

## Appendix: A Few Systematic Effects of Exegetical Strategies

The following is a short list, intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive, of a few exegetical strategies that had major systematic effects. The majority of these strategies had a reconciliative purpose: to harmonize traditions, to unveil the hidden unity in canonical sources, to reconcile new traditions with old ones, or to co-opt the ideas of warring traditions or subtraditions. Which strategies were preferred in different traditions — and hence which types of cosmologies tended to evolve within those traditions — depended in part on (1) the ease with which those methods solved given exegetical tasks and (2) the frequency with which those methods showed up in earlier layers of tradition. The inbreeding of traditions over long periods resulted in the cross-cultural growth of multilayered correlative systems that by late traditional times exhibited high levels of structural complexity, formal consistency, and self-similarity. Partially counterbalancing these developments were anti-scholastic (or classicist) movements that tended to grow in strength the further traditions drifted from the sense of their base texts; the seesaw battle of syncretic and anti-syncretic forces was a major theme in the history of thought until the final collapse of high-correlative systems in early modern times.

EXEGETICAL STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL BYPRODUCTS
Correlation of gods from different polytheistic traditions.	Gods of different traditions are ordered in abstract series, or viewed as bodily parts of superior deities, for reconciliative ends.	Generation of early pantheons of gods in ancient Egypt, Mesoamerica, India, Greece, etc. Similar tendencies in Chinese “folk” religion.
Fusion of different gods or concepts of god in one or more tradition.	Conflicting concepts of gods are fused to create transcendental deities.	Initial appearance of proto-monotheistic or monotheistic traditions.
Transcendent fusion of conflicting moral or intellectual concepts in one or more tradition.	Conflicting uses of terms are integrated to create abstract universal concepts.	‘Heaven,’ <i>dharma</i> , <i>Logos</i> , the ‘One,’ Platonic theory of ideas, etc. Abstract dualistic frameworks are created for later cosmological developments.
Paradoxical fusions of divine beings or cosmic principles.	Conflicting references to divine beings or cosmic principles are identified in paradoxical ways to demonstrate the unity of a body of texts.	Simultaneously transcendent and immanent gods; paradoxical Confucian-Daoist ‘Way’; Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu trinities; dualistic deities in Tibetan or Mesoamerican traditions, etc.
Assignment of divine beings, sages, or inferior creatures from various traditions to hierarchical or emanational series.	Key concepts in different traditions are harmonized by assigning those concepts to different levels of reality.	Grades of Confucian sages and worthies; Buddhist and Hindu avatars and saints, etc.; gnostic aeons and Neo-Platonic henads; orders of demons and angels, etc.
Syncretic fusion of multiple or conflicting stories concerning ancient sages, philosophers, and tradition founders in an evolving canon.	Multiple stories of sages, philosophers, and tradition founders are harmonized by transforming those figures into semi-divine or divine beings.	Eventual transformation of Confucius, Laozi, Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Jesus, etc., into semi-divine or cosmic beings.
Systematic correlations of conflicting references to single deities.	Conflicting references to a deity are identified as inferior manifestations of that deity.	Abstract schemas of the names and powers of god in Islamic and Christian scholasticism; the kabbalistic <i>sefirot</i> , etc.

EXEGETICAL STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL BYPRODUCTS
Allegorical methods applied in hierarchical frameworks.	Abstract philosophical or religious ideas read out of (or into) non-philosophical works.	Intensified hierarchical visions of reality. Transformation of poetic and other non-philosophical works into cosmological treatises (Homer, <i>Spring and Autumn Annals</i> , etc.)
Allegorical methods applied in a temporal framework (typology).	Concepts or persons in earlier traditions are pictured as imperfect anticipations of concepts or persons in later ones.	Growth of analogical views of time in progressive (linear) frameworks.
Compilational or allegorical strategies applied in cyclical temporal frameworks.	Conflicting stories, concepts, divine beings, or temporal events in canonical texts are reconciled by assigning them to different eras in a cyclical temporal framework.	Multiple creations and destructions of the world in Greek or Mesoamerican traditions; concept of avatars and multiple Buddhas, etc.; reconciliative use of the “five phases” ( <i>wuxing</i> ) in Chinese historical writings.
Compilational strategies in hierarchical frameworks.	Conflicting stories, concepts, or cosmological schemes are joined in a hierarchical manner.	Multileveled visions of heaven and hell in Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Mesoamerican traditions; complex faculty psychologies; etc.
Syncretic syllogisms.	Disjoined snippets of texts are conjoined to unveil their hidden unities. Heavy use in Vedic, Neo-Confucian, Midrashic, and similar commentarial traditions.	Increased reverence towards holy books; intensified word magic, bibliomancy, etc.
Standard scholastic distinction.	Apparent conflicts in authorities are reconciled by adding appropriate verbal modifiers to the concepts of those authorities.	Reality becomes increasingly complex, correlative, and (normally) hierarchical.
‘Double-truth’ models.	Religious or philosophical authorities are reconciled by distinguishing complementary realms of truth.	Bifurcations of reality in the three-treatise school of Buddhism; similar developments in Neo-Confucian, Vedantic, Averroistic, and Latin scholastic traditions.
Mystical letter/glyph interpretations and/or anagrammatic manipulations of sacred canons.	Mystical letter/glyph interpretations and anagrammatic readings introduced to demonstrate the hidden unity of canonical texts.	Glyphomancy in China, anagrammatic manipulations of texts in India, the Middle East, and the West. Intensified linguistic realism, fusion of mysticism and calligraphy, etc.
Higher-level fusions of systems of correspondences.	Presyncretized (correlative) concepts found in earlier texts are conjoined in increasingly abstract forms.	Abstract numerologies of the type found in Shao Yong or Joachim of Fiore. Extreme syncretic-correlative systems with amplified magical properties in medieval and early modern times.

For detailed discussion of individual strategies, see Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, and Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton, 1991). For discussion of exegetical methods opposing these strategies, see Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and Early Christian Patterns* (Albany, 1998).