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The Bible between psychology, exegesis, and theology: Jordan Peterson, Nicholas T. Wright, and Scott Hahn as interpreters of Scripture in the digital space

 <https://doi.org/10.15633/ps.30204>

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Article history • Received: 07 Oct 2025 • Accepted: 20 Nov 2025 • Published: 30 Jun 2026

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Abstract

The Bible between psychology, Eeegesis, and theology: Jordan Peterson, Nicholas T. Wright, and Scott Hahn as interpreters of Scripture in the digital space

The article investigates digital-era interpretations of Scripture by the Canadian clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson, the Anglican New Testament scholar Nicholas Tom Wright, and the Catholic theologian and former Presbyterian pastor Scott Hahn. The primary sources include selected monographs and digital presentations produced by the three authors. Each of the article's three sections provides a profile of one interpreter followed by a systematic analysis of his hermeneutical approach. The study demonstrates a substantive online demand for advanced biblical content. Audiences value Peterson's existential and moral readings of biblical narratives, Hahn's covenantal, sacramental, and mystagogical hermeneutic, and Wright's historically grounded kerygmatic and didactic biblical theology, which connects scriptural meaning with the lived experience of hearers.

Keywords: Bible, Jordan Peterson, Scott Hahn, Nicholas T. Wright

Abstrakt

Biblia między psychologią, egzegezą a teologią: Jordan Peterson, Nicholas T. Wright i Scott Hahn jako interpretatorzy Pisma Świętego w przestrzeni cyfrowej

Przedmiotem artykułu jest interpretacja Pisma Świętego w przestrzeni cyfrowej przez kanadyjskiego psychologa klinicznego Jordana Petersona, anglikańskiego duchownego i badacza Nowego Testamentu Nicholas Toma Wrighta oraz katolickiego teologa i byłego pastora prezbiteriańskiego Scotta Hahna. Materiałem źródłowym są wybrane książki oraz internetowe wystąpienia autorów. W każdej z trzech części artykułu autor opisuje twórcę, a następnie jego podejście do hermeneutyki świętego tekstu. Z analizy wynika, że wśród użytkowników Internetu istnieje zapotrzebowanie na pogłębione materiały biblijne. Słuchacze wymienionych twórców są im wdzięczni za interpretację historii biblijnych bliską życiu (treści moralne i egzystencjalne Petersona), za najwyższej jakości teologię biblijną opartą na orędziu Pisma Świętego i bliską życiu słuchaczy (treści kerygmatyczne, didaskalijskie i egzystencjalne Wrighta) oraz za interpretację Biblii w świetle teologii przymierza i sakramentów świętych (treści mistagogiczne Hahna).

Słowa kluczowe: Biblia, Jordan Peterson, Scott Hahn, Nicholas T. Wright

The interpretation of the Bible in the digital space is approached from various perspectives. Among its prominent and popular advocates are Jordan Peterson, a Canadian clinical psychologist with an interest in Catholicism; Nicholas Tom Wright, one of the leading British scholars of the New Testament; and Scott Hahn, an American Catholic theologian and former Presbyterian pastor. This three-part study aims to present a profile of each author and analyse their characteristic methods of interpreting Scripture within the digital realm. The source material consists of excerpts from their written works concerning their approaches to the Bible, as well as selected talks and presentations available on the Internet. The study concludes with reflections and key insights relevant to Catholic preaching in the digital age.

1. Peterson's psychological approach to the Bible

Jordan Peterson, a retired professor of psychology from the University of Toronto, is a clinical psychologist and a prominent author specialising in personal development, responsibility, and the influence of belief systems on human meaning-making. His academic research has focused on personality structure, creativity, and the neurobiological mechanisms underlying perception and cognition. Peterson also gained recognition during his tenure at Harvard University, where his research and teaching contributed to his reputation as an influential scholar. His lectures at the University of Toronto further shaped the life choices of both students and the members of the broader public. Peterson's digital presence, including online courses and public lectures, has achieved substantial reach. He has delivered presentations in more than 160 cities across multiple countries, attracting audiences numbering in hundreds of thousands.¹ On his official YouTube channel, Peterson provides lectures and accessible scientific discussions, some of which engage with biblical themes.² These recordings have collectively been viewed more

¹ See About Jordan Peterson, <https://jordanbpeterson.pl/> (July 18, 2025).

² The thematic focuses of the author's biblical series include an existential engagement with the divine, the psychological analysis of biblical narratives, and core texts such as the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus, and the Gospels. The latest recorded ses-

than a billion times, indicating significant engagement and the considerable impact of his interpretations.³

Peterson has increasingly been invited to discuss the topic of faith, particularly following the documented case of his wife Tammy's recovery, which culminated in her reception of the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil of 2024. When asked to specify his understanding of God, Peterson identifies Jesus as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, emphasising the Christological view of Jesus as a self-sacrificing divine figure who assumes the sins of humanity.⁴ He regularly participates with his wife in liturgical practices and notes that such religious engagement appears to have a positive psychosocial impact on her well-being. Peterson commends the Catholic Church for maintaining the deposit of faith over twenty centuries, recognises the Orthodox Church for its fidelity to doctrinal orthodoxy, and acknowledges Protestants for their historical contribution to global literacy.⁵ In a conversation with twenty atheists, he characterises God as a moral conscience and advances three theses: that atheists reject the concept of God without fully understanding what they reject; that morality and human meaning cannot be exclusively derived from scientific approaches; and that many atheists adopt Christian moral values independently of the doctrinal or narrative dimensions of religion.⁶

sions featuring Peterson are publicly available through the American conservative media platform, Daily Wire: <https://www.dailywire.com/watch/jordan-peterson>.

- 3 Between March 30, 2013, and September 30, 2025, Peterson's videos on YouTube exceeded one billion views (1,001,509,709), with approximately 8,790,000 subscribers to his channel. His prominence is primarily attributable to high-visibility interviews conducted with prominent internet content creators and journalists. The three most viewed interviews, conducted by Helen Lewis, Cathy Newman, and Joe Rogan, collectively accumulated approximately 169 million views, indicating significant reach and influence in the digital world.
- 4 Cf. S. Bartlett, Jordan B. Peterson: You need to listen to your wife, <https://podcasts.apple.com/pl/podcast/jordan-b-peterson-you-need-to-listen-to-your-wifeweve/id1291423644?i=1000683738903&cl=pl> (July 17, 2025).
- 5 Cf. M. Gove, I'm a new kind of Christian: Jordan Peterson on faith, family and the future of the right, "The Spectator" January 4, 2025, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/im-a-new-kind-of-christian-jordan-peterson-on-faith-family-and-the-future-of-the-right/> (July 17, 2025).
- 6 See Jordan Peterson vs 20 atheists. Surrounded, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-wk5MPE_6zE (July 17, 2025).

According to Peterson's conceptual framework, the Bible constitutes a foundational element of Western civilisation.⁷ When analysing human understanding of the world through the lens of archetypal narratives, he formulates a series of analytical questions designed to facilitate the interpretation of the existential dimensions contained within biblical stories:

If the world reveals itself to us in the form of a story—what is that story? How do we properly characterise our aims, our most profound temptations, our most admirable upward strivings? What is relevant and what can and should be ignored? To what should we devote our costly attention? To what ends should we aim our action? What uncomfortable truth is our conscience eternally attempting to reveal? What is the appropriate hierarchy of values through which the world most productively, generously, and sustainably reveals itself? What, in other words, is the story, the true story of our lives—what is it, and what should it be?⁸

Peterson conceptualises biblical narratives as a compilation of moral archetypes. Bishop Robert Barron, when commenting on the Canadian psychologist's work, noted that in the context of contemporary denominational struggles for influence within American Christianity, such a non-confessional interpretation of Scripture by a lay expert external to ecclesiastical frameworks possesses considerable persuasive power. Peterson explicitly refrains from asserting theological infallibility, and instead focuses on elucidating the moral messages inherent in the sacred texts.⁹ He describes the biblical ethos in the following manner:

We watch the hero aiming upward, living in truth, sacrificing for what is better, struggling nobly against the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune, yet maintaining his integrity. We watch the objects of the world revealing themselves to him as the tools and obstacles relevant to his journey. We watch the friends he

7 See J. B. Peterson, *We who wrestle with God: Perceptions of the divine*, e-book ed., New York 2024, p. 27.

8 J. B. Peterson, *We who wrestle with God*, p. 26.

9 See R. Barron, *It is practically impossible to imagine anyone who would not find illumination and inspiration in the pages of this book*, <https://www.jordanbpeterson.com> (July 14, 2025).

meets along the way perform the sacrifices necessary to be of aid and are pleased to see it. We watch his foes cheat, steal, betray, lie, and fail, and we feel that justice has been served—or we watch them succeed, and we experience the moral outrage of the deceived. In short, we are entranced by those with lofty aims, and we wish, if we are brave, to be possessed by their spirit.¹⁰

Existential sensitivity and the recognition of archetypal moral themes function as two primary interpretive frameworks that inform Peterson's understanding of the Bible, emphasising its relevance to human psychological and existential experience. An analysis of his commentary on the story of Adam and Eve presented in an 80-minute popular science lecture, reveals his focus on several key dimensions: the necessity of revisiting foundational sources of civilisation; the role of worldview narratives in shaping perception; fundamental principles of relationship formation; perceptions of the external world as mediated by individual aims; the role of egoism; issues related to sexuality and authority; the appropriate objects of worship and moral aspiration; strategies for managing informational overload in modern society; the biblical representation of women's roles; the biological functions associated with motherhood; development of self-awareness regarding personal life purpose; critique of feminist hermeneutics; the cognitive foundations of moral reasoning; and the moral and spiritual significance of pride as a moral flaw.¹¹ Qualitative analysis of viewer feedback indicates predominantly positive reception, with statements such as: "This resonates deeply"; "Invaluable insights"; "I wish I had encountered such perspectives earlier in life"; "This moved me emotionally"; "I am grateful for his references to biblical narratives—there is significant pedagogical and moral value in these stories. These insights merit dissemination to a broad audience"; "Thank God for speaking to us through the thoughts and insights of Dr Peterson." Such responses highlight a fundamental human drive to seek answers to core existential and moral questions, illustrating both the broad societal relevance and psychological resonance of Peterson's interpretative approach.

¹⁰ J. B. Peterson, *We who wrestle with God*, p. 25.

¹¹ See J. B. Peterson, *The sins of Adam and the true nature of Eve*, <https://youtu.be/R2f13G-zlGnc?feature=shared> (July 17, 2025).

Peterson's interpretations are frequently critiqued for their superficial engagement with the literal meanings of biblical symbols and for employing methodological approaches that appear disconnected from established theological frameworks.¹² This tendency results in the biblical texts being interpreted through a variety of symbolic frameworks that lack consistent theological grounding. For example, Moses' staff is construed as a reference to the Garden of Eden; Adam and Eve are represented as archetypes embodying personality differences between genders; the serpent is viewed as an avatar of chaos; Cain is depicted as the first victim of liberal ideology; Noah's Ark is interpreted as a paradigm of free speech; the Tower of Babel is read as a prophecy of transidentity and hedonistic excesses; and the story of David and Goliath is framed as a narrative of rebellion against tyrannical authority. In Peterson's schema, the concept of God frequently personifies morality and moral strength—an internal force capable of confronting challenges and overcoming adversity.¹³ A characteristic feature of his interpretative method is the tendency to derive similar moral lessons from different biblical stories, often emphasising themes of order, stability, and discipline, while denouncing chaos and disorder. Comparable moral lessons are frequently extracted from secular texts such as *Harry Potter*, *Pinocchio*, or *The Lion King*, which can give the impression of treating biblical Scripture as equivalent to literary or popular narratives rather than as theological doctrine. Within the context of the author's ambiguous confessional stance, a methodological concern arises from the reduction of the Old Testament to a form of self-help literature, which offers overly simplified solutions to complex existential and moral questions.¹⁴

The Pontifical Biblical Commission, in its document *On the interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, recognises the psychological approach to biblical texts as a hermeneutical methodology rooted in the human sciences. It acknowledges the contributions of psychological and

¹² Cf. K. Nickel, *Jordan Peterson's confusion over religious symbolism: A lesson from Cain and Abel*, "Think" 22 (2023) no. 65, pp. 45–52.

¹³ Cf. B. Rothfeld, *The Gospel according to Jordan Peterson*, "The Washington Post" December 6, 2024, <https://img.washingtonpost.com/books/2024/12/06/we-who-wrestle-with-god-jordan-peterson-review/> (July 17, 2025).

¹⁴ Cf. B. Rothfeld, *The Gospel according to Jordan Peterson*.

psychoanalytic studies to biblical exegesis, particularly in interpreting Scripture as a reflection of personal life experiences and moral frameworks. Furthermore, this approach facilitates a multi-dimensional analysis that enables access to the human linguistic expression of divine revelation, including the language of religious symbols. The Commission also noted that:

The dialogue between exegesis and psychology or psychoanalysis, begun with a view to a better understanding of the Bible, should clearly be conducted critically, respecting the boundaries of each discipline. Whatever the circumstances, a psychology or psychoanalysis of an atheistic nature disqualifies itself from giving proper consideration to the data of faith [...] it is necessary to take good account of competence in the particular field and to recognise that only rarely will the same person be fully qualified in both exegesis and one or other of the human sciences.¹⁵

Within the framework established by the guidelines of the document, the interdisciplinary scholarly dialogues concerning the theological and literary messages of the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus, and the Gospels are of particular significance. These dialogues were initiated by Peterson, who engaged experts from diverse academic disciplines, including a Catholic bishop, an Orthodox iconographer, an Anglican philosopher, a conservative Jewish scholar, a secular cognitive scientist, a novelist and playwright, a specialist of ancient rhetoric, a philosopher of religion, and a comedian. This approach highlights the importance of interdisciplinary integration in biblical hermeneutics and theological analysis.¹⁶

2. Wright's historical-critical approach

Professor Nicholas Tom Wright, an Anglican scholar who resigned from his episcopal office in Durham to dedicate himself to scholarly research,

¹⁵ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Vatican 1993, I/D/3,

¹⁶ Cf. J. B. Peterson, *The Gospels*, <https://www.dailywire.com/watch/jordan-peterson> (July 17, 2025).

is affiliated with the University of Oxford and has also served as a senior research fellow at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Recognised as one of the foremost contemporary New Testament scholars, Wright's methodology focuses on reconstructing the historical context of biblical texts and examining the emergence of early Christianity. His academic contributions include over 85 published works and the co-creation of the digital educational platform N. T. Wright Online, designed to support scholarly study of Scripture and biblical theology.¹⁷

In Poland, Wright's influence has been notably extended through the translation of his book *Simply Good News. Why the Gospel is news and what makes it good*¹⁸ In this work, he delineates four core principles underpinning both pastoral and pedagogical approaches to biblical proclamation, asserting that the Gospel represents:

(1) an announcement of an event that has happened; (2) a larger context, a back-story, within which this makes sense; (3) a sudden unveiling of the new future that lies ahead; and (4) a transformation of the present moment, sitting between the event that *has* happened and the further event that therefore will happen.¹⁹

This concept of the kerygma consists of four interrelated components: the past, the present, the future, and the experiential continuity of the listeners. First, the emphasis on the past highlights the biblical narrative in which God, through Jesus Christ, assumed sovereignty over creation. This eschatological fulfilment is anticipated in the second coming of Christ, thereby imbuing the present epoch with renewed theological significance, as the anticipation of the King's return is a foundational

¹⁷ See N. T. Wright, *Renewing minds through biblical teaching*, <https://www.ntwrightonline.org> (July 17, 2025). The YouTube channel operated by the content creator under the same name has been active since June 15, 2018, attracting a subscriber base of approximately 67,900 users. The channel features 263 videos, which have collectively accumulated approximately 3,740,085 views. Additionally, the creator maintains an external website as part of their digital outreach platform: <https://ntwrightpage.com>.

¹⁸ Book review in Polish: M. Klukowski, Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Dobra Nowina. Wiadomość, która zmienia świat* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM 2016), "Verbum Vitae" (2017) no. 31, pp. 371–383.

¹⁹ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News. Why the Gospel is news and what makes it good*, e-book ed., New York 2011, p. 23.

eschatological assumption.²⁰ Second, the theological framework underscores the significance of the existential context, asserting that the proclamation of the Gospel is situated within ongoing human life. It represents an unforeseen intervention whereby the kerygma disrupts the continuity of historical narrative, pointing to an unresolved problem and an aspirational future characterised by hope. Recognition of such contextual embedding shapes the reception of the message, fostering hope rather than indifference.²¹ Third, the approach advocates the articulation of moral imperatives, with a focus on the salvific indicative embedded within the proclamation—exemplified by the Apostle Paul’s model, who presented the Gospel as a transformative event that actively reshaped socio-cultural realities, rather than merely a philosophical system, ideological stance, or set of pragmatic guidelines. The effective proclamation of the living and Paschal Christ naturally leads to significant, decisive behavioural responses in the audience, emphasising the practical efficacy of the Gospel as a transformative and salutary message:

Once people grasp that the events of the Messiah’s death and resurrection have transformed everything and that they are now living between the initial explosive event and God’s final setting right of the world (when God is “all in all”), then everything will change: belief, behaviour, attitudes, expectations, and not least a new love, a real sense of belonging, which springs up among those who share all this.²²

Fourth, Wright’s discourse systematically incorporates didactic elements, notably emphasising the concept of heavenly reality, which aligns with the biblical assertion that Jesus’ mission was to realise the divine reign “on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10). This interpretative approach affirms an inaugurated eschatological model, whereby divine fulfilment is understood as both a future goal and an ontologically accessible reality in the present. In this way, Wright reflects the biblical

²⁰ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, p. 3.

²¹ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, p. 4.

²² N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, pp. 26–27.

tension between realised and future aspects of eschatology, situating them within a dynamic theological framework.²³

Wright explicitly critiques three predominant distortions in the hermeneutical presentation of the Gospel. First, he condemns an overemphasis on substitutionary justification, which neglects the theological concept of new creation and covenant. He illustrates this issue by pointing to the reductionist claim that individuals are sinners deserving of death, that Jesus died for them, and that belief in Him guarantees entrance to heaven. This perspective frames salvation primarily in terms of moral merit, thereby minimising the broader, more holistic understanding of divine redemption that includes communal, sacramental, and eschatological dimensions.²⁴ Second, he critiques the disproportionate focus on reason and emotion, which fosters a false dichotomy between spiritual and material realities. This approach leads audiences of purely didactic sermons to view faith as a system of abstract propositions demonstrable by reason. In contrast, preachers influenced by romanticism often construct superficial appeals that merely encourage listeners to “fill their hearts with joy.” Wright argues that effective proclamation must engage both rational and emotional faculties in a balanced manner.²⁵ Third, he identifies a distortion that has been present since the mid-18th century, there has been a notable distortion characterised by attempts to adapt the Gospel message to the paradigms of modernity—such as Enlightenment principles, notions of freedom and equality, scientific methodology, technological advancement, and progress. In this context, sermon content is often curated to appear “politically correct” and aligned with contemporary cultural norms, thereby avoiding any association with perspectives perceived as outdated or reactionary.²⁶

To mitigate common inaccuracies in biblical interpretation, Wright advocates for an interdisciplinary hermeneutic methodology that integrates historical, cultural, literary, and theological analyses. He

²³ See N. T. Wright, *Practicing the Resurrection: Perilous world, powerful love*, <https://nt-wrightpage.com/category/sermons/> (July 17, 2025).

²⁴ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, pp. 57–60.

²⁵ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, pp. 67–68.

²⁶ See N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News*, pp. 75–77.

emphasises the necessity of constraining biblical exegesis within the bounds of theological coherence, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of the multiple layers of meaning embedded within Scripture.²⁷ Within this framework, effective homiletical practice must be grounded in a robust Christological foundation. This includes contextualising Jesus within the socio-historical conditions of first-century Judaism, analysing the socio-political dimensions of the Kingdom of God, and examining the tension between the Messianic figure and the religious as well as political authorities of the period.²⁸

According to Wright, an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates the overlapping influences of Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Hellenistic cultures facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive frameworks of biblical authors. It is likewise critical to identify the literary genres that shape the interpretative strategies applied to individual biblical texts, as well as to analyse the narrative structures of the Gospels, which trace the progression from Old Testament messianic promises to their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.²⁹ Wright further advocates a contextualised practice of theology that promotes dialogue and collaboration among scholars from diverse disciplines, thereby establishing an epistemological foundation for addressing complex hermeneutical questions.³⁰ An exemplary model of such an integrative methodology can be found in the mission of the Apostle Paul, which historically engaged with pagan cultures and imperial ideologies while remaining rooted in Judaic tradition. Wright underscores the continuing necessity—also in the 21st century—of rigorous exegesis combined with the

²⁷ Cf. M. Michielin, *Bridging the gulf between biblical scholars and theologians: Can Barth and Wright provide an answer?*, “Scottish Journal of Theology” 61 (2008) no. 4, pp. 433–434.

²⁸ Cf. D. Duffield, *Christocentric preaching meets the historical Jesus. A critical analysis of Christology in N.T. Wright and Wolfhart Pannenberg: Implications for a christocentric homiletic*, Eugene 2024, p. 320.

²⁹ See N. T. Wright, *Bible stories*, “U.S. Catholic” 85 (2020) no. 3, pp. 28–31. This approach is consistent with the foundational principles of the historical-critical methodology in biblical hermeneutics. Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, I/A/2.

³⁰ See N. T. Wright, *Theology of the future: Scholars, theologians, and philosophers used to work together. Why they need to do so again*, “Christianity Today” 63 (2019) no. 3, pp. 50–53.

contextualisation of biblical history within the lived existential experiences of interpretive communities, in order to ensure the effectiveness of proclamation and the depth of theological understanding.³¹

3. Hahn's hermeneutics: Covenant and sacraments

Scott Hahn, born in 1957, is a distinguished Catholic theologian and apologist with a family background deeply rooted in the Christian tradition. He is married and has six children, along with twenty-three grandchildren, which situates his personal application of theological principles within a familial framework. Initially ordained within the Presbyterian Church (Calvinist branch), Hahn served as a pastor for four years before converting to the Catholic Church in 1986. His subsequent scholarly work emphasises the interpretative significance of the theology of the covenant and the sacraments as fundamental methodological tools for biblical exegesis. Hahn's contributions to Catholic apologetics include numerous publications and media appearances, notably on the U.S.-based Catholic television network Eternal World Television Network (EWTN). Currently, he holds the position of Chair of Biblical Theology and the New Evangelisation at Franciscan University of Steubenville. He is the founder and president of the Saint Paul Centre for Biblical Theology, established in 2001.³² This centre, along with its digital media outreach—including a dedicated YouTube channel—serves as his primary platform for scholarly communication, supplemented by additional resources hosted on his personal website.³³

The foundational context of Hahn's theological approach is his personal conversion experience, which originated from encountering sermons perceived as doctrinally insufficient. He describes this in his book, formulating it as follows:

³¹ See N. T. Wright, *Paul as preacher: The Gospel then and now*, "Irish Theological Quarterly" 72 (2007) issue 2, p. 131.

³² See S. Hahn, *Biography*, <https://stpaulcenter.com/scott-hahn/bio> (July 13, 2025).

³³ The private website is accessible at <https://www.scotthahn.com>. The associated YouTube channel, titled "St. Paul Center," has maintained a subscriber base of approximately 211,000 users since July 6, 2012. The channel has published 1,102 videos, which collectively have garnered over 21,318,547 views, indicating substantial engagement within the digital media platform.

I recall the last time I ever attended our family's church. The minister was preaching all about his doubts regarding the Virgin Birth of Jesus and his bodily Resurrection. I just stood up in the middle of his sermon and walked out. I remember thinking, I'm not sure what I believe, but at least I'm honest enough not to stand up and attack the things I'm supposed to teach. I also wondered, why doesn't the man just leave his ministry in the Presbyterian Church and go wherever his beliefs are held? Little did I know that I had witnessed a portent of my own future.³⁴

On a subsequent occasion, Hahn experienced cognitive dissonance when a preacher publicly posed an inquiry regarding the theological nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross but failed to provide a substantive response. After formally addressing the pastor's neglect to clarify the issue, Hahn was informed that the question had been raised incidentally and that the preacher himself lacked a definitive theological resolution. Consequently, Hahn initiated an interdisciplinary study that encompassed the Passion narratives in the Gospel of John, the liturgical and theological significance of the Last Supper, Jewish Passover traditions, covenant theology, and biblical hermeneutics related to the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. His research further extended to analysing patristic texts on sacramental theology and ancient liturgical sources. This integrative process led to the conclusion that, from an academic and epistemological perspective, active participation in the Catholic Eucharistic celebration was necessary to ensure both doctrinal fidelity and scholarly integrity, despite his prior reservations.³⁵ Here is his retrospective reflection on this experiential learning process after many years later:

There I stood, a man incognito, a Protestant minister in plainclothes, slipping into the back of a Catholic chapel in Milwaukee to witness my first Mass. Curiosity had driven me there, and I still didn't feel sure that it was healthy curiosity. [...] I took my seat in the shadows, in a pew at the very back of that basement chapel.

34 S. Hahn, K. Hahn, *Rome sweet home: Our journey to Catholicism*, San Francisco 1993, p. 13.

35 Cf. M. Zachara, *O liturgii, która zmienia życie*—Scott Hahn, <https://www.liturgia.pl/o-liturgii-ktora-zmienia-zycie-scott-hahn/> (July 13, 2025).

[...] So I would remain an observer. [...] I remained on the sidelines until I heard the priest pronounce the words of consecration: This is My body... This is the cup of My blood. Then I felt all my doubt drain away. As I saw the priest raise that white host, I felt a prayer surge from my heart in a whisper: My Lord and my God. That's really you! [...] From long years of studying the Bible, I immediately knew where I was. I was in the Book of Revelation, where Jesus is called the Lamb.³⁶

As a consequence of these experiences, Hahn reoriented his academic and pastoral career, renouncing his educational pursuits, Protestant pastoral position, and scholarly work within the Presbyterian tradition, alongside distancing himself from personal and professional relationships. Self-identifying as a “bumbling biblical detective,”³⁷ he embarked on a path toward the Catholic faith, rooted in Scripture. On the official platform of his evangelisation centre, he articulates that his primary mission is to interpret the Bible within its authentic ecclesial context—aligned with Catholic Tradition, liturgical practice, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in continuity with the Magisterium of the Church. He posits that the Bible and liturgy are mutually constitutive, with the Old Testament foreshadowing the sacramental life of the People of God, which the Church is tasked to recognise and explore. His publications, audio recordings, and educational courses serve as instruments to support this interpretive and formative process. Hahn views his audience as being called to discipleship through biblical literacy and proficient engagement with Scripture. Ecclesiastical authorities, such as Bishop Barron, describe working with Hahn as engaging with a master biblical scholar. At the same time, Cardinal Timothy Dolan commends his ability to present the sacraments as acts primarily initiated by God for human salvation, rather than as human actions directed toward God. Colleagues frequently compare Hahn's theological influence to that of John Henry Newman or Gilbert Keith Chesterton within contemporary ecclesial thought.³⁸

³⁶ S. Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as heaven on earth*, e-book ed., New York 2013, pp. 6–7.

³⁷ S. Hahn, K. Hahn, *Rome sweet home*, p. 11.

³⁸ See R. Barron, T. Dolan, M. Aquiliana, *Endorsements*, <https://stpaulcenter.com/scott-hahn/bio> (July 13, 2025).

Hahn's hermeneutic is grounded in covenant theology.³⁹ He emphasises—more strongly than some contemporaries—that the continuity of God's covenants with Israel constitutes an integrative framework for interpreting the diverse corpus of Scripture.⁴⁰ In Hahn's model, biblical covenants serve to expand kinship relations, establishing a father–son relationship between God and His elect people. This filial motif recurs throughout salvation history, is anticipated in the Old Testament, realised in Christ, and instantiated in the Church. Hahn demonstrates systematically how divine mercy and redemptive action are grounded in divine promise and fidelity, even amid covenantal infidelity on the part of the people. In concluding his account of conversion and reception into the Catholic Church, he formulates a programmatic exhortation: believers are called to deepen their faith through sustained engagement with the Mystery of Christ, through liturgical participation in His presence, through moral transformation effected by the Gospel, and through disciplined prayer:

Pick up the Scriptures daily and read them. [...] Believe what you read. Share it. Pray it. Memorise it. Soak in it, as in a warm tub! [...] Along with the Bible, pick up a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and read through it—from cover to cover—at least once. [...] While you're at it, why not blow the dust off your copy of *The Documents of Vatican II* [...] Make a "plan of life" for yourself so that prayer is on the schedule. [...] The foundation for the Catholic's life must be the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.⁴¹

Hahn's scriptural studies culminated in his reception into the Catholic Church, and in the development of a sacramental theology articulated within a covenantal framework. He conceptualises the sacraments as actions of Christ in which heavenly reality intersects with earthly

³⁹ See S. Hahn, *Kinship by covenant: A canonical approach to the fulfilment of God's saving promises*, New Haven 2009, p. 7.

⁴⁰ See S. Hahn, *The covenant and the Mass*, <https://youtu.be/uBJ9EQIoFNk?si=OnAUtcNnybLFClv1> (July 17, 2025).

⁴¹ S. Hahn, K. Hahn, *Rome sweet home*, p. 128–129. Hahn's catechetical appeals correspond thematically to the four structural components of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: the Profession of Faith, the Sacraments of Faith, the Life of Faith, and Prayer in the Life of Faith. Cf. CCC 14–17.

existence and eternal significance permeates temporal life. In virtue of the Incarnation, the sacraments function to incorporate human beings into divine communion in a manner analogous to the bond of a marital covenant.⁴² This theme recurs systematically throughout Hahn's corpus and public teaching, and may be summarised as follows:

Jesus Christ wants us in the New Covenant that he established through his own flesh and blood, the same covenant he renews through the Holy Eucharist. When his sacrifice for us is renewed at the altar, we gather at the family table for the sacred meal that makes us one.⁴³

Conclusions

A comparative analysis of the writings and digital presentations of three prominent interpreters of Scripture—Peterson, Wright, and Hahn—identifies three distinct hermeneutical paradigms operative in the online sphere, reflecting divergent theological, cultural, and disciplinary orientations. Peterson foregrounds the archetypal density of biblical narratives and emphasises their moral and existential import. His methodological approach, however, has been critiqued in academic and theological circles for its tendency towards overly symbolic readings and for an interpretive latitude that lacks systematic theological grounding. Moreover, Peterson's uncertain confessional stance has been attracted criticism from both theologians and secular interlocutors. Wright highlights the necessity of situating Scripture within its historical and cultural context and pursues a rigorous understanding of the New Testament through an interdisciplinary dialogue of scholarship, faith, and lived experience. As a cleric-scholar, he advances a kerygmatic proclamation informed by theological and biblical research that enables hearers to interpret their lives in light of the Gospel—thereby enhancing reception and avoiding ineffectual proclamation. Hahn focuses on biblical covenant theology and sacramental doctrine, a trajectory that shaped his conversion and subsequent advocacy of a Catholic

⁴² See S. Hahn, *Swear to God: The promise and power of the sacraments*, New York 2025, pp. 27–28.

⁴³ S. Hahn, K. Hahn, *Rome sweet home*, p. 131.

hermeneutic. Uniquely, he reads Scripture through the lens of liturgical mystagogy, interpreting the sacraments as concrete actions of Christ that actualise divine presence and confer theological coherence on biblical interpretation.

Conclusions for digital-era homiletics align with the fundamental principle of material homiletics: the integral proclamation of the mystery of Christ, actualised in sacramental celebration and embodied in the lives of believers.⁴⁴ Practically, this requires a balanced proclamation across kerygmatic, didactic, mystagogical, existential, and moral registers, with appropriate prioritisation of the salvific indicative. Hahn exemplifies this integrative, mystagogical model. Peterson, notwithstanding methodological and confessional critiques, has significantly broadened public engagement with biblical narratives through wide-reaching digital dissemination and interdisciplinary readings. Wright models a historically grounded, dynamic kerygmatic proclamation that links exegetical rigour with the lived experience of listeners. From a media-practice perspective, all three figures demonstrate professional standards in production values, platform selection, and collaborative networks that enhance the reception and perceived credibility of their biblical materials.

Recommended avenues for further research include: sociological analyses of their digital audiences (demographics, motivations, reception patterns); formal rhetorical and discourse-analytic studies of their communicative strategies and multimodal production; and comparative hermeneutical analyses of their treatments of identical scriptural passages in order to assess convergences and divergences in doctrinal, moral, and existential emphases.

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