knowing the sheep and the mutual knowing between the Father and the Son: “I know mine and mine know me just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father” (10:14–15). With this statement, Ratzinger connects the Trinity and ecclesiology via the category of communion. He writes, “The knowing that links Jesus with ‘his own’ exists within the space opened up by his ‘knowing’ oneness with the Father.”<sup>35</sup> The Shepherd knows His sheep and wants them to find genuine freedom, rooted in the truth (that is, “the pasture”). The fullness of this freedom and truth are only available in communion with the Triune God into which Jesus leads His sheep. Ratzinger presents this vision of truth and freedom, which are rooted in God, in opposition to modern materialism. He writes, “Any ‘self-knowledge’ that restricts man to the empirical and the tangible fails to engage with man’s true depth.”<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger again allows the Gospel to speak to present situations by interpreting them within the terms and horizon of the Gospel narrative.

The fourth thematic element of the discourse which Ratzinger treats is unity. He first turns to Ezekiel 37:15–17. Reading this text together with Ezekiel 34, Ratzinger accents God’s action as Shepherd to gather together His scattered people, that is, the restoration of Israel. The ingathering of God’s people provides the biblical context for the unity motif in John 10. As with the canonical shepherd image, Ratzinger sees Jesus embracing this component of biblical eschatology while also expanding it.<sup>37</sup> While Ezekiel 34–37 focuses specifically on the ingathering of Israel, Jesus extends the ingathering motif to include all of humanity. Ratzinger justifies this claim by linking Jesus’ remark about His “sheep, who are not of this fold” (10:16) with the narrator’s remark in 11:52: Jesus would die “not only on behalf of the nation, but so that He may gather together into one God’s scattered children.” Jesus’ extension of the ingathering component does not negate Ezekiel’s claims, but rather presupposes and expands on them.<sup>38</sup> Theologically, Ratzinger grounds the relationship of unity and universalism in Christ’s identity as the Logos (Word). Christ is able to gather all people into one because as the Logos, all people (and indeed all creation) were made through Him (1:3). Ratzinger

34 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.281.

35 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.282.

36 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.282.

37 Ratzinger (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.284) writes, Jesus “takes up this vision, while very decidedly enlarging the scope of the promise.”

38 In his discussion of Jesus as interpreter of Scripture, Ratzinger (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.116–122) argues that the universalism of the Gospel builds upon the prophetic trajectory which envisions God’s salvation extended to the Gentiles through Israel as a “light to the nations” (compare Isa. 49:6).

writes, "however scattered they may be, yet as coming from him and bound toward him they are one."<sup>39</sup>

Having connected the Shepherd's gathering activity with Christ's identity as the Logos, Ratzinger closes his interpretation of John 10:1–18 by referring this equation to his readers' personal relationships with Christ. Citing Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus* [*The Pedagogue*] 3.12.101), Ratzinger states that early Christians occasionally used the biblical shepherd imagery for interpreting their life in the world. Texts such as Psalm 23 and the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:4–7) depict the shepherd bearing his sheep through difficult situations to safety. Ratzinger then puts himself and his readers in the place of the sheep, whom the shepherd carries upon his shoulders in the Gospel parable (see Luke 15:5). He writes: Christ, as the Shepherd and Logos, "brings home the stray sheep, humanity; he brings *me* home, too. ... Carried on his shoulders, *we* come home."<sup>40</sup> In this way, Ratzinger, who at the time of publication serves as the successor to Peter, places himself among Christ's sheep.

### III. Ratzinger's Appropriation of Patristic Biblical Hermeneutics

#### *A Synthesis of Modern and Premodern Interpretation*

Ratzinger's appropriation of *patristic* biblical interpretation is neither wholesale nor straightforward because it is conditioned by his commitments to modern historical criticism. Like Henri de Lubac, Ratzinger does not advocate a nostalgic retreat to the Fathers as a mythical golden age of exegesis.<sup>41</sup> Not only is this a practical impossibility but Ratzinger also genuinely values the contributions of modern biblical exegesis. At the same time, Ratzinger maintains that contemporary theological interpretation has much to gain by drawing on patristic exegesis. A statement from his famous 1988 Erasmus Lecture articulates his attitude well: Christian exegesis "cannot withdraw to the Middle Ages or the Fathers and use them as a shield against the spirit of modernity. That said, it also cannot take the opposite tack of dispensing with the insights of the great believers of all ages and of acting as if the history of thought begins in earnest only with Kant."<sup>42</sup> The kind of

39 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.284.

40 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.286 (my emphasis).

41 Ratzinger (*Principles of Catholic Theology*, 145) explicitly rejects any return to the Fathers that is based on nostalgia or a myth of origins: "We have drawn a fundamental distinction here between the mythical concept of tradition and the Christian concept of patrology. ... The Fathers, we must now say, are not marked out simply because they belong to 'antiquity'; the fact that they stand near *in time* to the origin of the New Testament does not necessarily prove that they are *inwardly* close to it. But that inner closeness is what matters." See also de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1.xix–xxi.

42 Ratzinger, "On the Foundations and the Itinerary of Exegesis Today," 19.

theological interpretation proposed by Ratzinger must genuinely be a synthesis of the wisdom found in both patristic and modern exegesis.<sup>43</sup>

As has been shown, Ratzinger often formally distinguishes the theological claims of patristic *interpretations* (which he values) from their interpretive *methods* (which he often criticizes or dismisses). He often focuses on the theological substance of patristic interpretations and uses them to develop his own theological interpretations. Thus, he develops the Augustinian association of “the pasture” in Ezekiel 34:13–14 with God’s Word to articulate the human desire for the truth and freedom which is satisfied only in Trinitarian communion through Christ. At one level, Ratzinger values patristic exegesis as a kind of extended “chronicle of research”: a collection of theologically and exegetically interesting observations, which he consults and develops in his own interpretation.

Even though Ratzinger is often cool towards patristic interpretive *methods*, I propose that he actually appropriates in a creative way a key patristic interpretive strategy: regarding Scripture as a *mirror* for the readers’ situations. A succinct formulation of this patristic interpretive strategy is given by Athanasius in his *Letter to Marcellinus*:

These words [of the Psalms] become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul. ... For in fact, he who hears the one reading receives the song that is recited as being about him, and either, when he is convicted by his conscience, ... he will repent, or hearing of the hope that resides in God, and of the succor available to believers—how this kind of grace exists for him—he exults and begins to give thanks to God.<sup>44</sup>

Athanasius invites the Christian audience to hear the Psalms speaking personally to their present lives and situations. So contemporized and personalized, the biblical text speaks to the faithful reader, encourages him or her to repent, grow in holiness, and offer praise to God. Similarly, I have noted several instances in which Ratzinger uses the shepherd discourse to interpret realities in his readers’ present. He employs the “thief and robber” to interpret both peoples’ self-interested greed and also those political despots who exploit their own people. He contrasts the “pasture” of divine truth and freedom with the false vision provided by modern materialism. He also identifies all Christians, himself included, as “the lost sheep,” whom Christ carries home.<sup>45</sup> Like Athanasius, Ratzinger invites his readers to interpret their lives and present situations in the world in light of the Gospel nar-

43 See William M. Wright IV, “A ‘New Synthesis’: Joseph Ratzinger’s *Jesus of Nazareth*,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 7 (2009): 35–66, especially pp. 35–51.

44 Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus*, §12 (p. 111).

45 See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.278, 281, 282, 286 respectively.

rative. He reads the discourse in a more-than-literal way to configure the readers' present situations in light of the biblical text.<sup>46</sup> Scripture thus provides the master horizon in which the readers are to interpret and understand themselves and their situations. By providing the interpretive framework for all reality, the biblical text (to use George Lindbeck's expression), "absorbs the world."<sup>47</sup>

### *Retrieving a Patristic Theological Style*

More significant is Ratzinger's vision for the whole program of theological interpretation. As others have observed, Ratzinger's basic approach to Scripture and theology in *Jesus of Nazareth* resembles the kinds of theological thinking characteristic of early Christians.<sup>48</sup> Ratzinger not only uses patristic exegesis as a collection of interpretive possibilities from the Christian past, but he also embraces it as a template for the very practice of theology. This may be the most compelling aspect of Ratzinger's retrieval of patristic hermeneutics for the theological interpretation of Scripture. I will focus on four specific ways in which Ratzinger's approach to biblical interpretation incorporate principles of patristic biblical hermeneutics.

First, Ratzinger's theological presentation in *Jesus of Nazareth* is identical with his biblical exegesis. Rather than subjective experience or theory, Scripture provides the starting point and the substance for Ratzinger's theological thinking. Theology and exegesis are so integrated in *Jesus of Nazareth* that it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to make any real distinction between them. This indistinguishability of theology and exegesis characterizes much premodern Christian biblical interpretation. As de Lubac writes, for premodern exegetes "theological science and the explication of Scripture cannot but be one and the same thing."<sup>49</sup>

Second, Ratzinger reads the Gospels in light of the whole canon of Scripture with Christ as the principle of its unity. He places Christ within the horizon of the Old Testament, but his Christian reading of the Old Testament departs in some ways from the classical Christian hermeneutic. Much of this can be attributed to the new context of biblical interpretation created by modern historical exegesis. Ratzinger first situates the canonical compositions in their historical contexts of origin and then discerns a theological dynamic developing across the canon. He

46 See Lewis Ayres, "On the Practice and Teaching of Christian Doctrine," *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 33–94, especially 53–59, 71; Wright, "Hearing the Shepherd's Voice." [Forthcoming]

47 George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 118. See also Bruce D. Marshall, "Absorbing the World: Christianity and the Universe of Truths" in *Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck*, ed. Bruce D. Marshall (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 69–102. This resemblance to Lindbeck is also noted by Anthony C. Sciglitano, Jr., "Pope Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth*: Agape and Logos," *Pro Ecclesia* 17 (2008): 181.

48 See Roch Kereszty, "The Challenge of *Jesus of Nazareth* for Theologians," *Communio* 34 (2007): 456–458, 473; Sciglitano, "Pope Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth*: Agape and Logos," 177.

49 De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1.27.

then situates Christ within this unfolding dynamic, which He brings to its fullness. In this way, Ratzinger maintains that the Old Testament books both have a historical and abiding theological sense in their own right, and, within the context of the Christian canon, they also have other, more-than-literal meanings which are not apparent apart from faith in Christ.<sup>50</sup> For Ratzinger, a more-than-literal reading of Scripture expands or develops something present in the text. These more-than-literal meanings may go beyond the original sense of the text, but they maintain some degree of congruence and correspondence to it. In this way, the literal, historical meaning functions as a point of departure and control for more-than-literal meanings. Ratzinger relates the Old Testament and Jesus on the basis of textual meanings, language, and cross-compositional theological ideas.

Like much modern biblical criticism, Ratzinger tends to identify the literal sense with a text's claim understood within its original historical circumstances. By parsing the literal and spiritual senses in terms of words and texts, Ratzinger differs somewhat from the classic Christian hermeneutic, which (at least according to de Lubac) associates the spiritual sense with *the things* or *realities* presented by the text rather than the language of the text itself.<sup>51</sup>

Consider, for example, the formulation of the fourfold sense given by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* pt. 1, q. 1, a. 10. Aquinas defines as proper to the literal sense of Scripture "that first signification whereby words signify things."<sup>52</sup> It

50 Compare Ratzinger's reading of the Old Testament in light of Christ with the 2001 PBC text *Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* §21: "for Christians, all the Old Testament economy is in movement towards Christ; if then the Old Testament is read in the light of Christ, one can, retrospectively, perceive something of this movement. But since it is a movement, a slow and difficult progression throughout the course of history, each event and each text is situated at a particular point along the way. ... Although the Christian reader is aware that the internal dynamism of the Old Testament finds its goal in Jesus, this is a retrospective perception whose point of departure is not in the text as such, but in the events of the New Testament proclaimed by the apostolic preaching." Cited from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20020212\\_popoloebraico\\_en.html#4.%20Return%20to%20the%20Literal%20Sense](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popoloebraico_en.html#4.%20Return%20to%20the%20Literal%20Sense). Accessed June 14, 2011.

51 For De Lubac, the spiritual sense (or Christian allegory) is the spiritual participation of historical realities, presented by Scripture, in the mystery of Christ. He distinguishes Christian allegory from Hellenistic allegory on the grounds that the former deals with the spiritual participation of real things in Christ, whereas the latter abandons history for abstract speculation. He states that Christian allegory "is not in the service of some naturalist thought or philosophical abstraction. It goes from history to history—although not to history alone or only to the exterior elements of history. It relates the unique facts with another unique fact, divine interventions that have already taken place with another kind of divine intervention, equally real and incomparably more profound. ... It is, we repeat, the fact of Christ, both unique and universal. It is the Christian mystery in all its dimensions" in Henri de Lubac, "Hellenistic Allegory and Christian Allegory," in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 165–196, at 195. See also de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2.1–19. A recent attempt to articulate this "participatory dimension of historical realities" in divine providence in Thomistic terms is Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

52 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, q. 1, a. 10. Quotations from Aquinas' *Summa*

is the simple sense of the words which signify things or realities—or as Aquinas puts it in *De potentia Dei* [On the Power of God] 4.1 “the ways the words go.”<sup>53</sup> For Aquinas, the spiritual senses do not pertain to the biblical words or texts as such, but the realities, which the words present, as they signify the Mystery of Christ: “That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.”<sup>54</sup> Through this Augustinian distinction of words and things, Aquinas discerns the relationships between the Old Testament and Jesus as existing properly between *things* or *realities*, not words or textual meanings. Hence, de Lubac writes:

To discover this allegory [i.e. the spiritual senses], one will not find it properly speaking in the text, but in the realities of which the text speaks; ... the text acts only as spokesman to lead to the historical realities; the latter are themselves the figures, they themselves contain the mysteries that the exercise of allegory is supposed to extract.<sup>55</sup>

Or, as Francis Martin succinctly puts it, “the spiritual sense of Scripture is based, not on a theory of text, but on a theology of history.”<sup>56</sup>

These differences between Ratzinger and Aquinas highlight the well-known complexities that attend defining “the literal sense” and parsing its relationship with the more-than-literal senses of Scripture. The models of Ratzinger and Aquinas are not irreconcilable, but they do diverge in their locating of the more-than-literal senses of Scripture, whether entirely in the text’s surplus of meaning or in the concrete historical realities of the divine economy as given in Scripture. These divergences underscore that any retrieval of patristic exegesis must reckon with the various definitions of “literal sense” in Christian history, what exegetical techniques are appropriate for apprehending it, and its role in relating the Testaments.<sup>57</sup>

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*Theologiae* are taken from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols. (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947–1948).

53 The phrase in quotation marks is Bruce Marshall’s translation of Thomas Aquinas’ characterization of the literal sense as *salva circumstantia litterae* in *De potentia Dei* 4.1, cited in Marshall, “Absorbing the World,” 93. See also Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., “How the Virtues of an Interpreter Presuppose and Perfect Hermeneutics: The Case of Thomas Aquinas,” *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 64–81, especially p. 74; Mark F. Johnson, “Another Look at the Plurality of the Literal Sense,” in *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 2 (1992): 117–141, especially pp. 126–136.

54 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. I., q. 1, a. 10.

55 De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2.86.

56 Francis Martin, “Election, Covenant, and Law,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 4 (2006): 867.

57 For a survey of the different ways in which “literal sense” has been defined in Christian history, see Brevard S. Childs, “The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem,” in *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag* [Contributions to Old Testament Theology: Festschrift for Walther Zimmerli for His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday],

Third, Ratzinger not only reads Scripture theologically, but he also operates with an implied theology of Scripture. That is, he understands the nature and function of Scripture within a larger doctrinal framework.<sup>58</sup> Ratzinger does not write extensively about this in *Jesus of Nazareth*, but he does make some suggestive comments in the Foreword to volume 1 when discussing the relationship between Scripture and the Church. He understands Scripture as embedded within the larger context of God's relationship with His people: "The Scripture emerged from within the heart of a living subject—the pilgrim people of God—and lives within this same subject."<sup>59</sup> The people of God exist in close relationship with Scripture because the Scripture came to be within it and the historically-continuous faith community continues to hear God's voice sounding through the Scriptures. For Scripture to be read as God's Word, it must be read within the context of the believing community—a community which is constituted by its relationship with God. As Lewis Ayres has observed, "the very notion of 'canonical' Scriptures implies the existence of the community that sees those scriptures as the focus for their attempt to articulate an account of God, of God's actions, and of the most appropriate shape of Christian life in response to those actions."<sup>60</sup> In other words, according to Ayres, the existence of a biblical canon necessarily presupposes a community for whom that canon is normative. Since he reads Scripture in terms of its relationship with the Church, Ratzinger brings what he knows and practices by faith to bear on his biblical interpretation. Hence, he justifies the importance of historical biblical study to Christian exegesis by making a theological appeal to the historical reality of the Incarnation. For Ratzinger, theology provides and secures the space for historical research in Christian exegesis.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, Ratzinger's theological interpretation ultimately aims at the spiritual transformation of Christians. Ratzinger makes clear from the beginning that his goal in writing this book is to help readers come to know and love Christ more. While he presents his work in contrast to certain historical Jesus studies that have obstructed or impeded the possibility of knowing Him personally through the Gospels, Ratzinger does not present his work as an exercise in modern critical

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eds. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhard, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 80–93.

58 My thinking here is indebted to Ayres, "On the Practice and Teaching of Christian Doctrine," 50–74.

59 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xx-xxi, quotation from 1.xx. In a 1965 essay, Ratzinger discusses the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, understood as the Church's interpretation of Scripture in light of Christ's abiding presence in the Church. See Joseph Ratzinger, "Revelation and Tradition," in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, trans. W. J. O'Hara, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 17 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 26–49.

60 Ayres, "Practice and Teaching of Christian Doctrine," 50.

61 Compare Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* §28–29. Benedict makes a similar argument to secure the autonomy of reason and temporal space by placing them within the Christian account of the world.

exegesis.<sup>62</sup> Rather, Ratzinger offers his interpretation of the Gospels as an aid by means of which his readers may come to know Christ and grow in their relationships with him. He writes, "it struck me as the most urgent priority to present the figure and message of Jesus in his public ministry, and so to help foster the growth of a living relationship with him."<sup>63</sup>

This concern—that biblical interpretation should ultimately serve a transformative end—places Ratzinger squarely in line with the main goals of patristic exegesis. His appropriation of mimetic exegesis, in which the audience is invited to interpret their lives and situations in terms of the biblical text, illustrates this well. By bringing the Scripture to bear on the readers' present situations and interpret them accordingly, Ratzinger enables the Scripture to speak to the present. Ratzinger uses this patristic exegetical strategy in part to overcome the historical-critical method's inability to let the Scripture speak with present and personal relevance.

#### IV. Conclusion

Reinhard Hütter has characterized the effort to integrate modern historical criticism with traditional Christian exegesis as a "quandary" which corresponds to an unresolved tension in recent Catholic pronouncements about the interpretation of Scripture.<sup>64</sup> When viewed in light of post-conciliar Catholic biblical exegesis, Ratzinger's *Jesus of Nazareth* appears as one of the most substantive efforts to work out that tension in practice. The individual claims and interpretations in *Jesus of Nazareth* can and will be debated (as Ratzinger himself invites). But in a larger sense, *Jesus of Nazareth* offers a model for the theological interpretation of the Gospels, which combines both "the new and the old" (Matthew 13:52), in service of the readers' spiritual transformation by Christ. Ratzinger's retrieval of patristic biblical hermeneutics allows God's Word to sound in the Church and the world today, a task most appropriate to the man who serves as Chief shepherd of Christ's sheep.

62 Ratzinger (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xxiii) explicitly makes this claim: "my intention in writing this book is not to counter modern exegesis."

63 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1.xxiv.

64 Reinhard Hütter, "A Symposium on 'The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible' from the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2001," *Pro Ecclesia* 13 (2004): 19–21. Both Hütter and Ratzinger cite *Dei Verbum* §12 as exhibiting an uneasy association of both modern and traditional modes of exegesis. See Hütter, "Symposium," especially 21, n.18; Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 134–137.

