

The Priority of Synchronic Text-analysis: Cognitive Text Comprehension and Interpreting Deuteronomy 4:1–40¹

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Abstract

This investigation first notes the differences between the outlook of more traditional, Enlightenment exegesis and the general approach advocated by Eep Talstra and Christof Hardmeier. Second, following the observations of C.H.J. Van Der Merwe, I outline salient features from Walter Kintsch's cognitive model of text comprehension as the theoretical foundation for adjudicating between exegetical models. Third, I present the notions of profile and domain from cognitive semantics, and then relate them to the level of discourse as a means for identifying overarching meaning constructions via extra-canonical intertextuality. Fourth, I use this theoretical model to compare and contrast Talstra's diachronic analysis of Moses' discourse in Deut 4:1-40 with the reading of J.G. McConville. Thus, the theoretical foundation is laid for identifying and articulating the effect of extra-canonical intertextuality on the construction of meaning in Biblical exegesis for Bible translation, for teaching, and for preaching.

Key Words: Deuteronomy 4; Cognitive Linguistics; cognitive text processing; text semantics; exegetical method; discourse analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

The scholarly quest for precision in exegesis for Bible translation, preaching, and teaching has served as an impetus leading to many advances in our understanding of Hebrew lexicography, grammar, discourse structure, and literary structure. Although individual scholars differed in their analyses, from the Enlightenment through the late twentieth century there was a general consensus among historical-critical exegetes regarding both the method and the aims for determining the precise, historical meaning of a text. However, at the end of the twentieth century this consensus began to break apart, as has been well documented. More recently, some scholars not only voiced their dissatisfaction with traditional exegetical methods, but also they propose a new approach.² On the basis of advances in our understanding of discourse and text analysis, as well as under the influence of final-form reading, they propose a re-ordering of the steps in exegesis. Moreover, they propose a reconsideration of how we analyze the diachronic dimensions of a text.

I would like to proceed in the following investigation by first providing a brief overview of traditional, Enlightenment approaches to exegesis, and then to contrast this vein of scholarship with the more recent proposals of Eep Talstra and Christof Hardmeier. Second, following the suggestion of Christo H.J. Van Der Merwe, I will outline the most salient features of Walter Kintsch's cognitive model of text comprehension as a means for adjudicating between exegetical models. Third, I will present the notions of profile and domain from cognitive semantics, and then relate them to the level of discourse as a means for identifying the construal of meaning at the discourse level. Fourth, I will raise some concerns about the approach of Talstra and Hardmeier via an examination of Talstra's diachronic analysis of Moses' discourse in Deut 4:1–40 in order to demonstrate the manner in which extra-canonical intertextuality affects the construction of meaning in text comprehension. I will show that although recent discussions move beyond traditional, historical-critical exegesis, their method of interpretation is still constrained by the assumptions of both the Enlightenment and Modernity.

2. EXEGETICAL MODELS AND TEXT COMPREHENSION

We now therefore begin by delving into the issue of exegetical method. We will first

² Eep Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers: Een inleiding in de methoden van uitleg van het Oude Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 2002) and Christof Hardmeier, *Textwelten der Bibel entdecken: Grundlagen und Verfahren einer textpragmatischen Literaturwissenschaft der Bibel* (2 vols.; Textpragmatische Studien zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte der Hebräischen Bibel 1; Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003, 2004).

outline the traditional, Enlightenment understanding of the assumptions, the method, and the aims of exegesis, and then we will proceed to examine new proposals that follow on the heels of the break-up in the modern consensus.

2.1 EXEGETICAL METHOD IN THE STREAM OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT TRADITION

In order to gain an understanding of the starting point for recent discussions of the method and the task of exegesis, we will now provide a couple of examples from the modern tradition of exegesis.

As our first exemplar, the work of O.H. Steck falls within the traditional, historical-critical quest for the original and historical meaning of Biblical texts, and his aim is to bring the history of interpretation and all pre-understanding under the control of this historical meaning in order to move toward an objective interpretation of the Old Testament.³ Steck orders the use of critical methodology as follows: 1. Text-criticism, 2. Literary- (Source-)criticism, 3. Tradition-criticism, 4. Redaction-criticism, 5. Form-criticism, 6. questions of the History of Traditions, and 7. a determination of the text's place in history.⁴ Textual, semantic, or syntactic analysis is conducted on discrete units or levels only after these are determined by rigorous diachronic analysis.⁵ Steck concludes with a chapter on interpretation, and he applies each of the methods with an eye towards interpretation. Nevertheless, one major weakness of his book is a lack of awareness of recent hermeneutic literature, as well as a serious discussion of the meaning of the text for the contemporary world. Although Gadamer is cited several times, relevant hermeneutic literature is not mentioned. In my estimation, a summary discussion of both hermeneutics and homiletics would be appropriate.⁶

³ O. H. Steck, *Exegese des Alten Testaments. Leitfaden der Methodik. Ein Arbeitsbuch für Proseminare, Seminare und Vorlesungen* (14., durchgesehene und erweiterte Auflage 1999; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1971/1999), 1, 5. Another standard work from a more traditional, historical-critical standpoint is that of G. Fohrer, *et al.*, *Exegese des Alten Testaments. 5. Auflage* (Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg, 1989).

⁴ Steck, *Exegese*, 15, 19–21.

⁵ For example, in Steck's approach form criticism is conducted on discrete units that have been determined by source-criticism (Steck, *Exegese*, 106).

⁶ I find the discussions of Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981); William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993); Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis, Third Edition: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); and Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Revised and*

By way of contrast, the work of Wolfgang Richter is founded upon text-linguistic theory.⁷ Richter places his method firmly within the discipline of literary studies.⁸ Moreover, he distances his linguistic and literary approach from traditional, historical-critical exegesis on the grounds that it is text-centered rather than seeking the history behind the text.⁹ Richter begins with diachronic analysis, and then proceeds to a synchronic analysis of the units that were determined on the basis of his diachronic analysis. For Richter, form-critical analysis is central. Text- (or discourse-) analysis is the analysis of discrete, coherent units that are determined on the basis of source and form criticism. According to his approach, no word analysis should be conducted until after the form-critical analysis.¹⁰ The results of analyzing the form of the text are the basis for all further questions.¹¹ The interpretation of the placement and the function of a discrete unit within a larger whole does not come until later in the process with composition- and redaction-critical analysis.¹² Since Richter views his approach strictly as a form of text analysis, this means that there is neither a theological nor an ecclesiological dimension to his work.¹³ Richter views the role of

Expanded (2d ed.; Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2006) to be much more comprehensive, and therefore of inestimably greater worth for practical application in the life and work of the Church.

⁷ Wolfgang Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft. Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen Literatur Theorie und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

⁸ „Die Bibelwissenschaft ist somit ein kleiner Zweig der Literaturwissenschaften; sie ist Literaturwissenschaft.“ (Richter, *Exegese*, 12)

⁹ „Die selbständige Position der Literaturwissenschaft des AT (=Bibelwissenschaft) macht zugleich deutlich, daß der Begriff 'historisch-kritische Wissenschaft' nicht mehr angewandt werden kann.“ (Richter, *Exegese*, 17–18) Although one may distinguish his text-centered method from historical-critical exegesis, Richter's core assumptions share a similar naturalistic worldview with historical-critical exegetes.

¹⁰ „Hiermit ist zugleich bewiesen, daß Wortuntersuchungen nicht am Anfang der Textanalyse stehen können, sondern frühestens nach der Formkritik möglich sind.“ (Richter, *Exegese*, 119) Moreover:

¹¹ Richter, *Exegese*, 120.

¹² „Als letzter methodischer Schritt vor der inhaltlichen Analyse bleibt noch die Frage nach der literarischen Zusammenfügung und Bearbeitung der einzelnen Einheiten und Kompositionen.“ (Richter, *Exegese*, 165)

¹³ „Die Existenz des Kanons ist für den Interpreten der Texte bedeutungslos; interessant ist er nur als historisches Faktum, insofern seine Aufstellung dazu geführt hat, daß andere Texte leider verlorengegangen sind und für die Interpretation nicht mehr zur Verfügung stehen. Die Entstehung des Kanons muß er den Kirchengeschichtler verfolgen lassen, seine Gestaltung sowie Fragen der Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit muß er dem Dogmengeschichtler und Dogmatiker, geistesgeschichtlich bedingte Wertungen wie „historisch“ dem Theologiegeschichtler überlassen. Insofern findet er sich doch in ähnlicher Situation wie seine

each of these methods as follows in Table 1.

Aspekt	Methode
1. <i>Einheit oder Zusammengesetztheit der Texte</i>	<i>Literarkritik</i>
2. <i>Struktur der Einheit</i>	<i>Formkritik</i>
3. <i>Vorgegebene Einheiten</i>	<i>Gattungskritik</i>
4. <i>(Mündliche) Entfaltungsstufen der Einheit</i>	<i>Traditionskritik</i>
5. <i>Komposition und Redaktion der Einheiten</i>	<i>Kompositions- und Redaktionskritik</i>

Table 1. W. Richter's view of the role of traditional, critical methodologies in exegesis.¹⁴

Now that we have examined representative formulations of the exegetical task within the critical tradition, we shall turn our gaze to some new proposals that followed the breakup of the critical consensus.

2.2 A RECENT TURN IN DISCUSSIONS OF EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY

Among discussions of exegetical method within the last fifteen years, one begins to note a growing acceptance of a plurality of methods, as well as an attempt to reorder the application of these methods in exegesis.¹⁵ Canon criticism and the literary turn in exegesis is leading key scholars to propose that the right determination of meaning begins with a final-form reading of the Pentateuch, and then this synchronic reading in turn proceeds to diachronic analysis. In order to gain an appreciation for the

literaturwissenschaftlichen Fachkollegen“ (Richter, *Exegese*, 41). In contrast, B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); idem., *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) situates interpretation within the context of the Church, and he also locates meaning within the canon. These two foundational assumptions are integral to exegesis for the Church.

¹⁴ Richter, *Exegese*, 44.

¹⁵ For more on the plurality of methods today, see Louis C. Jonker, “Winds of Change? Recent Developments in Old Testament Exegetical Methodology in Germany,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 45/3 (2004): 599–608; idem., *Exclusivity and Variety: Perspectives on Multidimensional Exegesis* (CBET 19; KOK Pharos: Kampen, 1996); Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (eds.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Helmut Utschneider and Erhard Blum (eds.), *Lesarten der Bibel: Untersuchungen zu einer Theorie der Exegese des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2006).

assumptions and the insights of this approach, we will begin with an overview of the work of Eep Talstra and Christof Hardmeier, and we will then follow Christo H.J. Van der Merwe's proposed synthesis of these two upon the foundation of cognitive text processing in the following section.¹⁶

2.2.1 Eep Talstra. Eep Talstra reads the Old Testament both as an ancient text, as well as within a particular, Protestant reading community.¹⁷ He argues that the reading process should be a confrontation between many generations of readers and their reading methods.¹⁸ Even though Talstra is primarily known for his text-linguistic approach, he advocates reading the Old Testament within its historical context because the Old Testament has many linguistic and conceptual continuities with the society in

¹⁶ Helmut Utschneider (“Text-Reader-Author. Towards a Theory of Exegesis: Some European Viewpoints,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 1 (1996): Pdf version [www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/jhs-article.html], accessed April 25, 2008) notes the crisis in Biblical studies with the loss of consensus regarding historical-critical assumptions. Knud Lambrecht (*Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representations of Discourse Referents* [Cambridge Studies in Linguistics; Cambridge: CUP, 1994]) remains key for an accurate understanding of information structure, and Walter Kintsch (*Comprehension: A Paradigm for Cognition* [Cambridge: CUP, 1998]) provides an accepted theoretical foundation for cognitive text processing. The methods of Eep Talstra (*Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*) and Christof Hardmeier (*Textwelten der Bibel entdecken*) have been discussed and applied in the following articles from a text-linguistic perspective: Christo H.J. Van der Merwe, “The Bible and Hypertext Technology: Challenges for Maximizing the Use of a New Type of Technology in Biblical Studies,” *JNSL* 28 (2002): 87–102; Eep Talstra and C.H.J. van der Merwe, “Analysis, Retrieval and the Demand for More Data. Integrating the Results of a Formal Textlinguistic and Cognitive Based Pragmatic Approach to the Analysis of Deut 4:1–40,” in *Bible and Computer: The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference. Proceedings of the Association Internationale Bible et Informatique “From Alpha to Byte”. University of Stellenbosch 17–21 July, 2000* (ed. Johann Cook; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 43–78; Christo H.J. van der Merwe and Eep Talstra, “Biblical Hebrew Word Order: The Interface of Information Structure and Formal Features,” *ZAH* 15/16 (2002/2003): 68–107; Christo H.J. Van der Merwe, “Biblical Exegesis, Cognitive Linguistics and Hypertext,” in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 255–80.

¹⁷ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 11. Talstra's application of exegetical method, text processing, and computer-assisted text research may be seen in Eep Talstra and Carl J. Bosma, “Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History. A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology,” *CTJ* 36 (2001): 290–313; Wido van Peursen and Eep Talstra, “Computer-Assisted Analysis of Parallel Texts in the Bible. The Case of 2 Kings xviii–xix and Its Parallels in Isaiah and Chronicles,” *VT* 57 (2007): 45–72; Eep Talstra, “The Hebrew Bible and the Computer: The Poet and the Engineer in Dialogue,” *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 1 (2007): 49–59.

¹⁸ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 15.

which it developed, and historical knowledge illumines the meaning and the significance of these aspects of an historically distant text.¹⁹ Above all, his work is an investigation into exegetical method, and Talstra emphasizes his agreement with J. Barton that there is no one correct procedure: “The quest for good exegetical methods does not point in the direction of the absolutely correct procedure. The search points toward two other aims: first, to bring order to the variety of texts, instruments, and approaches; second, to develop competency as a reader.”²⁰ The diversity of approaches in reading strategies today is undeniable, and the competent reader must choose the appropriate method for a given text or question in the process of multidimensional exegesis.²¹

In terms of methodology, Talstra begins by first *taking inventory* of the Jewish and Christian text materials that are relevant for interpreting a given passage: epigraphic material, related texts from the MT, the Greek text tradition, Qumran, the Mishna and Talmud, Christian liturgy, and Christian dogmatics.²² The reader’s tradition determines both his assumptions and the relative weight of these texts during the interpretive process.²³ Second, comes *analysis*, and for this the Masoretic Text is central.²⁴ We seek to understand the language, the structure, the background, and the intended readers.²⁵ This phase consists in the use of the Masoretic Text, concordances, computer programs, theological lexicons, and grammars in order to investigate syntax,

¹⁹ At the same time, Talstra (*Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 21, 24, 26) finds that there are discontinuities between the Old Testament and its environment.

²⁰ “Het zoeken naar goede methoden van exegese richt zich niet op het vinden van de absoluut juiste procedure. Het zoeken dient twee andere doelen: het gaat in de eerste plaats om orde aan te brengen in de verscheidenheid aan teksten, instrumenten en werkwijzen. In de tweede plaats gaat het om de ontwikkeling van een goede competentie als lezer” (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 81). J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study. Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

²¹ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 109.

²² Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 39–48. Talstra fails to mention a consideration of both patristic literature and medieval Jewish exegesis in the inventory phase. Moreover, following Gadamer, the importance of *Wirkungsgeschichte* has been noted in discussions of philosophical hermeneutics. Beyond those texts mentioned by Talstra, some interpreters find that it is important also to consider how a text has affected history, art, literature, music, etc. In all fairness, it is too much to expect a thorough acquaintance with the complete history of the interpretation and effects of a text; however, I did wonder whether or not a consideration of patristic exegesis was called for within the context of interpreting Deuteronomy 4 for the Church.

²³ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 50.

²⁴ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 39, 52.

²⁵ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 39.

lexical items, and literary context in expanding concentric circles.²⁶ Third comes *interpretation*, when one attempts to recognize the religious choices or claims that the text puts forth, as well as its worth or authority.²⁷ At this point, Talstra advocates reading the Old Testament text as a discrete unit before proceeding to the issue of its relation to the New Testament.²⁸ Furthermore, interpretation is the point where the established understandings of a text are tested, as well as its traditions of interpretation.²⁹ In other words, this is the point where the text confronts the Church. From these three phases a reader gains competency by understanding the text’s background, the world within the text, and how generations of readers subsequent to the original audience conceived its meaning.³⁰

In terms of how Talstra’s approach is distinct from traditional, critical exegesis, one may make the following observations. Whereas previous, critical methodology sought the most original elements in a passage before conducting text analysis, Talstra reorders the method and advocates the analysis of a text’s structure and reception before moving to an analysis of the text’s origin and tradents.³¹ Moreover, Talstra uses more recent literary and hermeneutical methods in order to move beyond an exclusively historical approach: “Newer, literary-scientific or critical-hermeneutic methods begin at this point and challenge the classic, historically-directed methods to give up the fiction of the universal, rational reader, to recognize the diversity of readers, and to put the question of the relevant context on the agenda.”³² In contrast with the quest for the

²⁶ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 54–56.

²⁷ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 40.

²⁸ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 73.

²⁹ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 74.

³⁰ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 83.

³¹ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 82, 115. Talstra elsewhere maintains that synchronic analysis precedes diachronic analysis in Eep Talstra, “Deuteronomy 9 and 10: Synchronic and Diachronic Observations,” in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (ed. Johannes C. de Moor; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 187–210; idem., “Deuteronomy 31: Confusion or Conclusion? The Story of Moses’ Threefold Succession,” in *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomical Literature* (ed. M. Vervenne and J. Lust; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 87–110; idem., “From the ‘Eclipse’ to the ‘Art’ of Biblical Narrative: Reflections on Methods of Biblical Exegesis,” in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism: A Symposium in Honour of Adam S. Van Der Woude on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday* (ed. Florentino García Martínez and Ed Noort; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1–41.

³² “Nieuwere, literatuurwetenschappelijke of kritisch-hermeneutische methoden zetten op dit punt in en dagen de klassieke, historisch gerichte methoden uit, de fictie van de universele, rationele lezer op te geven, de diversiteit van groepen van lezers te erkennen en de vraag naar

original, historical meaning of a text for its intended audience, “Contemporary exegetes are often more interested in the opposite: the reader of a specific Biblical text is confronted by a meaning in the text beyond that of the intended reader. A religious text implies not only pronouncements about God, but also implies discourse about Man—a confrontation between reader and text.”³³ Whereas traditional, critical exegesis focused upon the meaning of the hypothetical, original form of a given text to an hypothetical, original audience, Talstra ultimately aims to identify the meaning of a text for contemporary readers. Whereas the practitioners of the traditional, historical-critical method of exegesis assume a universal, rational reader, Talstra aims to facilitate the confrontation between the text and many types of contemporary readers, who are situated in various contexts.

In the end, Talstra advocates the following general methodological order during the reading process:

1. “*The Language System precedes considerations of text composition* ... The interpretation of the linguistic phenomena in a text with categories from general linguistic science (syntax and semantics) are elevated in priority over an interpretation according to categories of literary development or stylistic formation.”
2. “*The final form of the text precedes the reconstruction of the text* ... The analysis of the structure and content of the final form of the text, which has been left to us by Jewish and Christian tradition, is elevated in priority over the analysis of its process of composition.”
3. “*Reconstruction of the text precedes dialogue with the text* ... After synchronic follows diachronic analysis, which comprises the broad field of reconstructing individual texts and their literary connections by reconstructing individual texts and their literary context within the text-corpus of the Old Testament.
“Diachronic analysis compares a text with other texts both within and outside of the Old Testament corpus in terms of linguistic characteristics, literary form, and content. Relationships between texts, shifts or inconsistencies in language and style are reasons for positing an hypothesis regarding earlier phases of the text, later redactions, and their religious background.”
4. “*The Dialogue between the reader and the text* ... The interpretation of the text is not finished if the actual reader has not added determinately the supervision of the text and its reception in Jewish and Christian tradition to her or their response. It is clear that the

relevantie die daarmee samenhangt aan de orde te stellen” (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 103).

³³ “Huidige exegeten zijn vaak meer geïnteresseerd in het omgekeerde: de lezer van een specifieke bijbeltekst wordt geconfronteerd met een mening in die tekst over de beoogde lezer. Een religieuze tekst impliceert niet alleen: uitspraken over God, zij impliceert ook: spreken over de mens, confrontatie tussen lezer en tekst” (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 103).

determination of a personal, theological response only in part can reconcile itself to the application of analytical procedures.”³⁴

Moreover, akin to previous methodological consensus, Talstra uses the traditional, critical methodologies of literary-critical analysis, form-critical analysis, redaction-critical analysis, composition-critical analysis, and tradition-critical analysis in step three in order to probe the diachronic dimensions of the text.³⁵ However, he uses diachronic analysis with an eye toward contemporary application. He aims to discover whether or not the author’s intent in the original text is analogous to the situation of the contemporary reader:

The completion of all exegetical activity finds its place in the borderland that was formed between the reconstruction and the address. The question that arises in this borderland is how much of an analogy or distinction exists between the probable original reader, readers through the centuries, and the actual reader. What was the situation and the religious world of the intended readers of the book ...? What was the aim of later redactions?³⁶

³⁴ 1. *Taalsysteem gaat vóór tekstcompositie* ... De verklaring van taalverschijnselen in een tekst in categorieën van algemene taalwetenschap (syntaxis, semantiek) heeft voorrang op een verklaring in categorieën van literair ontwerp of stilistische vormgeving.

2. *Compositie gaat vóór de reconstructie van de tekst* ... De analyse van de structuur en inhoud van de voltooid teksten die ons door de joodse en christelijke tekstoverlevering zijn nagelaten, heeft voorrang op de analyse van het proces van hun ontstaan.

3. *Reconstructie gaat vóór de dialoog met de tekst* ... Op de synchronische analyse volgt de diachronische, die het brede veld omvat van de reconstructie van individuele teksten en hun literaire vervat van de reconstructie van individuele teksten en hun literaire verbanden binnen het tekstcorpus van het Oude Testament.

Diachronische analyse vergelijkt een tekst met andere teksten binnen of buiten het oudtestamentische corpus in termen van taalkundige kenmerken, literaire vormgeving en inhoud. Verwantschappen tussen teksten, verschuivingen of inconsistenties in taal en stijl zijn aanleiding tot het opstellen van een hypothese omtrent eerdere fasen van een tekst, latere bewerkingen en hun religieuze achtergrond.

4. *Dialoog tussen lezer en tekst* ... De uitleg van een tekst is niet voltooid wanneer de actuele lezer niet haar of zijn reactie heeft bepaald ten opzichte van de tekst en van zijn receptie in joodse en christelijke tradities. Het is duidelijk dat het bepalen van een persoonlijke, theologische reactie maar gedeeltelijk kan berusten op de toepassing van analytische procedures.” (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 115–16)

³⁵ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 171–84.

³⁶ “De voltooiing van alle exegetische activiteit vindt plaats in het grensgebied dat wordt gevormd door reconstructie en adressering. De vraag die in dit grensgebied wordt gesteld, is, hoeveel analogie of verschil er bestaat tussen de vermoedelijke oorspronkelijke lezers en de

Therefore, an understanding of earlier conceptualizations of a text's significance informs the manner in which we apply a given text today.

2.2.2 *Christoph Hardmeier*. Christoph Hardmeier, however, distinguishes his work from text-linguistics, which he finds to be focused primarily on syntax and semantics, and emphasizes text-pragmatics. He characterizes his approach as a *Lese-Hermeneutik der Behutsamkeit* in which the linear nature of the text and its linguistic signals form an *Instruktionssemantik* that the author or speaker uses to accomplish the communicative act.³⁷ Hardmeier both shies away from ahistorical, synchronic readings of the text, and he also finds that the traditional, historical-critical consensus regarding text-genesis and literary history has been shaken.³⁸ He begins his work with synchronic analysis, and only then proceeds to diachronic investigation on the basis of the synchronic results. In his view, both the text and its historical context are necessary for exegesis, and the implied original author and audience are to be determined on the basis of the text-world, which yields evidence of the text's original social context.³⁹ In his own words,

die biblischen Texte weisen sich selbst als Traditionsliteratur aus und tragen unverkennbar ihre eigene Entstehungs- und Auslegungsgeschichte in sich. Deshalb ist die literarkritische Fragestellung sowohl in bibelhermeneutischer Hinsicht unverzichtbar als auch systematisch-theologisch konstitutiv, um den *sensus historicus* dieser Texte umfassend erschließen und das *sui ipsius interpres* der Schrift sachgemäß erfassen zu können. Dabei ist nicht ihre diachrone Dimension strittig, sondern allein

lezers de eeuwen door tot en met de actuele lezer. Wat was de situatie en de religieuze wereld van de beoogde lezers van het boek ...? Wat was eventueel het adres van latere redacties?" (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 191)

³⁷ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:xii, 48. For subsequent applications of his method and views on the relation between the text and history, see Christoph Hardmeier, "'Geschichten' und 'Geschichte' in der hebräischen Bibel. Zur Tora-Form von Geschichtstheologie im kulturwissenschaftlichen Kontext," in *Das Alte Testament—Ein Geschichtsbuch?* (ed. Erhard Blum, William Johnstone, and Christoph Marksches; Altes Testament und Moderne 10; Münster: Lit, 2005) 1–26; Christoph Hardmeier and Regine Hunziker-Rodewald, "Texttheorie und Texterschließung: Grundlagen einer empirisch-textpragmatischen Exegese," in *Lesarten der Bibel*, 13–44; Christoph Hardmeier, "Die textpragmatische Kohärenz der Tora-Rede (Dtn 1–30) im narrativen Rahmen des Deuteronomiums: Texte als Artefakte der Kommunikation und Gegenstände der Wissenschaft," in *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, ägyptologische und altorientalistische Perspektiven* (ed. Ludwig Morenz and Stefan Schorch; *BZAW* 362; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 207–57.

³⁸ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:2–3.

³⁹ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:5.

die methodische Frage, wie man dem innerbiblischen *actus tradendi* und seinem Niederschlag im *traditum*, d.h. der Literaturgeschichte der biblischen Schriften verlässlich auf die Spur kommen kann.⁴⁰

Historical and social information is not an end in itself, but rather establishes the original communicative intention in order to determine the text's communicative function for readers today.⁴¹ Hardmeier's emphasis on the socio-communicative function, the intention of the text, and pragmatics is intended as a corrective to the tendency of historical-critical scholarship to distance the Biblical text and to silence its contemporary relevance.⁴² Tracing the levels of redaction and the reception history within the text, or *relecture* in Hardmeier's parlance, indicates how texts were received and interpreted within various social settings through history.⁴³ This type of analysis in turn suggests the manner in which texts may be open for us today via typological interpretation.⁴⁴

In terms of methodology, Hardmeier outlines the following program. First, the exegete determines the text's boundaries and surface structure on the basis of explicit linguistic signals.⁴⁵ It is understood that the text has an order by which it guides the reader, and this is to be taken into account as the exegete investigates both the text's content and the text's intentional communicative function (pragmatics).⁴⁶ The surface form of the text, its structure, and the manner in which it leads the reader may be referred to as *texture*.⁴⁷ The investigator seeks the most relevant linguistic signals, and the determination of these will depend on the research question at hand. In particular, one must identify text units and provide an explicit description of them and their relationships to one another on the basis of linguistic evidence from the text.⁴⁸

Second, after the initial synchronic analysis of texture, the exegete may move to diachronic considerations:

⁴⁰ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:7–8.

⁴¹ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:53.

⁴² Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:19.

⁴³ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:53–56.

⁴⁴ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:56.

⁴⁵ See Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, Chapter 4, 1:78–135.

⁴⁶ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1: 78.

⁴⁷ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:79–81. Hardmeier follows the Chomskyan school of generative grammar, and therefore he distinguishes between surface and deep structure. This is the point at which Van Der Merwe's suggestion for following Kintsch, who is summarized below, is helpful for putting exegesis on a firmer methodological foundation. Kintsch's theory is developed on the basis of much experimentation and analysis, which is the greatest deficiency in Chomsky's approach.

⁴⁸ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:84.

Allerdings kann bereits die Überprüfung der inneren Homogenität und Folgerichtigkeit der texturrelevanten Einzelprofile auch auf Divergenzen und Inkonsistenzen aufmerksam machen—sei es in kommunikationspragmatischer Hinsicht, sei es auf der Ebene der Wortwahl oder in stilistischer und phraseologischer Hinsicht Lassen sich solche heterogenen Beobachtungen und Auffälligkeiten selbst aus der Zusammenschau aller Profile nicht synchron erklären, liegt der Verdacht auf objektbezogene Diachronie nahe, d.h. auf einen Teiltex, der nicht aus demselben KHS [Kommunikationshandlungsspiel, TRW] hervorgegangen ist, wie seine Umgebung. Allerdings muss ein solcher objektbezogener Diachronie-Verdacht in mehrfacher Hinsicht überprüft und erhärtet werden⁴⁹

Hardmeier suggests the following procedure for questioning the text:

1. Identify all of the evidence that points toward the need for diachronic work. The more the evidence, the stronger the case for a diachronic approach.⁵⁰
2. Determine the precise boundaries of the unit that has been embedded within the present text. What additional commentary or interpretation has been added to the old text in its synchronic context?⁵¹
3. Determine to which network of later text-levels the unit belongs.⁵²
4. If the diachronic evidence is weak, if it is not necessarily indicative of diachronic levels, or if it is based upon word or text-scrap that have been regarded as diachronic in the history of scholarship, then that passage is to be approached with caution and adjudicated anew.⁵³

Moreover, the following considerations point toward the legitimate use of or need for relevant historical information:

1. Internal linguistic signs point toward the historical period in which the narrative is set.
2. The constellation of problems provides indirect evidence of when the narrative was embedded in its immediate literary context or edited.
3. The form of the discourse points to the form-critical *Sitz im Leben*.
4. The thematic unfolding of the component parts point to the historical-geographical or socio-historical world that the text assumes.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:154.

⁵⁰ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:154.

⁵¹ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:154.

⁵² Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:154–55.

⁵³ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:155.

⁵⁴ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:157.

Third, Hardmeier's work assumes the theological nature of the Biblical text, and for him this is to be kept in mind during the course of exegesis. He mentions Bonhoeffer's paradox, in which we "vor und mit Gott leben ... ohne Gott," and thus we should seek to live "ohne die Arbeitshypothese Gott, ... vor dem wir dauernd stehen."⁵⁵ By this, Hardmeier means that we are to be aware of "die weltliche" or "die nicht-religiöse Interpretation der biblischen Begriffe."⁵⁶ This view stands against the Enlightenment ideal of "objective" exegesis, which excludes a theological approach to the Bible. Therefore orthodox assumptions or pre-understanding are not necessarily excluded, and one must not necessarily espouse the naturalistic assumptions of Modernity in order to quantify a valid reading of the text. In fact, Hardmeier argues that the Biblical text should be situated within the context of the Church since "Kirche selbst von ihrem Fundament und Ursprung her primär eine *creatura verbi divini* ist."⁵⁷

2.2.3 *Summary and Conclusions*. Therefore, Talstra and Hardmeier have incorporated recent moves toward final-form reading stemming from canon criticism and synchronic, literary analysis as they both re-order the exegetical process and reappraise the nature and the purpose of diachronic analysis:⁵⁸

1. Linguistic and text analysis precedes diachronic analysis and interpretation.
2. Situating a text in history, contra purely literary methods, is necessary for determining its meaning and significance.
3. Exegesis is situated within a reading community, and therefore a consideration of dogmatics or systematics is valid during the interpretation phase as part of the reader's dialogue with other interpreters, as well as the explicit statement of one's presuppositions.
4. Diachronic work is necessary for identifying the original communicative function of a given text, and it is a guide for determining the meaning of a text for the Church today.
5. Reading the Biblical text is not only a confrontation between the reader and the text, but it is also a confrontation between the reader and generations of readers with their

⁵⁵ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:159.

⁵⁶ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:159.

⁵⁷ Hardmeier, *Textwelten*, 1:160–61.

⁵⁸ In addition, other scholars who give the priority of privilege to a synchronic reading are R.E. Longacre, "The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative," *JAARSup* 47(1979): 89-133; idem., *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence. A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39–48* (2d. ed.; Eisenbrauns, 2003); John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992); idem., *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009); Jason S. DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5–11* (Gorgias Dissertations 30; Biblical Studies 2; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007).

reading strategies. Reading the Biblical text is a confrontation between the canon, the Church, and the Church's theological formulations.

This approach challenges me to consider the manner in which rigorous text analysis demands synchronic investigation as a methodological control over diachronic considerations. The discussions of Talstra and Hardmeier emphasize both the theoretical and the methodological necessity of this interpretive move. Furthermore, situating the reading of the canon within the context of the Church, as opposed to an Enlightenment or Postmodern reading paradigm with naturalistic and deistic presuppositions, seems appropriate for reading the text for the purpose of the mission of the Church. Both Talstra and Hardmeier have thought through the methodological assumptions and their implications well in order to devise a reasonably well-integrated approach to the text. In addition, their approach balances concerns of author-text-reader in such a way as to avoid the excesses of approaches that are overly obsessed with history, approaches that focus exclusively on the text as a discrete entity (i.e., New Criticism), or approaches that place the authority for meaning with the reader (i.e., Reader Response Criticism). Their work may be seen as a balanced view that mediates between such opposed philosophers and critics as Hirsch and Vanhoozer; Wimsatt, Barthes, and Ricoeur; or Derrida and Fish.⁵⁹

Next, we follow the suggestion of Christo H.J. Van Der Merwe, who builds on the work of Talstra and Hardmeier by applying cognitive linguistics to Biblical text analysis as a theoretical underpinning for reading Scripture. I would like to follow his proposal with the added goal of formalizing the degree to which the trajectory of Enlightenment and historical-critical exegesis impacts the construction of meaning in text comprehension with respect to the historical provenance and authorship of the text.⁶⁰ In particular, we will examine Walter Kintsch's theory of text comprehension, and then turn to a cognitive view of semantics in relation to discourse within the following section.

⁵⁹ For arguments regarding the validity of considering the author's intent in interpretation, see E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale, 1967) and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998); cf. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1980).

⁶⁰ Christo H.J. Van der Merwe, "The Bible and Hypertext Technology: Challenges for Maximizing the Use of a New Type of Technology in Biblical Studies," *JNSL* 28 (2002): 87–102; *idem.*, "Biblical Exegesis, Cognitive Linguistics and Hypertext," in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 255–80.

3. A COGNITIVE VIEW OF TEXT PROCESSING AND DISCOURSE MEANING

In section 3 I will now give a short overview of Walter Kintsch's theory of text comprehension, the construal of meaning, the notions of profile and domain, and then I will relate these theoretical insights to a discourse as a discrete semantic unit in the construction of meaning.

3.1 KINTSCH'S MODEL OF TEXT COMPREHENSION

We now therefore begin by taking a look at features of Kintsch's model of text comprehension. Kintsch characterizes his approach as a constraint-satisfaction theory of comprehension.⁶¹ His model is a psychological process theory that is concerned with the mental processes involved in acts of comprehension, not primarily with an analysis of the materials to be comprehended.⁶² Kintsch finds that many elements enter the comprehension process, including perceptions, concepts, ideas, images, and emotions.⁶³ These elements may come "from the world via the perceptual system, as well as from the organism in the form of memories, knowledge, beliefs, body states, or goals."⁶⁴ Kintsch offers the following account of the process of comprehension:

Roughly, the story goes like this. We start with a comprehender who has specific goals, a given background of knowledge and experience, and a given perceptual situation. The perceptual situation may, for instance, be the printed words on a page of text. We mostly skip the question of how the reader forms basic idea units from these words (though we deal extensively with word identification in a discourse context and, at least tangentially, with the question of how sentences are parsed into their constituents). Given these idea units in the form of propositions as well as the reader's goals, associated elements from the reader's long-term memory (knowledge, experience) are retrieved to form an interrelated network together with the already existing perceptual elements. Because this retrieval is entirely a bottom-up process, unguided by the larger discourse context, the nascent network will contain both relevant and irrelevant items. Spreading activation around this network until the pattern of activation stabilizes works as a constraint-satisfaction process, selectively activating those elements that fit together or are somehow related and deactivating the rest. Hence, the name of the theory, the construction-integration (CI) theory: A context-insensitive construction process is followed by a constraint-satisfaction, or integration, process that yields if all goes well, an orderly mental structure out of

⁶¹ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 2.

⁶² Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 3.

⁶³ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 4.

⁶⁴ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 4.

initial chaos.⁶⁵

Kintsch distinguishes between the text itself and the mental construct of the text which results from comprehension. He represents the abstract, mental construct as propositions, and finds that the abstract representation of the text may exist within the mind alongside generalized event memory and other levels of meaning.⁶⁶ With regard to the abstract representation of meaning in the brain, one must distinguish between the *microstructure* and the *macrostructure* of the text, as well as between the *textbase* and the *situation model*. Kintsch defines the terms microstructure and macrostructure as follows:

The *microstructure* is the local structure of the text, the sentence-by-sentence information, as supplemented by and integrated with long-term memory information. The *macrostructure* ... is a hierarchically ordered set of propositions representing the global structure of the text that is derived from the microstructure. It is sometimes directly signaled in a text, but often it must be inferred by the comprehender. An ideal summary is (or should be) a text expressing the macrostructure. Because summaries can vary in their level of generality, the macrostructure is also hierarchical, so that one may have macropropositions at different levels of generality (e.g., corresponding to major headings and subheadings in a text).⁶⁷

In turn, he defines the terms textbase and situation model as follows:

The textbase-situation model distinction refers to the origin of the propositions in the mental representation of the text. Those propositions that are directly derived from the text constitute the *textbase*. However, only in rare cases is the result of comprehension a pure textbase; usually in order to understand a text, comprehenders supplement the information provided by a text from their knowledge and experience (long-term memory) to achieve a personal interpretation of the text that is related to other information held in long-term memory. The complete structure that is composed of both text-derived propositions (the textbase) and propositions (this includes imagery and action, which we also represent as propositions) contributed from long-term memory is called the *situation model*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 4–5. This process is roughly equivalent to what literary circles refer to as cumulative reading knowledge, or the development of a frame during the reading process.

⁶⁶ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 42.

⁶⁷ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 50.

⁶⁸ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 49.

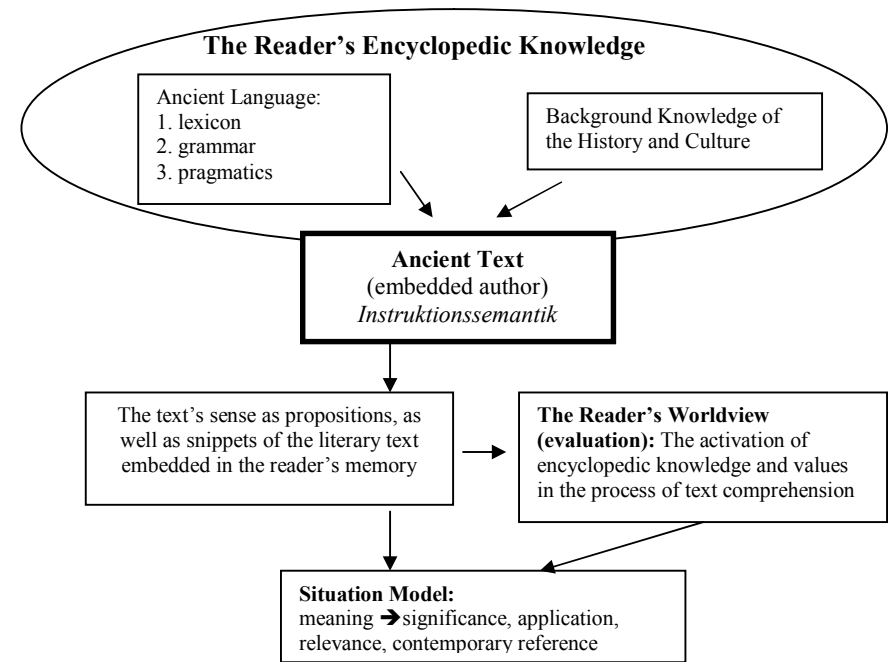


Figure 1. A representation of the reading process based upon Kintsch's model of reading comprehension, with considerations from Talstra's proposed ordering of the steps in exegesis, as well as Hardmeier's work. The reader's knowledge of the language and culture, worldview, and experiences are embedded in long-term memory, and they are activated during the post-crystallization interpretive processes.

An important point to note is that "Neither the micro- nor the macrostructure of the situation model is necessarily the same as the micro- and macrostructure of the textbase, for the reader may deviate from the author's design and restructure a text both locally and globally according to his or her own knowledge and beliefs."⁶⁹

Therefore, we may summarize the important points of Kintsch's theory as follows.

⁶⁹ Kintsch, *Comprehension*, 50. Kintsch's propositional notation is algebraic and a bit unwieldy for uninitiated Biblical scholars. A literary approach that is notationally simpler communicates better to non-linguists, and this is the approach taken within the present investigation.

The reader scans the text, and the reader's understanding of the text interacts with all of his or her past experiences and knowledge of the text (this may include specialized knowledge) in order to generate a personal interpretation. One may integrate Kintsch's theory with the discussions of Talstra and Hardmeier as above, in Figure 1.

For me, Kintsch raises two key points regarding comprehension in text processing. First, one may distinguish between the textbase, which is relatively constrained, and the situation model, which depends on an individual's background and experiences. The situation model is the point at which text analysis impinges on discussions of reader-response theory in literary interpretation, as well as Gadamer's historically effected consciousness in hermeneutic discussions. This is the point at which the reader's encyclopedic knowledge interacts with the text in order to produce an interpretation (or situation model). Second, Kintsch's theory is helpful for noting the manner in which the situation model may differ from the textbase. This goes far in providing a model of text comprehension that accounts for the manner in which various non-complementary readings occur of a single text.⁷⁰ Whereas a text may be fixed, the reality is that its interpretation will be relative and affected by the reader's perception, cognition, past experiences, and the sum of the knowledge and the assumptions that are stored in long-term memory.

Moreover, in terms of Van der Merwe's call for a consideration of Kintsch's approach as the theoretical grounding for a comprehensive reading strategy, I find that Kintsch's work in and of itself does not refine the procedures proposed by Talstra and Hardmeier.⁷¹ Rather, Kintsch confirms their general ordering of text analysis preceding diachronic analysis, over against the traditional, critical views as represented by Steck and Richter. Real readers read and comprehend concrete texts, and this is the first step in Talstra and Hardmeier's approach. An initial, rigorous text analysis is a control that helps the competent reader better to identify the linguistic structure of a text, and it helps the competent reader identify the macropropositions within a text. This is then the foundation from which further interpretive or evaluative activity departs.

Finally, these observations enable me to articulate a chief concern I have with empirically grounded theories of text analysis in exegesis for theology and Bible translation, and this observation presages the following discussion. There seems to be

⁷⁰ Accounting for divergent readings of a given text is in fact one of the aims of Cognitive Poetics: Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (Routledge: London, 2002); Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper, eds., *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and cognition in text analysis* (Linguistic Approaches to Literature 1; Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002); Reuven Tsur, *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (2d ed.; Sussex: Brighton, 2008).

⁷¹ For references to Van Der Merwe, see note 59, above.

a false sense of objectivity in interpretation when one uses the results of scientific investigation as the basis for putting forth a reading of the text. One must take great care to note the degree to which preconceptions and personal ideology (i.e., background knowledge and the reader's worldview in Figure 1) affect the construction of meaning in what Kintsch identifies as the situation model. The use of a rigorous method does not guarantee assured results. This is the point in the reading process where the reader's perception, background knowledge, and worldview may silence the text. Therefore, a careful reading of texture in conjunction with historical investigation and a consideration of the history of interpretation may function as a control for unmasking skewing personal factors that lead to an unwarranted or unjustifiable situation model.

In order to lay further groundwork for quantifying the semantic and interpretive impact of presuppositions behind a given exegetical work I would like to proceed by next addressing the issue of a cognitive view of meaning both in terms of profile and domain, as well as by noting the encyclopedic nature of our semantic knowledge. Moreover, I would like to extend this notion as a means for identifying the construction of meaning in a discourse at large. In particular, I hope to identify the manner in which the information that is entrenched in long-term memory interacts with the textbase in the construction of a situation model.

3.2 A COGNITIVE VIEW OF MEANING

First, cognitive linguists maintain that language is conceptualized.⁷² Langacker explains this notion as follows:

The word concept alludes to the claim that meaning resides in conceptualization (in the broadest sense of that term). Semantic structures are simply the conceptual structures evoked by linguistic expressions, and viable semantic analysis ultimately reduces to conceptual analysis. However, an expression's meaning consists of more than just conceptual content—equally important to linguistic semantics is how that content is shaped and construed. There are many different ways to construe a given body of content, and each construal represents a distinct meaning; this is my intent in saying that an expression imposes a particular image on the content it evokes.⁷³

⁷² W. Croft and D.A. Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 3. For a more recent statement on cognitive semantics and meaning, see Vyvyan Evans, *How Words Mean: Lexical concepts, cognitive models, and meaning construction* (Oxford: OUP, 2009).

⁷³ R. Langacker, *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar* (2nd ed.; Cognitive Linguistics Research 1; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), xv. For a cognitive literary view of meaning, see Stockwell (*Cognitive Poetics*, Chapter 2, Figures and Grounds),

For example, we may construe fish eggs either in terms of the reproductive cycle of fish, or in terms of food, as with the word “caviar”. Thus the meaning of a word depends on how it is shaped within the mind. For lexical analysis, this suggests the need for a description of how semantic information may be shaped and construed within the mind of the ideal reader or the type of reader who is under consideration. Also, one may investigate the concepts to which a word is related and in terms of which it is to be understood.

Second, I find that the cognitive notions of profile, domain, and frame are helpful for describing meaning. We may enter this discussion by way of an example. How may one define the word *knuckle*? The concept [KNUCKLE] presupposes the conceptual context [FINGER]. This semantic context to which a word is related and by which it is understood is referred to as its *domain* or *frame*. A domain is the context for the characterization of a semantic unit.⁷⁴ “Domains are necessarily cognitive entities: mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes.”⁷⁵ Langacker maintains that, “Every predicate is characterized relative to one or more cognitive **domains**, collectively called its **matrix**.”⁷⁶ For example, the seven-day week is the domain against which ‘Monday’ is understood,⁷⁷ and KNUCKLE is understood within the matrix FINGER, BONE, JOINT, HAND, BEND, among other domains.

Moreover, let us now consider Langacker’s discussion of “profile” and “base” (=domain). He states:

A predication always has a certain scope ..., and within that scope it selects a particular substructure for designation. To suggest the special prominence of the designated element, I refer to the scope of a predication and its designatum as **base** and **profile**, respectively. Perceived intuitively, the profile (in the words of Susan Lindner) “stands out in bas-relief” against the base. The semantic value of an expression resides in neither the base nor the profile alone, but only in their combination; it derives from the designation of a specific entity identified and

and for Langacker’s latest statement on his theory of meaning, see Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); *idem.*, *Investigations in Cognitive Grammar* (Cognitive Linguistics Research 42; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009).

⁷⁴ R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume 1: Theoretical Prerequisites* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 147.

⁷⁵ Langacker, *Foundations*, 147.

⁷⁶ Langacker, *Foundations*, 147.

⁷⁷ J. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory* (2nd ed.; Oxford: OUP, 1995), 84.

characterized by its position within a larger configuration.⁷⁸

Therefore KNUCKLE is the profile and FINGER is the domain (or base, according to Longacker): “The base is that knowledge or conceptual structure that is presupposed by the profiled concept.”⁷⁹ Here are some further examples:

<i>PROFILE</i>	<i>DOMAIN (BASE)</i>
ARC	CIRCLE
RADIUS	CIRCLE, LINE, CENTER, DIAMETER
DAUGHTER	FATHER, MOTHER
NIECE	UNCLE, AUNT, KINSHIP SYSTEM
HAND	ARM
ARM	HUMAN BODY ⁸⁰

Thus an ARC may be understood only in terms of a CIRCLE, and NIECE may be understood relative to one’s knowledge of UNCLE, AUNT, KINSHIP SYSTEM. Croft and Cruse conclude that “THE MEANING OF A LINGUISTIC UNIT MUST SPECIFY BOTH THE PROFILE AND ITS BASE.”⁸¹ This describes how a word is conceptualized.

Furthermore, Taylor, as well as Croft and Cruse, nuance their definitions of domain and frame. “The fact that a base supports multiple concept profiles is what makes the base a **domain**...”⁸² Therefore, in the strict sense, a domain is the context for understanding several different concept profiles. For example, the domain ARM may serve as the context for understanding the profiles ELBOW or HAND.

In contrast, a frame is “the knowledge network linking the multiple domains associated with a given linguistic form.”⁸³ And “a frame is any coherent body of knowledge presupposed by a word concept.”⁸⁴ Thus a frame may consist of several domains. For example, the profile RADIUS is understood within the frame that consists of the domains CIRCLE, LINE, CENTER, or DIAMETER. As a further example, the profile NIECE relates to the single domain UNCLE. However, the frame for NIECE includes the domains UNCLE, AUNT, and KINSHIP SYSTEM. Taylor explains that frames “are configurations of culture-based, conventionalized

⁷⁸ Langacker, *Foundations*, 183.

⁷⁹ Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 15.

⁸⁰ These examples recur throughout the discussions of Langacker, Taylor, and Croft and Cruse.

⁸¹ Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 15; see Langacker, *Foundations*, 183.

⁸² Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 15.

⁸³ Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 87.

⁸⁴ Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 17.

knowledge,” and Langacker refers to the semantic frame as a matrix.⁸⁵ Therefore, a domain is a single context to which a profile is related, whereas a frame consists of the multiple domains that are related to the profile. There may be many domains within a profile’s semantic frame, and the frame is encyclopedic in nature.⁸⁶

3.3 THE NOTION OF PROFILE, DOMAIN, AND FRAME APPLIED TO DISCOURSE

Moreover, I would argue that we may apply the notion of conceptualization beyond individual words or syntactic structures to the level of discourse. One may define discourse in the following manner:

*“Discourse” is a unit of speech (either oral or written) that is accepted by interlocutors as a complete utterance. Moreover, discourse analysis is the analysis of language and its use beyond the sentence, and this includes the analysis of language situated in its social context.*⁸⁷

First, in terms of the present investigation, individual units such as Deut 4:1–40 all the way up to the canon as a text may be conceived as a discourse (Kintsch’s “textbase”), and discourse analysis may examine both the linguistic function and the construction of meaning at any level ranging from the morpheme up through the text situated in its social context (Kintsch’s “situation model”), akin to the methods proposed by both Talstra and Hardmeier. In my opinion, it is worth moving up the hierarchical level from word and syntactic construction to discourse in order to explore the application of cognitive insights into profiles and domains more broadly.⁸⁸

In particular, as grounding within the larger theory of discourse comprehension, we

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 89; Langacker, *Foundations*, 147.

⁸⁶ Many cognitive linguists maintain that the linguistically relevant portion of our knowledge is encyclopedic in nature, as opposed to the dictionary view of meaning in which only a small subset of linguistic knowledge is regarded as relevant for meaning. See Wardlaw, *Words for “God”*, 31–33, for further references and a more complete discussion.

⁸⁷ Terrance R. Wardlaw, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Words and the Word: Explorations in biblical interpretation and literary theory* (ed. David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant; Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 270–321, esp. 272.

⁸⁸ Discourse analysis has by and large not been a chief concern in cognitive circles, although the work of R. Langacker, “Discourse in Cognitive Grammar,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 12(2001): 143–88 was a beginning exploration, and this has in turn been followed up by a chapter on discourse in his introduction to cognitive grammar (Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 457–99). The application of cognitive insights to text have largely been confined to literary stylistics or poetics. It is the author’s hope that the present investigation may contribute in some way to discourse analysis within a cognitive paradigm.

will hypothesize that profiles, domains, and frames may be conceived in terms of the interaction between macropropositions that have been abstracted from a textbase during the comprehension process with the complex of a reader’s beliefs and life experiences stored in long-term memory. Thus, in the situation model that develops in what some refer to as the post-crystallization interpretive processes, a discourse, or textbase, may be conceptualized in relation to the reader or listener’s assumptions or previous experiences. For the sake of theoretical precision we may quantify these assumptions and previous experiences by identifying them as a particular confessional or reading tradition and the body of literature and beliefs which that tradition has canonized (and at the same time we must be careful to allow for admixtures of influence in a given reader). These previous experiences and assumptions are stored in the reader’s long term memory as encyclopedic knowledge.

Second, we seek to describe the abstract representation of “meaning” and “significance” that is negotiated between the author, the text, and the reader situated in a given social and historical environment. In relation to the use of cognitive semantics, this will entail the identification of the discourse (i.e., the textbase of the Bible) as the profile, and the identification of various discrete features of the reader’s social environment as domains within the overall semantic frame of the field of discourse. It will be assumed that these aspects of the social environment are entrenched within an ideal reader’s long-term memory in neural networks, and that they are available for activation given the right stimuli during the construction of a situation model in the act of text comprehension. See Figure 2 for a representation of the manner in which traditions of thought (i.e., domains) may be entrenched in a reader’s long-term memory and interact with a literary text during the process of interpretation.

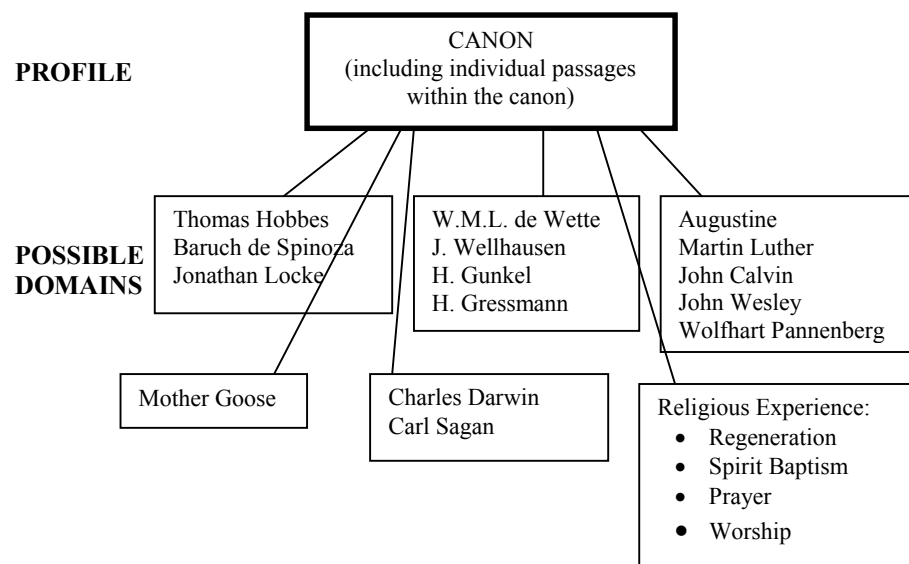


Figure 2. An example representation of the manner in which macropropositions from extra-canonical texts and experiences may profile against the canon as a discourse. Each of these domains consists of a stream or constellation of thought that may influence the manner in which a reader may evaluate a literary text and construct a situation model, and it is not necessarily the case that a given reader is conscious that these domains reside behind the assumptions or practices of a given reading community. These are simply names put to outlooks upon the text. This is a means for quantifying extra-canonical intertextuality (i.e., presuppositions) in the construction of meaning.

The notion of the canon as a profile and the domains of representative presuppositions from Figure 2 are a more detailed description of “The Reader’s Worldview” in Figure 1. These are either (1) the choices the reader makes between interpretive traditions for evaluating the Biblical text, or (2) the reading tradition or community with which the reader identifies, and whose values and standards the reader takes upon himself. Moreover, the canon may also profile against the reader’s religious experience, which is also quantifiable as a semantic domain within cognitive

semantic theories of text processing.⁸⁹

Third, we may consider how the determination of extra-canonical intertextuality relates to the exegetical method proposed by Talstra and Hardmeier. Given a thorough and rigorously methodical text analysis, both of these scholars argue that we should then move to diachronic analysis (the reception history of the text prior to its final, canonical form), which is then followed by interpretation.

However, I argue that this procedure misses a key point: Talstra and Hardmeier’s diachronic analysis precedes an explicit consideration of the history of interpretation (or the social context of the text), and their diachronic analysis assumes critical methodologies and presuppositions that are actually at variance with traditional, Protestant theology and the emic worldview of the Biblical text. This is an unacknowledged *Sachkritik* that has been included under the rubric of *Wortauslegung*. The diachronic approach advocated by Talstra and Hardmeier imports the assumptions of a late dating of the text that derive from the naturalistic worldview of the Enlightenment and Modernity. As these methodologies were being developed and applied, traditional notions of revelation and inspiration, and traditional views of the text’s genesis were jettisoned in favor of strict, historical causation as the working assumption behind accounts of tradition-history, composition-history, and canonical formation. References to revelation or the miraculous within the Biblical text came to be interpreted metaphorically as vestiges of a primitive worldview in which there is direct, divine intervention in daily affairs. Therefore, I argue that by moving directly from text analysis to diachronic considerations, Talstra and Hardmeier skip the step of a rigorous analysis of extra-canonical intertextuality in terms of the assumptions behind the traditions of scholarship and the scholars whom they follow. I argue that the skepticism toward tradition and the naturalistic assumptions of Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke are imported through the exegetical tradition of De Wette, Wellhausen, Gunkel, Gressmann, Noth, and others who influence the diachronic assumptions of Talstra and Hardmeier.⁹⁰ These philosophical positions and assumptions are at variance with the emic, Biblical view of divine discourse and divine agency for those who espouse non-metaphorical interpretations of references to revelation and miracle, and I suspect that a thoroughgoing identification of extra-canonical intertextuality in terms of the scholars upon whom one relies may lead to a

⁸⁹ I would like to thank Josh Moon for pointing this out.

⁹⁰ See Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale, 1974) for an account of the rise of modern Biblical criticism and its philosophical underpinnings, and Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980) for an example of the manner in which philosophies that are alien to a Biblical worldview reside behind the critical methodologies used to describe its meaning.

radically different account of and application of diachronic analysis than that provided by Talstra and Hardmeier (assuming that one takes upon oneself the prescribed beliefs of the canonical text rather than evaluating them as naïve in the light of modern, naturalistic assumptions).⁹¹ This evaluation in the construction of a situation model radically affects the meaning and the significance of the Biblical text as it confronts the reader and the Church today in what Talstra and Hardmeier identify as the interpretation phase (included in Kintsch's situation model).

We now therefore turn to an application of the notions of profile, domain, and frame to a discourse. I find it necessary to identify the canonical texts and the ideologies of various scholarly communities and the traditions that one consults in order to work toward a rigorously explicit interpretation and account of the social environment behind diachronic analysis. Let us now therefore proceed to a consideration of Deut 4:1–40 in order to exemplify the manner in which the preceding cognitive and discourse concerns may be applied and in order to contrast how these readings differ in determining the “meaning” of the text.

4. A COGNITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND DEUT 4:1–40

We now therefore turn our attention and limit discussion to Talstra's diachronic analysis of Deut 4:1–40 and its hermeneutical implications in the light of the theoretical discussion above. Our aim is not to perform a thorough exegesis of this passage, but rather to compare and contrast the effect that Talstra's diachronic analysis and exilic dating has on the construction of meaning, versus a reading of the text that takes its presentation at face value as a more ancient account of the speech of Moses.⁹² The following critique of Talstra does not depend on cognitive analysis, but rather cognitive analysis will be used following the critique in order to quantify and demonstrate the semantic ramifications of Talstra's application of diachronic analysis on the construction of meaning.

⁹¹ As do scholars who assume Mosaic scholarship in their analysis (e.g., Sailhamer, DeRouchie, and Kaiser).

⁹² J.G. McConville (*Deuteronomy* [Apollos OTC 5; Leicester: Apollos, 2002]) moves in the direction of dating Deuteronomy much earlier than the time of king Josiah; however, he does not advocate Mosaic authorship of the book. Although it would be an interesting discussion, we will not here delve into reasons for or against the Mosaic composition of Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch. I will leave this problem to the side for the moment since scholars such as Sailhamer, and DeRouchie have provided accounts for their view of Mosaic origins for the text of Deuteronomy. Instead, I want to focus on the hermeneutic implications of an earlier versus a later dating of this text in order to probe the role that our historical assumptions play in the construction of meaning.

4.1 DIACHRONIC ISSUES

In Talstra's diachronic analysis of Deut 4:1–40, he follows the observations of M. Weinfeld, H. D. Preuss, and M. Rose regarding the relation between Deuteronomy 4 and chapters 29–31, which these scholars find to be postexilic.⁹³ As a postexilic composition, Deuteronomy 4 and 29–31 teach that the Torah is given with the understanding of coming disaster, and the Lord is not taken by surprise with Israel's unfaithfulness (Deut 31:21, 27).⁹⁴ To make one point explicit, Talstra's proposed dating of the final composition therefore assumes that “prophetic” passages may not be taken at face value as Moses' prescient speech in premonarchic times. Rather, these contents are an interpretation of the exile after it happened (i.e., *vaticinia ex eventu*), and this interpretation is retrojected back to the time of Moses.⁹⁵

When he then moves from diachronic analysis to an identification of the intended readers of Deut 4:1–40, Talstra states that we must distinguish between the situation within the text and the situation of the text. Within the text, Moses is at the end of the route from Horeb to Moab just prior to Israel's entry into the promised land. However, the situation of the text is an analogous situation much later, when Israel is on the verge of returning to the promised land from exile.⁹⁶ This text is therefore to be dated

⁹³ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 226–41.

⁹⁴ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 230.

⁹⁵ In order to define the particulars of Moses' prescient knowledge as presented by the text, Deut 4:1–40 does not portray the coming judgment in terms of the particular judgment that came through the Babylonian exile during the 6th century BC. Rather, Deut 4:1–40 seems to be typological prescience. Therefore, Moses is not predicting one particular exile, but rather *an* exile as an act of judgment from the hand of Israel's overlord for failure to keep the stipulations of this vassal treaty. Hermeneutically, this is significant because this is the way that the Lord works throughout history when “Israel,” whether defined variously as the physical descendants of Abraham or as the Church, fails to keep the covenant.

See Carsten Vang (“The So-called ‘*Ur-Deuteronomium*’—Some Reflections on Its Content, Size and Age,” *SEE-J Hiphil* 6 [http://www.see-j.net/hiphil] 2009; accessed 21.07.2010), who argues against the assumptions behind these scholars, points toward the generic and non-specific nature of references to exile, and argues that Deut 1–30 are unified and authentically Mosaic.

⁹⁶ “Bij het zoeken naar de mogelijke eerste adressering van de tekst is het belangrijk om een verschil te maken tussen de situatie in de tekst en de situatie van de tekst. De situatie in de tekst plaatst de luisteraars van Mozes aan het eind van de route die liep vanaf Horeb naar land van Moab, aan de grens van het beloofde land (hoofdstuk 1-3). Op die plek wordt Israël opnieuw herinnerd aan het gebeuren bij de Horeb. De opbouw van het boek Deuteronomium laat echter zien dat we een stap verder moeten gaan. De lezer bevindt zich niet, zoals de luisteraars, aan de vooravond van de intocht, maar hij bevindt zich in een analoge situatie veel later, aan de vooravond van de terugkeer in het land. Het gaat om Israëls entree in het land, maar dan wel

to the Persian period.⁹⁷ If this is true, then one may describe this text's function as the beginning development of a theology of penitence within the liturgy of the synagogue.⁹⁸ Talstra's dating of the text thus accords with the tendency of contemporary Deuteronomy scholars to look for an exilic or postexilic audience as a key factor in understanding the book, as noted by McConville.⁹⁹

From this, Talstra's interpretation raises two key questions in my mind. First, if we are to read this story as an exilic composition, following Talstra's methodological application, then why is it presented within the text as Moses' speech to Israel on the Plains of Moab prior to the conquest? On the basis of the text's surface structure, is this interpretive move legitimate? My application of Hardmeier's observation that diachronic analysis should be based on the texture itself leads me to note that Talstra's interpretation does not find overt textual support. In fact, it goes against the text's explicit claim to be Moses' speech that is directly linked with the giving of the law in the following chapters. According to Hardmeier, we should determine diachronic analysis on the basis of internal evidence, and I find it striking that most of Talstra's application of diachronic methodology centers upon the work of other scholars rather than on his direct observation of features within the text itself that demand a diachronic reading.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, it seems that Talstra's use of the diachronic method in some ways silences the voice of the text's structure and content rather than allowing it to be heard in its own right. Rather than looking for text-internal clues that point

met de kennis van een lange geschiedenis: wetgeving, intocht, andere goden, ballingschap en omkeer." (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 238)

⁹⁷ Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 238.

⁹⁸ "De tekst representeert het begin van de teksten van de gebeden in de synagogale liturgie en presenteert een theologie van boetedoening: omkering en boetedoening zijn altijd mogelijk, met een beroep op het verbond met de vaderen." (Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers*, 238) I at least wonder if Talstra's emphasis on identifying the intended audience in some ways shortcuts legitimate interpretations and applications of this passage in contemporary life. By this I do not downplay the importance of identifying the original audience as one step in the process of interpretation. However, McConville warns against foreclosing possible interpretations by failing to recognize the book's potential to speak to new audiences in different ways. Perhaps, following McConville, it would be beneficial to pay more attention to the rhetoric of the text (McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 41–42), alongside Talstra's emphasis on the original historical situation of the text, as a control on interpretation.

⁹⁹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 28. Although Talstra does not advocate this view in his work, many scholars who date Deuteronomy to the exile or later regard the book's "vision of Israel as an independent political entity with a carefully articulated polity (political and social policy) as unrealistic and utopian" (McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 28).

¹⁰⁰ To be fair, Hardmeier practices diachronic analysis and arrives at dating schemes similar to those of Talstra.

toward the intended audience and the date of composition, Talstra finds his work upon the critical assumptions that his exegesis should instead modify or correct.

Second, how may the meaning of Talstra's reading contrast with a reading of the text as the speech of Moses that stems from the pre-monarchic period rather than as a post-exilic composition? Foremost, borrowing from McConville, Talstra's approach follows both the assumptions and the conclusions of critical scholarship, which maintains that "an original law book was given a historical dress that was alien to it," and this type of polarization "misses the force of the book."¹⁰¹ Talstra does not discuss whether Moses' speech derives from ancient traditions, or whether they are fictions. Therefore we are to assume that he presupposes the critical consensus described by McConville.

Moreover, in terms of preaching and teaching, if the words within the canonical text are not based on a real, historical event as it is depicted within the text, then they ring hollow and, in my estimation, lose their authority.¹⁰² Unless this unit faithfully reflects an earlier written source from either Moses or an eyewitness, then it is a retrojected composite account that was written on the basis of the exilic writer's familiarity with Israel's ancient traditions or his utopian vision of them. The text is not part of Israel's premonarchic, written traditions, and we are no longer listening to Moses recount what he saw and heard as part of his final sermon to Israel as they prepared to enter the promised land. The issue of eyewitness testimony of God's acts in history goes directly to the heart of the trajectory of the Christian faith and its grounding in history (Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1–4). It is precisely this notion of authorship and dating which impinges on the validity and the authority of the canonical text in the life of the Church. This is not something to be jettisoned without deeper reflection.

In terms of implications for translation, some languages will require a different discourse form or set of discourse particles, depending on whether the text of Moses' discourse was written by either himself or an eyewitness, or whether it was written on the basis of oral traditions or as a composite account of various Israelite religious traditions by an exilic writer who was not present (i.e., the linguistic phenomenon of evidentiality). One's critical stance toward the dating and the composition of Deuteronomy will therefore affect how one indicates that we know what is being said

¹⁰¹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 37.

¹⁰² In the words of Thomas W. Davis ("Theory and Method in Biblical Archaeology," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions* [ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 20–28, esp. 21): "The practitioners of biblical archaeology believed, albeit in different ways, that biblical faith, both Christianity and Judaism, depends on the historical reality of the events that displayed the hand of God. If the events, which the Bible interprets as the intervention of the divine, have no basis in reality, then there is no basis for believing in the biblical witness."

within the book of Deuteronomy. Moreover, the discourse form will vary in other languages, depending upon whether it is an etiological fiction that explains the origins of the law, or whether this is valid historical testimony of the historical Moses.¹⁰³

Moreover, there are reasonable grounds for at least allowing for an earlier dating of Deuteronomy as “the document of a real political and religious constitution of Israel from the pre-monarchical period.”¹⁰⁴ In terms of identifying the original or intended audience, we do not gain much by dating the text to the exile or later rather than to the time of Moses. In fact, as I argue below, we gain more interpretively by dating it earlier.

4.2 INTERPRETATION

We now therefore turn to the issue of how this text impinges on the world in the act of interpretation. In keeping with the theoretical terminology that we outlined above, what situation model will an ideal or possible reader construct? How may a reader construct a meaning from the text, and how may a reader apply the sense of the text to the real world? We will limit this discussion to a contrast and comparison between the situation models to which Talstra’s reading and McConville’s reading may lead.

First, we will examine a possible application of Talstra’s method of proceeding from a synchronic to a diachronic reading of the canonical text. It seems instructive to me that after conducting a thorough text-analysis, and after then proceeding to the diachronic phase, Talstra fails to engage the issue of how the text impinges on the world in a satisfying manner. Although he unpacks the issue of the Persian-era author’s intended audience, and although he notes subsequent readers both within the Jewish and Christian traditions in order to set the stage for understanding the constraints or trajectories of possible applications, he fails to open the text for possible readers today. I suspect that his focus on text-analysis and diachronic analysis retains some of the historical-critical conditioning under whose influence scholars look only to the historical meaning of a text, and not to its contemporary relevance. This tendency is noted by Hardmeier. Although Talstra definitely moves beyond the original audience to subsequent generations of readers in his theoretical discussion, he fails to carry these implications to the point of application or contemporary

¹⁰³ While on the basis of the texture of Genesis through 2 Kings I agree with Talstra that there is a redaction of this text for an exilic audience, I would not put this at the book level of Deuteronomy. Rather, I would put this either at the final redaction of the unit of Deuteronomy – 2 Kings or Genesis–2 Kings (i.e. Dtr, in traditional, historical-critical parlance), which is both an exilic compilation and composition that followed the premonarchic writing of the Pentateuch.

¹⁰⁴ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 34.

significance in his exegesis.

According to Talstra’s analysis of the intended audience, the text was originally intended for readers whose fathers committed idolatry, and who were exiled to a foreign land. They were then on the brink of re-entering the promised land, analogous to the fathers under Joshua, who wandered in the wilderness for forty years before the Lord allowed them to enter the land.

I applaud Talstra for turning our attention to the structure of the text. Nevertheless, akin to historical-critical reading, he focuses on the intended audience and subsequent generations of readers in such a way as to keep our attention from how the text may impinge on our world today. His reading therefore becomes an author and text-oriented approach rather than one that also considers the contemporary reader explicitly.

Moreover, the late dating of the text due to references to exile (Deut 4:25–31) assumes a naturalistic interpretation in which the appeal to divine revelation or speech, and especially historical foreknowledge, is illegitimate. This conflicts with the internal claims of the text that God spoke to Moses, and Moses heard the Lord’s voice. Therefore, following Talstra’s approach, I fail to find any historical, eyewitness testimony that the Lord either speaks or possesses foreknowledge within the text. These traditional theological claims remain merely theoretical or hypothetical retrojections from a later historical period. There is therefore no authoritative grounding for living by them, unless we claim that this text was deemed authoritative by the Church. But to my reckoning, Church-sanctioned fiction also rings hollow and exudes very little force for demanding change from the reader.¹⁰⁵ We may represent Talstra’s reading as in Figure 3.

¹⁰⁵ See Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, “Tracking the World of Judges: The Use of Contextual Resources in Narration and Conversation,” *SEE-J Hiphil* 2 [http://www.see-j.net/hiphil] 2005; accessed 21.07.2010. Winther-Nielsen formulates a theoretical approach to reading the book of Judges in which he rejects “tracking the world in a later period (rhetorical analysis), in a symbolic world (cultural analysis) and a fictional world (literary analysis)” (Winther-Nielsen, “Tracking the World of Judges,” 18). He instead follows “a real-world linguistic model of contextual resources such as that developed by Linell and Karolija” (Winther-Nielsen, “Tracking the World of Judges,” 18). Winther-Nielsen’s approach takes the historical validity of the text seriously as an integral component in the construction of meaning.

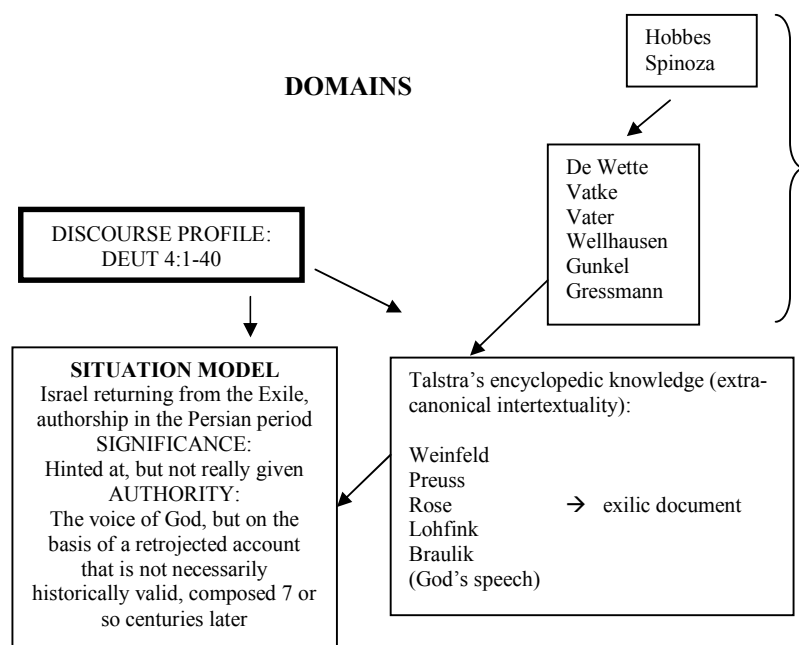


Figure 3. A representation of the manner in which Enlightenment, extra-canonical intertextuality (i.e., presuppositions) profiles against Biblical discourse during the phase of diachronic analysis, as envisioned by Talstra. There is a conflict between Talstra's view of divine speech and the inherent assumptions which reside behind the scholars he cites. I find these views to be incoherent.

Second, we now turn to a possible reading of the text as the speech of Moses, recorded either by himself or by an eyewitness, and placed in its present book form in premonarchic times.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ McConville himself does not argue for Mosaic authorship, but rather for the pre-monarchic composition of the book of Deuteronomy. I use McConville's hermeneutic discussion alongside the traditional ascription of Deuteronomy to Moses (e.g., by Sailhamer or Vang) as a means for noting how the illocutionary force of Deut 4:1–40 changes depending upon whether it is read as an exilic composition or as a Mosaic/premonarchic composition. Although I maintain that it is Mosaic, McConville's work is helpful for articulating the hermeneutic and

With a more scrutinizing eye toward Deuteronomy's application for subsequent generations, McConville takes the approach that "Deuteronomy's ability to have new audiences is built into the book's self-understanding."¹⁰⁷ This explains the book's emphasis on teaching children and the public re-reading of the book (Deut 6:6–9; 31–32).¹⁰⁸ Moreover, "In theological terms, Deuteronomy makes a claim that God not only spoke, but goes on speaking by means of the teaching and interpretation of his word in believing communities."¹⁰⁹ Whereas Talstra interprets Deuteronomy with a focus on the exilic community, McConville identifies its reception both in the premonarchic and the exilic communities:

On the face of it, its impact on successive communities is bound to change with the changing circumstances in which it is heard. As the covenant document of the ancient Israelite assembly, it is a word that has the power to form a community, and contains the promise of life in the land continuing into an open future. As a part of the Scripture read by the exilic and post-exilic communities it testifies to the truth and justice of God, and to his mercy to a people that had proved unfaithful. This is what I mean by understanding the historical depth-dimension of reading the book.¹¹⁰

For McConville, Israel's journey from Egypt to Horeb, and thence to the promised land becomes a metaphor, or type, for the life of faith.¹¹¹ Although historical considerations play a part in McConville's exegetical method, he takes a slightly different approach to controls on interpretation than that of Talstra's diachronic reading: "The necessary control on interpretation of Deuteronomy into new situations comes both from careful reading of the book itself and from considering its relation to other parts of the Bible."¹¹² In my estimation, McConville's view of interpretation is more comprehensive, and it has something to add to Talstra's text-analytical and diachronic approach to exegesis.¹¹³

For example, McConville identifies one possible application of Deut 4:1–40:

semantic distinctions in meaning that derive from one's historical assumptions about the text's provenance.

¹⁰⁷ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 41.

¹¹⁰ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 42.

¹¹¹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 42.

¹¹² McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 42, 51.

¹¹³ I would advocate a synthesis of both Talstra's consideration of reading communities through history, as well as McConville's close reading of the text in conjunction with its relation to other parts of the Bible.

The essence of the Moab covenant is to assert that the decisive encounter with God can be continuously repeated. This repetition can take several forms, including the teaching of children by parents (6:6–9), and the work of prophets in succession to Moses (18:15–18). But it is also embodied in the visible life of Israel as a worshipping assembly (31:9–13). This passage gives the clue to the understanding of the ‘place that the Lord will choose’ (31:11; cf. 12:5), namely as the place in which Israel stands again before God as they once did at Horeb. The place is not named, for there is no limit in time or space on the future meetings of God and Israel.¹¹⁴

Therefore, in terms of both the historical depth-dimension and text-pragmatics, the text before us was received in premonarchic times, and it speaks to all subsequent generations who meet God as Israel did at Horeb.

Whereas Talstra’s reading of the text’s original audience is restricted to one level, namely the exiles who returned to the promised land, a traditional reading of the text is more robust, with polyvalent significance. First, there is the original audience whom Moses addressed, and who was on the verge of entering the promised land (without recourse to a fictional text-world and a loss of authority). Thus, typologically, this passage and book may be applied to the life of those who are leaving the Egyptian bondage of sin, they have passed through the wilderness, and they are now entering the promised land of the Christian life. Second, the text functioned as the exhortation of Moses to each new generation of Israel within the promised land. Therefore, a typological reading may see this as a foundational document for ethics within “Israel” today in order to experience the presence of the Lord. Third, this text functioned as a key document for those who were returning from exile. Therefore, typologically, it may function today as an ethical guide for those within the Church who experience the Lord’s chastisement of “exile,” repent, and desire to enter the promised land. Given a traditional reading, the authoritative force of all three (and subsequent) historical levels in the text’s reception history remains grounded in Moses’ eyewitness testimony as reported directly within the text before us. Therefore, it is trustworthy and forceful on the life of the reader.

We may represent a more traditional reading as in Figure 4.

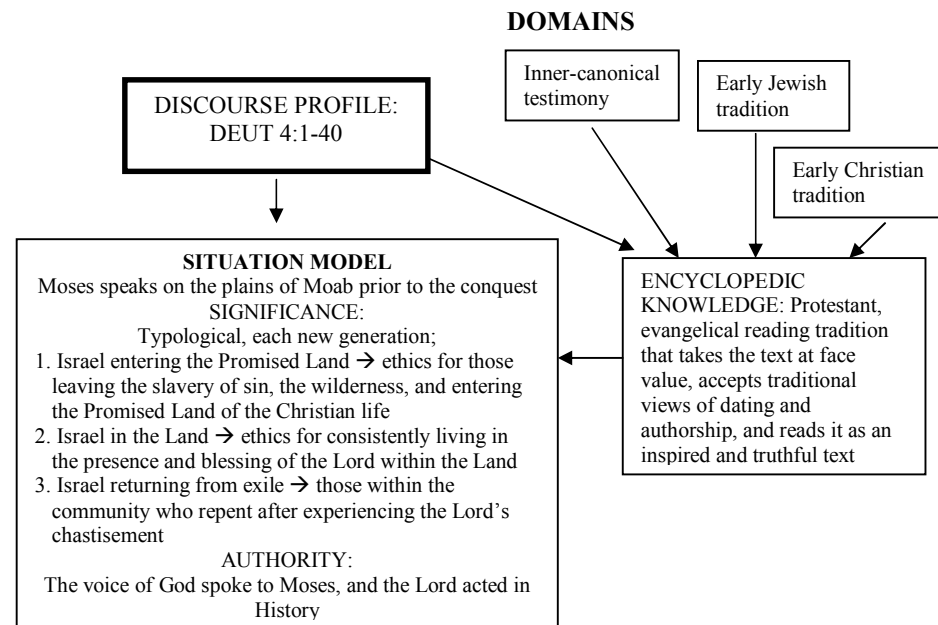


Figure 4. A representation of the manner in which Deut 4:1-40 as a discourse profiles against traditional assumptions regarding text-genesis and the historical validity of the text in order to generate meaning, akin to the type of reading practiced by McConville.

4.3 CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

In keeping with Talstra’s quest for the significance of the ancient text as the contemporary reader dialogues with past generations of readers, I shall now briefly interact with the text of Deuteronomy 4 in order to tease out some possible dimensions of its significance for Christian readers today. I shall pay especially close attention to (1) how the semantics of the text’s antiquity impact its significance, and (2) how the text may correct contemporary ecclesiastical traditions in a dialogue with the Church.

First, I follow Sailhamer and Vang in reading Deuteronomy 4 as an historically valid report of Moses’ speech on the diachronic plane and situate this sermon as being given on the plains of Moab before Israel set foot into the promised land, and I also conclude that it was written at least within the generation following, if not

¹¹⁴ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 116.

immediately following, its initial delivery. Furthermore, Talstra notes that the command to listen to and obey the following statutes and judgments is a prominent imperative from the outset (Deut 4:1), and the imperatives form the backbone of the discourse in Deuteronomy 4. Therefore, Moses is emphasizing to the people their religious, moral, and ethical choices, and he is warning them that the possession of the land is contingent on their future choices. One may conclude on the basis of the text's structure that Moses' intent in giving this sermon was to exhort Israel to keep the covenant commands in order to remain in relationship with the Lord and in order to possess the land, contrary to their earlier grumblings, idolatry, and failure to enter the promised land when the Lord commanded them.

Consequently, if we conceive of the promised land as a type of the kingdom of God, which consists both of the now and the not yet, then we are likewise warned that our religious, moral, and ethical choices will determine whether or not we may remain in the land in order to experience the Lord's presence, blessing, and the various dimensions of His salvation both now and in the life to come. Will we obey the Lord's statutes and judgments that we have received by tradition from antiquity (Deut 4:1), or will we choose to go our own way and face the exile of dismissal from God's presence both now and in His future kingdom (Deut 4:26–27)? The Church in our present generation is given this choice, just as past generations in Israel were given this choice. Moreover, just as God's judgment was realized in ancient Israel with the exile, there is both a present and a future exile from God's presence for those who ignore God's ancient statutes and commands. Is the contemporary Church leading the present generation to obey the Lord's commands in a proper response to His covenant of grace and love, and is the contemporary Church experiencing the fullness of God's presence with the full assurance of the promised land yet to come?

Second, Moses' discourse may lead one to see a present need for the Church to wrestle anew with the issue of defining the nature of the Gospel and its relation to the Old Testament's conceptualization of covenant. For example, New Testament usage of such constructions as εὐαγγέλιον θεου (e.g., Mk 1:1 and Rom 1:1), variously inflected in various collocations, is based on the Old Testament LXX usage in passages such as Isa 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1, where εὐαγγέλιον or εὐαγγελίζομαι refers to the declaration of Israel's release from exile. If the New Testament writers understood the Gospel to refer to the good news of release from exile, that is, release from an exile from God's presence due to the neglect of the covenant (Deut 4:26–27), then a full-orbed presentation and understanding of the Gospel entails obedience to covenant ethics (Deut 4:29–32). The New Testament writers constructed their thoughts upon the foundation of Old Testament preparation. Or, in other words, they conceived of the Gospel on the basis of the Old Testament. This means that "the Gospel" in New Testament usage was conceived in terms akin to the following script: (1) violation of

the covenant ethics leads to (2) exile, and therefore, we must (3) seek God's face (i.e., repent), and (4) obey the covenant ethics (i.e., "hear God's voice") in order to live in God's presence in the land (i.e., life in Christ). Therefore, the good news is that God allows us to live in His presence when we listen to His voice by keeping the covenant. Where Israel failed, Jesus kept the covenant, and we are also able to live in God's presence by keeping the covenant through Jesus Christ (Rom 1–11). Thus, a Gospel without covenant ethics is not only a fundamental misunderstanding of the central dogma of the Church (Rom 12–15), but it also leads the Church back into the exile from which Jesus delivered it (e.g., the assured destruction of the ingrafted branches in Rom 11).

Third, Moses commands both the Israelites standing before him and generations to come neither to add to nor to diminish from the commands they are to obey (Deut 4:2), and this imperative is then repeated in Deut 13:1. These verses are then echoed prominently at the close of the New Testament in Rev 22:18–19. The question therefore presents itself, are we as a Church in any way adding to or diminishing from God's revealed commands? The urgency of this self-examination is underscored by the nature of the written Torah as we ruminate upon it and dialogue with its interpreters. The purpose of the Law is to bring a knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20; 7:7), and this knowledge of sin is foundational for a right conceptualization of the importance of faith (Rom 4), the nature of justification (Rom 5), the nature of living in Christ by the power of the Spirit (Rom 8), and the nature of Israelite and Gentile election (Rom 9–11). Therefore, if the Church in any way adds to God's commands or takes away from them, then rather than functioning as God's kingdom we are instead working at cross-purposes to the Spirit by inhibiting the knowledge of what drives people to Christ (Rom 6–7). God aims to use the Law in order to identify sin for what it is, and therefore when we downplay His commands we hinder the knowledge of the Gospel and keep people from coming to Christ on God's terms. Our diluted versions of the Gospel, which lack covenant commands, diminish the importance of the function of the Law in bringing people to Christ by revealing their thoroughly corrupt, powerless, and fallen state.

Fourth, Moses speaks to Israel what God has spoken to Him, and Moses testifies that the Lord acted directly in the world on Israel's behalf (Deut 4:3, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37,). This emic view of the text world regarding divine speech and direct activity in the world stands in direct opposition to Deism and its echoes in Modernity and Postmodernity. Moses claimed to have received direct communication from God, and Moses' discourse assumes that the Lord acted directly in day-to-day affairs. Although it is possible to interpret these passages metaphorically, this is not the most natural interpretation since it lacks explicit textual clues which point in that direction, as in parabolic or figurative literature. For example,

Ezekiel explicitly identifies Oholah as Samaria, and Oholibah as Jerusalem in Ezek 23:4, and Isaiah explicitly identifies the house of Israel and the men of Judah as the Lord's vineyard in Isa 5:7. There are no explicit, linguistic clues in support of the metaphorical interpretation of divine speech and activity. For this reason, I find this type of interpretation exegetically unconvincing.

Therefore, the foundation of the covenant in divine speech and activity stands in direct opposition to naturalistic versions of theology and naturalistic positivism in exegesis. This is not to say that there should not be freedom to practice this type of thinking if one chooses to do so in a secular setting. Rather, it is to say that this approach and this kind of presupposition is at variance with canonical Scripture, which is authoritative for the Church. For this reason, naturalistic positivism stands opposed to Church dogma and is to be identified and rejected in all of its various forms among confessing believers. Two areas in which I find this presupposition to have crept in through the back door are (1) in the acceptance of naturalistic presuppositions in critical introductions, commentaries, and methodological discussions of exegesis, and (2) through the melding of Enlightenment assumptions from secular and critical Biblical scholarship with quasi-theological jargon in courses within seminaries and schools of theology (i.e., akin to the manner discussed above regarding extracanonical intertextuality).

Thus, we have compared and contrasted Talstra's method with that of McConville, and we have examined four possible applications of Deuteronomy 4 to the life of the Church. We are now, therefore, in a position to recapitulate our preceding discussion, and to draw some conclusions.

5. Conclusion

Within the preceding discussion, we first described the mainstream, critical, exegetical method as prescribed by Richter and Steck. We then turned to more recent discussions of exegetical method and practice as advocated by Talstra and Hardmeier. This discussion found that exegetical method has shifted from a diachronic investigation preceding exegetical inquiry to a process in which synchronic analysis precedes a consideration of diachronic concerns. Moreover, we observed that these more recent writers tend to bring their focus to bear upon the final form of the text in a theological context.

Second, following Van der Merwe's call for the use of Kintsch's Construction-Integration model of text comprehension in discussions of exegetical method, we examined Kintsch's theory and concluded that it may function as an aid for adjudicating between exegetical models. In fact, Kintsch's theory suggests the validity of beginning with the synchronic analysis of the text before moving to diachronic

considerations since readers typically begin with the text in front of them before moving to more sophisticated interpretive tools. At the same time, recursivity allows for the revision of initial, synchronic reading hypotheses on the basis of further reflection and the accrual of pertinent diachronic information.

Third, we examined the notions of profile and domain from cognitive linguistics, and then related these to the level of discourse as a method for identifying and quantifying extracanonical intertextuality. This extracanonical intertextuality included scholars to whom a given reader may appeal, the reader's encyclopedic knowledge and experiences stored in long term memory, and the assumptions behind the reader's reading tradition.

Fourth, we compared and contrasted Talstra's diachronic investigation of Deut 4:1–40 with that of McConville. In particular, we focused on the interpretive implications for both readings. From this discussion we observed that Talstra's reading leads to a loss of the text's significance and authority for today since it focuses upon what the text meant in its hypothetical prehistory and in subsequent reading communities. Moreover, Talstra imports naturalistic presuppositions into his diachronic analysis which seem to be in direct contradiction with the claims of the text under consideration. In contrast, McConville's reading considers both what the text meant in history, as well as what it means for subsequent generations. This observation therefore implies that a reading and interpretation of the text that takes the historical claims of the text-world seriously leads to a fuller, more comprehensive interpretation with more potential for impacting the world today. Moreover, a reading that takes the historical claims of the text-world at face value speaks with greater authority both to the reader and to the reading community.¹¹⁵

Although the more recent approaches to exegesis and text analysis, as exemplified by Talstra's work, claim to follow the text more closely, this exercise in identifying scholarly presuppositions and extracanonical intertextuality demonstrates yet once again the manner in which one's presuppositions determine or limit one's conclusions. Although Talstra and Hardmeier move farther in the direction of an emic interpretation of the text, the present discussion has demonstrated that Talstra's interpretive

¹¹⁵ Some exegetes with diachronic views similar to those of Talstra read claims to divine agency, speech, and revelation within the text metaphorically: "Since the Middle Ages emphasis has been laid upon the theological dimension of the Bible in orthodox and fundamentalistic circles, resulting in a mystification of the text without taking the ancient and metaphorical nature of the text into consideration." (Jonker, *Exclusivity and Variety*, 56) This type of dismissive assertion assumes that orthodox scholars do not consider other viewpoints, and it assumes their naïveté. Moreover, this type of aggrandizing remark fails to allow for the possibility that perhaps conservative evangelicals are correct in their acceptance of traditional interpretations of references to revelation and divine agency within the Bible.

conclusions remain somewhat influenced by traditional, historical-critical scholarship, both in terms of his assumptions and the conclusions to which these assumptions lead.

Moreover, we identified what is lost when one moves from more traditional theological interpretation to the approach advocated in more recent mainstream Modern and Postmodern discussions of the Bible and exegesis. First, if Deuteronomy 4 is the later product of the trajectory of Mosaic Yahwism, then this text becomes what Moses may have said rather than his direct witness to the acts and the revelation of God in history. This text is no longer direct historical testimony, and therefore it is not as trustworthy or as compelling for the life of faith. Second, the assumption or notion of the “Word of God to Man” in Talstra and Hardmeier is not defined explicitly. Does this follow early Church tradition, or is this more a Neo-orthodox position in which this passage is perhaps a kind of divine speech that resides at two levels (i.e., salvation or faith history overlays a naturalistic conception of history)? One suspects that traditional views of divine speech are out of the question, such as Israel and Moses hearing the very voice of God at Horeb (Deut 4:33, 36), although this stream of thought conveys this message in hushed tones. Third, there is no explicit statement on how we are to regard the account of God’s direct acts in history in Deut 4:1–40, as well as the testimony that the Lord spoke to Moses. Therefore, Talstra’s work fails to deal with a major hermeneutic issue in the move from *Wortauslegung* to *Sachkritik*. Do we demythologize this account in harmony with the Enlightenment tradition of Biblical criticism? Or do we take it at face value in harmony with more traditional Jewish and Christian exegesis? At stake is our basic conceptualization of how the meaning or significance of both Deut 4:1–40 and the canonical text at-large casts itself upon the world today.

Finally, we examined four possible applications of the significance of the text’s meaning when it is read as an historically valid account with its provenance accurately reflected in the text. The applications challenged contemporary tendencies to downplay the role and function of ethical commands in the doctrine, dogma, and practices of the Church. Moreover, the significance of Deut 4:1–40 challenges naturalistic readings and their impositions upon Scripture in the life of the Church.

In terms of future work, Talstra and Hardmeier laid excellent foundations for reassessing the issues of dating and authorship of Scripture along more traditional lines. The notion of the priority of synchronic work for diachronic analysis possesses great merit. At the same time, as the preceding discussion attempted to point out, Talstra and Hardmeier’s approach should be qualified by a reexamination of the underpinnings of Enlightenment Biblical scholarship on the grounds that the synchronic analysis of the Biblical text seems to point toward an emic worldview that is at odds with the assumptions behind the traditional, Enlightenment paradigm. Consequently, a thorough application of Talstra and Hardmeier’s general approach to

the dating and authorship of the Pentateuch, to the study of Isaiah, to the Psalms, as well as to other books within the canon may yield results that are quite at variance with many segments of the present critical consensus. Moreover, as evangelicals have maintained throughout the Twentieth Century to present, the preceding discussion seems to reaffirm that the issues of dating and authorship radically affect both the meaning and the significance of the text in our present age.¹¹⁶ The discourse-level semantic notation advanced within this investigation demonstrates the manner in which one’s historical assumptions impact the construction of meaning at the level of the text. I, therefore, argue that in exegesis it is necessary to state explicitly the semantic implications of historical assumptions on the diachronic plane.

¹¹⁶ Contra Jonker, *Exclusivity and Variety*, 277.