HERMENEUTICS
BOOK TWO

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SECTION 15

Titus: A Test Case for Interpreting the Text

Titus
"A Call to Sound Doctrine and Good Works"

Theme: Balancing Theology and Good Works

Author: The Apostle Paul (1:1)

Recipient: Titus: my true child in our common faith (1:4) who was at Crete (1:5)

Date of Writing: c. A.D. 66

Place of Writing: Asia Minor (modern Turkey) ?

Major Emphases:

1. God as Savior
2. Qualifications for Leaders
3. Sound Doctrine
4. Silencing False Teachers
5. Roles of Men and Women
6. Coming of Christ
7. Doctrine of Regeneration
8. Good Works

Titus

Introduction 1:1-4	Maintain Sound Doctrine and Good Works				Conclusion 3:15
	Church Leadership	False Teachers	Specific Groups	Everyday Life	
	God's Word Has Appeared		God's Grace Has Appeared	God's Kindness and Love Has Appeared	
	Commitments (1:5-6) Conduct (1:7) Character (1:8) Convictions (1:9)	The Divisive (1:10-11) The Deceived (1:12-14) The Defiled (1:15-16)	Older Men (2:1-2) Older Women (2:3-4) Younger Women (2:4-5) Younger Men (2:6-8) Slaves (2:9-10) All Persons (2:11-15)	In the Community (3:1-8) In the Church (3:9-11) In our Conduct (3:12-14)	
	Leaders	Enemies	Followers		
	1:5 1:9	1:10 1:16	2:1 2:15	3:1 3:15	

Purpose Statement: Paul wrote to Titus, his son in the faith, in order to instruct him in establishing churches that would be properly governed and active in maintaining sound doctrine and good works.
Key Words: Faith(ful); Good Works; Sound Doctrine; Savior

Introduction to Titus
"A Call to Sound Doctrine and Good Works"

I. Author

The author of Titus is Paul the apostle. This conclusion is supported by the text itself (1:1), the internal evidence of theology and language, and the external testimony of the overwhelming majority of the Church Fathers. Arguments against Pauline authorship of this book are the same as those marshaled against the other two pastoral epistles (e.g. 1 and 2 Timothy). There are differences between these three letters and the other Pauline epistles. Those differences, however, are adequately explained by the fact that the other letters are written to churches, whereas the pastorals (and Philemon) are personal letters written to associates. Linguistic differences are probably due to the use of an amanuensis (secretary), possibly Luke (c.f. 2 Tim. 4:11) and/or the difference of subject matter being addressed. The extremely personal nature of this letter further supports its genuineness as the work of the apostle Paul.

II. Date and Place of Writing

The historical references of this book fall outside the Book of Acts and between Paul's two Roman imprisonments (Acts 28:30-31; 2 Timothy). The events between these two imprisonments may be reconstructed from various information throughout the pastoral epistles.

1. Paul was released from his first imprisonment c. A.D. 62-63 (Acts 28:30).
2. He then journeyed to Asia Minor, visiting Ephesus and Colossae in the spring and autumn of the same year (1 Tim. 1:3, Philemon 22)
3. After leaving Timothy in Ephesus, he traveled to Macedonia where he spent the winter (1 Tim. 1:3, Phil. 2:24)
4. In A.D. 64 he revisited Asia Minor on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:28)

5. He returned from Spain in A.D. 65-66 and spent some time on Crete.
6. Sometime later he departed for Asia Minor, leaving Titus (A.D. 66).
7. Shortly after his arrival in Asia Minor, Paul wrote a personal letter to Titus (A.D. 66).
8. Paul spent the winter of A.D. 66/67 in Macedonia in the city of Nicopolis where Titus was to rejoin him (2 Tim. 4:13, Titus 3:12).
9. Paul was re-arrested in A.D. 66-67 and sent to Rome.
10. Near the time of his death under Nero's reign in c. A.D. 67-68, Paul's last letter was written (2 Tim. 4:20).

From this brief chronology we can project that Paul wrote Titus from Asia Minor perhaps in the summer or autumn of c. A.D. 66.

III. Destination

This epistle from Paul was written to Titus (1:4) who was laboring to organize the local assemblies of believes on the island of Crete (1:5) in the Mediterranean Sea. Crete was an island 146 miles long immersed in pagan philosophy. Located in the Mediterranean near the Aegean Sea, it was the mythical birthplace of Zeus and the legendary Minotaur, a half-bull, half-human monster.

IV. Occasion and Purpose

Apparently Titus was appointed by the apostle to organize the churches in Crete. Paul seems to have evangelized the island, but could not stay long enough to develop local leadership. Because this was lacking (1:5) and false teachers were infiltrating the scattered flocks (1:10-16), Titus was summoned to temporarily remain on Crete to "set in order the things which are lacking and ordain elders in every city." In the midst of little, if any, local

leadership and the encroachment of false teachers, Paul and Titus apparently discussed the task of organizing the churches when they were together (1:5), but the letter affirmed Paul's instructions telling Titus both what to do (1:5-16) and what to say (2:1 – 3:11).

V. Recipient

Though he does not appear by name in Acts, Titus is mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 2:13, 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16; 12:18 twice; Gal. 2:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:10; and Titus 1:4). Titus was a convert from a non-Jewish heritage early in Paul's ministry. Titus first appears with Paul at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:1, 3) where he is the apostle's proof that one does not need to become a Jew to be a Christian. Later, Titus' work is related to the Corinthians as he appears as an emissary to Paul concerning the Corinthian's reaction to 1 Corinthains (2 Cor. 7:16) and as the bearer of the second epistle to them. We do know that Titus has a specific burden for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:16). There is little information in the New Testament with respect to Titus between A.D. 56 (when he delivered 2 Corinthians to Corinth) and A.D. 66 (when we find him laboring on Crete). The most distinct biographical note concerning Titus was written by Paul when he said that they "walked in the same spirit and in the same steps" (2 Cor. 12:18; c.f. also 8:23). Titus may have rejoined Paul in Nicopolis where they spent the winter of A.D. 66-67 (Titus 3:12), and accompanied Paul to Rome (2 Tim. 4:10). The final biographical entry notes that Titus was in Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

VI. Purpose

It is likely that the church on Crete suffered from two sources: (1) <u>visiting Judaizers</u> who mixed law and grace and (2) <u>ignorant Christians</u> who abused the grace of God and turned it into license. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote: (1) to remind Titus of his work of re-organizing the church and appointing elders; (2) to warn him about false teachers; (3) to encourage him in pastoring the different kinds of people in the church; (4) to emphasize the true meaning of grace in the life of the Christian; (5) to explain how to deal with church troublemakers; and (6) to encourage believers to look for the coming of Christ.

VII. Emphasis

Several words are repeated in this brief letter, helping us to understand the burden that was on Paul's heart. Savior occurs six times (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6). Good works is a major emphasis (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14). Saved by grace means saved unto good works. Christian doctrine and Christian living are to be sound (1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8). There ought to be a life of godliness (1:1 and 2:12), not worldliness. God's grace leads a person to live a godly life (1:4; 2:11ff; 3:7, 15). The key verse of the book is probably 3:8 – ". . . they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

VIII. Theme

The theme of Titus is a call to sound doctrine and good works for the church of the Lord Jesus. Passages occur in this short epistle concerning the qualifications and responsibilities of pastors (1:5-9), the ethics of the believer (2:1-10), the return of Christ (2:11-14), and the nature of salvation (3:3-7).

An Outline of Titus
"A Call to Sound Doctrine"

I.	Sound doctrine and the church's leadership		1:1-9
	1.	Greeting	1:1-4
	2.	The selection and qualification of elders	1:5-9
II.	Sound doctrine and false worship		1:10-16
	1.	The divisive	1:10-11
	2.	The deceived	1:12-14
	3.	The defiled	1:15-16
III.	Sound doctrine in the lives of certain groups		2:1-15
	1.	Different age groups	2:1-8
		a. Older men	2:1-2
		b. Older women	2:3-4
		c. Younger women	2:4-5
		d. Younger men	2:6-8
	2.	Slaves	2:9-10
	3.	All persons	2:11-15
		a. Proper teaching	2:11-12
		b. Proper looking	2:13
		c. Proper living	2:14-15
IV.	Sound doctrine in everyday life		3:1-15
	1.	In the community	3:1-8
	2.	In the church	3:9-11
	3.	In our conduct	3:12-14
	4.	Conclusion	3:15

SAVED TO SERVE

Titus 1:1-4

I. We are servants of our Lord. 1:1

1. We are slaves. (humility)
2. We are sent. (authority)
3. We are selected. (ministry)
4. We are sanctified. (spiritually)

II. We are secure in our Lord. 1:2-3

1. We have His witness. 1:2
2. We have His word. 1:3

III. We are separated unto the Lord. 1:4

1. We share a common faith.
2. We are in God's family.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A GODLY LEADER

Titus 1:5-9

I. He is a man with godly commitments. 1:5-6

1. He is faithful to the church. 1:5
2. He is faithful to others. 1:6
3. He is faithful to his wife. 1:6
4. He is faithful to his children. 1:6

II. He is a man of godly conduct. 1:7

1. He understands the need of a good reputation.
2. He understands the nature of his calling.
3. He understands the necessity of a balanced life.

III. He is a man of godly character. 1:8

1. He pursues the right priorities.
2. He possesses the right perspective.
3. He produces the right pattern.
4. He promotes the right passion.

IV. He is a man with godly convictions. 1:9

1. He is devoted to the truth.
2. He is diligent to teach.

THE MINISTRY OF CONFRONTATION
Titus 1:10-16

I.		We must confront the divisive.	1:10-11
	1.	They are destitute in how they talk.	1:10
	2.	They are dangerous in what they think.	1:10-11
	3.	They are dishonest in why they teach.	1:11
II.		We must confront the deceived.	1:12-14
	1.	Who they are is clear.	1:12-13
	2.	What they believe must be confronted.	1:13-14
III.		We must confront the defiled.	1:15-16
	1.	They lack purity (the inside).	1:15
	2.	They lie in their profession (the outside).	1:16
		a. They are detestable.	
		b. They are disobedient.	
		c. They are disqualified.	

THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH
Titus 2:1-8

I. Pursue God's Assignment As An Older Man. 2:1-2

1.	Be a teacher.	2:1
2.	Be sober.	2:2
3.	Be reverent.	2:2
4.	Be self-controlled.	2:2
5.	Be sound in the faith.	2:2
6.	Be loving.	2:2
7.	Be patient.	2:2

II. Pursue God's Assignment As An Older Woman. 2:3

1. Be reverent.
2. Be truthful.
3. Be sober.
4. Be a teacher.

III. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Woman. 2:4-5

1.	Love your husband.	2:4
2.	Love your children.	2:4
3.	Be self-controlled.	2:5
4.	Be pure.	2:5
5.	Be a homemaker.	2:5
6.	Be good.	2:5
7.	Be subject to your husband.	2:5

IV. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Man. 2:6-8

1.	Be sober.	2:6
2.	Be a good example.	2:7
3.	Be sound in doctrine.	2:7
4.	Be sound in speech.	2:8

Servant Evangelism: A Biblical Perspective On Slavery
Titus 2:9-10

I. Be productive for your superior. 2:9

II. Be pleasing in your spirit. 2:9

III. Be polite in your speech. 2:9

IV. Be principled in your service. 2:10

V. Be public in your sincerity. 2:10

VI. Be praiseworthy for your Savior. 2:10

THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD
Titus 2:11-15

I. God's grace teaches us how we should live. 2:11-12

1. God's grace has come to us. 2:11

2. God's grace must change us. 2:12

II. God's grace teaches us where we should look. 2:13

1. We know what to look for: His coming.

2. We know who to look for: Our Savior.

III. God's grace teaches us who is Lord. 2:14

1. Jesus paid for us.

2. Jesus purifies us.

3. Jesus possesses us.

4. Jesus prepares us.

IV. God's grace teaches us what we should learn. 2:15

1. Learn doctrine.

2. Learn duty.

3. Learn discernment.

4. Learn dedication.

NEW BIRTH FOR A NEW LIFE
Titus 3:1-8

I. We must be ready for good works . 3:1-3

1. In the present we can help others. 3:1-2

a. We submit obediently. 3:1

b. We serve eagerly. 3:1

c. We speak gently. 3:2

d. We show humility. 3:2

2. In the past we harmed others. 3:3

a. Sin deceives.
b. Sin disobeys.
c. Sin dictates.
d. Sin detests.
e. Sin desires.
f. Sin destroys.

II. We have been regenerated for good works . 3:4-7

1. God cares for us. 3:4

2. God changes us. 3:5

3. God has come for us. 3:6

4. God comforts us. 3:7

III. We will be rewarded for good works . 3:8

1. We should affirm good works.

2. We should be active in good works.

GOD'S FORMULA FOR A FRUITFUL LIFE
Titus 3:9-15

I.	Avoid the foolish.	3:9
	1. They are unwise.	
	2. They are unprofitable.	
II.	Reject the divisive.	3:10-11
	1. They must be disciplined.	3:10
	2. They are dangerous.	3:11
	3. They are destructive.	3:11
III.	Follow the leader.	3:12-13
	1. Listen to their advise.	3:12
	2. Lend your assistance.	3:13
IV.	Maintain good works.	3:14
	1. Good works must not be neglected.	
	2. Good works do meet needs.	
V.	Welcome the faithful.	3:15
	1. Express the love we share.	
	2. Pray for the grace we need.	

"Church Discipline: A Missing Essential In The Life Of The Contemporary Church"

Titus 3:9-15

I. Avoid the Foolish. 3:9

1) They are unwise.

2) They are unprofitable.

II. Reject the Divisive. 3:10-11

1) They must be discipled.

2) They can be dangerous.

3) They are destructive.

III. Follow the Leader. 3:12-13

1) Listen to their advice.

2) Lend your assistance.

IV. Maintain Good Works. 3:14

1) Good works must not be neglected.

2) Good works do meet needs.

V. Enlist the Faithful. 3:15

1) Express the love we share.

2) Pray for the grace we need.

SECTION 16

The History of Interpretation

THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1. Ancient Jewish Interpretation
2. Use of the O.T.
3. Patristic Interpretation
4. Medieval Interpretation
5. Reformation Interpretation
6. Post-Reformation Interpretation
7. Modern Interpretation

A. ANCIENT JEWISH INTERPRETATION

1. The ministry of Ezra - Nehemiah 8:8 – "And they read from the book, from the Law of God, translating (explaining) to give the sense so that they (the people) understood the reading."
2. At the time of Christ - 4 main types of Jewish interpretation existed:
   - Literal - (*peshat*)
   - Midrash - Rabbinic expositional commentary on the OT. Rabbi Hillel - developed basic rules of Rabbinic interpretation
   - Pesher - (Hebrew for "commentary") - unique form of Midrash found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Noted by the phrase "This is that" - meaning "this present phenomenon is a fulfillment of that ancient prophecy."
   - Allegorical - true meaning lies beneath the literal meaning (symbolic interpretation) Philo of Alexandria (c.20BC - 50AD) was a leading exponent. Often led to fanciful interpretation.
3. Post-apostolic developments among Jewish interpreters
   - Mishnah – authoritative compilation of Jewish oral tradition grouped into topical collections of legal rulings, completed at the end of the second century AD, compiled by Rabbi Judah.
   - Talmud – The Mishnah in addition to later rabbinic commentary (Gemara). The Palestinian Talmud was completed in the 4th century, AD. The Babylonian Talmud was completed in the 5th century, AD, and is about three times the length of its Palestinian counterpart.
   - Josephus (37 – 100 AD) – A Jewish historian whose writings are especially important for Jewish and Roman political history during his lifetime and the two centuries beforehand.
   - Philo (20 BC – AD 50) – An Alexandrian Jew whose writings represent a synthesis between Greek philosophical thinking and Jewish traditions.

SUMMARY -

1. Literal employed in areas of judicial and practical concerns
2. Mostly employed Midrashic methods
3. Most used allegory to some extent

B. N.T. USE OF THE O.T.

Approximately 10% of the NT is OT quotation, paraphrase, or allusion. Of the 39 OT books, only 9 are not referred to in the NT.

1. Jesus' use of the OT

- Jesus accepted the entire OT as Word of God and completely true (Matt. 5:17-18)
- Normal, literal interpretation as opposed to allegorical was His method.
- Historical narratives of OT were accepted as straightforward records of fact.

2. Apostles' use of the OT
   - Following Jesus, they viewed Scripture as the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)
   - When quoting the OT, the apostles sometimes modify the wording.
   - Several Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek versions were circulating.
   - It is not necessary to quote the OT verbatim. (Remember the translation principle: Faithfulness not exactness is the issue.)
   - Freedom from verbatim quotation is a sign of mastery of the material.
   - Mostly they interpreted the OT literally - history as history, poetry as poetry, Symbols as symbols, etc. (Literally here = "normally" or "naturally" in its historical-grammatical sense.)

C. PATRISTIC (CHURCH FATHERS) INTERPRETATION (AD 100-500)
*Allegorical method dominated
*2 Major schools of interpretation develop: Alexandria (allegorical) and Antioch (literal)

1. Alexandrian School - (emp. allegorical interpretation)
   A. Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215)
      1. Scripture hides its true meaning behind the literal words.
      2. Hence, there is a need for allegorical method.
      3. Clement accepted the allegorical method of Plato and applied it to the NT Scriptures.
   B. Irenaeus (d. ca. 200)
      1. Took interpretation in a typological direction.
      2. Followed the principle that obscure passages should be interpreted in light of clear.
      3. Introduced the idea of authoritative exegesis - true meaning of Scripture invested in church where apostolic authority is preserved. (Led to the Catholic error that true interpretation is what the church leaders say it is rather than in careful study of the Bible. Reformation opposed this error vehemently. Catholic Council of Trent affirmed ecclesiastical infallibility).
   C. Origen (185-254)
      1. Systematized allegorical method.
      2. Wrote *De Principiis* - deals with inspiration and interpretation
      3. All Scripture has a spiritual meaning, not all has a literal meaning.
      4. His emphasis on scripture having a divine allegorical meaning which was different from the literal meaning set the tone for interpretation through the Middle Ages.
2. Antioch School (emp. literal interpretation)
   1. Defended the grammatical-historical method of interpretation against the allegorizing of the Alexandrian School.
   2. Literal interpretation of Scripture paramount.

3. Spiritual meaning not opposed to the literal but flows out of the literal.
4. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) most well known.
5. Laid groundwork for Reformation and modem evangelical hermeneutics.

*Augustine - (354-430)

1. Wrote *On Christian Doctrine* - outlined rules for interpretation.
2. Tended toward excessive allegorizing.
3. Scripture has a 4-fold sense:
    - Historical
    - Allegorical
    - Tropological - (moral)
    - Anagogical - (spiritual meaning as it relates to the future and the eternal...)

D. MEDIEVAL INTERPRETATION - (600-1500)

Augustine's 4-fold sense of Scripture came to dominate Medieval interpretation. The following little verse was used during the time:

"The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;
The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;
The moral meaning give us rules of daily life;
The anagogy show us where we end our strife."

*William Tyndale (1494-1536) was a forerunner of the Reformation. He aided the return to historical-grammatical interpretation. Addressing this 4-fold approach to Scripture he wrote: "They divide Scripture into four senses, the literal, typological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his profession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies; and driveth men from it with violence of sword: for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, 'If it shall please the pope.'...Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the Scriptures hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way." -William Tyndale, "The Observance of a Christian Man" in *Doctrinal Treatises* (Cambridge, 1848, pgs. 303-304)

Example: "Jerusalem" in Galatians 4:22 understood in 4 different ways:

- Historically - literally city of the Jews
- Allegorically - church of Christ
- Morally - human soul
- Analogically - heavenly city

1. 2-fold reason for insistence on multiple meanings of Scripture:
    A. No adequate theory of the relation of revelation to reason had been worked out.
    B. Through the Greek Patristics and Augustine, Platonism influenced the Christian

worldview. God's Word and will not overtly expressed in Scripture, but hidden in symbolic meaning behind the literal words. Scripture was like a Medieval Cathedral, which spoke to the people in the language of symbols.

2. Thomas Aquinas - (1225-1274)
   A. Most influential and important theologian of Middle Ages.
   B. Principle exponent of the literal sense during the Middle Ages.
   C. Views expressed in his most famous work, *Summa Theologica*.
   D. Aquinas made the declaration of independence from the allegorical method.
   E. Catholic Church viewed as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture.

SUMMARY:

1. Late Middle Ages began a return to a study of Hebrew and the production of literal and historical commentaries on the OT.
2. Rejection of the Patristic theological method - theology now divorced from exegesis.
3. This divorce was followed immediately by a remarriage of theology to philosophy.
4. Emphasis on historical studies led to claim of objectivity in interpretive understanding.
5. Heavy emphasis on Rationalism (Aristotleanism).
6. Claim to objectivity would come to fruition in the Modern era of biblical interpretation in a negative way - rejection of inspiration, inerrancy, etc.
7. Throughout Medieval Period, the source of theology is not the Bible alone, but the the Bible as interpreted by the Church and tradition.

E. REFORMATION INTERPRETATION - (1500-1600)

2 Watchwords of the Reformation:

Sola Fide - "Faith alone"
Sola Scriptura - "Scripture alone"

1. Luther - (1483-1546)
   - Believed Faith and the Spirit's illumination were prerequisites for interpretation.
   - Church should not determine what the Scripture,s teach.
   - Rejected the allegorical method (called it "dirt" and "scum") in favor of a return to the literal method.
   - Affirmed the perspicuity of Scripture - clarity of Bible.
   - All OT and NT points to Christ.
   - Carefully distinguished between Law and Gospel.
   - Scripture is its own best interpreter.
2. John Calvin - (1509-1564)
   - Greatest exegete of the Reformation - *Institutes* and *Commentaries* are must reading.
   - Rejected allegory in favor of literal interpretation.
   - Return to a study of the original languages of Scripture in exegesis.

SUMMARY:
Reformation period was a return to the Bible alone as the sole rule of faith and practice. Rejection of the authority of the Catholic Church in providing the only true interpretation of Scripture. Priesthood of believer rediscovered in biblical interpretation. Translation of Scripture undertaken by Luther and others.

F. POST-REFORMATION INTERPRETATION - (1600-1800)

1. Rationalism - intellectual movement - human mind is an independent authority capable of determining truth.
2. Rationalism became a tool of reason used against the Bible (The Enlightenment).
3. Rise of Empiricism - valid knowledge obtained through the five senses.
4. Scripture subjected to the authority of the human mind rather than the other way around.

   17th Century Examples:
   - Thomas Hobbes - Anglican Philosopher
   - Richard Simon - French Catholic Priest
   - Bernard Spinoza - Jewish Philosopher

5. Reason rather than revelation is now the key to biblical interpretation. Later, in reaction to a dead rationalistic religion, there will be a turn to experience.

G. MODERN INTERPRETATION - (1800-PRESENT)

Influenced by Freud, Nitzeche, Darwin and Hegel, the Bible came to be viewed as a record of the evolutionary development of Israel's religious consciousness and an expression of the religious experiences of its authors.

1. 19th Century - Rise of Liberalism
   A. Freidrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) – "father of modem liberalism"
      1. Must interpret the Bible like any other book.
      2. Confluence of Rationalism with Subjectivism
      3. Rejected the absolute authority of Scripture and a supernatural worldview.
      4. Pioneer in Hermeneutics - identified 2 sides to understanding texts:
         a. Grammatical Interpretation - objective side - focus on grammar, words, etc.
         b. Technical Interpretation - subjective side - focus on attempts to get into the mind of the author.
   B. Birth of the Historical-Critical Method of interpretation
      1. Rationalistic assumption
      2. Naturalistic worldview
      3. Bible's greatest contribution is its moral emphasis rather than its theological teachings.
   C. 3 Influential German scholars: F.C. Baur, Julius Wellhausen, and Adolf von Harnack - Harnack's book, *What is Christianity?* (1901), summarized liberal theology as shaped by its biblical interpretation with its evolutionary matrix and antisupernatural worldview.

2. 20th Century (Neo-Orthodoxy)

   A. Karl Barth - (1886-1968)
   1. Commentary on *Romans* (1919) was a watershed book.
   2. Attacked liberalism as inadequate.
   3. Reemphasized authority of Scripture.
   4. Reemphasized need for personal encounter with God.
   5. Multi-volumed *Church Dogmatics* his major work.

   B. Rudolph Bultmann - (1884-1976)
   1. Applied method of Form Criticism to Gospel.
   2. He sought to "Demythologize" the Bible, strip away the mythical (supernatural) embellishments/framework.

BASIC TENETS OF NEO-ORTHODOXY

1. Words of the Bible cannot convey the knowledge of God as abstract propositions. God can only be known in personal encounter.
   The Bible is not the Word of God but the <u>record</u> of God's involvement in history. The Bible <u>becomes</u> the Word of God to us in existential encounter.

2. A gulf separates God from fallen humanity - myths can bridge this gulf. Neoorthodoxy downplays the historicity of biblical events.

3. Truth is viewed as ultimately paradoxical (dialectical) in nature. There is no underlying rational coherence that binds the diverse ideas of Scripture together.

A CRASH COURSE IN LINGUISTICS (Language philosophy at the end of the 20th century.)

A. IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

- ***Linguistics*** - The study of the structure of language, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- ***Phonology*** - The identification and classification of all sounds used in a given language.
- ***Morphology*** - The study of the structure of words: the classification of word formation including inflection, derivation, prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.
- ***Syntax*** - The study of the arrangement of words as elements in phrases, clauses, or sentences to show their relationship. Study of phrase, clause and sentence structure.
- ***Semantics*** - The branch of Linguistics concerned with meaning, its nature, structure, and development.
- ***Grammar*** - The study of the forms and structure of words (Morphology) and their arrangements in phrases, clauses, and sentences (Syntax). Also, a system of rules relating to morphology and syntax.
- ***Translation*** - The transfer of meaning from one language to another.
- ***Source Language*** - The language we are translating - ex. Greek for the NT
- ***Receptor Language*** - The language we are translating into - ex. the English Bible for us.
- ***Surface Structure*** - The form of a text which includes phonology, lexicon, and grammar. Words, phrases, clauses, sentences, etc. are a language's surface structure.
- ***Semantic Structure*** - The content of a text which includes its meaning.
- ***Meaning*** - All the relevant information that is transmitted by an act of communication (spoken or written). (See under "Types of Meanings" below)

B. THE HIERARCHY OF LANGUAGE

In all languages words are combined into larger units of meaning: Words - Phrases - Clauses - Sentences - Paragraphs - Discourse

Important principles to remember:

1. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.
2. Language is characterized by the concept of "embedding."
   Example: a sentence may have embedded within it smaller sentences I John 1:5 – "God is light" is embedded within the *oti* clause.
3. Language has "content" words and "function" words.

Example: Content words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs Function words: articles, prepositions, conjunctions

C. TYPES OF MEANING

1. Referential Meaning: that which is being talked about; the subject matter of a text.
2. Situational Meaning: information pertaining to the participants in a communication act (environment, social status, etc.)
3. Structural Meaning: arrangement of the information in the text itself; the grammar and syntax of a text.

Illustration of the 3 types of meaning in the following sentence:

DAVID OWNS A DODGE PICKUP.

Referential Meaning - David, a pickup truck; a relationship that exists between them, namely, ownership. This sentence is about these things.

If the sentence reads: David owns a Dodge clunker.

Situational Meaning: the referents have not changed, but with the substitution of "clunker" for "pickup" we learn something about the attitude of the speaker toward the pickup and possibly toward David. In the first sentence nothing is said about the attitude of the speaker, not so in the second sentence.

If the sentence reads: He owns a Dodge pickup.

Structural Meaning: same referents but "he" is linked to another sentence in context not given here. Furthermore, the structure within this sentence is:

He = pronoun functioning as Subject
owns = verb
a = indefinite article modifying "pickup"
Dodge = adjective modifying "pickup" describing kind
pickup = noun functioning as the object of the verb

D. KEY ELEMENTS IN LANGUAGE THEORY

Semiotics - Study of human communication as a signaling system.
Linguistics - Study of the structure of human communication (written or verbal)
Semantics - Structure and development of meaning in a text
Pragmatics - Circumstances that accompany communication

THE GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION

1. We are to understand the text literally (naturally/normally) not allegorically. Literal - the simple, direct, plain, ordinary meaning We communicate truth in 1 of 2 ways:
   a. Literal - no figures of speech...explicit assertion of words.
   b. Figurative literal - interpret using the specific intention of the figure and what that figure
   connotes.
2. Importance of authorial intent cannot be overstated. We should honor the author's intended meaning as discovered in the text (not his mind. Schleirmacher was wrong).
3. To take the figurative-literal text and interpret it as a plain literal text is to interpret it allegorically.
   Ex. Isaiah 55:12 - Mountains and Fields
4. To take the plain literal and interpret it as figurative-literal is to interpret it allegorically as well.
5. The joint authorship of Scripture must be affirmed (Confluency) - 100% divine, 100% human.
6. Progressive Revelation - a later author will have fuller insight than an earlier author.
   A later writer may understand a given passage to imply more than the original author understood or applied (sensus plenary - a hotly debated issue!)
   Ex. Matt. 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14 - Matthew infers more from the text than Isaiah understood at the time.

GUIDELINES:

1. Assume a plain literal sense.
2. If plain literal sense involves a contradiction to known literal truth, interpret the passage figuratively. Ex. - Isaiah 55:12
3. If interpreting figuratively, look to the immediate context for the explanation of the figure.
   Ex. - Rev. 20:2 - Dragon = Satan
   (The material on linguistics comes from David Allen of SWBTS)

Respect for Authorial Intention

E. D. Hirsch: "A stable and determinate meaning requires an author's determining will . . .All valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the re-cognition of what the author meant" (*Validity in Interpretation*, 126).

"the meaning of a text is the author's meaning." (p.25)

David Dockery: With Hirsch and those emphasizing the primacy of the author in interpretation, we can maintain . . . the plausibility of determining a text's normative meaning . . . The author's meaning is only available in the text, not by making contact with the author's mental patterns (*Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, p. 182)

William W. Klein, et al: Though one may never completely understand all dimensions and nuances of a specific message, normally the goal of the recipient in communication is to understand what the author/speaker intended (*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 117)*.

Kevin Vanhoozer: The author's intention is the real causality that alone accounts for why a text is the way it is . . .A Text must be read in light of its intentional context *(Is There Meaning in This Text?, 249, 265)*.

G. B. Caird: We have no access to the mind of Jeremiah or Paul except through their recorded words. A fortiori, we have no access to the word of God in the Bible except through the words and minds of those who claim to speak in his name (*The Language and Imagery of the Bible, 61)*.

PREUNDERSTANDING

(Summary form Duvall and Hayes)

Preunderstanding: refers to all our preconceived ideas and understandings that we bring to the text, which have been formulated, both consciously and subconsciously before we actually study the biblical text in detail.

1. Preunderstanding can result from previous encounters with a biblical passage causing us to believe that we already understand the passage.

2. Preunderstanding is influenced by what we have been taught in the past – both the good and the bad.

3. Preunderstanding surfaces when one comes to the text with a theological agenda already formulated. Vanhoozer refers to this as "overstanding" and not "understanding."

4. Preunderstanding can be the result of familiarity with the biblical text.

5. One of the most powerful, yet subtle, aspects of preunderstanding is that of culture.

The Changing Face of Hermeneutics: The New Hermeneutic

Hermeneutics is the term that has traditionally been applied to the interpretation of texts. But the discipline has gone through some major changes – therefore it is worth pausing and considering some of the ways in which the discipline of interpretation has changed. Three stages may be discerned, however, throughout the process there has been much overlap.

1. Hermeneutics was once understood to be the science and the art of biblical interpretation: science because there were important rules and principles that could be applied to the task, and art because there were many calls for mature judgment borne of experience and competence.

The task of the interpreter was to understand what the author meant in the text under consideration. It was assumed that if two interpretation of equal competence understood the rules of interpretation well enough, then in the great majority of cases their understanding of what a passage meant would be the same.

In this approach a great deal of emphasis is paid to grammar, genre, principles for studying words and how to relate biblical themes.

2. Hermeneutics became increasingly used to describe an array of literary critical tools: source, form and redaction criticism. Admittedly some gains were made by such approaches, however, there were also many loses by such approaches. Much of the purpose of these techniques was to reconstruct the history and belief-structure of particular believing communities behind the text, rather than to listen to the message of the text.

3. Both of these approaches have largely been eclipsed by what is known as the new hermeneutic, or reader-response criticism. Here the important insight that people bring their own biases and limitations to the interpretative task is raised as the controlling thought.

At one level this observation is purely salutary. Everyone does bring his or her own interpretative gird with them to the interpretative process, there is no thing as a totally open-mind (see Bultmann's article).

Many proponents of this method of interpretation argue that since each person interpretation will differ in some measure from everyone else's interpretation, we cannot legitimately speak of "the" meaning of the text (as if it were something objective). Meaning they argue does not reside in the author, or the text, but in the readers, the interpreters of the text. If different interpretations are legitimate then one cannot speak of the correct interpretation; some expressions are nothing more than personal preferences. If no single interpretation is right, then either all interpretation are equally meaningless (deconstruction, hermeneutical nihilism) or all are equally right (all are good or bad insofar as they satisfy, or meet the needs of a particular person or community or culture, or meet certain arbitrary criteria).

In this regard advocates of the new hermeneutic foster different readings of scripture:

- A liberation theology reading
- A gay/lesbian reading
- A white male Anglo-Saxon protestant reading

Aligned with the thought of political correctness this new hermeneutic rules out no interpretation as invalid with the exception of those that claim their interpretation is right and that others are wrong – that interpretation is the only invalid one.

It is important to note that this approach to understanding meaning governs much of the agenda not only in contemporary biblical interpretation but also in the disciplines of history, literature, politics, and much more.

Despite some helpful insights, the new hermeneutic can be challenged at several points.

1. There seems to be some wrong with a theory that proposes the relativity of all knowledge gleaned from reading, while producing innumerable books that insist on the rightness of this view. The theory assumes that the author's intent is not reliably expressed in the text. It builds a barrier between the author and the reader and that barrier is the text. The oddity is that these ideas are written by authors who expect their readers to understand what they write, authors who write what they mean and hope the readers will be convinced by their reasoning. One only wishes that they would extend the same courtesy to Isaiah, Paul and John.

2. Even if it is admitted that finite human beings cannot attain an exhaustive knowledge of the text, it is difficult to understand why they could not attain a true knowledge.

Doubtless a reader may be largely controlled by personal biases and rigid agendas when first approaching the Scripture, and thus find in the text much that the author did not intend to be there, or, alternately, the interpreter may not see many things that are in fact there. The total mental baggage of the reader, what modern interpreters call the reader's "horizon o understanding," may be so far removed from the horizon of understanding of the author as expressed in the text that great distortions occur.

But it is also possible that the reader will re and re-read the text, learn something of the language and culture of the authors, and gradually discover what his or her baggage must be discarded and gradually fuse hi or her horizon of understanding with that of the text. Others speak of the hermeneutical spiral, that is the interpreter spirals in on the text.

There are a few potential gains with the new hermeneutic:

1. The new hermeneutic reminds us that God's verbal revelation to us in scripture comes to us not only clothed in the language and idiom of particular historical cultures, but to improve our understanding of the objective truth that is their disclosed it is necessary to think our way

back into those cultures, as far as possible, to minimize the dangers of interpretative distortion.

2. The new hermeneutic reminds us that even if an individual interpreter gains some significant understanding of the text, none will understand it exhaustively and other interpreters will bring to light insight that is genuinely there in the text that we have missed.

3. Properly applied, some of the insights of the new hermeneutic remind us that human beings bring enormous cultural and conceptual baggage to the Scriptures they claim to interpret and that this allied with out understanding of our own sinfulness and that out sin and self-centered seeks to drive us from the light (Jn. 3.19-20) my send us to our knees in recognition that the interpretation of God's word is not merely an intellectual discipline, but turns also on moral and spiritual bearings. We need the aid of the Spirit not only to do the Scripture but in some sense to understand the Scripture to the fullest.

HERMENEUTICS, EXEGESIS, AND PROCLAMATION.

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Hermeneutics, exegesis, and proclamation form the crucial triad with which every pastor must reckon. A proper biblical hermeneutic provides the philosophical underpinnings which undergird the exegetical task. Likewise, a proper exegetical methodology provides the foundation for the sermon. Then, of course, proper sermon delivery is necessary to carry home Cod's truth to the hearer. This article will attempt a discussion of these three aspects in both a descriptive and evaluative manner. Hermeneutics as a philosophical base for exegesis will comprise section one. Section two of the article will suggest a methodology for exegesis from the field of Text Linguistics as an augment to the traditional method of biblical exegesis. Finally, in section three, the matter of proclamation will be briefly discussed.

I. *Philosophical Basis of Exegesis*

A discussion of the principles and practice of biblical exegesis would not be complete without mention, however brief, of the philosophical arena in which these issues stand today. The field of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, has undergone tremendous upheaval in recent years. A host of new questions about the nature of meaning are being asked. In the first section of this article, we offer some tentative answers to the following questions which must be addressed by the biblical exegete, since they will invariably affect his exegetical method.

1) What is the difference between traditional hermeneutics and modern hermeneutics?
2) How does our understanding of the subject/object distinction affect our theory and practice of Interpretation?
3) What is the difference between what a text meant historically and what it means today?
4) Is authorial intention a valid criterion for biblical interpretation?
5) Is the distinction between “meaning” and “significance” a valid distinction for the biblical exegete?
8) Does a text have one primary meaning or are multiple meanings of equal validity possible?
7) How do the horizons of the interpreter affect exegesis?
8) What presuppositions about language and its nature inform one's theory and practice of exegesis?

In an effort to offer some workable answers to these questions, the first part of the article will attempt to outline some of the changes which have taken place In hermeneutics since 1800. It is an apodictical fact that the field of biblical interpretation has radically

changed, especially from the time of F. Schleiermacher onwards. Traditional hermeneutics involved the formulation and implementation of proper rules for interpretation. Primary attention was paid to the linguistic aspects of textual Interpretation, including grammar, syntax, vocabulary, etc. Meaning was bound up M the text and awaited the Interpreter to dig it out via proper exegesis. Traditional hermeneutics assumed that a text contained a determinate meaning which with the proper exegetical method could be discerned by an interpreter.

Modern hermeneutical theory is characterized by a twofold transition: the shift from a special/regional hermeneutical approach to that of general hermeneutics, and the shift from a primarily epistemological outlook to an ontological one. The former was inaugurated by the advent of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics while the latter shift occurred with the advent of M. Heldegger's *Being and Time*.[1] In general, we may say that traditional hermeneutics focused on the text, while sometimes neglecting the role of the interpreter, and modern hermeneutics focuses on the reader/interpreter, while sometimes neglecting the role of the text. It is our contention that a balanced theory of interpretation must give advertence to both of these aspects as in play every time interpretation takes place. Such a position seems to be represented by men like P. Ricoeur in his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*[2] and E. D. Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation*.[3]

Hermeneutical Theory Since 1800: an Historical Assessment

No discussion of hermeneutics would be complete without mention of the father of modern hermeneutics, F. Schleiermacher. He argued that interpretation consisted of two categories: grammatical and technical or psychological.[4] Grammatical interpretation focused on the text Itself and dealt with such matters as grammar, syntax, etc. while technical interpretation focused on the mind of the author in an attempt to reconstruct his psyche in order to determine his mental process that led him to write what he did. Schleiermacher defines authorial intention in a way which most, if not all, would agree today is untenable for the simple reason that we cannot get into the author’s psyche. This problem is particularly acute when considering ancient texts. The only hint at authorial intention we have is what the author has deposited in his text. We cannot get behind the text to the author’s thought processes.

[1] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Blackwell: Oxford, IM)

[2] P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus at Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976).

[3] E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1967).

[4] F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscript,* ed. H. Kimmerle, trans. J. Duke and H. J. Forstman (Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 67-88.

For our purposes, we note two important features of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He emphasized that interpretation involved both objective and subjective factors. Furthermore, he did not attempt to dissolve the subject/object distinction as many later theoreticians have attempted to do. Schleiermacher's s recognition that interpretation involved both objective and subjective factors should be a vital part of a balanced theory of interpretation. If we inject the notion of the interpreter's own horizons playing an integral part in meaning determination coupled with a more workable definition of authorial intention (see below), then Schleiermacher's basic scheme proves to be a valuable hermeneutical method.

From Schleiermacher the history of modern hermeneutical theory followed the trail of W. Dilthey to C. Frege to E. Husserl to M. Heidegger to H. Cadamer. Space does not permit an analysis of the contributions and insights of Dilthey, Frege, and Husserl. Yet it is important to note that Heidegger was a student of Husserl and could not agree with his mentor that objective knowledge was possible. This point is crucial for it was Heidegger who ushered in the ontological revolution in hermeneutics. With it came an increasing skepticism towards the possibility of achieving determinate meaning in textual interpretation. Hence, we may say that Schleiermacher, Frege and Husserl are representative of the school of thought that determinate meaning and objectivity are possible in interpretation while Heldegger and his student Cadamer are representative of the view that there can be no determinate meaning and objectivity in textual interpretation.

Heidegger has had a profound influence on contemporary hermeneutical theory in his two works *Being and Times*[5] and *On the Way to Language*[6] It Is to Heidegger that we owe the valuable insight of hermeneutics as embracing the whole of man's existence. Heidegger is an ontologist who posited "interpretation" as one of the fundamental modes of man's being. However, Heidegger's theory concerning the historicity of all understanding forced him and his followers to exaggerate the difference between past and present into a denial of any continuity of meaning at all. In Heidegger, the shift Is made from the primacy of the text to the primacy of the interpreter. Indeed, for Heidegger the interpreter is himself the source of meaning. Reality for the interpreter is "disclosed" via his understanding. Heidegger seems to disallow the cognoscibility of any objectively valid and determinate meaning.

[5] Heidegger, *Being and Time.*

[6] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Our critique of Heidegger must be brief at this point. It is not our purpose to critique captiously those with whom we disagree. Suffice it to say that from our perspective he has overemphasized the role of the interpreter In creating meaning by not allowing the text to communicate determinate meaning. His theory assumes the collapse of the subject/object dichotomy and therefore the impossibility of objective textual meaning. R. Bultmann may be the most influential figure in NT studies in this century. While teaching at the University of Marburg, Bultmann found the philosophical framework for his approach to scripture , from his colleague, Heidegger. It Is primarily through Bultmann that Heidegger's philosophical existentialism has found its way Into biblical studies. Bultmann's excellent article, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" should be lead by all who practice exegesis. Bultmann has accurately emphasized the fact that one cannot come to any text from a totally objective standpoint. The Interpreter always brings his own conceptual grid to the text. His first paragraph is worth quoting:

> The question whether exegesis without presuppositions is possible must be answered affirmatively if "without presuppositions" means "without presupposing the results of the exegesis." In this sense, exegesis without presuppositions is not only possible but demanded. In another sense, however, no exegesis is without presuppositions, inasmuch as the exegete is not a tabula rasa, but on the contrary, approaches the text with specific questions or with a specific way of raising questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject matter with which the text is concerned[7]

Yet Bultmann, following Heidegger, exaggerates this notion of presuppositions and subjectivity by arguing that the text of the Bible is not intended to be interpreted objectively but rather is to be a "Subject" that determines the interpreter's existence. While we can agree that the Scriptures do "speak" to us in a sense as subject to object, we must reject the notion that with each approach to the text, there Is no valid or permanent meaning to be identified. By de-emphasizing the cognitive aspects of textual meaning, and unduly exalting the ontological notion of interpretation as "encounter," Bultmann injects into the main arteries of biblical exegesis an overdose of Heideggerian ontology and existentialism.

[7] R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith*, ed. S. M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 289-96.

We can all agree that interpretation does not involve. a totally passive subject who stands wholly apart from his text and interprets it without any input from his own subjectivity. Like F. Kant, we have all been awakened from our Cartesian dogmatic slumbers. Whatever Insights Heidegger, Bultmann and the like may press upon us in this vein, we are the better for it. However, we must argue that meaning is not a construct of the interpreter's subjectivity alone. It must be forcefully stated In opposition to the correlation of interpretation with ontology by Heidegger and Bultmann that they are doing nothing more In the end than suggesting that the interpreter projects his own subjectivity. Unless we maintain the otherness or objectivity of textual meaning, then we must face squarely the fact that we could not interpret at all. Heidegger's scheme ineluctably results in the complete breakdown of the subject/object dichotomy, and it is this fact which causes his "method," along with Bultmann's, to be methodologically inadequate in biblical exegesis.[8]

[8] The so-called "New Hermeneutic" school of interpretation is one example of exegesis which has followed the lead of Heidegger and Bultmann. For a critique of the New Hermeneutic, see A. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 352-56, and "The New Hermeneutic," *New Testament Interpretation- Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 308-33.

Like Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Gadamer's monumental work *Truth and Method*[9] must be reckoned with by evangelical exegetes. It contains some crucial insights which should not be ignored by those of us interested in text interpretation. Particularly helpful is his emphasis that interpreters come to a given text with their own worldview, presuppositions, or "horizon" as Gadamer uses the term, which is different from that of the text. What is necessary is a "fusion of horizons" for interpretation to take place.

However, Gadamer's system is not without its philosophical and methodological flaws. Gadamer continues the attack on objective textual interpretation by emphasizing that meaning is not to be identified with authorial intention. Furthermore, exegesis has no foundational "methods" to be used in eliciting meaning from a given text. According to Gadamer, our historicity eliminates the possibility of discovering any determinate textual meaning and therefore objective meaning is not possible.

Yet Gadamer does not want to proffer relativism in text interpretation and hence he falls back on three concepts in an attempt to extricate himself from ultimate hermeneutical nihilism. These are 1) tradition, 2) meaning repetition, and 3) fusion of horizons. The role of tradition, as Gadamer sees it, is to enlarge the horizons of the text for each passing generation such that tradition serves as a bridge between the past and the present. The problem here is of course how to mediate between two conflicting traditional interpretations. By eliminating the possibility of objective textual meaning, Gadamer also eliminates the criterion needed to make a choice between conflicting interpretations and he is again left with relativism.

Gadamer seems to argue that a text does represent a repeatable meaning and yet in the same paragraph turns around and suggests that this is "not repetition of something past, but participation in a present meaning."[10] This creates confusion in that Gadamer seems to be saying first that meaning is repeatable and then that it isn't. Such reasoning leads Hirsch to point out: "This kind of reasoning stands as eloquent testimony to the difficulties and self-contradictions that confront Gadamer's theory as soon as one asks the simple question: what constitutes a valid interpretation?"[11] While we can profit greatly from Gadamer's statements about pre-understanding and "fusion of horizons," we must reject his basic thesis that a text contains no determinate meaning.

[9] H. C. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975).
[10] Ibid., 370.
[11] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 252.

In Heidegger and Gadamer, the notion of understanding is not conceived as a way of knowing but rather as a mode of being. Somehow they never quite get around to answering the epistemological questions which were left in the wake of the ontological revolution. What we need is a hermeneutical system which strikes a proper balance between epistemology and ontology.

Hirsch of the University of Virginia has countered the relativism of Heidegger and Gadamer by arguing for the stability of textual meaning in two important works: Validity in Interpretation and The Aims of Interpretation.[12] One of Hirsch's most important contributions is his emphasis on the distinction between "meaning" and "significance." Drawing on A. Boeckh's division of his *Encyclopaedie*[13] into the two sections labeled "Interpretation" and "Criticism," Hirsch points out that "the object of interpretation is textual meaning in and for itself and may be called the 'meaning' of the text." Conversely, the object of criticism is textual meaning as it bears on something else. This object is what Hirsch refers to as the "significance" of the text.[14]

Roughly speaking, such a division corresponds to the exegesis of a text which seeks to determine the text's meaning and the application of that meaning (as, for example, in preaching) to point out its significance/application for today. Both meaning and significance or interpretation and application are two foci which the exegete must constantly keep in mind. Furthermore, because they tend to happen concurrently, it is probably not wise to argue that in practice these two foci can remain completely separated, although for the sake of discussion, we may separate them for the purpose of investigation and analysis.

Hirsch's categories of "meaning" and "significance" are important and helpful for us. When the biblical exegete comes to a text of Scripture, he can proceed on the premise that there is a determinate meaning there. His job is to discover this meaning through exegesis. Having done this, there remains the further task of applying this meaning to modern day man.

Hirsch has also made a solid contribution in that his writings stand as perhaps the best critique of Gadamerian hermeneutics. His most telling criticism of the weaknesses of Gadamer's theory can be found in Appendix H of his *Validity in Interpretation*.[15]

[11] E. Hirsch, *The Alms of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago. 1978).

[12] A. Boeckh, *Encyclopoedie end Methodologie der Philologischen Wissenschaften* (ed. E. Bratuscheck; Leipzig, 1888).

[13] Hirsch, *Aims*, 445-64.

[14] Hirsch, *Validity*, 210-11.

A third valuable contribution of Hirsch to the contemporary hermeneutical scene Is his insistence upon authorial intention as a criterion of validity in text Interpretation. What do we mean by the term "authorial intention" It may be helpful to outline what we do not

mean. By this term, we do not mean the psychological experience of the author for such is inaccessible. We do not mean the relation between mental acts and mental objects as in Husserl's theory. We do not mean the hoped for consequences of the author's writings. Authorial intention Js to be identified with textual meaning, with the "sense of the whole" by which the author constructs, arranges and relates each particular meaning of his work.[16]

We propose then that a text has one primary meaning with multiple significances or applications of that meaning. Generally speaking, a text will not have multiple meanings of equal validity.[17] The key phrase here is "of equal validity" because some method and norms are necessary to adjudicate meaning possibilities. Hirsch has argued for such norms in his works. By way of illustration, we may say that the one primary meaning of a text is like an iceberg. The tip protrudes above water and- is analogous to "meaning," but further investigation continues to yield fuller and deeper "meaning" just as the bulk of the iceberg is underwater. It is the same iceberg and hence the same meaning. Various disciplines approach the "meaning"/ iceberg in different ways. For example, a photographer would analyze the iceberg from the standpoint of its aesthetic value. An oceanographer would analyze it to obtain its scientific value, while a ship's captain may analyze it so as to avoid any damage to his ship. It is the same iceberg that all are analyzing, but it yields for each different aspects of meaning. At no time do any of these "interpreters" interpret the iceberg as a whale! The iceberg itself furnishes the constraints which guide and limit the interpreters potential elicitation of meaning. The kind of meaning we find in a text depends to some extent on the kind of meaning for which we are looking. Sometimes interpreters differ on a given text because they are looking for different kinds of meaning and from different perspectives. But it is the iceberg/text which determines the meaning capable of being drawn out, not the interpreters themselves, although they contribute to it.

[16] See the excellent article by E. Johnson, "Authors Intention and Biblical Interpretation." *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible,* eds. E. Radmacher and R. Preus (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984) 409-29. His definition of authorial intention, which we have used here, is found on p. 414.

[17] One exception to this would be the notion of census plenior. For a good discussion of this topic, see D. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon,* eds. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986), 179-211.

As A. Thiselton says: "For there is an ongoing process of dialogue with the text in which the text itself progressively corrects and reshapes the interpreter's own questions and assumptions."[18]

Ricoeur, the French phenomenologist, is considered by many today to be on the cutting edge in the field of hermeneutics. His work has caught the attention of us all. In an

important work entitled *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*,[19] Rieoeur defines discourse as a dialectic between event and meaning. Discourse occurs as an event (conversation, the writing of a text, etc.) but as soon as the conversation ceases or the text is written, the event ceases. Yet the text as propositional content remains and this is the meaning which can be reidentified. Written discourse awaits reactualization as event by a reader.

A second dialectic which Rieoeur describes is that of Distanciation and Appropriation.[20] The Scriptures, for example, are distanced from us historically and culturally in the sense that they were written centuries ago by authors who are no longer around to tell us what they mean. Furthermore, our own cultural horizons serve as a barrier between us and the world of the text. The aim of all hermeneutics is to struggle against cultural distance-and historical alienation. This goal is attained only insofar as interpretation actualizes the meaning of a text for the present reader, a notion which Rieoeur calls "appropriation."

A crucial point in Ricoeur's theory is the fact that texts do have determinate meaning which can be appropriated by a reader. He has synthesized many of the insights of Gadamer into his theory without coming under the spell of Gadamer's "cognitive atheism" in interpretation, as Hirsch would call it.

What we have said to this point is that the crucial difference between the two competing hermeneutical schools of thought is whether a text has a determinate meaning or not. Heidegger, Gadamer, Bultmann and company argue that it does not, while Hirsch, Rieoeur, and company argue that it does. Evangelical exegetes must be aware of the debate and its implications for our exegetical task.

Philosophical Conception of Language

Another crucial consideration for the biblical exegete is the nature of language. Much discussion has occurred on this subject in recent years which has a direct bearing

[18] Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 439.

[19] Rieoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 8-12.

[20] I. B. Thompson, ed., Petit Rieoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Humor Sciences* (London: Cambridge University, 1981) 131-44, 182-93.

on biblical exegesis. When considering the language of the Bible, in our opinion the following presuppositions are necessary: 1) language has a cognitive function; 2) language can interpret reality; 3) language both expresses and interprets ultimate reality by serving as a means of God's revelation to man.

The rise of analytic philosophy and logical positivism led to the notion that the only reality which philosophy was to investigate is language. Interestingly, this idea was long ago anticipated by Aristotle and criticized in his Metaphysics. Failing to recognize that language actually provides windows into reality, analytic philosophy has tended to investigate language itself rather than any reality about which language may speak.
Truth is a property of the sentence/proposition and the biblical revelation is a propositional revelation where God has conveyed truth about himself to us. The task of the exegete is to interpret accurately these truth-bearing propositions which have been placed in linguistic form. There is an ultimate referent beyond language (God) about which language may speak.
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Most of the non-evangelical and some of the neo-evangelical theologian-exegetes have disallowed the propositional nature of God's revelation in Scripture. One need only read the writings of K. Barth, E. Brunner, Bultmann, and H. and R. Niebuhr along with a host of others to see that this is the case. The modern biblical exegete must be aware of the philosophical and theological one-sidedness of such an approach to scripture. Revelation is both propositional and personal. We may accept one aspect of revelation as being "encounter" and use phenomenological categories in describing it. But, we must also recognize the cognitive aspect of revelation as well.[21]

When we interpret a text from the Bible, we are seeking to interpret the very words of God conveyed through human instrumentality and language. Such a mode of disclosure does not obviate divine revelation. As R. Longacre so aptly puts it: "I think the moral of the story is that rather than language and its categories veiling reality, they are windows into it."[22] It is our foundational principle that God has so constructed language that it can be used by man to describe reality, and; by God to reveal reality, even such ultimate reality as the nature and person of God himself.

We have attempted in this brief sketch to offer some tentative answers to the eight questions at the beginning of this article. The field of hermeneutics can be seen to be of

[21] For an excellent discussion of this subject, see C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco: Word. 1976-1983) 3.429-81.

[22] R. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum,1983) 345.

great importance to the exegesis of the biblical text. Evangelical theologians have shown a willingness to engage the competing hermeneutical schools of thought in dialogue, and as a result biblical exegesis from an evangelical standpoint has been enhanced. The interested reader should pursue Thiselton's *The Two Horisons*,[23] *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*,[24] edited by E. Radmacher and R. Preus, and *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*,[25] edited by I. H. Marshall, to name just three of many outstanding works available from an evangelical perspective. We as biblical exegetes must maintain a dialogue with not only the state of our own discipline, but with what is taking place in other fields as well, especially when it may relate specifically to the discipline of biblical studies.

II. *Exegetical Methodology*

Theory without practice is useless and practice without theory is unserviceable and unproductive. The previous discussion on hermeneutical theory was dedicated to the above maxim. One's approach to biblical exegesis rests upon certain theoretical considerations which are foundational to that approach. While it is not necessary to be a thorough student of hermeneutical theory since Schleiermacher to engage in exegesis, one should at least be acquainted with the present state of the discussion.

The purpose of exegesis is to "lead out" the meaning which has been deposited in the biblical text by the writer. Exegesis is of crucial importance because it is the foundation for theology and preaching. We cannot communicate the meaning of God's word via preaching until we have understood it ourselves.

We will argue in the second part of this article that exegesis is more than meaning determination which is arrived at only from a combination of word studies with ,syntactical analysis on a sentence level. Unfortunately, it is probably true that a great deal of exegesis that goes on in the average pastors study is little more than this. The average pastor, plundered by an already too busy daily schedule, resorts to an uncritical method of exegesis which results in an all too shoddy interpretation of a given biblical text. He may look at a sentence in his Greek NT, parse what he considers to be the key

[23] Cf. n. 8 above.

[24] Cf. n. 16 above.

[25] I.. H. Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

verbs, do word studies on key words, and then from this material fashion a sermon. All of this is, of course, well and good as far as it goes. The problem is that it does not go far enough.

Text Linguistics and Exegesis

We are thoroughly convinced that contemporary linguistic theory has a great deal to offer the biblical exegete in terms of both theory and method. The rise of Semantic :analysis from the Chomskyian revolution onwards has already found its way into biblical studies. The field of discourse grammar (Text Linguistics as it is called in Europe) has much to offer those who interpret the Scripture. Discourse analysis is already proving to be a fruitful method in Bible translation. By and large, however, the insights of contemporary linguistic theory, discourse analysis, and the like have found their way into biblical exegesis only in a limited way. This is evidenced by the very few commentaries written from a discourse perspective rather than the traditional sentence level or verse by verse perspective. Many seminary professors, pastors and seminary students have little or no knowledge of what if taking place in the field of discourse grammar and its place in biblical studies.[26]

The question may be asked, "Is discourse grammar necessary in text interpretation, especially in the study of the Scriptures?" We believe that it is. Over a decade ago, Longacre was involved in workshops which concentrated on the discourse structure of a number of languages in Columbia and Panama. He argued that it was impossible to analyze correctly the grammar of a language without accounting for its discourse level features.
in earlier work, discourse analysis was regarded as an option open to the student of a language provided that he was interested, and provided that he had a good start on the structure of lower levels (word, phrase, clause). But early in the first workshop it was seen that all work on lower levels is lacking in perspective and meets inevitable frustration when the higher levels-especially discourse and paragraph-have not been analyzed ... discourse analysis emerges not as an option or as a luxury for the serious student of a language but as a necessity.[27]

[26] We have here in mind the work of J. Beekman, J. Callow, and M. Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981) as well as the application of this model to Bible translation. Furthermore, the work of Longaere in various articles, his most recent book *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum,1983) and a forthcoming volume on the Joseph story in Genesis is proving to be fruitful in analysis of both OT and NT texts.

[27] R. Longacre, ed., *Discourse Grammar: Studies In Indigenous Languages of Columbia, Panama, and Ecuador.* Part 1 (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and University of Texas at Arlington, 1976), 2.

It is our hope that this article can contribute to biblical exegesis by integrating concepts and principles discovered by Beekman and Callow, Longacre, and others in the field of discourse grammar and applying them to a method of biblical exegesis. We are keenly aware of

the many fine books and articles of recent vintage which have been written on the subject of exegesis.. The reader will profit from consulting them. The approach taken in this article is of course dependent upon the time honored principles which have guided biblical exegetes for centuries. Yet in some respects, our method will describe features of text analysis not usually discussed in books and articles on biblical, exegesis. With this in mind, the following seven linguistic features of texts are offered in an attempt to guide the exegete into a more thorough and fruitful analysis of sacred discourse.

Discourse Genre

There are four major discourse types, all of which appear in Scripture. They are: Narrative, Procedural, Expository, and Hortatory. Narrative discourse primarily tells a story or narrates a series of events. Participants and events combine in a sequential chronological framework in narrative discourse. The book of Genesis, the Gospels and Acts are examples of narrative discourse. Procedural discourse answers the question, "How is something done?" Again there is a sequential chronological framework in this discourse type. An example of this type would be certain sections of the Pentateuch where specific instructions are given by God to Moses regarding the building of the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc.

Expository discourse is different from the previous two types in that it is set in a logical framework rather than a sequential chronological one. Expository discourse primarily explains or defines in some way and is probably the most frequently employed discourse type. Many of the Pauline epistles are said to be of this discourse type although we have come to believe that most, if not all, of the expository material in the Scripture is really hortatory in its semantic structure since truth is unto holiness. Nevertheless, there are large sections of embedded exposition in the Scriptures.

Hortatory discourse may be defined as an attempt to prescribe a course of action through a command, request, suggestion, etc. It tends to answer the question, "What should be done?" Hebrews is an example of hortatory discourse in the NT although it is usually defined as expository in most commentaries. Recognizing in which discourse genre an exegete is working is crucial to his exegesis.

This aspect of text analysis is somewhat analogous to Genre Criticism. This leads to a crucial question which must be answered by those who engage in biblical interpretation.

What is the value and role of higher criticism for biblical exegesis? There has been wide disagreement concerning the viability of higher criticism as a method of biblical interpretation. The Meier-Stulmacher debate illustrates the point. The problem resides not so much in the methodology as with the presuppositions of many who practice higher criticism. Pentateuchal criticism is illustrative of this point. It is commonplace to pick up a commentary or an article on some aspect of pentateuchal studies and observe that the author assumes at the outset some form of the Documentary Hypothesis. Multiple redactors and traditions are employed to explain textual phenomena all in a very subjective way. Would it not be better to assume the unity and integrity of the text until proven otherwise? Linguistically, there are other explanations for these textual phenomena which are just as valid and which are, in fact, predicated on textual phenomena rather than the suggestion of some elusive redactor. Linguist E. Wendland expresses the matter quite well when he says:

> I feel, for example, that some scholars suffer from a certain degree of "linguo-centrism"; in other words, they often have difficulty in appreciating the distinctiveness and genius of a language and literature that lies outside of the Indo-European family of which they are so familiar. Thus, when encountering a text such as the Hebrew Old Testament which allegedly contains so many "problems," they quickly propose that the text is, in fact, a patchwork, composed of fragments from sources J, E, D, P, X, Y, and Z, rather than recognizing the possibility that they may simply be dealing with a narrative style that is quite different from what they are used to.[28]

D. A. Carson sounds a much needed warning regarding the use of higher critical methodology when he says that

> the situation is worsened by the fact that these 'hermeneutical principles' are frequently handled, outside believing circles, as if they enable us to practise our interpretive skills with such objective distance that we never come under the authority of the Cod whose-Word is being interpreted, and never consider other personal, moral and spiritual factors which have no less 'hermeneutfcal' influence in our attempts to interpret the text.[29]

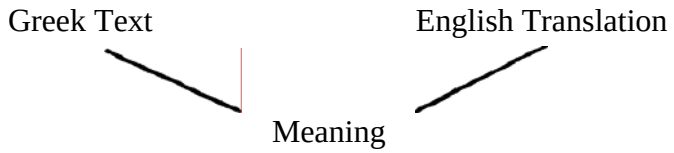
[28]E. Wendland, "Biblical Hebrew Narrative Structure," *Selected Technical Articles Related to Translation* 10 (1984): 35-36.

[29]D. A. Carson, "Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of some Recent Trends," *Themelios* 5 (1980): 14.

Language as a Form-Meaning Composite

Language is a form/meaning composite which contains surface structure=form and semantic/notional structure=meaning. By "form" we mean the phonological, lexical, and grammatical structure of a language. This Is what has traditionally been called "grammar." The notion of meaning is, like form, multidimensional. It contains three aspects: referential, situational, and structural. Referential meaning refers to the subject matter of the discourse, i.e., what the text is about. Situational meaning refers to the participants and the situation in which communication takes place. By participants here we mean author/speaker and reader/hearer rather than the participants who may be a part of the referential content of the discourse itself. When an exegete studies the background and provenance of a given biblical text, he is engaged in analysis on this particular level. Structural meaning refers to how the information in a discourse is "packaged" and how these units of meaning relate to one another in the discourse. Traditional grammatical analysis is subsumed in this category.

Meaning is communicated via surface structure. As we approach the Bible, we must decode the meaning from the surface structure of Hebrew or Creek and then encode that meaning in another surface structure, namely, English. This is what takes place every time the Bible is translated. Therefore, all translation is an interpretation. The following diagram illustrates the process.



The key here is that the form of the source language and the form of the receptor language are not totally congruent, yet the meaning is capable of being understood, preserved and re-expressed in the receptor language. This is crucial in that exegesis attempts to understand the meaning of the source text and then re-express that meaning in an English text (translation, essay, commentary, or sermon). In this view, meaning has priority over form.

Contextual Exegesis

Exegesis must be practiced contextually. Sentence level grammars, while valid, are not sufficiently descriptive of all the structural phenomena of a text. Following Longacre,

[30] Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure*, 8-13.

we accept three basic building blocks of communication: sentence, paragraph, and discourse. Sentences combine to form paragraphs and paragraphs combine to form discourses. A discourse is always greater than the sum of its parts and hence one's textual analysis cannot remain solely on the sentence level. Just as there is a grammar of the sentence, there is also a grammar of the paragraph and discourse as well.[31]

Most if not all of the Creek grammars appearing before 1965 view Koine Creek discourse with the presupposition that the suprasentence structure (paragraph and discourse) is basically non-linguistic. Features of paragraphs and whole discourses seem not to have been treated in any way. J. H. Moulton's famous three-volume A *Grammar of New Testament Greek*[32] appeared over a fifty-seven year span with N. Turner authoring the third volume, *Syntax*, in 1963.[33] In this entire three-volume work, the supra-sentence level of Creek discourse is never mentioned. A. T. Robertson's monumental A *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*[34] appeared in 1923. His discussion of grammar and syntax focuses solely on the clause and sentence level. Blass-Debrunner-Funk's A *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* was first published in 1896 and passed through ten editions before being translated by Funk into English.[35] While the notes by Funk are important contributions to the work, the basic principles are the same as outlined by Blass and Debrunner. A concluding chapter entitled "Sentence Structure" occasionally touches upon matters relative to discourse features, but only in a tertiary way.

Of course, Text Linguistics as a discipline was not in existence when these grammars were written. From a sentence level perspective, they are excellent treatments of the subject. We are simply pointing out that the biblical exegete must acknowledge the fact that a great deal is happening in the text above the sentence level and, furthermore, his exegetical methodology must provide the tools to investigate meaning beyond that level.

[31] *For* evidence of paragraph grammatically see Longacre, "The Paragraph as a Grammatical Unit," *Discourse and Syntax* (*Syntax and Semantics*; 18 vols.; ed. Talmy Givon; New York: Academic, 1979), 12.115-33.

[32] J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed.; 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908).

[33] J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 In *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963).

[34] A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934).

[35] F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. R. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961).

The Hierarchical Structure of Texts

Texts are hierarchically structured such that the organizing principle of surface structure in discourse is the notion of hierarchy. The following illustrates the levels of communication found in texts.

1) Who: discourse-highest level of language
2) Paragraph-viewed as a structural unit
3) Sentence
4) Clause
5) Phrase
6) Word
7) Stem
8) Morpheme

levels 4-8 are usually called "grammar"

These textual units of meaning may embed lower levels within them in such a way that a text is characterized by recursive embedding. A given discourse may embed discourses and paragraphs, a paragraph may embed paragraphs and sentences, and so on down the line. For example, the book of Acts is an example of narrative discourse, but it contains chunks of embedded expository and hortatory discourse. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 functions in the text of Acts as an embedded expository discourse in the surface structure form of a speech/sermon. This notion of recursive embedding is important for the biblical exegete and the homiletician in that its recognition will allow one to better analyze and outline a text accurately.

Most of the biblical exegesis in vogue today is intra-sentential, i.e., the exegete spends most of his time studying the syntax of the text from the clause level on down. What those of us in discourse grammar are advocating for biblical studies is that we also take into consideration the upper levels of communication as well including the sentence, paragraph, and discourse. In other words, biblical exegesis should not be limited to intra-sentential analysis, but must be expanded to include inter-sentential analysis as well.

Consider the following two sentences. S_1 "He slept for seventeen hours." S_2 "He was dead tired." These two sentences share a semantic level relationship of result-reason. S_2 is the reason far S_1. The same kind of relationship could have been expressed in a single sentence: "He slept for seventeen hours because he was dead tired." Here, the reason-proposition is subordinated in a causal clause. Thus, semantic level relationships exist intra-sententially as well as inter-sententially. Furthermore, the same kind of semantic relationship could exist between two paragraphs such that a given paragraph P_2 could be the reason for paragraph P_1. The point in all of this for the exegete is the fact that we must consider the overall context of sentence, paragraph, and discourse in the

text interpretation, as well as paying attention to the semantic relationships that exist between sentences, paragraphs and even embedded discourses In a given text. A finite network of communication relations is suggested in Beekman and Callow's *Semantic Structure of Written Communication*.[36] A text can be propositionalized according to these semantic level relationships to determine the propositional relationships.

Paying special attention to paragraph boundaries in the text is crucial to a proper analysis. The exegete should become aware of the ways in which paragraph onset is -marked in Hebrew and Greek discourse structure. In Greek, a number of particles and conjunctions can mark paragraph onset. Back reference or certain characteristic constituents at the beginning of a paragraph are used as well. For example, the vocative in Greek often marks the beginning of a new paragraph. In the epistle of James, eleven of the fourteen vocatives function as devices to mark paragraph onset. Tense spans can also serve to mark paragraph boundaries. For example, a string of present tense verbs may be interrupted with tense shift and such change may mark paragraph onset. Such an analysis serves the exegete well in his attempt to find a valid structure to the text. All of the features mentioned so far are surface structure features. There is a semantic level feature as well which identifies paragraphs in a given text. Thematic unity often aids in marking the onset or the conclusion of a paragraph. Each paragraph is constructed around a particular theme or participant. Usually a change in theme or participant engenders a change in paragraph as well.

Main Line Information vs. Ancillary Information

It is crucial for the exegete to recognize that a written discourse contains main line information as well as ancillary information. Information which is on the event line of a narrative discourse or the theme line of an expository discourse is more salient than that which appears in the supportive material. Longacre has suggested the notion of verb ranking as a means whereby the exegete can determine what is main line material and what is not. For example, In English, the simple past tense is used in narrative discourse to tell a story. By extracting the verbs in past tense, one gets the backbone or event line of the story. Sentences containing other verb tenses or verbals such as participles and infinitives are usually supportive material. In the Hebrew of the OT, for example, the *waw* consecutive plus the imperfect (preterite) is used to carry on the event line in narrative discourse. This tense form is always verb initial in its cause and can not

[36]Beekman and Callow, *Semantic Structure*, 112.

have a noun phrase or negative preceding it. Characteristically, clauses which begin in this way (with the preterite) are expressive of the story line in the narrative. By extracting these verbs and placing them in order one gets a usually well-formed outline of the story.[37]

The book of Hebrews is an example of hortatory discourse with sections of embedded exposition. The most salient verb forms are the imperatives and hortatory subjunctives. The main thrust of the book is centered around the clauses containing these verb forms. Yet, Hebrews is usually analyzed by exegetes as an expository discourse and the thematic material centered around the embedded sections of exposition such as the atonement or the High Priesthood of Christ, both concepts of which are important to the book, but neither of which constitutes its main theme. The point here is that the entire verbal system of a language needs to be evaluated to determine what part each tense form plays in the overall discourses.

The main line material of any text will be the material which is most important to the exegete and preacher if he wants to stay true to the emphasis placed by the text Itself. On the other hand, the supportive material will be viewed as just that, material which supports the main theme or story line of a given discourse. If the exegete/pastor analyzes a text and assigns the theme to supportive material, he has misplaced the emphasis which the text itself has marked. Thus, when he preaches the text, the subordinate material becomes the primary thrust of his message and he has missed the emphasis altogether.

Macrostructure in Texts

Every text contains a macrostructure, an overall theme or point of the text: The exegete must determine what this overall thrust is because then he can more readily see how all of the units of the text fit together to achieve this overall theme. Careful consideration of the verb structure of a discourse will aid in determining the macrostructure.

Peak Structure in Texts

Sometimes a text contains what Longacre calls peak. This textual phenomenon is quite common in discourse and its recognition will aid the biblical exegete in his analysis of a given text. Longacre defines peak as a “zone of turbulence” In the overall flow of the discourse. At Peak, routine features of the event line may be distorted or phased

[37] R. Longacre, “Verb Ranking and the Constituent Structure of Discourse,” *Journal of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest* 8 (1962): 177-202.

out. In short, Peak is any episode-like unit set apart by special surface structure features and corresponding to the climax or denouement in the notional/semantic structure.[38]

Longacre notes several surface structure features which can be used to mark Peak. The employment of extra words at the important point of the story via paraphrase, parallelism and tautologies may be used to mark the Peak of a discourse. The effect of such devices slows down the story so that this part does not go by too fast. Another feature is a concentration of participants at a given point resulting in the "crowded stage" effect. Heightened vividness may be used to mark Peak by a shift in the nominal/verbal balance, tense shift, or a shift to a more specific person as from third person to second or first person. This kind of marking usually occurs in narrative discourse. Change of pace may be used to mark Peak as in a shift to short, crisp sentences or a shift to long run-on type sentences.[39]

An example of this phenomenon occurs in the Flood narrative in Gen 6:9-9:17 where Longacre posits 2 peaks: an action peak in 7:17-24 where the destructiveness of the flood reaches its apex, and a didactic peak in 9:1-17 where the covenant concept comes into primary focus.[40] The action, peak describes the ever-mounting flood waters until finally the tops of mountains are covered. The author uses a great deal of paraphrase and paraphrase within paraphrase at this point in the story. Longacre notes that much of this paraphrase, which would normally be collateral material in the discourse, is presented with event line verbs. These are not normally used in backgrounded material such as paraphrase. Here, however, at the action peak of the story, the event line tense is extended to backgrounded material. The effect created is analogous to the use of slow motion at the high point of a film.

In the book of Philemon, the peak of the book is found in the third major paragraph (vv 17-20). Philemon is an example of hortatory discourse where Paul desires Philemon to receive the runaway slave Onesimus back into his home. Up until v17 there is not a single imperatival verb form. Yet when we come to this paragraph there are three imperatives which occur, the first being προσλαβου, "receive him. . . ." In the preceding paragraph there are seventeen verb forms and five of these are verbals. In this paragraph, however, there is a total of eleven verbs and not one of them is a verbal. There is a wide

[38] Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse,* 24.

[39] Ibid., 25-38.

[40] R. Longacre, "Interpreting Biblical Stories," *Discourse and Literature,* ed. Teun A. van Dijk (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1965): 169-85.

range of mode shift in the verbs of these four verses as well, including the imperative, the indicative, and the optative. Tense shift is also well represented as the present, aorist, and future tenses all occur. The sentence structure of this paragraph is quite different from the rest of the book in that Paul shifts to short almost staccato sentences with very little

preposed and postposed material. This added “punch” is further magnified by the increase in finite verb forms. All of these features combine to mark vv 17-20 as the hortatory peak of Philemon. Notice also how v 17, which contains the first imperative of the book functions as a good statement of Philemon's macrostructure: “Receive him as you would receive me.”

Summary Methodology

In summary fashion, we are suggesting that biblical exegetes should acknowledge the contribution that contemporary linguistic theory is making to the field of biblical interpretation. In terms of method, we suggest that text analysis begin with the original text. A preliminary translation should be made at the outset. This translation will serve as a guide and will be modified perhaps several times until the conclusion of the exegetical process when a final translation can be made. Several readings of the text should be made to get a sense of the whole before breaking it down into its constituent parts. Take the telescopic view before subjecting the text to your exegetical microscope. A text is always more than the sum of its parts and the parts cannot be interpreted except in light of the whole. Analyze the hierarchical structure of the text making tentative paragraph breaks. These may be modified upon further investigation. Analyze the verbal structure to get an idea of the event line or theme line of the text. Pay close attention to material that is thematic and determine how the subordinating ideas support It. Watch for features that may be marking Peak, especially in a narrative discourse. Determine the macrostructure and analyze how the constituent structure of the text contributes to it. Take note of participant reference in narrative discourse. Observe how participants are introduced and integrated into the overall discourse as well as how they are phased out. At this point, the groundwork has been laid for a microscopic view of the text. Dig into the clause level structure, making grammatical decisions aided by your telescopic view. Any necessary word studies should be done but always paying close attention to context since words are defined by context.

Propositionalizing the text as in the Beekman-Callow model will aid the exegete in determining the semantic level relationships that exist in inter-clausal connections.[41] In this way intra-sentential, intersentential and inter-clausal relationships can be identified and one can better see the meaning being communicated.

A recognition of these features of language and discourse will aid the exegete to achieve a more fruitful analysis of his text. They are not offered in any attempt to be exhaustive as a methodology, nor are they offered as a replacement for the standard exegetical methods which have been used for centuries. It is our hope that these insights from contemporary linguistic theory and practice can subsidize biblical exegesis as it is normally practiced.

III. *From Exegesis to Proclamation*

Sermon delivery is the counterpart of exegesis. However, the bridge from exegesis to proclamation is not easily built. Many pastors complete their exegetical work, fashion it into a well-organized sermon, and then enter the pulpit only to see their sermon die in the delivery process. Without a good delivery much of the sermon, as well as the meaning and significance of the biblical text, is lost as far as the audience is concerned.

If preaching is to be truly communicative, five aspects of delivery must be mastered by the preacher. 1. The first crucial area of delivery is what may be called the mechanical aspects. This includes such matters as breathing, articulating, pitch, inflection, vocal variation, etc. 2. Mental aspects of sermon delivery take us behind the spoken word to the mental dynamics that produce them. Communication is enhanced when a speaker learns to see what he says before he says it. 3. A third aspect of sermon delivery is the psychological aspect. Here the preacher-audience dynamic is the central focus. 4. The rhetorical aspect of sermon delivery focuses on the use of words and sentences effectively and persuasively. One cannot effectively communicate without carefully considering his audience. 5. The fifth aspect of sermon delivery is the spiritual aspect which emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit who vitalizes a sermon in the life of the preacher and audience.[42]

Aristotle's Rhetorical Triad

One of the best frameworks for analyzing the total communication situation as described in these five aspects of sermon delivery (excepting the spiritual aspect) is that

[41]Beekman and Callow, *Semantic Structure*, for the list of communication relations which undergird all discourse and the methodology for analyzing the semantic propositional structure of a text.

[42] J. Vines, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody, 1986).

which Aristotle formulated centuries ago in his *Rhetoric* under the rubrics of *logos, ethos,* and *pathos.* If we could place any one textbook on the required reading list in all of the homiletics courses in seminaries today, it would be Aristotle's *Rhetoric.*

By *logos*, Aristotle referred to the use of logic and formal methods of persuasion. The use of induction and deduction are fundamental modes of rhetorical persuasion and should be used by the Christian persuader. The Pauline epistles are filled with material of an inductive and deductive nature.

Ethos refers to the impression which the preacher himself makes upon the audience. As far as the audience is concerned, the validity of what the preacher says will be proportional to the integrity which his audience perceives him to display.

Pathos describes the appeal to the emotions in an audience by means of the speakers rhetorical technique. Although some preachers disparage the use of any emotion in a sermon, and others absolutely abuse it, we must recognize that there is a valid use of the emotional appeal in preaching.

Aristotle defines the function of rhetoric as not only the art of persuasion, but also "to discover the available means of persuasion in a given case."[43] His rhetorical triad of *logos, pathos,* and *ethos* are the means of persuasion in any spoken or written discourse.

Preaching as Persuasion

Preaching is a form of persuasion. Every sermon should have a hortatory purpose as its underlying base. The simple reason for this is that we do not preach for the sake of preaching or even just to communicate truths, but we preach for a verdict. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that truth is unto holiness. However, it seems to us that some have lost sight of the fact that preaching should be geared to persuading people to respond. Some sermons are little more than a rehearsal of Bible history with no clear attempt to persuade the listener to any course of action. Other sermons are didactic in nature and while they contain excellent information, they never are persuasive because the preacher fails to tie the teaching to a prescribed course of action.

There are of course those who question the validity of the use of persuasion in preaching at all. Perhaps this is so because some within the ranks of the Christian ministry have become more like manipulators rather than persuaders. They have taken the philosophical stance of Utilitarianism with its characteristic maxim "the end justifies the means."

[43] *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, ed. and tr. Lane Cooper (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1932), 7.

Biblical Basis for Preaching as Persuasion

Yet we must say that there is an adequate biblical basis for persuasion in preaching. A study of Paul's preaching ministry will reveal that he was a persuader in the finest sense of that term. For example, in Acts 13:43, we are told that Paul, in speaking to Christians, "persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." Acts 18:4 records the fact that Paul preached in Corinth on the Sabbath and "persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." 2 Cor 5:11 is perhaps the clearest passage where Paul mentions his attempt to persuade men as well as one of his motivations: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . ." The particular word for "persuade" in this verse means to persuade or to induce one by words to believe.

The appeal to fear is not altogether an unworthy one. Of course, there should be no unreasonable or excessive use of fear in preaching. Scare tactics for the sake of fear are totally unwarranted. Yet fear is a genuine emotion of the human psyche. A doctor who wishes to cause his patient to abstain from smoking does not hesitate to make an appeal to fear. The Scriptures speak of the reality of entering eternity unprepared to meet God in the most fearful terms. Preachers should not hesitate to sermonize about that which God himself has revealed in his word.

Paul summarizes the preacher's attitude toward the subject of persuasion in preaching in 1 Thess 2:3-8 when he says,

> For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of Cod to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men but Cod, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; Cod is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of Cod only, but also our own souls because ye were dear unto us (KJV).

There is an extreme to which some preachers go which must be avoided. It is possible to be too persuasive in one's sermon delivery. We have all heard sermons from well-meaning preachers who bombarded the congregation with one imperative after another. Such a concatenation of command forms bunched together in a sermon are not usually persuasive. They give the impression that the preacher is God's legislator who angrily barks forth "thou shalt nots." Such a preacher's motive was pure, namely to persuade the

people to do what the Bible says they should do. However, his technique did not fake into account the psychological and rhetorical aspects of sermon delivery and audience reception.

Mitigation in Preaching

In further development of this point, we should like to discuss briefly the notion of *mitigation* in discourse. No one likes to be told that a particular course of action they have chosen is wrong. Further more, no one likes to be told to do things. The wise preacher will learn to employ mitigation in his preaching.

For example, suppose a teacher is lecturing his class and the room temperature is too warm. He has at his disposal any number of ways of communicating to someone in the class that he prefers them to open a door. He may say to someone, “Bill, open the door.” Or he could say, “Bill, would you please open the door?” The first form of address is harsh and direct, employing an imperatival form. The second form of address is somewhat mitigated with the employment of the word “please” and the Interrogative “would you.” There are other ways even more mitigated in which he could communicate his desire for the door to be opened. He could say, “Would someone please open the door?” Here the shift from a specific person to the general “someone” mitigates the request even further. Another option available to the teacher would be to say, “I wish that door were open so it would be cooler in here.” Here, there is no imperative or interrogative, but a simple declarative statement. Chances are someone would open the door after hearing such a statement. Or take the statement, “It’s warm in here.” The surface structure is one of a declarative sentence with no mention whatsoever of the word “door.” Yet the underlying notional structure of this statement (given the context in which we have placed it) might be one of command in the sense that we could add the unstated sentence, “Open the door.” All of this goes to show that there are any number of ways a speaker may mitigate his commands to an audience. .

Preachers need to learn to make wise use of mitigation in their preaching. The NT writers employed a variety of mitigated forms of expression in an attempt to persuade their readers to a particular course of action.

In short, effective communication from the pulpit must be informed by Aristotle's rhetorical triad of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. This involves a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and here is where there is no substitute for thorough exegesis. It involves a thorough knowledge of the speaker-audience dynamic such that the preacher must speak

from integrity and his audience must know of his sincerity and genuineness. Finally, it involves a knowledge of people and how they respond to the spoken word.

R. Roberts summarizes the triad of *logos, ethos,* and *pathos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in words that every preacher needs to hear and heed.

> Be logical. Think clearly, Reason cogently. Remember that "argument" Is the life and soul of persuasion. Study human nature. Observe the characters and emotions of your audience, as well as your own character and emotions. Attend to delivery. Use language rightly. Arrange your material well. End crisply.[44]

Conclusion

A well-rounded approach to biblical interpretation involves three things. First, a recognition of the foundational hermeneutical principles necessary to inform a productive methodology. Foundational to one's biblical hermeneutic is the notion that a text has a determinate meaning. Second, a recognition of and implementation of exegetical methods which employ, along with traditional methodology, insights and methods from contemporary linguistic theory. Third, a recognition of Aristotle's rhetorical categories of logos, pathos, and ethos and how they inform good homiletical theory and practice. The bridge from hermeneutics to exegesis to proclamation is not easily built, but it must be built, and once built, ceaselessly traversed by us all.

[44] R. Roberts, *Greek Rhetoric and Literary Criticism* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), 50.

SECTION 17

Old Testament Narrative and Poetry

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN READING A PARAGRAPH

1. Look for that which is ***General*** and that which is ***Specific.***

2. Look for the author's use of ***Questions*** and ***Answers.***

3. Examine the flow of ***Dialogue*** and ask the appropriate questions of the ***Dialogue.***

4. Observe the use of ***Emotional*** terms.

5. What is the ***Tone*** of the passage?

CLUES FOR INTERPRETING NARRATIVE

CONTEXT

Any individual narrative should be interpreted in light of the whole account, i.e., Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted in light of Mark 1:1-16:8.

AUTHORIAL/EDITORIAL/NARRATOR COMMENTS

The author or narrator gives clues to his reader of how to interpret a text.

Examples:

(1) Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted by such editorial comments as: Mark 1:1, 34; 3:11-12.

(2) 1 Kings 15:5-6; 22:43; 2 Kings 14:3-4; 2 Chronicles 33:2-8

(3) 1 Kings 12:15, 15:29; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 1:17; 23:16; 24:2

THEMATIC STATEMENTS

The author or narrator sometimes provides a thematic statement which reveals the theme of his work: Cf. Acts. 1:8 with 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31. (How do Peter and Paul fit into this?)

REPETITION

Cf. Judges 3:7-9; 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25

Interpreting Old Testament Narratives[1]

1. Follow many of the same principles used in the interpretation of New Testament narratives.

2. Examine each section to see what it is teaching and then ask why the author has strung together the stories in the larger context.

3. Ask what the passage is teaching about God. He is the central figure in Old Testament narratives as Jesus is the central figure in the Gospels.

4. Look for story shifts (breaks and pivots) in the narrative.

5. Observe the literary device of interchange, which involves contrasting or comparing two stories at the same time.

6. Note that theology is (normally) taught implicitly rather than explicitly in Old Testament (as well as in the NT) narratives.

7. One significant difference between Old Testament narratives and narratives in the Gospels is the Old Testament narratives are usually much longer (i.e. Joseph, Abraham, David)

[1] This material comes from Fee and Stuart

Common Errors in the Interpretation of Old Testament Narratives

1. Beware of allegorizing Old Testament narratives. Focus on the clear meaning of the text.

2. Beware of reading things into narratives that are not really there. Why do people sometimes read things into narratives that are not really there?

- Desperate people are truly hurting and in need of help are looking for anything that might address their situation.

- Sometimes sincere believers are impatient and want an immediate answer from God rather than waiting patiently and praying for God's guidance.

- We sometimes wrongly believe that everything in the Bible applies *directly* to us.

- Sincere believers can be prone to decontextualizing a passage.

Poetic Literature

<u>The Difference Between Prose and Poetry</u>

Judges 4 (prose) and 5 (poetry)

Exodus 14 (prose) and 15 (poetry)

Poetic License

THE FORM OF HEBREW POETRY

1. Metrical Patterns

2. Parallelism
   a. Synonymous Parallelism

   b. Synthetic Parallelism

   c. Antithetical Parallelism

   d. Non-Parallelism

3. Poetic Language and Imagery

   (a) Paronomasia

   (b) Alliteration

   (c) Acrostics

   (d) Assonance

   (e) Figurative Language

HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Note the strophic (stanza) patterns of the poem or hymn.

2. Group parallel lines.

3. Study the metaphorical language.

INTERPRETING POETRY

- What is the difference between commissive and referential language?

- Over one-third of the Bible is comprised of Poetry.

- Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Lamentations – almost all of these books are poetry.

- Prophetic books embody poetry as a major literary feature.

- Poetry can also be found in many Old testament narratives (Judges 4-5; Exodus 14-15)

- The teaching of Jesus in the Gospels contains a significant amount of poetic/commissive language.

Elements of Hebrew Poetry

1. Terseness

2. A high degree of structure – Parallelism

   - Synonymous

   - Developmental/Step/Climatic

   - Antithetical/Contrastive

   - Chiastic

3. Figurative Language

   - Simile
   - Metaphor
   - Indirect analogy
   - Hyperbole
   - Personification/Anthropomorphism/ Zoomorphism

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PSALMS

Psalms of Zion	48, 84
Royal Psalms	2, 8, 72, 110
Hymns to God	19, 24
Wisdom Psalms	1, 127-128
Penitential Psalms	6, 32
Imprecatory Psalms	58, 137
Praise Psalms	106, 111-113
Lament Psalms	13, 142

Songs in the Bible

Introductory Information:

Different Kinds of Songs in the Bible:

Much of the following outline is directly dependent on Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral.* Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

(1) War Songs

(a) Exodus 17:16
(b) Judges 7:18, 20
(c) Numbers 10:35-36
(d) Exodus 15:1-18 [victory song of Moses – among best known]
(e) Judges 5 [victory song of Deborah – among best known]
(f) Numbers 21:27-30 [victory song over Moabites]
(g) 1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11; 29:5 ["Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands"]

Osborne: "[Most of these songs] dwell rapturously upon the hand of God stretched out against the enemies of Israel. The glory belongs to Yahweh, who shares the spoils and the honor with his people."

(2) Love Songs

(a) Song of Solomon, 5 different interpretations
   1. Judaism and the early church – allegory of the mystical love of God for his people or Christ for the church.
   2. Some modern scholars – a postexilic midrash on divine love (similar to #1)
   3. A drama of a maiden and her lover
   4. Most modern critics – see no structural development – it is a collection of secular love songs, perhaps modeled on praise hymns
   5. The book uses love imagery for purposes of cultic ritual and was used in the festivals of Israel.

   (I favor option #3) – literal maiden and lover. Solomon and lover. image of rustic shepherd and king relate to David and by extension to Solomon as well.

(3) The Psalms

Overview of psalms. Largest "book" of Bible. 5 different books.

Psalms 1-41, ends in verse 13 with doxology
Psalms 42-72, ends with benediction in verses 18-19
Psalms 73-89, ends with benediction in verse 52
Psalms 90-106, verse 48 benediction
Psalms 107-150, ends with 150th Psalm

There are titles affixed to some of psalms

73 explicitly by David
12 by Asaph
11 by the sons of Korah
2 by Solomon

Lament Psalms.

(a) The most common type of psalm.
(b) Songs that agonize over a particular situation and petition God for help
(c) Individual laments (Pss 3; 5-7; 13; 17; 22; 25-28; 31; 38-40; 42-43; 51; 54-57; 69-71; 120; 139; 142)
(d) Corporate laments (Pss 9; 12; 44; 58; 60; 74; 79-80; 94; 137)
(e) Two by David outside the Psalms – 2 Samuel 1:17-27 for Saul and Jonathan; 2 Sam 3:33-34 for Abner.
(f) Seven Common themes in the structure of a lament noted by Hayes (Stein text lists 5, extra two have a *)

1. **Address to God** – Ps 22:1 "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" often with a confession of faith, Ps 71:1, "In you, O Yahweh, I have taken refuge; may I never be put to shame.

2. **Description of Distress**, often highly figurative (57:4, I am in the midst of lions … whose teeth are spears and arrows", at times presented as concern regarding himself (69:2, "I sink in the miry depths" or even as a complaint against God (44:9, "yet you have rejected and humiliated us")

3. **Plea for Redemption**, both for deliverance (3:7a, "Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God!") and the defeat of his enemies (3:7b, "For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw; you have broken the teeth of the wicked")

4. **Statement of Confidence or Trust in Yahweh** (12:7, "O Yahweh, you will preserve us; you will protect us from this generation forever")

5. ***Confession of Sin** (25:11b, Pardon my guilt, for it is great") or affirmation of innocence (17:3-5, "you have tested me and found nothing . . . I have avoided the paths of the violent . . . my feet have not slipped")

6. **A Vow or Pledge** to do certain things if God grants the request (56:12, "I must present vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you", often involving a reminder to God of his covenant commitments (74:18, "Remember this, O Lord")

7. ***Conclusion**, which may be in the form of praise (57:11, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth") or restatement of the request (80:19, "Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved")

Few psalms contain ALL these elements. Nevertheless, these do constitute the basic lament.

Osborne: "The value of such psalms for every believer is obvious. Whether one is ill (Ps. 6; 13; 31; 38; 39; 88; 102), beset by enemies (3; 9; 10; 13; 35; 52-57; 62; 69; 86; 109; 120; 139) or aware of sin (25; 38; 39; 41; 51), the lament psalms offer not only encouragement but models for prayer. Many have claimed that one should pray them directly; I agree but prefer to meditate, contextualize and then pray these psalms as they reflect upon my situation."

Hymns or Praise Songs. Directly celebrate the joy of worshipping YHWH.

1. Calling upon YHWH (Ps 139:1, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me."
2. A call to worship (111:1, "I will extol the Lord will all my heart")
3. A motivation clause praising YHWH and giving the reasons for worship, often centering upon God's attributes and deeds (111:2, "Glorious and majestic are his deeds"
4. A conclusion repeating the call to praise, often including a series of blessings (111:10, "to him belongs eternal praise")

Fee and Stuart note 3 specific kinds of hymns:

1. Yahweh is praised as Creator (Ps. 8; 19; 104; 148)
2. Yahweh is praised as protector and benefactor of Israel (66; 100; 111; 114; 149)
3. Yahweh is praised as Lord of history (33; 103; 113; 117; 145-47)

Other hymns:

(1) Some go into detail regarding God as in control of history by recapitulating the great salvation events in the life of Israel (78; 105-6; 135-36).
(2) The Hallel psalms (113-18) formed a special part of the Passover celebration and were also a regular part of the synagogue service.

Thanksgiving Hymns – Thanking God for answers to specific prayers. If the lament is the "before" of spiritual trust songs, the thanksgiving hymn is the "after" – like 2 bookends. Like the lament, we have individual thanksgiving hymns (18; 30; 32; 34; 40; 66; 92; 103; 116; 118; 138) and corporate (65; 67; 75; 107; 124; 136). Another example – after Jonah's deliverance (Jonah 2:2-9).

1. In addition to thanking God for his deliverance, such psalms regularly pledge future fidelity and worship to God (18:49, "Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Yahweh") and specifically give the glory to Yahweh for the defeat of the psalmist's enemies (18:39, "You gave me strength for battle; you subdued my adversaries") or his recovery from illness (30:3, "O Lord, you raised my soul from Sheol; you rescued me from those who descend to the grave). 6 structural elements to a Thanksgiving song.
    a. Invitation to give thanks or to praise YHWH , Ps 30:1, 4
    b. Account of trouble and salvation, Ps 18:3-19
    c. Praises of Yahweh, acknowledging his saving work, Ps 18:46-48
    d. Offertory formula at the presentation of sacrifice (Ps 118:21)
    e. Blessings over participants in the ceremony (Ps 22:26)
    f. Exhortation (Ps 32:8-9)

Songs of Celebration and Affirmation – several types of hymns that celebrate God's covenant relationship with the king and the nation.

1. **Royal Psalms.** The coronation psalms (2; 72; 101; 110) and enthronement psalms (24; 29; 47; 93; 95-99) were written to depict the implications of the accession to the throne, with its ritual crowning, swearing in before Yahweh, anointing with oil and receiving the homage of the people. The enthronement psalms may have gone beyond the single coronation to encompass an annual ceremony celebrating the kingship.

2. **Songs of Zion –** praises God for his gift of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

Wisdom and Didactic Psalms (1; 36; 37; 49; 73; 119; 127; 128; 133) parallel Proverbs in the celebration of wisdom as God's great gift to his people and its connection to the inscripturated Word and Torah.

Imprecatory Psalms (12; 35; 52; 57-59; 60; 69; 70; 83; 109; 137; 140) lament psalms where the writer's anger and desire for vindication are especially prominent.

Penitential Psalms – Psalms of repentance where the psalmist comes to God in repentance of his sin. Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130

Label the Psalm:
1 –

13 –

21 –

48 –

51 –

95-

137 -

Suggestions for interpreting the Psalms:

1. Note the sub-genre of the psalm, consider the original setting (as best as one can determine).

2. Be aware of figurative language (poetry)

3. Be aware the psalm my give general guidance or only part of the story (proverbs)

SECTION 18

Proverbs and Prophecy

TYPES OF PROVERBS

1. ***Descriptive Proverbs*** make a simple observation about life without dealing with exceptions or applications (11.24; 15.23)
2. ***Prescriptive Proverbs*** state a truth with the goal of influencing behavior (19.17; 14.31; 15.33)
3. ***Antithetical Proverbs*** are the most common and dominate chapters 10-15. (15.18; 12.12)
4. ***Numerical Sayings*** usually contain a number and/or a list (cf. 30).
5. ***Paradoxical Proverbs*** cause the reader to ponder more complex levels of thought.

PROVERBS ON MONEY: WEALTH AND POVERTY

1. God blesses the righteous with financial security. (3.9-10; 3.15-16; 10.22; 10.15-16a)

2. The behavior of fools can result in poverty. (26.13-15; 10.4-5; 6.6-11; 21.17; 22.16; 11.24)

3. A fool's wealth is temporal. (11.18; 13.11; 21.6; 22.16; 11.4; 23.4-5)

4. Some are impoverished as a result of injustice and oppression. (13.23; 16.8; 22.2)

5. Those who have money should be generous with the poor. (29.7, 14; 28.27; 11.24; 6.1-5; 3.27-28)

6. It is better to be wise than to be wealthy. (15.16,17; 16.8, 16; 17.1; 22.1; 28.6)

7. Financial riches are of limited value. (11.4; 13.8; 19.10; 14.20; 30.7-9)

Proverbs on the Tongue/Words

1. Words are a reflection of the heart (12.23; 16.23; 18.4; 10.20; 26.23-26)

2. Words are a reflection of reality (12.17, 19; 18.13, 17)

3. Evil speech takes many forms (10.6; 12.6; 22.10)

- Lies (14.5, 25; 13.5; 25.18)
- Argumentative (26.17, 21)
- Insult and Slander (10.18; 20.20)
- Gossip and Rumors (11.13; 18.8)

4. The words of the wise (8.7-9; 10.11; 13.3; 17.28; 15.4; 16.24; 27.5)

5. One's speech has consequences (18.13, 21; 12.13; 14.3; 13.2-3a)

Prophecy

Stein: Chapter 16

Introduction: For many people the term prophecy is a synonym for prediction. As a result many people think of the prophetic books of the Bible as just a long list of predictions concerning future events. Yet when one reads these books it is clear that much of the material is proclamation and narrative material. This can be seen that in the Hebrew canon the books of Joshu-2 Kings are called the Former Prophets.

1. Judgment Prophecies

- Jonah 3.4 (cf. 3.5-10)
- Judgment prophecies in the ancient world carried the understanding that destruction could be avoided if the people repented from their sins.
- The principle stated: Jeremiah 18.7-8 (vv. 9-10; cf. Ezek. 33.13-15)
- Another example of this rule is found in Micah 3.12. In Jeremiah 26.16-19 this prophecy is quoted and its lack of fulfillment noted. However, Micah was not considered a false prophet.
- Another example of a judgment prophecy averted is in 1 Kings 21.0-29.
- All of this is part of the "norms of language" concerning judgment prophecies.

2. The Language of Prophecy

- Isaiah 13.9-11 (cf. 13.1, 19) – This prophecy was fulfilled with the rise and rule of the Persian Empire
- Isa. 24.23
- Jer. 4.28; 13.16; 15.9
- Ezek. 32.7-8
- Joel 2.10, 31; 3.15
- Amos 8.9
- Hab. 3.11
- Matt. 24.29; Mk. 13.24-25; Lk. 21.25
- Rev. 6.12
- Acts 2.14-21

3. The Figurative Nature of Prophetic Language

A clear example of a "nonliteral" prophecy is found in Isa. 11.6-9 and 35.8-10. In describing the peace and prosperity of the millennial/messianic age the author writes what appears to be contradictory descriptions. If interpreted literally there is a conflict, however, the willed meaning of the author is that the messianic age will be one of peace and security.

Luke 3.4-6: This is a quote from Isaiah 40.3-5 and is found in each of the gospels (Mk. 1.3; Matt. 3.3; John 1.23) but only Luke includes the topographical/geographical references. Obviously he is speaking of the proud being humbled and the humble being exalted (a theme in Luke's Gospel; cf. Mary's Magnificat.

Revelation 21: The description of the New Jerusalem.

- The walls are described as 144 cubits thick (note the symbolism 12 x 12 (v. 17) [cf. also 7.4-8; 21.12]. The thickness indicates the safety and security of the city, but notice as well the gates are never shut. What good re thick walls if the gates are never closed. Once again the prophet has used imagery that appears contradictory, but the open gates communicate the concept of safety as well, there is no need to close the gates.

- Other example of figurative terminology in prophecy – Isa. 3.24-4.1; 34.1-17; Jer. 4.23-31; 15.8-9; Nah. 1.4-5; Hab. 1.6-9; Mk. 13.14-16.

4. The Sensus or "Fuller" Meaning of the Text

There are times when a prophetic text appears to have a fulfillment other than what the prophet himself apparently expected. Some frequently cited examples are:

- Matt. 1.22-23; 2.15, 17-18; Jn. 12.15; 1 Cor. 10.3-4

The thought would be that this fuller sense could only be known after the fact since the prophet himself did not envision it.

Stein prefers to see it as an implication of the author's conscious meaning.

Much OT prophecy was future to the prophet and his audience but is past as far as we are concerned; however, there are still some prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. Stein lists the following:

Prophetic predictions that have been fulfilled:

- The fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah, Ezekiel)
- The judgment of Samaria (Hosea, Amos, Micah)
- Babylon (Isa. 13-14, 21, 47; Jer. 50-51, Daniel)
- Edom (Obadiah)
- Moab (Isa. 15-16); Damascus (Isa. 17); Ethiopia (Isa. 18); Egypt (Isa. 19); Tyre (Isa. 23)
- Nineveh (Nahum, Zeph. 2)
- Etc.
- The birth, ministry, death, and resurrection (Isa. 4, 7, 9, 11, 40, 53; Jer. 23, 33; Mic. 5; Zec. 3)
- The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (Jer. 31, Joel 2)

There are other prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled

- The great tribulation (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; 2 Thess. 2)
- The glorious appearing of the Son of man (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 1-2)

By seeking to interpret the willed meaning of the author for the situation in which he wrote, we shall avoid interpreting certain prophecies that have already been fulfilled.

Old Testament Prophets:
Covenant Mediator Enforcers

Difficulties with reading the prophets (especially the longer prophetic books)

- They are collections of spoken oracles
- The oracles are not always in chronological order.
- There are often no hints as to where one oracle begins and another ends.
- There is often no historical setting provided to interpret the oracle.
- We are so far removed from their religious, historical and cultural context that we can fail to understand the issues being addressed by the prophets.

I. The Nature of the OT Prophetic Literature

The Prophetic books include:

- *The four major prophets*: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- *The twelve minor prophets*: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

1. The OT prophetic books primarily contain numerous short spoken or preached messages/oracles, usually proclaimed by the prophet to either the nation of Israel or the nation of Judah.

2. Only a small percentage of OT prophecy deals with events that are still future to us.

3. The prophets use poetry for much of their message, and it is the poetic aspect of their message that is the most foreign to us.

4. The prophetic books are primarily anthologies.

Amos 5.1-27

5.1-3: a lamentation over Israel's destruction
5.5-6, 14: an invitation to seek God and live
5.7-13: attacks on social injustice
5.16-17: a description of miseries
5.18-20: a description of the day of the Lord
5.21-24: a rebuke of hypocritical worship
5.25-27: a brief review of Israel's sinful history culminating in a prediction of exile.

II. The Historical-Cultural and Theological Context

THE LARGER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

760-460: The 16 prophetic books come from a rather narrow span of time in Israelite history (ca.760-460 B.C.).

The reason for this concentrated time between Amos (ca. 760), the earliest of the writing prophets, and Malachi (ca. 460) is that this period of time called for covenant enforcement mediation.

Israel - NORTHERN KINGDOM: ANNOUNCING IMPENDING JUDGMENT - in the northern kingdom disobedience to the covenant went far beyond anything yet known in Judah and was slated for destruction by God because of her sin. Amos (ca.760) and Hosea (ca. 755) announced impending destruction. The northern kingdom fell to the superpower Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah – SOUTHERN KINGDOM: INCREASING SINFULNESS OF JUDAH AND RISE OF BABYLON- Thereafter the increasing sinfulness of Judah and the rise of another superpower, Babylon, constitutes the subject of several prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Obadiah probably fits in here). Judah was destroyed for her disobedience in 587 B.C.

After 587: Afterward Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi announced God's will for the restoration of his people (beginning with a return from exile in 538 B.C.)

III. The Basic Prophetic Message: Covenant Enforcement Mediators

1. Repent for you have broken the covenant.

- Idolatry
- Social Injustice
- Religious Ritualism

2. God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.

- The blessing of faithfulness: Lev. 26.1-13; Deut. 4.32-40; 28.1-14

- The punishment for disobedience: Lev. 26.14-29; Deut. 4.15-28; 28.15-32

Categories of Corporate Blessings: Life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect and safety.

Categories of Corporate Punishments: Death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, defeat, deportation, destitution and disgrace.

3. There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

SUMMARY: Interpreting the Prophets

1. The prophets were God's spokespersons.

2. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.

3. The prophet's message was not original (for the most part).

4. Understanding the historical context is very important to understanding the prophet's message.

5. It is important to isolate the various forms of oracles/messages.

6. The prophetic message can be summarized under the three ideas:

- You have sinned against God - repent
- God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.
- There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

7. When teaching and preaching the prophets look for similarities in settings (greed, injustice, etc.)

8. Understand that the prophets are excellent in teaching a balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Old Testament Prophets: Covenant Enforcers[1]

Introduction: The OT Prophetic books contain some of the most inspiring passages in the Bible:

- Isaiah 40.28-31
- Isaiah 53.1-6

The prophets also contain their share of obscure and difficult verses:

- The rather gruesome text from Amos 3.12
- Passages very insulting to their original audience – Jer. 2.23b-24
- As well as strong passages of judgment – Jer. 15.1-2

Difficulties with reading the prophets (specially the longer prophetic books)

- They are collections of spoken oracles
- The oracles are not always in chronological order.
- There are often no hints as to where one oracle begins and another ends.
- There is often no historical setting provided to interpret the oracle.
- We are so far removed from the religious, historical and cultural context that we fail to understand the issues being addressed by the prophets.

I. The Nature of the OT Prophetic Literature

The Prophetic books include:

- The four major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- The twelve minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

The term major and minor have nothing to do with importance but only with the length of the books.

The writing prophets take up about as much space in the Bible as the entire New Testament.

Yet of al the genre types in the Bible the prophetic literature may be the most difficult to understand because we really have nothing similar to it in the English language.

1. The OT prophetic books contain primarily numerous short spoken or preached messages/oracles, usually proclaimed by the prophet to either the nation of Israel or the nation of Judah. They also contain visions from God as well as short narrative sections and symbolic acts.

[1] This material is a summation of Duvall and Hayes

2. Only a small percentage of OT prophecy deals with events that are still future to us. Douglas Stuart says,

- Less the 2% of OT prophecy is messianic
- Less than 5% specifically describes the new covenant age
- Less than 1% concerns events that are still yet to come.

The role of the prophets was to proclaim that as a result of disobedience of Israel and/or Judah that they were in danger of imminent judgment.

3. The prophets use poetry for much of their message, and it is the poetic aspect of their message that is the most foreign to us. The prophet's use of poetry by makes their message even more powerful and gripping.

- Amos does not just say, "God is angry." Rather, he proclaims, "The Lion has roared."
- Isaiah does not analytically contrast the awfulness f sin and the amazing wonder of forgiveness; he uses figurative language, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."
- Jeremiah is disgusted with Judah's unfaithful attitude toward God and wants to convey the pain the Lord feels because Judah has left him for idols. Thus throughout the book he compares Judah to an unfaithful wife who has become a prostitute. "You have lived as a prostitute with many lovers."

The power of poetry is its ability to affect the emotions of the reader or listener.

The prophets also use parallelism to communicate their message.

- Synonymous parallelism: The second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line, as in Isaiah 44.22
    - A: I have swept away you offense like a cloud/B: your sins like the morning mist.

- Antithetical Parallelism: The second or subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first, as in Hosea 7.14
    - A: They do not cry out to me from their hearts,/B: but wail upon their beds.

- Synthetic Parallelism: The second or subsequent line adds to the first line in a manner which provides further information, as in Obadiah 21:
    - A: Delivers will go up from Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau/B: And the kingdom will be the Lord's.

4. The prophetic books are primarily anthologies.

By this we mean that the prophetic books are collections of shorter units, usually oral messages that the prophets have proclaimed publicly to the people. Other literary units such as narrative, and visions are mixed in.

It is important to note the collective nature of the books. Like a contemporary collection of a writer's poetry, the prophetic books contain primarily independent, shorter units. These units are not normally arranged chronologically and often do not have any thematic order as well. Occasionally a broad overall theme (judgment, deliverance) will unite a large unit of material, but for the most part tight, thematic unity is absent. Because of this aspect it is almost impossible to outline a prophetic book as one would outline an epistle or gospel.

When one comes to the actual study or informed-reading of the prophetic books, the first thing to do is to think oracles (much as one will think in paragraphs when reading the epistles). This is not always an easy task but it can be very helpful in gaining a better understanding of the prophets. Some prophecies are dated, notably Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Ezekiel: Oracles Against Egypt

1. 29.1-2: First Oracle against Egypt - Jan 7. 587 B.C. (this is the sixth date in Ezek. [1.2; 8.1; 20.1; 24.1; 26.1].
2. 29.17: Second oracle against Egypt (Apr. 26 571 B.C)
3. 30.1: The third oracle against Egypt Jerusalem was under siege at this time) [probably between January-April 587]
4. 30.20: Fourth – April 29 (587)
5. 31.1: Fifth – June 587
6. 32.1: Sixth Mach 3 585
7. No month is given – the entire year dates from April 13 586 to April 1 585.

However, it is not that easy most of the time. Amos 5 contains what is normally thought to be three oracles. Note the changes in subject in Amos 5:

5.1-3: a lamentation over Israel's destruction
5.5-6, 14: an invitation to seek God and live
5.7-13: attacks on social injustice
5.16-17: a description of miseries
5.18-20: a description of the day of the Lord
5.21-24: a rebuke of hypocritical worship
5.25-27: a brief review of Israel's sinful history culminating in a prediction of exile.

Most commentators understand this passage to consist of three oracles

5.1-3: forms a single short lament oracle announcing punishment.
5.4-17: forms a single (though complex) oracle of invitation to blessing and warning of punishment
5.18-27: forms a single (though complex) oracle warning of punishment.

Oracles are isolated according to the known forms. All three oracles in this chapter were given in the reign of King Jeraboam of Israel (793-753) to a people whose relative prosperity caused them to consider it unthinkable that their nation would be devastated as to cease to exist in just a generation.

Forms of Prophetic Oracles:

Lawsuit (Isa. 3.13-26; Hosea 4.1-19)
Woe (Hab. 26-8; Mal. 2.1-5; Zeph. 2.5-7)
Promise (Amos 9.11-15; Hosea 2.16-22); Isa. 45.1-7; Jer. 31.1-9)

II. The Historical-Cultural and Theological Context

One must be careful to interpret the OT prophetic literature within its historical context. This may require the interpreter to seek outside assistance from Bible Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and a Bible Handbook.

1. The prophets primary role is as spokesmen for God. To understand them as primarily predictors of the future is to miss their primary importance as men who spoke for God to their contemporaries.

Of all the OT prophets only 16 were chosen to speak oracles that would be collected and written into books. For example Elijah and Elisha spoke for God but we know more about what they did than what they actually said. Due to their place in narrative literature we know more about their historical context than we do he writing prophets. In the writing prophets we hear from God but we learn little about the prophets themselves.

THE LARGER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

760-460: The 16 prophetic books come from a rather narrow span of time in Israelite history (@760-460 B.C.).

The reason for this concentrated time between Amos (ca. 760), the earliest of the writing prophets, and Malachi (ca. 460) is that this period of time called for covenant enforcement mediation.

Three things characterized those centuries:

1. Unprecedented political, military, economic and social upheaval.
2. An enormous level of religious unfaithfulness and disregard for the original Mosaic covenant.
3. Shifts in populations and national boundaries

Israel - NORTHERN KINGDOM: ANNOUNCING MPNDING JUDGMENT - in the northern kingdom disobedience to the covenant went far beyond anything yet known in Judah and was slated for destruction by God because of her sin. Amos (ca.760) and Hosea (ca. 755) announced impending destruction. The northern kingdom fell to the superpower Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah – SOUTHERN KINGDOM: INCREASING SINFULNESS OF JUDAH AND RISE OF BABYLON - Thereafter the increasing sinfulness of Judah and the rise of another superpower, Babylon, constitutes the subject o many prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah,

Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Obadiah probably fits in here). Judah was destroyed for her disobedience in 587 B.C.

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SPECIFIC EXAPLES – Fee pages 157-158; How to read the Bible (p. 178 Isaiah 2.6-5.30; Ezekiel's oracles against Egypt (single sheet) includes dates of the oracles.

III. The Basic Prophetic Message: Covenant Enforcement Mediators

The prophets write in the theological context of Deuteronomy and in the historical context of an imminent invasion by either the Assyrians (against Israel) or the Babylonians (against Judah). What is their message in this context?

The prophets serve as prosecuting attorneys, that is, as covenant enforcers. While there are numerous nuances to their proclamation, their overall message can be boiled down to three basic points.

1. You have broken God's covenant and therefore you must repent.
2. God will judge you if you do not repent.
3. There is still hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

1. Repent for you have broken the covenant.

The prophets emphasize how serious the nations covenant violations have become. Evidence of their sin normally falls into three categories: idolatry, social injustice, and religious ritualism.

a. Idolatry is perhaps the most flagrant violation of the covenant and the prophets preach continuously against it. Israel engages in it from its political beginnings, with the golden claves in Bethel and Dan. But even Judah falls into serious idolatrous worship. The nation sought to maintain some semblance of the worship of the one true God while blending in worship to local pagan deities.

This syncretistic worship climaxes in Ezekiel 8. The Spirit takes Ezekiel on a tour of the temple in Jerusalem. There he sees

- An idol at the entrance to the north gate
- Drawings and carvings of animals on the walls
- Women burning incense to Babylonian god Tammuz
- And the elders with their backs to the presence of the Lord facing east and bowing down to the sun.
- "This the Lord declares will drive me from my sanctuary. Indeed in Ezekiel 10 the glory of the Lord departs from the temple. (The old mosaic covenant as defined in Deuteronomy comes to an end with the departure of the Lord's presence.

Idolatry strikes at the very heart of the relationship between the Lord and his people. The central covenant formula in the OT was the statement by the Lord, "I will be you God; you will be my people, I will dwell in your midst." Idolatry was rejection of this relationship. The prostitute/unfaithful wife imagery runs throughout Jeremiah and Hosea who has to live it out in his own life. Ezekiel uses the same imagery in chapter 16.

The prophets not only proclaim hat idolatry is a violation of their relationship with God but that to worship idols is both irrational and foolish.

- Isaiah 1.22-24
- Jeremiah 10.5

b. Social Injustice - The covenant in Deuteronomy bound the people to more than just the worship of God. A proper relationship with god required a proper relationship with people. The Lord was concerned with social justice for all people, and he was especially concerned with how weaker individuals in society were treated. The prophets would cite the treatment of orphans and widows as the social failure of the people. The prophets would also state how these violations of the covenant would invalidate the sacrifices offered.

Examples of prophetic condemnation of social injustice:

- Isaiah 1
- Jeremiah 5.28-29
- Micah 6.7-8

c. Religious Ritualism – The prophets denounce the people of God for their religion has become one of ritualism that lacks heart. The ritual has become a replacement for relationship with Almighty God. They think that the ritual will exempt them from their sinful acts involving idolatry and social injustice.

- Isaiah 1.11-13a
- Isaiah 58.6-7

Even as the prophets proclaim that judgment is imminent they plead for the nation to repent.

2. God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.

The prophets announced that if the law was kept blessing would follow and if not punishment would come.

- The blessing of faithfulness: Lev. 26.1-13; Deut. 4.32-40; 28.1-14

- The punishment for disobedience: Lev. 26.14-29; Deut. 4.15-28; 28.15-32

One must remember that the prophets did not invent the blessings and curses they announced. They may have announced the in their own style but their content goes back to Lev. And Deut.

Categories of Corporate Blessings: Life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect and safety.

Categories of Corporate Punishments: Death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, defeat, deportation, destitution and disgrace.

- Amos 9.11-15
- Hosea 8.14; 9.3

3. There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

Statistically, a majority of what the prophets announce in the 8th, 7th and 6th centuries is curses because the major defeat of the northern kingdom did not take place until 722 B.C. The fall of the southern kingdom of Judah did not take place until 587 B.C. The Israelites were headed toward punishment during these years, so naturally warnings of curses rather than blessings predominate as Go seeks to get the people to repent.

After 587 the prophets preached more often of blessings because after the punishment of the nation is complete God resumes his basic plan, which is to show mercy.

- Look for this simple pattern: (1) identification of Israel's sin or of God's love for her. (2) A prediction of curse or blessing depending on the circumstances.

This helps us to understand the prophets message was not primarily his own. The prophets were inspired by God to present essentially the content of the covenants warnings and promises of blessing. The newness to the prophetic message was the structure or means by which the prophet's message was delivered. Even the messianic prophecies had their origin in the Law (Deut. 18.18).

SUMMARY

1. The prophets were God's spokespersons.

2. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.

3. The prophet's message was not original (for the most part).

4. Understanding the historical context is very important to understanding the prophet's message.

5. It is important to isolate the various forms of oracles/messages.

6. The prophetic message can be summarized under the three ideas:

- You have sinned against God - repent
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- There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

7. When teaching and preaching the prophets look for similarities in settings (greed, injustice, etc.)

8. Understand that the prophets are excellent in teaching a balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Principles for Prophecy not classified "Straightforward Prophetic Prediction"

(1) In some cases, the NT authors use Old Testament language or images in a rhetorical fashion – without attempting to link the Old Testament language and NT events in a clear logical fashion.

(2) There may be a blending of more than one event in the prophecy. We should look for explicit statements in the original prediction and later progressive revelation to clarify this distinction.

(3) The authors of Scripture had a concept of "Corporate Solidarity." The individual is often representative of the community and vice versa.

(4) The biblical authors had as a presupposition – the correspondence in historical events – brought about because of God's divine purposes and sovereignty over history.

Three assumptions of typological interpretation in the NT: (Seifrid)

a. A continuity of God's dealings with Israel, so that earlier events foreshadow later ones.
b. A prospective aspect to God's dealings with Israel, so that earlier deliverance and judgment is incomplete.
c. The arrival of salvation and the fulfillment of God's purposes in Jesus.

(5) The NT authors understood themselves as living in days of eschatological fulfillment.

(6) The NT authors (like most of Judaism) assumed that the Scriptures were Christological.

(7) We need to understand that the range of meaning of the word “fulfill” in the Biblical languages is broader than our modern English usage.

SECTION 19

The Gospels and Parables

Interpreting the Gospels

I. WHAT ARE THE GOSPELS?

The term ***gospel*** translates the Greek word *euangelion*, which means "good news." Prior to the NT this word normally referred to good news of a political or military victory. ***In the NT*** the word denotes the good news proclaimed about Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15.1) or the good news proclaimed by Jesus Christ (Mk. 1.14-15). From this it is easy to see why the early believers referred to the Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the Gospels. But how did the Holy Spirit inspire the authors (often called the evangelists) to present this good news? Correct interpretation in part depends on correct identification of the kind of communication taking place.

1. First and foremost the Gospels are stories.

This is a part of what makes the gospels so powerful. The question is what kind of stories are they?

a. The early church understood the gospels as stories about Jesus from the personal experiences of the apostles.

Justin Martyr (A. D. 100-165) in his First Apology characterized the gospels as the "memoirs" of the apostles. This sounds like the apostles may have been writing biographies of Jesus. But when you read the gospels you immediately notice that they are different than modern biographies.

- *Note ways that the gospels differ from modern biographies.*

b. Unlike most biographies the gospels do not cover the whole of Jesus' life.

- Note the differences in the gospels presentations of Jesus' life (*Matthew* and *Luke* jump from the birth and infancy to his adult life, *Mark* focuses a major portion of his gospel on the last week of Jesus' life. John begins his discussion of the last week of Jesus' life in chapter 12.)
- There is no serious discussion of his adolescent years, or any people who may have played a major role in his life. We know nothing of his twenties or his relationship with his brothers and sisters.
- The evangelists also devote a rather large amount of space to the final week of Jesus' life than a typical biography might devote.
  1. Mark 11-16
  2. Matthew 21-28
  3. Luke
  4. John 12-21 (13-19: to the final night of his life through crucifixion and burial)

c. Often the evangelists arrange the material topically rather than chronologically.

- Mark 2.1-3.6; Matthew 8-9 (cf. Matt. 4.17; 5-7)

2. The gospels are really four different versions of the same story.

They present a picture that is complementary rather than contradictory; however, for modern people who have a fixation on chronological strictness, the variety of presentation can cause some folks problems.

- Overhead transparencies of the different arrangement of material in the gospels.
- Overhead in variety of wording in the gospels.

As ancient biographers, the evangelists felt free to paraphrase or summarize what Jesus said and to arrange the events according to a particular theme rather than according to strict chronological sequence. The goal of the evangelist was to faithfully tell the story of Jesus in a relevant and persuasive manner for their readers. They are telling their story in order to teach their readers something about the person and mission of Jesus. The evangelists selected and arranged their material about Christ in order to communicate theological truth to their audience. John wrote that if he had told his readers everything Jesus did and said that all the books in the world could not have contained the information.

CONCLUSION: Where does all of this lead us? While the gospels are biographies about Jesus, much like other ancient biographies, they are also more than ancient biographies. By focusing on Jesus' life and teaching we may describe the gospels accurately as Christological biographies. This brings us to their primary purpose in writing their gospels.

(1) They have selected and arranged material to tell the story of Jesus.

(2) Through the story of Jesus they are saying something very important to their first readers (and to us). Since the Holy Spirit inspired the evangelists in the way he did, we need to adopt a way of reading the gospels that matches the method used by the evangelists.

II. HOW SHOULD WE READ THE GOSPELS?

1. The Law of Proportions

- How much material does an evangelist give to a particular scene or section of Jesus' life?
- The Gospel of Luke – Central Section
- The Gospel of John – Upper Room Discourse

2. Reading the Gospels Vertically

- Ask what each section is teaching us about Jesus?
- Ask what the evangelist is seeking to communicate by arranging his material the way he does.

How to read individual stories (perciope)

1. Bombard the text with questions: (see example in Duvall)

- *Who* are the characters?
- *What* is the story line?
- *When* did the event take place?
- *Where* did the event take place?
- *Why* did it take place? (Reason)
- *How did it take place (M*eans)

2. Look for interpretative clues provided by the author: Often the evangelist will provide a clue to the passage in an introductory or closing comment.

- Lk. 14.7
- Matt. 5.1-2
- Matt. 19.30: The Rich Young Ruler – "The first will be last and the last will be first."
- Mark 7.1-23 (v. 19: declared all food clean)
- John 20.8-9 ("still did not understand from the scriptures . . .")
- Mark 4: Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him? A form critical designation known as a pronouncement story.

3. Look for repeated words or concepts in a passage.

- John 15: Abide/fruit
- Matt. 23: Woe
- Matt. 5: You have heard it was said . . .but I say to you
- Matt. 6: Do not worry
- Luke 12.22-34; Do not worry

4. Observe places where the story shifts to direct discourse

- Matt. 17.5 – Where God speaks directly to the disciples. The question is what are they to listen to him about. Notice that the transfiguration follows his passion prediction.
- Mk. 4.35-39: Notice how the direct discourse tells the story in a nutshell (4.35, 38, 39, 40, 41)
- Although it is in a different genre, notice the majority of direct discourse in the Parable of the Prodigal son is between the father and the older brother.
- In the story of the transfiguration the direct discourse is God speaking to Peter.

<u>Reading a series of stories:</u> *Look for connections between passages.*

What is the gospel writer trying to do by the way he strings together a series of stories?

- ***Mark 1*** – A day in the life of Jesus – Why the crowds are flocking to him and a summary incident on his first tour of Galilee.
- ***Mark 2.1-3.6***: Why would anyone want to kill someone that can do all Jesus does?
- Lets search for a connection between what occurs in Mark 4.35-41 and the following passages.
    - Mark 4.35-41: Jesus exerts his power over the sea
    - Mark 5.1-20: Jesus casts out a legion of demons, restores a man to his right mind, and sends him out as a faithful disciple.
    - Mark 5.21-43: The twofold miracle story of Jesus healing a woman with an issue of blood and raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. Notice the combined emphasis on desperation and faith.
    - In this passage we see that because they did not have faith in Jesus they rejected him and he did not perform many miracles (sermon on what to do when the crowd turns against you)
    - The connections between these stories: The difficulties of life – life threatening situations, satanic attack, disease, and death of a loved one. Jesus is sovereign over hostile forces. People in the first century are not that different than we are in many ways and we both have fears and difficulties that upset life. We should trust Christ in the midst of life's difficulties.

1. Mark 4.35-41 – Encountering Storms
2. Mark 5.1-20 –
3. Mark 5.21-43
4. Mark 6.1-6 – When the Crowd Turns Against you

- Luke 1-3: Jesus and John the Baptist – this is an example of interchange
- Luke 4: Genealogy and Jesus' Temptation
- Matt. 8-9: Jesus' power (cf. Matt. 4.17ff)
- Mark 4-5: Jesus' word: Listen to him – nature, demons, sickness, death
- Lk. 8: Jesus heals the woman with the issue of blood and raises Jairus' daughter (Believe/faith)
- Luke 10.25-37 – Luke 10.38-42-Luke 11.1-13
    - 10.25-37: We see that the principle for love for one's neighbor should transcend all human boundaries such as nationality, race, religion, or economic status
    - 10.38-42: Here we discover the principle that doing good things is no substitute for sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His word.
    - Jesus' teaches about how to communicate with God through prayer (11.1-4). This is followed by a parable on prayer (11.5-8) and an exhortation to pray (11.9-13).

MARK 8.22-26: *An example of how this helps in the interpretation of a difficult passage.*

1. Taken by itself this is a very strange passage. Why does Jesus only heal the man partially at first? Why does Jesus ask the man if he can see anything? Does Jesus know or not know that the man can see? Why can the man only see partially? Lets examine the surrounding passages to see if there is any connection and if they can help us to interpret this passage.

2. Read the previous and following passage.

3. What connections exist between the three passages?

- All three passages are basically dialogues.
- In all three scenes Jesus asks a question.
- In the first and the third pericopes Jesus' dialogue is primarily with the disciples. In the second it is with the blind man. Thus, two dialogues bracket the second dialogue with the disciples.
- The middle episode mentions "the village" twice (*.23, 26). The third episode mentions "villages" (8.27).
- Jesus ends the blind-man pericope (8.22-26) by forbidding him to go back into the village. Jesus ends the third pericope by forbidding the disciples to tell anyone about him (8.27-30).
- The middle passage revolves around terms related to seeing (i.e. blind, eyes, seeing, saw, sight, etc: v. 22, 23, 23, 23, 24, 24, 24, 25, 25, 25, 25). In light of the number of terms related to seeing in the blind-man passage, it is interesting to note similar terms used in reference to the disciples in the first passage (8.14-21). This repetition to seeing between the first two scenes is obviously an important connection between them. **In 8.17**: "Do you still not see?" and **in 8.18**: "Do you have eyes but fail to see?"
- Note that seeing in the blind-man passage relates to physical seeing, however, in the first passage it is used figuratively. It carries the idea of understanding (cf. 8.21).
- In light of Peter's comment in 8.29 it seems that he is seeing, but not clearly when we read about his rebuke of Jesus.

One interpretation is that he will not see clearly until the second touch of the resurrection.

This helps us understand that the second passage is an "acted parable." It provides a real-life example of what was happening in the disciples in regards to their understanding of who Jesus is.

3. Reading the Gospels Horizontally

To think horizontally means that when studying a pericope in any one Gospel, one should be aware of the parallels in the other Gospels. The purpose is not to fill out the story for preaching. We should preach each passage on its own for this is how the Holy Spirit inspired the Gospels. The purpose is to give us an appreciation for the distinctives in each Gospel.

- Luke 4/Matt. 4
- Jn. 18: Jesus' arrest
- Crucifixion Scenes in Gospels – (esp. Mark/Luke/Jn)
- Casting out of demon from little boy after transfiguration

Normally when we preach a passage from a Gospel we should not seek to import much information from another passage. God inspired each Gospel in its present form. That is, each evangelist under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit included what the Spirit wanted him to include and the author omitted what the Holy Spirit wanted him to omit. However, at times it can be helpful to compare one passage with another. This enables us to get a fuller picture of the event.

BLOMBERG: Applying the Gospels

Several important principles come into play when applying Jesus' teaching to our own day that was originally spoken to the disciples,

1. ***One needs to distinguish what is explicitly directed only to the Twelve.***

2. ***One must distinguish situation-specific commands to the Twelve that were revoked later in the Gospels***

3. ***One must observe what may never have been explicitly limited to the Twelve, nor formally revoked, but could not be followed by Christians living in later generations.***

4. ***We should be alert to metaphors or other figures of speech not meant to be taken literally.***

5. ***Understanding the historical background often proves crucial in determining how literally to apply one of Jesus' commands.***

6. ***Individual teachings of Jesus are often embedded in larger sermons or discourses that contain seemingly contradictory teachings.*** (In these instances, legitimate application must take both strands of teaching into account.)

The Interpretation of Parables

Definition of “parable”:

The Purpose of parables:

History of Interpretation

(1) Allegorical Interpretation

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Clement of Alexandria

- **Good Samaritan = Neighbor = Christ**
- **Thieves = Rulers of Darkness**
- **Wounds = Fears, Lusts, Passions, Pains, Deceits**
- **Wine = Blood of David's Vine**
- **Oil = Compassion of the Father**
- **Binding of Wounds = Love, Faith, and Hope**

Origen

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he is going = Paradise
- Jericho = this world
- Robbers = hostile influences and enemies such as mentioned in John 10:8
- Wounds = disobedience or sins
- Priests = Law
- Levite = Prophets
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two Denarii = Knowledge of the Father and Son

- Innkeeper = Angels in charge of the church
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Second Coming of Christ

Augustine

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he was going = City of heavenly peace
- Jericho = the moon which signifies our mortality
- Robbers = Devil and his angels
- Stripping him = Taking away his immortality
- Beating him = Persuading him to sin
- Leaving him half-dead = Due to sin he was half-dead spiritually, but half alive due to his knowledge of God
- Priest = Priesthood of Old Testament (Law)
- Levite = Ministry of the Old Testament (Prophets)
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of wounds = Restraint of sin
- Oil = Comfort of good hope
- Wine = Exhortation to spirited work
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = two commandments of love
- Innkeeper = Apostle Paul
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Christ's Resurrection

Luther

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam and all mankind
- Robbers = Devils who robbed and wounded us
- Priests = Fathers (Noah, Abraham) before Moses
- Levite = Priesthood of the Old Testament
- Good Samaritan = Lord Jesus Christ
- Oil/Wine = Whole gospel from beginning to end
- Oil = Grace
- Wine = Cross the Christian is called to bear
- Beast = Christ the Lord
- Inn = Christianity in the World (Church)
- Innkeeper = Preacher of the Word of God

Archbishop Trench

- Man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem = Heavenly city
- Jericho = Profane city, a city under a curse
- Robbers = Devil and his angels

- Stripping him = Stripping him of his original robe of righteousness
- Leaving him half-dead = Mortal, but having a divine spark
- Priest and the Levite = Inability of the Law to Save
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of Wounds = Sacraments which heal the soul
- Oil = Anointing of the Holy Spirit
- Wine = Blood of Christ's passion
- Walking along the beast = Christ's became poor on our behalf
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = All gifts and graces, sacraments, powers of healing or remission of sins
- Whatever more you spend = Reward for righteous service

(2) Adolf Jülicher and the end of Allegorical Interpretation

(3) Dodd and Jeremias – Noting the first century life-setting

(4) Redaction Criticism – How is the parable to be understood in the context of the individual Gospels?

Parables (Continued)

<u>4 periods</u>
Jesus-500
500-1500
Reformation-modern period
1888 – now

(1) Parables generally teach one main point. Therefore, when investigating the parables one should be content with seeking to understand the one main point of the parable. One should not seek allegorical significance in the details of a parable unless it is absolutely necessary.

(2) Jesus did not teach his parables to twentieth-century Christians but to first-century Jews. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life in which the parable was uttered.

(3) The Evangelists were interested in interpreting the parables for their readers. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life of the Evangelist and his unique understanding of the parable.

(4) The parables as uttered by Jesus and recorded by the Evangelists are the Word of God. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to ascertain what God is saying today through this parable.

1. Seek the Main Point of the Parables
2. Seek to Understand what Jesus Meant
3. Seek to Understand what the Evangelist meant
4. Seek to Understand what God is teaching us by the parable today.

Rules for arriving at the main point of the parable:

1. Who are the two main characters (of the parable)?
2. What comes at the end? (the rule of end stress)
3. What occurs in direct discourse?
4. Who/What gets the most press?

How to Detect the Presence of Allegory:

1. Would Jesus audience have attributed meaning to these details?

2. Would the Evangelist's audience have attributed meaning to these details?

The History of the Interpretation of Parables

I. THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS (TO 540)

- Irenaeus (ca. 130-200)
- Tertullian (ca. 160-220)
- Origen (ca. 185-224) - The “Threefold” Sense of Scripture
- Augustine (ca. 354-430) – The Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Chrysostom (ca. 347-407)

II. THE MIDDLE AGES (540-1500)

- A fourth sense is added to Origen’s threefold sense of scripture – Anagogical

III. THE REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION PERIOD (1500-1888)

- Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-64)

- Archbishop R. C. Trench – *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (1841)

IV. THE MODERN PERIOD (1888 TO PRESENT)

- Adolf Julicher (1888) – Showed how parables differed from allegories.

- C. H. Dodd (*The Parables of the Kingdom*) (1935)

- Redaction criticism – Hans Conzelmann and Willi Marxsen (mid-1950's)

PARABLE

A parable has been called an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word 'parable' is derived from the Greek *parabolē,* meaning "to throw alongside or "putting things side by side." Mark Bailey defines a parable as "a figurative narrative that is true to life and is designed to convey through analogy some specific spiritual truths usually relative to God's Kingdom program."

A parable therefore, is a form of teaching which presents the listener with interesting illustrations from which can be drawn moral and spiritual truths; often it is designed to inculcate a single truth or answer a single question. The parable was an appropriate from of communication for bringing to men the message of the kingdom of God, since its function is to jolt them into seeing things in a new way. D.A. Carson has written, "[P]arables…in Jesus' hands were often meant to shock and 'interpret' the hearer to himself, as much as to be interpreted by the hearer…" They are means of enlightenment and persuasion, intended to bring the hearers to the point of decision.

It is impossible always to draw a clear-cut distinction between parable and allegory in the stories told by Jesus; some of his stories were clearly intended to illustrate several lessons, as in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). The parables must be understood in their original historical settings within the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

Parables are distinguished from other literary figures in that they are narrative in form but figurative in meaning. Parables use both similes and metaphors to make their analogies. Jesus utilized parables to motivate hearers to make proper spiritual decisions. To Jesus' original audiences the parables both <u>revealed</u> and <u>concealed</u> new truths regarding God's kingdom. Those who rightly responded were called disciples and to them it was granted to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. The same truth was concealed from those who, because of hardened hearts, were unreceptive to the message of Jesus.

The exposition of the parables for today must be based on as careful an understanding of what Jesus meant by the parables as is possible; otherwise we fall back into the error of regarding them as illustrations of general truths. The parables were meant to force people to decide about their attitude to Jesus and his message and thus to bring them into a new relationship with Him and the Kingdom of God.

Roy Zuck suggests nine kinds of occasions or purposes that led to Jesus' parables: parables in answer to questions, parables in answer to requests, parables in answer to complaints, parables given with a stated purpose, parables of the kingdom given because of Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah, parables following an exhortation or principle, parables that illustrate a situation, and parables with the purpose implied not stated.

Bob Stein suggests asking seven questions to help identify the main point of a parable.

1. What terms are repeated in the parable? Which are not?

2. Upon what does the parable dwell, i.e., to what or to whom does the parable devote the most space?
3. What is the main contrast found in the parable?
4. What comes at the end of the parable?
5. What is spoken in direct discourse in the parable?
6. What characters appear in the parable? Which are the least important? Which are the two most important characters? (Usually a parable focuses on two characters to establish its main point.)
7. How would you have told the parable? If Jesus told it differently, does this reveal anything?

Craig Blomberg seeks to synthesis our understanding of Jesus' parables under four major ideas:

1. Jesus clearly has three main topics of interest: the graciousness of God, the demands of discipleship and the dangers of disobedience.
2. The central theme uniting all of the lessons of the parables is the kingdom of God. It is both present and future. It includes both a reign and a realm. It involves both personal transformation and social reform.
3. The teaching of the parables raises the question of Jesus' identity. Who is the one who, by his teaching, can claim to forgive sins, pronounce God's blessing on social outcasts and declare that final judgment will be based on the responses people make to him? Christological claims are concealed in the parables. They are not as direct as in some other strands of the Gospel tradition, but they are present nevertheless.
4. Jesus' parables include implicit claims to deity. Jesus associates himself with authority figures in his parables which obviously stand for the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. His audiences must decide whether to accept these claims and worship him or reject them as misguided or even blasphemous. But Jesus' parables leave no neutral ground for casual interest or idle curiosity. They sharply divided their original audiences into disciples and opponents. They must continue to function in the same way today.

Jesus' parables are unique. The parables of other teachers can to some extent be separated from the teachers themselves, but Jesus and his parables are inseparable. To fail to understand him is to fail to understand his parables.

Mark Bailey, "Guidelines for Interesting Jesus Parables," *BibSac* (Jan.-Mar., 1998), 29-38.
Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 326-27.
D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 139.
I. Howard Marshall and R.V.G. Tasker, "Parable," *New Bible Dictionary*, 867-869.
Bob Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables*, 56.

SECTION 20

Acts, Epistles and Revelation

INTERPRETING ACTS

(Blomberg, 126ff)

1. Pay careful attention to where a practice appears in the development of the church's understanding of the new covenant.

Many of the difficulties with interpreting and applying the book of Acts has to do with their transitional nature. With the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and God's sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we encounter the shift from the Old Testament age to the New Testament era. What was perfectly appropriate and even mandated for God's people frequently changes from old to new.

- The first generation of believers come to understand that they no longer need to offer animal sacrifices, because Christ is the once for all sacrifice for sin (Acts 13.39).
- The dietary laws are rescinded (Acts 10)
- There is no longer one uniquely holy land or temple (Acts 7) as the ideal place where God's people must worship him.

However, the first believers do not wake up the day after Pentecost and recognize everyone of these changes. The transitions come gradually and mean that not every apostolic action is meant to be imitated.

- The casting of lots to determine Judas' replacement follows a common OT practice but is not found again in the NT.

2. Look for Luke's narrative clues.

When no direct command is given to believers it is difficult to know whether a story offers models to imitate or avoid.

- Believer's sharing with one another in Acts 2.42-47 and 4.31-5.11 has been cited on the one hand, as an exemplary model and a reason for supporting modern day communism, and on the other hand, as a failed experiment and a practice to avoid! Both perspectives go beyond what the test is explicitly teaching, but it is telling that Luke describes the results of the practice as the caring for the poor.
- The judgment of Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11), the one strikingly negative result, came not because they did or did not participate in the sharing but because they lied to what the extent they were participating (vv.2-4). So it is best to conclude that the pictures of communal sharing teach they necessity of helping the poor (Note the reasons why this took place in Judean but not in other churches – increased need as a result of Pentecostal conversions).

3. How slavishly must we mimic their models?

When Acts offers and exemplary model we must ask ourselves how consistently Acts itself reproduces the model? In the case of meeting the needs of the poor, there are three paradigms, all presented as helpful, but each quite different.

- In Acts 6.1-7 a precedent for the later office of deacon is established – no longer do the apostles administer a daily distribution of food or money for the poor. No longer do the apostles administer a common treasury.
- In Acts 11.27-30 a special offering is taken to meet the needs of Christians suffering during a famine.

These two along with the previous section establish three models for helping the poor that were quite different due to the differences in their circumstances.

In addition some models remain unchanged throughout the book. When Paul shares with the Philippian jailer he tells him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." This is the consistent means of salvation throughout the book (Acts 4.12).

4. Another key principle in the interpretation and application of Acts has to do with contextualization – couching the gospel in language that best communicates its essence in a specific context.

Perhaps the main reason why one must look throughout the book to determine which models prove consistent and which ones vary is because the first Christians worked hard to incarnate the gospel in the diverse cultures in which they ministered. The sermons in Acts afford a classic example.

On the one hand there are common elements in almost all of them, irrespective of who the preacher is – an appeal to special or general revelation to establish common ground with the audience, reference to Jesus as the fulfillment of all previous religious aspirations, a focus on his death and resurrection as the heart of the Christian message, and an appeal to repent and believe in Christ for salvation.

On the other hand, no two speeches are identical. Paul, for example, carefully tailors his message to his audience.

- To ***Jews in the synagogue*** he appeals to OT history, and to numerous scriptures that he believes point to Christ (13.16-41).
- To ***pagans in Lystra*** he stresses God's testimony through nature (14.15-18).
- To ***the philosophically minded Athenians***, he appeals to an unknown God to whom they have erected an altar, quotes a Greek poet, and plays Stoic and Epicurean philosophies against one another (17.22-31).
- And ***to the elders from the church at Ephesus***, he sounds most like the Paul of the Epistles – talking about the centrality of God's grace, faith in Jesus, his atoning blood, and the danger of false teachers (20.17-35). This is not surprising since Paul's letters are addressed to Christians.

5. Stress what Luke devotes the most space to in his narrative.

When one is not primarily giving commands but recounting history, a common device for highlighting the most crucial material involved the use of narrative space.

- Stories that are told in more detail or in a more leisurely manner are usually more important. (The day of Pentecost, Stephen's speech, the conversion of the Samaritans, the conversion of Cornelius),
- Another device is for the narrator to refer back to a particular event more than once. (Paul's conversion)

6. On the flip side of the previous point, often minor details in lengthy narratives are present simply because they better help us understand the central points, move the story along to the next scene, or add artistry or aesthetic delight to the account.

One needs to be careful therefore and not ascribe too much significance to the more peripheral details of a narrative. The best example in Acts is the lengthy description of Paul's ill-fated journey to Rome and the shipwreck that ensued. The numerous references to the various ports of call and the rich nautical language add reality and historical credibility to the account but we should not attempt to find points of personal application from these details.

Rather the point is that God's purposes will not be thwarted (cf. Acts 19) – neither storm, shipwreck, snakebite or man's devious plans can keep God from accomplishing his will.

INTERPRETING ACTS

(Duvall, Grasping God's Word)

I. We should thank the Lord for the book of Acts

II. The book of Acts is a Sequel to the Gospel of Luke

Compare the opening passages

Note the significant number of thematic and structural parallels between the two books:

- Prayer
- The work of the Spirit

There is an overlap between the two books as both describe the ascension of Jesus.

III. What kind of book is Acts?

Acts is history, accurately presented with a theological agenda.

IV. How is Acts Organized?

Guidelines for determining what is descriptive and what is normative:

1. Look for what Luke intended to communicate to his original readers.

When we find the message Luke has intended, we find the normative meaning of the passage.

- Acts 8: There are many good questions of a theological nature that could be asked from the passage but what is Luke's main point. Luke's main thought seems to be that the gospel is spreading beyond Jerusalem and its merely Jewish context.
- Set chapter 8 within its literary context.

2. Look for positive and negative examples in the characters of the story.

It makes sense that Luke would want us to imitate the positive example of holy men and women in the book of acts and to avoid the behavior of negative examples in the book. Positive characters like Stephen, Lydia, Silas are there to inspire and instruct. While the negative examples

of Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the Sorcerer, and King Agrippa are also there to instruct but they serve as a warning about what not to do.

3. Read individual passages in light of the overall story of Acts and the rest of the New Testament.

In some cases the movement of the story will help indicate what is intended by to be normative and what is merely descriptive.

- What about the coming of the Spirit in 2, 8, 10 and 19? (In 19 the disciples of John were not yet Christians)

4. Look to other parts of Acts to clarify what is normative.

- The selling of possessions

5. Look for repeated patterns and themes.

- The casting of lots to determine the will of God:

How does God make his will known to believers in Acts? He uses a variety of methods to do this: angels (8.26; 12.7), his Spirit (8.39; 10.19; 16.6-7); visions (9.10-12; 16.9-10); the Scriptures (1.20; 8.30-35; 18.24-26), circumstances (3.1-10; 8.1), prayer (13.1-3), theological discussion (15.1-21), and other believers

Interpreting the Epistles

- 21 of the 27 NT books are letters (approximately 35% of the entire NT).

- In our NT canon Paul's letters are in their present order by letters to churches (Largest to smallest) and then letters to individuals (largest to smallest). Paul's Epistles are named after the recipients.

- The Catholic Epistles are named after their authors because their recipients are mentioned in only a general way.

I. *Characteristics of New Testament Letters*

1. Compared to other ancient letters the New Testament Epistles are *typically* longer and more formal in nature.

2. The New Testament Epistles are the authoritative substitute for the author's personal presence.

3. The New Testament Epistles are occasional documents.

4. Ancient letters and the New Testament Epistles in particular were carefully written and delivered.

5. The New Testament Epistles were intended for the Christian Community

II. Things to look for when reading the New Testament Epistles

- These thoughts will apply to all types of biblical literature.

1. Observe any for words and thoughts that are repeated.

2. Look for contrasts the author draws.

3. Detect comparisons the author makes.

4. Note any lists that are delineated by the biblical writer.

5. Look for cause and effect relationships the author sets forth.

6. Seek to interpret any figures of speech the author uses.

7. Don’t overlook the importance of conjunctions in the author’s argument.

8. Don’t overlook the importance of verbs and pronouns in determining the author’s message.

III. The Form of New Testament Letters

1. Introduction

- Author
- Recipient
- Greeting
- Prayer

2. Body

3. Conclusion : Dr. Schreiner, in his book, *Interpreting Paul,* lists the various aspects included in Paul's concluding worlds (29-30).

- travel plans (Titus 3.12; Philemon 22)
- commendation (Romans 16.1-2)
- prayer (2 Thessa. 3.16)
- prayer requests (1 Thessa. 5.25)
- greetings (Romans 16.3-16, 21-23)
- final instructions and exhortations (Col. 4.16-17; 1 Tim. 6.20-21a)
- holy kiss (1 Thessa. 4.18; 2 Thessa. 3.17)
- autograph (1 Cor. 16.23-24; Eph. 6.23-24)
- benedictions (Jude 24-25)
- doxology

THE FORM OF ANCIENT LETTERS

SALUTATION

A to B – Greetings (Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1)
Shalom
Grace

THANKSGIVING and/or PRAYER

"I thank my God through Jesus Christ" – Rom. 1:8
"I give thanks to God" – 1 Cor. 1:4
"We give thanks to God always" – 1 Thess. 1:2

BODY OF LETTER

Romans 1:18-11:26
Galatians 1:6-6:10
1 Corinthians 1:10-16:12

EXHORTATION AND INSTRUCTION

Romans 12:1-15:32
Galatians 5:1-6:10
Colossians 3:1-4:6

CONCLUSION

A wish for peace (2 Cor. 13:11); Greeting (1 Cor. 16:1-20a); Kiss (Rom 16:16); Concluding Autograph (1 Cor. 16:21); Benediction (Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23-24

IV. How to Interpret New Testament Letters

1. Read the entire book in one sitting.

2. Seek to understand as much of the original situation as you can from the biblical text.

3. Think in paragraphs.

4. Seek to understand what is to be understood as normative and what is to be interpreted as cultural.

Applying Paul's Epistles (Summary of Blomberg)

Normative or Cultural

1. Does the immediate context juxtapose a seemingly contradictory command?

- Romans 12.17ff over against Romans 13.1-7

2. Does the command seem to contradict teaching elsewhere in Paul's writings?

- 1 Cor. 14.33 over against 1 Cor. 11.2-16

3. Does the rationale for a specific command work equally well in all cultures?

- 1 Cor. 11 – headcoverings

4. Does a command appeal to the way that God established things in OT times or to the way that he is reestablishing them in NT times?

- Creation ordinances – 1 Tim 2.13 – male leadership; male leadership in the home Eph. 5.22-33

5. Does the command reflect a broad cross-cultural principle stated explicitly in the text?

- Romans 3.23 – built on Romans 1.18ff
- Romans 14.14 – has been abused for the context teaches that the reference is to clean and unclean food

6. Is the command to an individual or the church?

- 1 Tim. 4.11-16 (v. 13 is applicable to Timothy and other ministers of the gospel but the rest of the passage can be applied more generally./

Major Interpretative Approaches to Revelation

1. *Preterist* (contemporary historical) View – this approach focuses on the historical setting contemporary with the original author and recipients. It takes seriously the historical context attempting to understand the book the way John's readers would have understood it. This approach tends to devalue the end-times aspect of the book. (contemporary critical scholarship)

2. ***Historicist*** (continuous historical) View – This approach understands Revelation to be a preview of the entire sweep of church history from the first century until Christ's return. No two proponents of this view are in agreement as to which parts of the book parallel which time in church history (Luther and Calvin)

3. ***Idealist*** (timeless symbolic) View - Understands Revelation to be a depiction of the ongoing battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. This view correctly sees the relevant timeless principles involved in the spiritual battle between good and evil, but it is not historically rooted (Amill. interpreters)

4. ***Extreme Futurist*** (eschatological) View – This approach understands the vast bulk of the book to refer almost exclusively to the events still in the future. The view is weak in demonstrating the relevance to original audience. (Robert Thomas)

5. ***Modified Futurist*** (eclectic) View - This view sees merit in several of the above options. While believing that Revelation clearly teaches about the future, those who hold this position also understand the book to have a message to its first readers, as well as presenting timeless truth (like the need of orthodoxy and forsaking spiritual complacency) for each generation of Christians. (Mounce, Ladd)

The Millennial Question

Amillennial (no [earthly] millennium) view understands the thousand years to be symbolic and refers to a lengthy period of time of unknown duration. The thousand-year reign in Rev. 201.-6 is a symbol of his present spiritual kingship at the right hand of God in heaven. Many amillennialists understand that the millennium is this present period of world history in which the gospel is boldly proclaimed.

Postmillennial ("after" the millennium) view teaches that Christ will come back to the world after the world has been progressively "christianized" by the spread of the gospel (at the conclusion of the millennium) . When that process is complete Christ will return.

Premillennial ("before" the millennium) view holds that Christ will return to earth (Rev. 19.11ff) to set up his kingdom for a period of one thousand years (20.4-6).

Dispensational premillennialists suggest that the return of Christ will take place in two stages. The first will take place prior to the tribulation (the Rapture) and the second at the end of the tribulation.

The Historical premillennialists believe that the return of Christ is a single-stage event that will occur at the close of the tribulation but prior to the beginning of the millennium.

Seven Suggestions for Reading and Studying Revelation[1]

The great John Calvin admitted that he wasn't sure what to do with the book of Revelation and therefore did not write a commentary on it, even though he had completed volumes on almost all of the rest of the New Testament. We today do not have the luxury of avoiding Revelation.

The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain to give God's people a glimpse of his plan for human history. Center stage at this cosmic drama stands Jesus Christ. The historical context was a situation where Christians were increasingly being persecuted for their faith because they refused to join the pagan parade. The pressure to bow the knee to Caesar rather than Christ was spreading, and hope was beginning to fade. In addition, some believers were becoming comfortable in their pagan surroundings and compromising their faithfulness to Christ. Revelation encourages the persecuted and is a warning those who are compromising morally and/or doctrinally.

We might say that the purpose of Revelation is to answer the question, "Who is Lord?" Historian Will Durant, in *The Story of Civilization*, concludes:

> There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned and oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fierce tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while their enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has known. Caesar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won. (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization. Part III: Caesar and Christ*

Revelation answers this question by creating a symbolic world in which readers may find the heavenly perspective they need to endure trying times.

1. Read Revelation with humility

We should resist the Revelation made easy approaches. Revelation is not easy! Reading Revelation with a humble mind means that we understand the difficulties involved in reading and preaching the book and being willing to admit that our interpretation could be wrong.

2. Try to discover the message to the original readers.

This is the top priority with any book of the Bible. Our tendency with Revelation is to ignore the first Christians and jump directly to God's message for us. We must beware of a "newspaper" approach to Revelation. The newspaper approach assumes that we must be living in the "final days". It also implies that in Revelation God was not really speaking to those to whom the book was written. If Christ does not return for another one thousand years the book still has a message for us.

Therefore a key question to ask is, "What was John trying to communicate to his audience?" If our interpretation would have made no sense to the original audience we probably have missed the meaning of the passage.

[1] Summary of Duvall and Hayes

3. Don’t try to discover a strict chronological roadmap of future events.

Revelation does not necessarily advance in a neat linear fashion. The book is filled with prophetic-apocalyptic visions that serve to make a dramatic impact on the reader rather than to present a precise chronological sequence of future events.

For example – the sixth seal (Rev. 6.12-27) takes us to the end of the age. But when the seventh seal is opened, we are given a whole new set of judgments – the trumpets – and the seventh trumpet also takes us to the end of the age.

Then with the first bowl in 16.1-2 we are given another series of judgments. Revelation 19-22 paints another colorful and detailed picture of the end, but this is not the first time the readers have been translated to the end.

On a smaller scale, in Revelation 16.12-16 we are told that the stars fell to the earth . . .The sky receded like a scroll . . .and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” Yet in 7.3 we read the four angels are told not to “harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” To attempt to force as strict chronological sequence would not make sense. Rather than searching a strict chronological map of future events in Revelation, we should grasp the main message in each vision about living in the here and now.

4. Take Revelation seriously but don’t always take it literally.

Some who insist that we should interpret Scripture symbolically do so in order to deny the reality of scriptural truth or a historical event. When they say that something is figurative or symbolic they mean that it is not real or that it did not happen. The truth in Revelation is that the picture language with its symbols, images, and figures is capable of conveying literal truth and describing literal events. Apocalyptic imagery is just another way of communicating reality. In my thought, the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation is just another way to emphasize historical reality rather than to deny or diminish it.

A key principle of interpretation is that our methods should match the literary genre used by the author. As a result we should be careful about taking apocalyptic imagery literally. We can actually pervert the author’s intended meaning by forcing a literal interpretation on something that the author intended to be understood figuratively.

Example Revelation 17.9 – if we were to take the description of the woman who sits on the seven hills literally we would have to have one very large woman or seven very small hills. But if we interpret it not as a literal woman, we do are not denying the reality of scripture at all. First-century readers would naturally have thought of woman as representing Rome, a city built on seven hills. The text probably also looks beyond Rome to powerful pagan enemies opposed to God. We can take the imagery seriously but not necessarily literally.

5. Pay attention when John identifies an image.

When john himself provides a clue to the interpretation of an image, we should take notice. For example

1.17 – the Son of man is Christ
1.20 – the golden lampstands are the churches (cf. 11.3-4)
5.5-6 – the Lion is the Lamb
12.9 – the dragon is Satan
21.9-10 – the heavenly Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb or the church.

However, John also has some fluidity to his imagery. In other words John is not shy about using the same image to refer to different things. For example, the seven stars are the angels to the seven churches (1.16, 20; 2.1; 3.1). But John also uses the image of a star (not the seven stars) to refer to other things, such as God's agents of judgment (8.10-12) or even Jesus himself (22.16). In the same way the image of a woman can be used for a false prophetess (2.20), the messianic community (ch. 12), the harlot city or empire (ch. 17), and the bride of Christ (19.7; 21.9).

Even though John is free to use images to refer to different things, when he identifies an image, we should pay attention.

6. Look to the OT and historical context when interpreting images and symbols

Revelation uses language at several different levels:

- Text level: words written on the page
- Vision level: the picture that the words paint
- Referent level: what the vision refers to in real life

One of the most difficult aspects of reading Revelation is knowing what the images and symbols refer to. Even when we understand what is happening at the text and vision levels, we may not know what is going on at the referent level. In other words, we may know what Revelation is saying, but we may not know what it is talking about!

The first two places to go for answers are the first-century historical context and the OT. The historical context would be the final decades of the first century. How Revelation uses the OT is complex. Although there is no explicit OT quotations in Revelation, the book is filed with echoes and allusions to the OT. In fact, Revelation contains more OT references than any other NT book, with the OT appearing in almost 70% of Revelations verses (Keener, Revelation, 33). Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel make the most important contributions to Revelation.

Example – The background to the vision of Jesus in chapter 1.7; 12-15 (cf. Dan. 7.9, 13-14; 10.5-6). Notice how many words and phrases John uses to depict Jesus as a glorious divine being.

Understanding Daniel helps us to understand Revelation here. John often uses OT language to describe what he has seen and heard.

7. Focus on the main idea and don't press all of the details

This is probably the most important guideline. With most literary genres in the Bible, we begin with the details and build our way toward an understanding of the whole. With Revelation, however, we should start with the big picture and work toward an understanding of the details. As we seek to discover theological principles in Revelation, we should focus on the main ideas.

For example, the main idea of revelation 4-5 relates to the ascended and exalted Lord, who alone is worthy to execute divine judgments.

The details of any particular section will heighten the impact on the reader but will not change the main idea. Resist the temptation to focus on the details so that you miss the main idea. Don't let the main point of the section fade from view.

Revelation 12.1-7

We realize that not everyone will agree with our interpretation but it will serve as a model for the process one can go through to determine points of application.

1. What did the text mean to the original audience.

This step consists of understanding the context of chapter 12 so we may be able to interpret the symbols ("signs" in 12.1, 3) in light of the context.

- The chapter opens with a woman that is about to give birth to a child. An enormous red dragon is waiting to devour the child. But as soon as the child is born God snatches him up to heaven. God also provides a safe place on earth for the mother.
- The scene then shifts to a great battle in heaven. The dragon is defeated and heaven celebrates the victory with a "song."
- The devil, who has been cast down from heaven, pursues the woman with a vengeance and makes war against the rest of her offspring.

How would the first century audience have understood these characters?

Most likely they would *not* have thought of the woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus (a much later interpretation). They would have likely thought of the woman as the true Israel, the faithful messianic community who gives birth to both the messiah and the church. Both the male child and the offspring serve as keys for identifying the woman. Note that the prophets often portray righteous Israel as a mother and the symbols used in 12.1 confirm this interpretation (cf. Gen. 37.9).

The woman flees to a place of spiritual refuge for a period of 1260 days, the time of persecution between the ascension and exaltation of Christ and his future return (cf. 11.2; 12.14; 13.5).

The dragon is explicitly identified in the passage as the devil or Satan (12.9). This enemy of God attempts to devour the male child and lead the world astray. The detailed description of the dragon as red with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns only adds to the awesomeness of the image

We are told that the male child will rule all nations with an iron scepter (12.5), an allusion to Psalm 2 that is applied even more clearly to Jesus in Revelation 19.5. The male child clearly represents Jesus Christ. After the child is born he is taken up to God. By moving straight from Jesus' birth to his ascension and enthronement, John stresses that Satan's plot has been foiled by Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

The original audience would have understood the war in heaven (12.7-12) and the subsequent rage of the devil (12.13-17) as an explanation of two significant realities: (10 God has defeated Satan and his victory is certain. (2) God's people on earth will continue to suffer as victims of the Satan's rage.

This heavenly perspective would help John's readers to understand their hostile environment and encourage them to persevere. They too can appropriate the victory and overcome the devil by the "blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony," that is, by bearing faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ even if it costs them their lives (12.11)

2. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

Like the original audience we look back on Jesus' first coming and look forward to his second coming. Both the biblical audience and the contemporary live between the already and the not yet. Because we share this situation with the original audience we can expect to suffer. As offspring of the woman (12.17), we will also encounter the anger of the defeated devil.

Nevertheless, because we live in a different place and time (we are not living under Domitian's Roman empire), our suffering may take different forms and may vary in intensity. In general, churches in North America are not being persecuted in the same degree that churches in Asia Minor were being persecuted though that could change.

We do, however, struggle with many of the same temptations toward complacency and compromise that the churches of Asia Minor faced. Immorality, idolatry, false teaching, materialism, and other such sins are still alive and well in our day. Like our forefathers, we also feel the attack of the devil in our struggle to live holy lives in the midst if a world system opposed to God. We know what its like to be at war with the evil one. The comment in 12.11 that first century believers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb . . . and did not love their lives even unto death" will pose a strong challenge to North American Christians not accustomed to considering radical sacrifice for the cause of Christ, much less martyrdom.

3. What are the theological principles in the text?

The theological principles are built on similarities between their situation and ours. There are several principles or truths that emerge from this passage:

1. Spiritual warfare is real. There is a real devil that is opposed to God and bent on deceiving and destroying God's people.
2. Satan has been defeated by the life and redemptive work of Christ.
3. Christians can overcome the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ faithfully.
4. Christians can expect to suffer for being faithful in their witness to Christ.

4. How can the theological principles in the passage be applied in the lives of believers?

1. We need first to see how the principles in the text address the original audience. Lets use the third theological principle listed above. There are several common elements in the intersection between the principle and the original audience:

    - They were Christians
    - They experience victory over the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ
    - They do it even under the threat of death

2. We must discover a parallel situation in a contemporary context. In the original context the satanic attack takes the form of persecution. Consequently, we can say that any time believers suffer for their faith we have a parallel situation.

3. We need to seek to make our application specific. In our passage, persecuted believers overcome the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ. If the preacher creates a real world scenario to serve as an illustration or as an example of how a person might put the biblical principles into practice he must be certain that it is both faithful to the meaning of the text and relevant to the contemporary audience.

One example might be to come up with a scenario of how to engage the culture with the gospel rather than retreat to avoid persecution.

THE NATURE OF THE REVELATION

1. The Revelation as Apocalypse

- The taproot of apocalyptic is the Old Testament prophetic literature, especially as it is found in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and parts of Isaiah.

- Unlike most of the prophetic books, apocalypses are literary works from the beginning.

- Most often the “stuff” of apocalyptic is presented in the forms of visions and dreams.

- The images of the apocalyptic are often forms of fantasy, rather than of reality.

- Because they were literary, most of the apocalypses were formally ideally stylized.

2. The Revelation as Prophecy

3. The Revelation as Epistle

The Exegetical Task

1. The first task of the exegesis of Revelation is to seek the author's (i.e. the Holy Spirit's) original intent.

2. Since Revelation is in part prophetic, one must be open to the possibility of secondary meaning, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but not fully seen by the author or original readers.

3. The interpreter must be careful of overusing "the analogy of Scripture" in the exegesis of Revelation.

4. Be cautious in handling the prophetic/apocalyptic nature of the book.

SECTION 21

Doing Greek Word Studies

GREEK FOR THE REST OF US: WHAT ARE WORD STUDIES?

William D. Mounce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003)
Chapter 24, pg. 198-215.

Introduction-In this chapter, Mounce covers simple procedures and techniques to help do effective word studies in the Bible. He also gives helpful tips on what resources to use and how to avoid translation mistakes.

Words have a "semantic range." "Semantic" refers to a word's meaning; "semantic range" refers to the range of possible meanings a word possesses. Mounce points out that everyday words can have a large range of meaning, such as the word "run" (i.e., I scored six runs today. My computer runs fast. He runs his mouth. Could you run that by me again?). In describing this concept, Mounce refers to the range of meaning as the word's "bundle of meanings," since a word rarely possesses only one meaning.

In the Greek language, the semantic range of some words is very large. Take the preposition εν for example. It can be translated to mean one of the following: in, to, with, among, or by. Rarely can one word in one language correspond exactly to another word in another language, especially in its semantic range. The question raised is how do we translate the Bible when we do not have English words that correspond exactly to the Greek? We have to interpret. All translation is interpretive. One example of interpretation is found in translating 1 Timothy 6:13-14. The word παραγγελλω can be translated "charge" (RSV), "command" (NLT), and "urge" (NKJV).

If a person wants to know what Paul meant by the word "charge", he or she cannot look up the English word "charge" because it does not give the full meaning of παραγγελλω. One has to discover the full meaning of the Greek word behind the English and learn its semantic range. To do this involves a four step process: decide what word to study, identify the Greek word, discover its semantic range, and look for something in the context that helps determine what the biblical author meant by this word in this particular verse.

SECTION ONE: CHOOSE THE ENGLISH WORD

I. Oftentimes, it is difficult to determine which word or words should be researched within a given text. How do we decide what words are most significant, for we cannot research every word because we will run out of time and probably become bored. Mounce gives four suggestions on what words to pick.

A. Look for *repeated* words
   1. This normally indicates a recurring theme, and perhaps the central theme in the passage. This includes the use of synonyms.

B. Look for *theological* terms.
   1. This will be more obvious in teaching passages (e.g., in Paul) than in narrative (e.g., in the Gospels).

C. Sometimes the verse will "*hang*" on a word, which contains the central meaning of the sentence. Without this "hanging" word, the sentence will not make sense. In Romans 10:9, the "hanging" word is "Lord."

D. When comparing translations, you may find a significant word that is translated *differently* among the different translations.

SECTION TWO: IDENTIFY THE GREEK WORD

II. This section simply explains how to look up a word in an exhaustive concordance to find its meaning. Mounce recommends the NIV *Exhaustive Concordance*.

SECTION THREE: DISCOVER ITS SEMANTIC RANGE

III. As stated before, to discover the full meaning of the word, we must find its "semantic range." The word that Mounce uses throughout this section is κυριος, which means "Lord." Mounce points us to a simple process to follow.

A. Find the word in the NIV *Exhaustive Concordance* and notice its wide range of meaning. For Lord, it might mean "sir" or "master", even to the idea of "majesty."

B. If using the *The Strongest Strong's*, you can look the word up in the *Greek Dictionary-Index*. Here we see that the word κυριος is the name of God in the Old Testament.

C. You can also look at other translations to see how they translated the word. The word for "Lord" will not vary much, but other words will greatly.

D. Another tool is "Englishman's Concordance." The most recent is titled *The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament*. With this, you can see every place in the New Testament where the word occurs. The beauty of this concordance is that it will show you all the words that are closely related to the word you are looking up; therefore, regardless of the translation, you will find all the uses of the word you are researching.

E. If you want to learn more about the semantic range, you can always go to a Greek lexicon. The standard one is *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

F. There are specific books that help you see the semantic range of the word and will tell you more about the word, especially its usage throughout the Bible and other ancient writings. Mounce's favorite choice is Verlyn D. Verbrugge's *The NIV Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Words*. While the discussion in this book is excellent, it is generally too advanced for most people at the "baby Greek" level. Greoffrey W. Bromiley's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* is much better for those at the "baby Greek" level.
G. Commentaries can be very helpful in discussing a word's meaning.
H. If the word is an important theological term, it may be discussed in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell. Mounce thinks this is a marvelous book and everyone should own it.

SECTION FOUR: CONTEXT

IV. In determining the particular meaning of a word in a certain verse, context is very important. Context will often give clues to what the author intended. For discovering the proper context, Mounce uses a diagram of eight circles with the inner most circle being the word itself, the second is the verse, the third is the paragraph, the fourth is the book, the fifth is the books by the same author, the sixth is the New Testament, the seventh is the Bible, and the eighth is extra-biblical sources. In using this diagram, one begins with the verse to find the meaning. If there isn't anything in the verse, move on to the paragraph, and so on. Note that the further you go out from the center, the less assuredness you have that you are defining the word properly. Mounce gives examples of each of the circles.

A. *Verse*-In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, the verse helps us realize that God's *will* is for believers to be sanctified.
B. *Paragraph*-In 1 Timothy 2:14-15, one may wander what "saved" means. Is it a spiritual salvation or a physical safety? The context points to a spiritual salvation.
C. *Book*- At the end of a list of sins, Paul states in 1 Timothy 1:10 that these are "contrary to *sound* doctrine." What is *sound* doctrine? Most translations miss the fact that the word is a medical metaphor meaning "healthy," and that it contrasts with the heresy being spread in Ephesus, which Paul elsewhere describes as sick and morbid (1 Tim. 6:4), infectious abrasions (1 Tim. 6:5) spreading like gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17). *Sound* doctrine is that which is opposed to the false teaching.
D. *New Testament*-In Romans 4:2-3, Paul states that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith; therefore, what does it mean to be justified? James 2:21-24 expands on the meaning of justification and gives us a fuller picture of what Paul meant when discussing justification. Paul is discussing how justification is granted; James is discussing how justification is shown to have occurred.
E. *Bible*-In Acts 4:8, we read the Peter was *filled* with the Holy Spirit, but previously in Acts 2:4, Luke already stated that this had happened. How can this be explained? The Old Testament book of Judges gives us insight on this topic. In Judges, the word *filled* is used when the Holy Spirit possesses a person in a powerful yet temporary way. While the Holy Spirit comes in his fullness at a believer's conversion, Luke uses the terminology of Judges to describe a work of the Holy Spirit in which he grips

a person in a special way to enable them to say or do something special. Let us remember, as you continue out to the outer circles of context, be very cautious.

F. *Word Study on "Lord"*-Using the system in place let us research and determine what Paul meant when he called Jesus "Lord" in Romans 10:9.
   1. *Verse*-The connection between the confession and belief in Jesus' resurrection suggests "Lord" means more than "sir."
   2. *Paragraph*-Verse twelve states that Jesus is "Lord of all," asserting his universal lordship.
   3. *Book*-In Romans 1:4, Paul states that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord," connecting Jesus' Lordship with his resurrection as in 10:9 and with his identification as the Son of God.
   4. *New Testament*-Many other verses expand upon the lordship of Jesus including Phil. 2:10-11 and 1 Cor. 12:3.

SECTION FIVE: SEPTUAGINT

V. In detailed word studies, you will often see writers referring to the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. When the Septuagint was translated, the translators chose a Greek word for each of these Hebrew words. When defining Greek words in the New Testament, it is the word's background in the Old Testament via the Septuagint that is the most important background in defining the Greek word, not its general usage in the first century.

SECTION SIX: COGNATES

VI. A cognate is a word that is related to another and actually shares the same root. In English, the words "prince" and "princess" share the same root. Some cognates have similar meanings; however, at other times there are nuance differences between cognates so they will not have the same meaning. It is best to stick to the lexical forms when possible.

SECTION SEVEN: COMMON MISTAKES

VII. Let us example three examples of common mistakes committed in doing word studies.

A. *Anachronism*-It is always a bad habit to define Greek words using an English word derived from that Greek word. One example occurs when someone talks about the "power" of God, and adds that the word for "power" is δυναμις (from which we get dynamite). It is totally backwards then to state that God's power is dynamite. God's power is never pictured in Scripture as something that blows rocks apart.

B. *Etymological Fallacy*-"Etymology" refers to how the word was originally created; however, the etymology, the pieces that were originally used to make up the word, does not define the word today. For example, a "butterfly" is not an animal made of butter that can fly. This type of mistake does occur when people translate words from the Bible. One of the most well known mistakes occurs with the word μετανοεω,

meaning to "repent." "Meta" implies changing and "nous" refers to the mind; therefore, the word must mean to change one's mind. Wrong! Mounce argues that "repent" does not only mean to change one's mind, but also to change one's behavior. This fuller meaning of repent is given when drawing from the entire Bible's concept of repentance, especially from the background of conversion in the Old Testament. Mounce points out that *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* makes this mistake. With that said, there are examples that a word carries the meaning of its parts, especially when a preposition exist. The word εισερχομαι, meaning, "to go into," is made up of two parts, εισ, meaning "into" and ερχομαι, meaning, "to go." Connected to the etymological fallacy is the fact that words change their meaning over the years. What a word meant when it was first created may be at best irrelevant today. A word's meaning today is seen in how it is used today, not in how it used to be used. Here are three examples

1. *Hussy* is from the Middle English word *huswife*, meaning *housewife.*
2. *Enthusiasm* meant to be inspired or possessed by a god.
3. *Nice* originally meant *foolish* in the Middle English.

Words have a range of meaning, but that range is not determined by the parts that made up the word or even by how it was used 1,000 years earlier.

C. *A Few Other Errors*-Do not put too much weight on a word, thinking that the word, all by itself, is full of meaning. Focus your study on the larger unit, hesitating to place too much emphasis on an individual word. Tied to this fact is that theological concepts are larger than one word.

SECTION 22

Theological Systems and Hermeneutics

Over-Arching Theological Systems and Hermeneutics

NOTE: the following comparisons are drawn from Donald Hochner's work.

Dispensational Theology organizes history and theology around a series of dispensations, which are each different "economies" or arrangements decreed by God. Each dispensation begins with an offer of blessing by God, and ends with failure by man to meet God's conditions and a resulting period of Divine judgment.

1. The Dispensation of Innocence – Untested Holiness
2. The Dispensation of Conscience – Cain & Abel
3. The Dispensation of Government – Noah
4. The Dispensation of Promise – Abraham
5. The Dispensation of Law – Moses
6. The Dispensation of Grace or the Church
7. The Dispensation of the Kingdom

Some Characteristics of Dispensational Theology

(1) Stresses a "literal" interpretation of the Bible

(2) "Israel" always means only the literal, physical descendants of Jacob

(3) God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly)

(4) The Church was born at Pentecost

(5) The Church was not prophesied in the OT but was a "mystery," hidden until the NT.

(6) God's main purpose in history is national, physical Israel

(7) The Church is a parenthesis in God's program for the ages.

(8) Dispensationalism stresses a discontinuity between the OT and NT.

(9) God's program in history is mainly through separate dispensations.

(10) Some dispensationalists have said that OT sinners were saved by works.

(11) Most teach that persons in the OT were saved by faith in a revelation peculiar to their Dispensation, but this did not include their faith in the Messiah as their sin-bearer.

(12) Jesus made an offer of the literal Kingdom to Israel; since Israel rejected it, it is postponed.

(13) The OT Law has been abolished for the Church, but not for Israel, who will be under the Law when the Church is taken away, and God returns to His original people – Physical Israel.

(14) OT Laws are no longer in effect unless repeated in the NT.

(15) The Millenium = the Kingdom of God. Pre-mil, Pre-trib usually.

(16) The OT animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millenium (as a memorial).

(17) The Millenium will fulfill the Covenant made with Abraham. Israel as a nation has a future.

Covenantal Theology

Covenantal Theologians organize all history and theology around several covenants, or arrangements between God and humans or the Son. They are:

1. Covenant of Redemption. This covenant occurred before creation.

- The Son - perfect obedience in death promised to the Father
- The Father - promised to the Son: 1)Holy Spirit given to the Church; 2) salvation to all believers; 3) exaltation of the son.

2. The Covenant of Works: Lasting from creation until the fall.

- Man's conditions - Adam must obey God
- God rewards obedience with eternal life, punishes disobedience with death

3. The Covenant of Grace: Lasting from the fall until the second advent.

- a. Man's conditions - saving faith issuing in obedience
- b. God's response - salvation in all of its phases

Characteristics of Covenant Theology

1. Always Calvinist. Usually five-point Calvinist.

2. Accepts both literal and figurative (spiritual) interpretation of the Bible.

3. 'Israel' may mean either physical descendants of Jacob, or spiritual Israel, depending on context.

4. God always had only one people, the Church gradually developed through the ages, in accordance with an Covenant worked out in eternity past between the "Three Persons of the Godhead."
5. The Church began in the OT (Acts 7:38) and reached fulfillment in the NT.

6. There are many OT prophecies of the NT Church.

7. Some OT prophecies are for national Israel, others for spiritual Israel.

8. God's main purpose* in history is Christ and secondarily the Church.

*God's main purpose is His own glory, Christ included because He is the glory of God, and then the church. The Church is the culmination of God's saving purpose for the ages.

9. The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Christ, the Seed, and spiritual Israel which is "in Christ"

10. The eternal Covenant of Redemption was within the Trinity to effect election.

11. God made a conditional Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.

12. God made a Covenant of Grace with Christ and His people, including Adam.

13. God's program in history is mainly through related covenants, but all those covenants were derived from the eternal covenant that the Trinity made in eternity.

14. No man has ever been saved by works, but only by grace. (Eph 2:8-10)

15. All men who have ever been saved have been saved by faith in Christ as their sin-bearer, which has been progressively revealed in every age.

16. OT believers believed in the Gospel of Messiah as sin-bearer mainly by the sacrifices as types and prophecies.

17. The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers in all ages, especially in the present NT era, and will not be withdrawn.

18. Jesus made only an offer of the Spiritual Kingdom, which was rejected by literal Israel but has gradually been accepted by spiritual Israel.

19. Believers in all ages are all 'in Christ' and part of the Body and Bride of Christ.

20. The Law has 3 uses: to restrain sin in society, to lead to Christ, and to instruct Christians in godliness. The ceremonial laws have been abolished; the civil laws have been abolished except for their general equity; the moral laws continue.

21. OT laws are still in effect unless abrogated in the NT.

22. The Church is the Kingdom of God. They are usually Amil or Postmil; although a few are Premil or Preterist.

23. The OT sacrifices were fulfilled and forever abolished in Christ.

24. Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham. Some believe in a future for literal Israel, most don't.

25. Christ alone sits on the throne in heaven. Saints rule under Him in Spirit.

26. Most embrace infant baptism, but the Baptist among them don't.

SECTION 23

The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denials, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to confirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

Drafted October 26 – 28, 1978
Summit I
International Council on Biblical Inerrancy
Chicago, Illinois

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's Divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's Work of Inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of Inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of materials, variant selections of material in parallel accounts or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26 – 28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the four years since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying flow of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to hermeneutical principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated.

In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

We deny the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

Article II

We affirm that as Christ is God and man in one person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

We deny that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Article III

We affirm that the person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

We deny that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

Article IV

We affirm that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

We deny that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Article V

We affirm that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

We deny that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the Biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

Article VI

We affirm that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that Biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

We deny that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, Biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Article VII

We affirm that the meaning expressed in each Biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

We deny that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

Article VIII

We affirm that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

We deny that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

Article IX

We affirm that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the Biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

We deny that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the Biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

Article X

We affirm that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

We deny that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

Article XI

We affirm that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

We deny that the meaning of Biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Article XII

We affirm that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents, which are faithful to the content of Biblical teaching, should be employed.

We deny the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort Biblical meaning in the process.

Article XIII

We affirm that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of Biblical study.

We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on Biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article XIV

We affirm that the Biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

We deny that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the Biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article XV

We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

We deny the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article XVI

We affirm that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

We deny the legitimacy of allowing any method of Biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Article XVII

We affirm the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

We deny that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

We deny that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article XIX

We affirm that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

We deny that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

Article XX

We affirm that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, Biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

We deny that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Article XXI

We affirm the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of Biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

We deny that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Article XXII

We affirm that Genesis 1 – 11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

We deny that the teachings of Genesis 1 – 11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Article XXIII

We affirm the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

We deny that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Article XXIV

We affirm that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of Biblical scholars.

We deny that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by Biblical scholars.

Article XXV

We affirm that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

We deny that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

SECTION 24

Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

JOURNAL OF THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

THE BENEFITS OF AN AUTHOR-ORIENTED APPROACH TO HERMENEUTICS

ROBERT H. STEIN*

I. INTRODUCTION

In all communication three distinct components must be present. If any one of these components is missing, communication is not possible. These components are: the author, the text, and the reader. Linguists tend to use the terms: the encoder, the code, and the decoder. Still another set of terms that can be used is: the sender, the message, and the receiver. Having been born and raised in New Jersey where we like to use alliteration, we can refer to the three components as: the writer, the writing, and the "weader."

During the twentieth century we have witnessed amazingly diverse views as to which of these three components is the determiner of meaning. Who or what determines the meaning of a text, code, message, writing? At the beginning of the twentieth century the general assumption was that the author was the determiner of a text's meaning. The text meant what the author of the text consciously willed to convey by the words he or she had written. Texts were understood as a form of communication, and in communication we seek to understand what the author of that communication seeks to convey. Thus, if in a Bible study we were engaged in a study of Paul's letter to the Romans, and by some miracle the apostle Paul entered the room and explained what he meant by the passage under consideration, this would settle the issue. Our goal was to understand what the author, that is, Paul, meant by this passage, and we now know what he meant. Hopefully, we would proceed to discuss some of the implications of that passage for us today, but the issue of what the text "meant" would be settled. This is the common sense approach to hermeneutics that most people use quite unconsciously. This is why, for example, in trying to understand Romans we seek help from Galatians rather than Ernest Hemingway's For *Whom the Bell Tolls* or Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind.* The reason for this is that the author of Galatians thinks more like the author of Romans than Hemingway or Mitchell, and we desire to understand what the author of Romans meant.

In the 1930s, however, a movement arose called the New Criticism. This movement became the dominant approach toward literature in the universities until the 1970s. This approach no longer sought meaning in what the

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author intended to convey, but in the text itself as an independent entity. Texts were interpreted as independent units in total isolation from their authors and the historical situation in which they were written. In fact, if, using the example given above, Paul entered into our presence and explained to us what he meant by what he wrote, this view would respond, "That is interesting but quite irrelevant, for after you wrote your text, you lost control of it. It is no longer a form of communication but a form of art. It has become `literature,' and as a result it possesses semantic autonomy and has its own meaning or meanings." According to this view, in handing the text over to the reader, the author lost his or her authority over the text and its meaning. It should be pointed out that this view is very different from that of Billy Graham when he says, "The Bible says" or "Our text tells us," for Billy Graham means by this, "The author of our Biblical text is telling us." The New Criticism totally disconnects the text from the original author. It is as if texts magically appeared on the scene without father, mother, or author.

More recently we have witnessed a hermeneutic that seeks meaning, not from what the author consciously willed to say or from what the text means in isolation, but from the reader. This reader-oriented criticism argues that it is the reader who gives meaning to a text. The "written text in itself ... is dead or in hibernation. The text only comes to life through the reader. He revives the text, he gives meaning to it."[1] A text is in effect an open reality that stimulates us to give meaning to it. This is very different from and should not be confused with the view that the reader learns, deciphers, discovers, or ascertains the meaning that the author sought to convey or with the view that a text possesses in itself a meaning totally independent of both author and reader. In this approach the reader is the creator of the text's meaning. Kevin J. Vanhoozer comments concerning this new hermeneutical approach:

> Recently ... the reader has come to the forefront in discussion of literary theory and biblical interpretation alike. Indeed, some critics speak of a reader's liberation movement. What is it that readers have hitherto not been free to do? The answer of an increasing number of literary theorists is: "make meaning." Reading is not merely a matter of perception but also of production; the reader does not discover so much as create meaning.[2]

This approach is witnessed to by such expressions as "a Marxist reading of the text," or "a feminist reading of the text," or "a liberation theology reading of the text," etc. John Ziesler describes this approach as follows:

To put it crudely, there is the question whether the text, any text, is a window or a mirror. Does it [the text] in some way facilitate our own illumination [as in the reader-response approach] or does it give us access to another world [as in the author-oriented approach]? ... It is far more fruitful to accept their mirror-like nature and concentrate on how we read them. "The texts are a language through which we generate meaning."[3]

[1] Walter Vogels, "Inspiration in a Linguistic Mode," *BTB 15 (1985) 87.*

[2] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Reader in New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995) 301.

3 John Ziesler, "Historical Criticism and a Rational Faith," *ExpTim* 105 (1994) 273

This analogy of whether a text functions primarily as a mirror or as a window is a very useful one.

I shall seek to argue in this paper that the determiner of meaning in the communicative process is the author. (Please note the use of the singular "meaning.") Let me state from the beginning my deep debt to E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and his book *Validity in Interpretation.*[4] Permit me, however, to make some general comments about the other two approaches. I have always been troubled by the New Criticism's assumption that meaning is a property of the text as an autonomous entity. "Meaning," as I understand it, involves a construction of thought. It is a property of thinking persons. On the other hand, a text is an inanimate object. It is a collection of symbols on papyrus, vellum, paper, stone, metal, etc. A text consists of unthinking, lifeless material. Being lifeless and inanimate, it does not have the ability to think. It cannot construct a thought or an idea. Thus a text cannot "mean" anything, because it cannot intend or purpose anything. Whereas a text can convey the meaning of a thinking, willing person, it cannot possess meaning in and of itself, because it cannot think. To ask "What does this text mean?" is to ask of an inanimate object what it cannot do, that is, to construct a thought or idea. Authors and readers can think but not paper and ink, stone and groves, or papyrus and symbols. Thus I find it impossible to conceive of a text "meaning" anything. Usually what people are saying when they speak of the meaning of a text is "the meaning of the author that the text conveys." [5]

With respect to the present reader-response emphasis it should be noted that this view is indeed a product of our time. It is interesting to note that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the miraculous nature of various Biblical accounts was no longer accepted, scholars desperately sought to find meaning somewhere other than in what the author consciously willed to convey. Since critical scholarship did not believe in the historicity of narrative accounts containing miracles, it could not accept what the author consciously willed to convey by those accounts. In other words, it could not accept the author's willed meaning. Nevertheless, critical scholars still believed that these accounts taught something that possessed a "meaningful" dimension to it. The question was where this "meaningful" quality was to be found. Having rejected the traditional view of author willed meaning, scholars sought for meaning in other places. One such place was in the "event" referred to in the text.

Rationalism sought to reconstruct the event of the text to find out "what really happened." In so doing, scholars hoped to discover in the "actual" event something that would prove "meaningful." If the feeding of the five

[4] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

[5] Note how the NT refers to the OT writers: Moses–"... offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded" (Mark 1:44; cf. also 7:10; 10:3-4; 12:19, 26; Luke 16:29, 31; John 1:45; 5:46; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:19; Heb 9:19); Isaiah-"Well did Isaiah prophesy of your hypocrites ..." (Mark 7:6;cf. also Matt 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; John 1:23; 12:38-41; Acts 28:25; Rom 9:27, 29; 10:16, 20-21; 15:12); David-"David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared ..." (Mark 12:36; cf. Acts 1:16; 2:25; 4:25; Rom 4:6; 11:9; Heb 4:7). Note also references to Jeremiah (Matt 2:17; 27:9); Daniel (Matt 24:15); and Joel (Acts 2:16).

thousand (or four thousand) was essentially a sharing of food initiated by a little boy's willingness to share his lunch with others, we then have a meaning-"If we share what God has blessed us with, there will be more than enough to go around." Such an approach, however, ultimately proved quite unprofitable, for it is exceedingly difficult to reconstruct what supposedly happened and then to find a moral lesson from these normal, misunderstood, natural events. Others sought to associate meaning in some way with the author.

One group sought it in the author's accommodation to his readers' mythological world view. According to this view, the author consciously sought to teach his readers moral truths through mythical traditions that his readers would believe but that he personally knew were untrue. This option encountered minimal success because it was obvious upon reflection that the Biblical authors truly believed what they were writing was true. An additional problem in the accommodationist's view was how such blatant liars could have produced the greatest moral teachings that the world has even known. The second group that sought to associate meaning with the author, but not with his consciously willed meaning, was the mythophiles. The mythophiles or "myth lovers" believed that meaning could be found in the sub consciousness that gave birth to these myths. Thus they sought to "demythologize" the miracle accounts to find out what the subconsciousness of the author was seeking to teach by these accounts.[6]

It should be noted that eighteenth and nineteenth-century attempts to find "meaning" in the miracle accounts sought for such meaning in either the author's conscious deception (the accommodationists) or their subconsciousness (the mythophiles) or they sought it in the event referred to in the text (the rationalists). No one apparently thought to seek meaning in the response of the reader. It was not until the 1960s and 70s that the reader response approach came into prominence. Whereas once the sun, as portrayed by Ptolemy, was thought to revolve around the earth and the earth was thought to be the center of the universe, later under Copernicus the earth was seen as rotating around the sun. Now this new revolution understood all of the universe and reality as rotating around the individual. The reader was no longer seen as part of the universe and seeking its meaning but as the center of the universe and imparting meaning to it.

II. THE ARGUMENT FOR AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

The question of where the meaning of a text is to be found is, I believe, the major issue that faces Biblical scholarship today. This hermeneutical issue, however, affects far more than just Biblical scholarship. There is great debate today as to whether the constitution of the United States means what the original authors of the constitution meant or what the judges of the Supreme Court make it mean. If the latter is the case, then what do

[6] For a helpful survey of these attempts, see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) esp. 245-66.

judges of the Supreme Court swear to uphold? Is it the meaning they would give to the constitution or the meaning that the founders who voted for the constitution gave to it? The recent renovation of the Sistine Chapel has brought a great deal of debate and discussion, for the restored paintings are much brighter and warmer in color than before the renovation. Were the darker and more somber colors due to the soot of four centuries of burning candles and the aging of the original frescos, so that the renovation has simply restored the original colors? Or has the restoration changed the tone and coloring of the original work, so that the paintings no longer represent the original colors and hues of Michelangelo? And does it matter?

The greatest argument in favor of understanding the author as the determiner of a text's meaning is that it is the common sense approach to all communication. One cannot have a meaningful conversation or even a serious debate about this issue without assuming this. During the present reading of this article, you, the reader, have been seeking to understand what I, the author, meant by the words I have written. Probably it has not even entered into your mind that the words I have written should be treated independently of my intention or that you should give your own meaning to these words. Communication between two people can only take place if both parties seek to understand what the other person means by their words. Should a person's last will and testament be read according to the deceased's consciously willed meaning? What would you think of an executor of a will who began by saying, "I am not interested in what the deceased meant by the words of this will? Here is the meaning that I choose to give to this will." For an executor to do so would, at least at the present time, be a criminal act.

It has been argued, however, that we should distinguish and treat communication differently than literature. When originally written, the letters of Paul were a form of communication, and their meaning was determined by what he meant by them. Now, however, it is argued, these letters are literature and should be interpreted as "art." Yet who determines if something is literature? Any definition of "literature" is ultimately quite fuzzy. Is it simply a matter of age and usage that determines if something is literature? What then should we do with the classification "twentieth-century literature"? And who determines how to interpret a work of art? Is it simply the viewer? But why did the artist place a title on his or her work?

Much of the interpretative process that people perform almost unconsciously is based on the hermeneutical principle that the goal of interpretation is to arrive at what the author of a text meant. For example, in the attempt to understand the meaning of a particular word in a text such as Galatians, to what primary sources do we turn? Why does common sense say, "Look up where it is used elsewhere in Galatians. Then look up how it is used in Romans and the Corinthian correspondence"? Why do we look for help in Galatians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians rather than in the writings of Plato or Julius Caesar? Why do we go to Luke in order to understand Acts rather than to Josephus? The answer is because we want to understand what the Biblical author (Paul or Luke) meant, and the writer of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians thinks more like Paul than Plato or Julius

Caesar, and the writer of Luke thinks more like the writer of Acts than Josephus. Why do we try to find help in understanding Calvin's works in his other writings rather than in the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Koran?

Not only is the author-oriented approach to meaning the common sense approach to interpreting the Bible, I believe it is also the one that best fits an evangelical view of the Bible's inspiration. If we believe that the "meaning" of the Bible is inspired, where is this meaning to be found? Surely it is not found in the ink and paper used to convey that meaning. As stated earlier, these inanimate materials cannot think and therefore cannot will a meaning. If we, on the other hand, give to the reader the authority to determine or create the meaning (note we are not saying "to ascertain or learn" but "to determine or create" the meaning), what do we do with diverse and contradictory "meanings" that readers find in the Scriptures? Are they all inspired? How do we distinguish a good translation of the Bible from a poor one? Is it that a poor one elicits fewer reader-responses than a good one? Is not the test of whether a translation is good or bad dependent on whether it translates accurately and well what the Biblical author consciously meant by the words he used?

A popular expression often used to argue against the view that the author is the determiner of meaning is the "intentional fallacy." In some circles this has become a shibboleth, and simply saying that someone is guilty of the intentional fallacy is considered a refutation of their view. This expression was made popular by William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe Beardsley.[7] They argued that it is impossible for a person to climb into the mind of an author and experience what he was going through when he wrote. This is, of course, true. One cannot relive an author's "mental acts" while writing.[8] Unless the authors stated them, they are inaccessible to us. We shall define shortly the "meaning" of a text not as the process that an author went through in writing a text, but rather what the author consciously willed to convey by the words he or she has given us. We possess those words, and because the author wanted to be understood and wrote using the norms of language in his day, we can understand what the author intended by these words.

Another objection sometimes associated with the intentional fallacy is the idea that an author may have been inadequate or incompetent in ex

[7] See W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954) 3-18. Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: University Press, 1991) 189,
points out that Wimsatt and Beardsley are inconsistent in their use of the term "intentional." "In their opening statement, `intention' signifies *aim, plan, purpose, goal,* whereas `criticism' signifies *evaluation.* But very shortly . . . `intention' starts to signify *meaning,* and by the end of the essay
`criticism' has come to signify something like *understanding* or *interpretation.* Thus Wimsatt and Beardsley's fairly innocuous beginning-to the effect that an author's aim has no place in the evaluation of a work-has been transformed into the quite different and much more radical statement that an author's intended meaning has no place in the interpretation of a work [author's italics]."

[8] The impossibility of reconstructing the experiences and influences that an author had in writing is clearly shown in C. S. Lewis, "Fern-seed and Elephants" in *Fern-seed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1975) 114-15. This article, and especially the pages mentioned, should be required reading for all Biblical students.

pressing what he sought to convey. What teacher has not had a student say, "Well, what I meant to say in my paper was ..."? There is no need to deny that an author may be incompetent in expressing his meaning, so that the reader cannot understand it. Yet is this true in most instances? It is surprising how seldom those who point out this problem of incompetence think that they may be incompetent in their writing about this problem! Why bother writing about it, if this problem is insurmountable? Furthermore, as an evangelical Christian, a factor comes into play that eliminates this objection for the most part. If divine inspiration means anything, it means that God gave to the Biblical authors a competency to write down adequately what they were led to write. As a result, I think that a correct understanding of an author-oriented hermeneutic is not guilty of the intentional fallacy. The reason is that it is not interested in ascertaining the mental acts of the author that led to the text but rather what the author meant by the words found in the text. In addition authors, especially divinely inspired authors, are generally quite competent in expressing their willed meaning.

III. VOCABULARY FOR AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

A great deal of the confusion involved in hermeneutical discussion is due to the lack of a clear and precise vocabulary. At this point I would like to offer a brief conceptual framework of terms for our discussion. This framework will be limited to four terms, for the sake of brevity. These terms are: meaning; implications; significance; and subject matter.[9]

1. *Meaning*. I define meaning as: "The paradigm or principle that the author consciously willed to convey by the sharable symbols he or she used." In this definition we should note that meaning is associated with the words of the author. It is not concerned with the thought processes or mental acts an author experienced while writing the text. In this respect, the pursuit of meaning avoids that aspect of the intentional fallacy which argues that one cannot relive the experiences of an author in their writing of the text. Meaning is not concerned with reliving the author's writing experiences but with understanding what the author consciously meant to convey by the words or symbols found in his or her text. [10] The "shareable" nature of these symbols indicates that the author consciously encoded his or her meaning using the norms of language with which their readers were familiar.

It should be noted that the term "consciously" is used to describe the meaning that the author wished to convey. This is to distinguish our definition from those views that seek to demythologize the myth that the author

9 For further definitions of the terms "understanding," "interpretation," "mental acts," "norms of language," "norms of the utterance," "literary genre," and "context," see Robert H. Stein, A *Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 48-58.

[10] In the present work "the author's writing experiences" are referred to as "mental acts" and "what the author consciously meant to convey by the words or symbols found in his or her text" as "meaning." Other terminology sometimes used to distinguish "mental acts" and "meaning" is "authorial motives" and "authorial communicative intentions." See Stephen E. Fowl, "The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture" in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000) 71-87.

has written and to find out the subconscious meaning of the author that lies behind the myth. It also distinguishes our definition from such views that reject the surface-level meaning and seek to discover the substructural meaning of a text. Meaning as it is defined here is what the author consciously wanted to communicate to the readers by the words he or she chose.

Understanding this meaning is possible because the Biblical author possessed competence and in seeking to communicate his meaning intentionally inscribed this meaning following the norms of the language of the readers. Thus we can understand the meaning of the author by understanding the norms of the language of the text's original readers. [11]

Because the author willed this meaning at a particular time and place in history, this meaning can never change. It is a part of history, and because history cannot change, the author's meaning cannot change. Even if an author no longer agrees with the meaning willed in the past, that meaning cannot change. The author may recant that particular meaning, write a revision in which he explains that he no longer believes what he wrote earlier, but he cannot change the willed meaning of the shareable symbols contained in the first work. The reason for this is that one cannot change the past. Thus the meaning willed in the past remains. The meaning of the author, however, involves a paradigm or principle that goes beyond the specific meaning that was consciously willed. Thus there are implications that are part of this paradigm of which the author may not be aware but which are nevertheless contained in the paradigm. This brings us to our second definition.

2. Implication. Implications refer to "Those submeanings of a text that legitimately fall within the paradigm or principle willed by the author, whether he or she was aware of them or not." Since meaning involves a paradigm or principle, the author may not be, and probably never is, aware of all the implications of that paradigm. I frequently use as an illustration of this Paul's command in Eph 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine." Now the specific meaning Paul had in mind for the Ephesian Christians was not to become intoxicated with that mixture of water and what we call wine that was called "wine" in his day. [12] Yet, let us imagine for a moment that

[11] At times the goal of interpretation is stated as "... to hear the message of the Bible as the original audiences would have heard it or as the first readers would have understood it." So William M. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 11. The problem with this is that at times the original readers *misunderstood* the intended meaning (see the letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians). Perhaps we should reword this by saying that our goal is to hear the message of the Bible as the original audiences *should* have heard it or as the first readers *should* have understood it. The value of seeking how the original audience *should* have understood the author's texts is because we believe: (1) the author was competent in expressing his meaning; (2) he consciously wrote that message using the norms of language with which his audience was familiar; and (3) we can understand those norms and therefore, like the original readers, understand the meaning that the author intended.

[12] See Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today* 19 (June 20, 1975) 9-11.

Paul later visited the church in Ephesus and found drunkenness in the church. How would he have responded if he asked, "Did you not read in my letter not to become drunk with wine?" and someone responded, "But Paul, ever since we read your letter, we have switched from wine to beer"? Would Paul have said, "Well, that's OK. So long as you are not drunk with wine"? Would he not rather have said, "You know, I meant beer also"? Within the paradigm that Paul uttered, beer is included as well as wine, even though beer is not mentioned.

Now let us imagine asking Paul the question, "Paul, did you mean that we should not become drunk with whiskey or vodka?" How would he reply? Now it is evident that, whereas Paul knew about beer, he did not know about whiskey or vodka. I believe, however, that he would have responded as follows. He would_ first have asked what whiskey and vodka are. Upon having this explained, he might have answered something like this, "In my day, we could not distill alcoholic beverages and concentrate their alcoholic content. In fact, we always diluted what you call wine with water. But, yes, I meant, `Be not drunk with whiskey and vodka.' In fact, the paradigm that I meant by Eph 5:18 was something like, `Do not take into your bodies substances, like wine, that cause you to lose control of what you are doing.'" Since the meaning of Paul's command in Eph 5:18 involves a paradigm that goes beyond his specific meaning, his meaning has implications. He may not have been aware of all of them but they nevertheless stem out of the paradigm he willed.

Let me give another example. Johnny received a Christmas gift from grandma and grandpa of fifty dollars. He knows exactly what he wants to do with the fifty dollars. He wants to go down to Target and purchase two toys that together, with tax, cost $49.95. As his father, you, however, tell Johnny, "Now I don't want you to go down to Target and buy those two toys with the money grandma and grandpa gave you. They don't want you to spend it on toys at Target." Later, when you come home, you find Johnny playing with the. two toys. In frustration you respond, "Didn't I tell you not to buy those toys at Target?" How would you respond if Johnny replied, "Well, dad, I didn't buy them at Target. I went to Wal-Mart and bought them for only $44.50." Would you say, "Oh, that's OK. As long as it wasn't Target"? Wouldn't you say, "Johnny, you knew I meant you shouldn't buy those toys at Target, Wal-Mart, or any other place?" What you meant by, "Now I don't want you to go down to Target and buy those two toys with the money grandma and grandpa gave you. They don't want you to spend it on toys at Target" involves a paradigm which, even though unstated, goes beyond Target. [13] Meaning involves numerous implications that we may not be_ aware of at the time but that are nevertheless present and logically flow out of the paradigm given.

Implications flow out of the paradigm of the author's meaning. As a result, we as readers do not create them but discover them. A great deal

[13] In the example just given it is assumed that Johnny's father referred to "Target" in the generic sense of a "store" and that he was not urging a boycott of Target products.

of confusion can be avoided if we recognize that these implications are not new "meanings" independentent of the author's meaning. Rather, they are "submeanings" that flow out of the paradigm the author has given. If we think of meaning as a tree, implications then correspond to the various branches and parts of the tree that make up the entire tree. Implications are submeanings that in their totality make up the entire meaning. To refer to these branches as independent "trees" or "meanings" is both incorrect and confusing. It is much better to refer to the submeanings that flow out of a paradigm willed by the author as implications than to refer to them as different "meanings." This permits us to acknowledge the single meaning of an author's text and nevertheless acknowledge that there are implications flowing out of that meaning of which the author was unaware. Only God in his omniscience knows all the implications of a text's meaning. The author, however, still controls these submeanings because they stem from his or her willed paradigm. A miner does not create the gold he finds in a mountain. He discovers it. Similarly, the interpreter of Scripture does not create the implications he or she finds in the text. If they are legitimate implications, they are merely discovered by the interpreter, for ultimately they stem from the paradigm willed by the author. [14]

3. *Significance.* Significance, as I understand it, refers to "How the reader responds to the willed meaning of the author." Significance involves the reader and his or her reaction to the author's meaning. Whereas the author is master of the meaning of the text, as well as the implications flowing out of its paradigm, with respect to significance the reader is master. In its simplest form, significance is the reader's "yes" or "no" to the author's meaning.

Perhaps an illustration may be useful as this point. The meaning of Acts 1:8 is that the followers of Jesus are to witness to his work and words throughout the world." Some general implications flowing out of this paradigm may involve such things as witnessing to one's neighbor, modeling the Christian life at work and sharing the good news with one's fellow workers, entering the Christian ministry, etc. Specific implication(s). flowing out of that paradigm may involve accepting the pastorate of a specific church, being a missionary under a particular mission board in a particular place, teaching a Sunday School class in church, etc. These general and specific implications are all subsumed under the category of "implications" and are controlled by the paradigm derived from the author's willed meaning. Significance, however, is the response of the reader to the meaning of the text and its implications. It involves not the mind's attempt to understand- the meaning of the

[14] If we think of the willed paradigm that Paul gives in Eph 5:18 as a geometric figure, then every submeaning or implication of this text lies within that figure. The totality of all the legitimate implications, along with the author's specific willed meaning which functions in the paradigm as a submeaning, defines the extent and shape of the figure.

[15] Whereas this command in Acts 1:8 is addressed specifically to the apostles, others are also seen as being witnesses of Jesus. (Cf. Acts 22:15 and 20 where Paul and Stephen are referred to as witnesses.) The present writer believes that Luke has recorded this command not simply to tell his readers that the apostles were called to be witnesses but that this is by implication a responsibility for each follower of Jesus.

text and its implications but the response of the will to that understanding. Thus significance involves not a cognitive activity but a volitional one.

The term "application" does not appear in our set of definitions. The reason is that this term does not consist of a single element in the conceptual framework of hermeneutics. It involves instead a compound of two elements. Just as water is a compound of the elements of hydrogen and oxygen, so "application" is a compound of the "elements" implication and significance. To be even more precise, it is a compound of a specific implication that concerns the individual, which is cognitive in nature, and the value response given to that implication, which is volitional in nature. Thus the term "application" can be confusing, because it refers to two different components in the communicative process. Implications, even those that apply uniquely to an individual, are controlled by the author and flow out of the paradigm determined by his or her willed meaning. The reader, on the other hand, controls significance.[16]

4. *Subject matter*. The term "subject matter" refers to "The content or `stuff' talked about in the text." The distinction between subject matter and meaning is reasonably clear in the non-narrative portions of Scripture.[17] For example, the "stuff" discussed in Romans 1-8 involves how a person can find acceptance before God. The meaning of Romans 1-8 is what Paul teaches on this subject. The "stuff" of a genealogy involves the relationships between the people listed. The meaning of a genealogy involves what the Biblical author is seeking to teach by this listing of relationships.

In historical narrative, however, there is a great deal of confusion as to what the meaning of such a narrative is. Most commentaries and preaching assume that the meaning of a gospel narrative involves the event being discussed, that is, what happened. Commentators will spend a great deal of time and effort explaining the historical situation in the life of Jesus in which the event being discussed occurred, what preceded and led up to this event, the response of Jesus' audience, how this may have led to his crucifixion, etc. Yet this has nothing to do with the "meaning" of the text. This involves rather the "subject matter" of what is being discussed in the text. Meaning is something different. This can be shown by the following example. Assuming that the passage under consideration is the story of Jesus' cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15-19, how would you complete the following sentence? "I, Mark, have told you about Jesus' cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15-19 because. . . ." Completing that sentence requires us to distinguish the event or subject matter from what Mark is

[16] I believe that E. D. Hirsch, Jr. looses sight of this compound nature of the term "application," and this has led to confusion. Whereas implications are aspects of meaning that the author may or may not have been aware of, application is not simply an aspect of meaning but a combination of this aspect of meaning plus the significance given to it by the reader. In his "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted" in *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984) 20 Hirsch seems to confuse "application," "meaning," and "significance." As a result he states, "... certain present applications of a text may belong to its meaning rather than to its significance." The reason for this confusion is that application is a combination of implication (and thus "meaning") and significance.

[17] The terms "text" and "event" or "sense" and "referent" often express the distinction between "meaning" and "subject matter".

seeking to teach his readers by this subject matter. In other words, the meaning of a historical narrative[18] involves what the Biblical writer meant or willed to teach his readers through this subject matter. The distinction between text and event, meaning and subject matter can be clearly seen if we ask, "What did the author seek to teach his readers through this event?" In my hermeneutics class I have two assignments that deal with historical narrative. The first sentence of each assignment must begin, "I [the Biblical author's name then follows] have told you [the Biblical passage then follows] because. . . ." Although some students still try to discuss what happened, that is, the event or subject matter, most see the difference between this and the meaning that the author seeks to teach by his use of this subject matter.

IV. THE ADVANTAGES OF AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

We have already mentioned some general advantages of a single, author determined meaning. These include: (1) it is the common sense approach to all communication; (2) any special hermeneutic suggested for works of "literature" have the difficulty of defining what "literature" is and defending why literature should be treated differently than other forms of communication; and (3) the main argument against author-determined meaning, the "intentional fallacy," confuses the willed meaning of an author with the process or "mental acts" which produced the work. At this point we shall now look at two other advantages that a single, author-determined meaning provides.

In his famous article "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?"[19] Rudolf Bultmann argues that when Paul quotes Deut 5:4 ("You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain") in 1 Cor 9:9 as proof that those who preach the gospel should live off the gospel, this is an illegitimate, allegorical interpretation.[20] I would suggest, however, that, properly understood, the Deuteronomist's willed meaning is in fact accurately interpreted by the apostle. If the Deuteronomist willed a paradigm by his words, then the specific statement, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain" is a paradigm that has implications going far beyond a simple application to oxen. Surely, no one would have any problem saying that what is true of oxen treading out the grain would also be true of donkeys. Even though donkeys are not specifically mentioned, the paradigm's implications include them as well. If this is true, would such a paradigm not also include

[18] It should be noted that such expressions as "the meaning of Romans 1-8," "the meaning of a genealogy," "the meaning of a Gospel narrative," "the meaning of the text," and "the meaning of an historical narrative" found in this and the preceding paragraph are shorthand expressions for "the meaning of Paul contained in Romans 1-8," etc. The present author has earlier argued that a text cannot possess a meaning in and of itself, because it is inanimate and thus cannot will a meaning. It can, however, convey the meaning that the author willed by these words. It is in this sense that these shorthand expressions should be understood.

[19] This is found in Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961) 289-96.

[20] Ibid. 289-90.

humans? Is it only dumb animals that should reap some benefit from their labor? Paul is probably saying in 1 Cor 9:9, "If it is true that an ox should receive benefit from its labor, how much more then does this imply that a preacher of the gospel should receive benefit from his labor." Surely the Deuteronomist would not say, "Only dumb animals should receive benefit from their labors. Humans, who are created in the image of God, should not be given similar treatment .,,[21]

Another advantage of a single, author-oriented meaning is that it avoids the need of seeking a different and separate divine meaning in difficult texts. I am thinking here in particular of reference to *a sensus plenior.* The *sensus plenior is* the idea that some Scriptures, especially prophecy, contain two separate meanings. One is the meaning of the Biblical author; the other is the meaning of God. I want to make two preliminary remarks about the *sensus plenior* before I deal specifically with this issue. First of all, I want to state that I do not believe that one's basic hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of Scripture should be developed based on the predictive prophecies of Scripture. The vast majority of Scripture involves other genres (narrative, teaching, proverbs, poetry, laws, parables, etc.). Even in the prophetic books predictive prophecy makes up only a portion of the contents of these books. We should derive a hermeneutical system based upon the most frequently used genres and then see how predictive prophecy fits the system of hermeneutics that has been developed. All too often the hermeneutic developed to interpret difficult predictive prophecies becomes the means by which the simpler and less difficult passages of Scriptures are interpreted. I would prefer developing a hermeneutical system based on the interpretation of the simpler and more common passages of Scripture and seek to apply that system to the predictive prophecies.

Second, the only way that we can understand what an author means is by his or her use of language. We can understand a Biblical writer such as Luke by noting that he wrote to someone in the first century using the Greek of hiss day and that he wanted to be understood. Therefore, if we seek - to understand how someone like Theophilus should[22] have interpreted the words found in Luke-Acts (and we know enough of the Greek of Luke's day to do this), then we can understand the meaning Luke willed by his words. We can compare how the words under consideration are used in the rest of Luke-Acts, how Luke used the same prepositional phrases elsewhere in Luke-Acts, how he used the same tense and participles elsewhere, etc. On the other hand, we have no such access to God's use of language. Why should we assume that words, prepositions, participles, etc., in one part of Luke-Acts should be interpreted in a similar manner as elsewhere in LukeActs? The answer is that the same author is responsible for these words,

[21] This is the only law found in Deuteronomy 25 that does not refer to humans. Surrounding this command are laws concerning disputes among people (25:1-3), levirate marriage (25:5-10), fighting (25:11-12), and dishonest business transactions (25:13-17). It would be difficult to conceive of the command in 25:4 not being seen as containing implications with respect to humans. Clearly the rabbinical interpreters of this passage saw it as having various human implications. Cf. *B. Mes.* 88b; *Git.* 62a; *Mak.* 13b, 23a; *Yeb.* 4a.

[22] See footnote eleven.

prepositions, participles, etc.[23] But if we are seeking God's meaning in distinction from that of Luke's, why not interpret the words, prepositions, and participles in Luke according to how they are used in Romans, or Mark, or Revelation?[24] We have no way of understanding what God means except through what his apostles and prophets wrote in Scripture, and in seeking to understand God's apostles and prophets, we want to know what these human, inspired authors meant by their words. We simply have no access to a separate divine meaning. [25]

With respect to prophecy, let me say that a single, author-determined meaning causes me to interpret certain terminology figuratively and metaphorically that I was taught to interpret literalistically.[26] For example, the language of Acts 2:16-21 is frequently interpreted as an example of a *sensus plenior* because of the imagery in vv. 19-20: "And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day." Since this imagery was not literalistically fulfilled at Pentecost, it is assumed that these words possess *a sensus plenior.* However, Luke quotes Peter as saying in v. 16, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." A single, author-determined meaning indicates that Luke believed that all of Joel's prophecy found in these verses was fulfilled in the events of Pentecost

[23] This does not mean that those words, prepositions, participles, etc., always mean the same thing throughout an author's work. It is the immediate context provided by the author that ultimately determines the meaning of words, prepositions, participles, etc. Generally, however, authors tend to use words in a fairly consistent manner.

[24] Such a hermeneutic can be disastrous. Compare what would happen if we seek to understand what "God" means by "faith" and "works" in Jas 2:14-26 by the way "God" uses these terms in Romans and Galatians! In Jas 2:19 "faith" refers to the acknowledgement of a simple fact"God is one." Thus James can state that, "Even the demons believe [this]." "Works," on the other hand, refer to acts of loving compassion, such as clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. In Paul, however, "works" are meritorious works that seek to place God in one's debt. They involve such "works" as circumcision, keeping "the works of the law," etc. Ultimately both Paul and James agree that the faith that saves is a faith that works through love (Gal 5:6). Nevertheless, the "faith" and "works" James describes in 2:14-26 are very different from what Paul means by "faith and "works" in Romans and Galatians.

[25] Imagine someone in the Corinthian church telling the apostle Paul, "I am really not interested in what you meant by the letters you wrote to us. I am interested in what God means." How would Paul have replied? Would he not have said, "God means what I mean! And if you disobey what I mean, you are disobeying God"? Cf. 1 Cor 14:37 and 2 Thess 3:14. G. B. Caird, *The Language an Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 61, correctly points out, "We have no access to the mind of Jeremiah or Paul except through their recorded words. A fortiori, we have no access to the word of God in the Bible except through the words and the minds of those who claim to speak in his name. We may disbelieve them, that is our right; but if we try, without evidence, to penetrate to a meaning more ultimate then the one the writers intended, that is our meaning, not theirs or God's."

[26] The terms "literalistic" and "literalistically" are used to distinguish this hermeneutical procedure from the "literal" interpretation of Scripture. When the Reformers referred to the "literal" interpretation of Scripture, they meant that the Bible should be interpreted in accordance with what the Biblical authors meant by the words they used. Thus metaphors, poetry, figures of speech, etc., were not to be interpreted as ends in themselves, but in accordance with what the Biblical authors meant by them. "Literalistic" interpretation, like allegorical interpretation, rejects an author-determined meaning and treats the text as an independent entity.

Rather than forcing Luke and Joel to fit within a literalistic interpretation of language, we need to understand how they interpreted such imagery. It is evident that the sun being darkened, the moon turning to blood, the stars falling from heaven, etc., are all part of the imagery that the prophets frequently used to describe divinely ordained events that are now past .[27]

In Isa 13:1-22 this imagery is used to describe the fall of Babylon, as 13:1a and 19 specifically state and the reference to the Medes in 13:7 demands. In Jer 4:23-28 this imagery is used to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, as 4:3, 5, 14 and the whole context of the book indicates. In Ezek 32:2-19 this imagery is used to describe the destruction of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt and his army. In Amos 8:9 it refers to the destruction of Israel in the eighth century BC. Frequently those scholars who seek to interpret prophecy more literalistically argue that these passages must be interpreted as possessing a *sensus plenior, so* that there is both an authorrelated meaning and a separate divine meaning. Yet, once we accept that these prophecies were understood by the prophets as referring to events in their own time, the need for *a sensus plenior* disappears. Once we acknowledge that the Biblical authors understood this imagery metaphorically and figuratively, we have no need for *a sensus plenior*. I would argue that a single, author-determined meaning allows us to interpret prophecy literally, that is, in the way that the Reformers used this term-according to their author's meaning, and not literalistically, that is, in a literalistic manner contrary to the way the Biblical authors understood this imagery.[28]

I shall not seek to provide any all-inclusive method of how to interpret the fulfillment prophecies in the NT, but I would like to suggest how a single, author-determined meaning might seek to resolve some of these difficult texts. In Matt 2:15 the Evangelist sees the return of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus from Egypt as being the fulfillment of Hos 11:1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Now it seems clear in reading Hos 11:1 and its immediate context that Hosea had in mind the exodus under Moses. In particular, he seems in this text to be alluding to Exod 4:22 where Moses is commanded to

[27] Cf. Richard D. Patterson, "Wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth: Apocalyptic Imagery in the Old Testament," *JETS* 43 (2000) 403, who states, "The persistence of these images strongly suggests that they had become a body of stylized vocabulary that the prophets had at their disposal to express God's judgment and saving activities. The freedom and variety with which they were utilized suggests further that although they had become a conventional part of eschatological predictions, they are not to be viewed as a blueprint of concrete details relative to end-time
events ... Therefore, they should not be interpreted in a slavishly literalistic manner."

[28] Another example of how Biblical writers understood such terminology figuratively is found in Luke 3:4-6. It is evident that the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ did not bring about geographical and geological changes either in Israel or anywhere else on this planet. The term used for "brought low" in 3:5, however, is used in Luke 14:11 and 18:14 with respect to those who exalt themselves being "humbled" or "brought low." In Luke 4:18 Jesus' bringing "release" to the captives should be interpreted in light of how the term here interpreted "release" is interpreted everywhere else in Luke-Acts, that is, as "forgiveness." The "recovering of sight" to the blind in Luke 4:18 is also probably best understood in light of such passages as 1:79 ("to give light to those who sit in darkness") and Acts 26:18 ("to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God").

tell Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, `Israel is my first-born son.'" Do we need to resort to a *sensus plenior* in order to make sense of Matthew's seeing the return of the holy family from Egypt as fulfilling this passage? I would suggest that we should seek first to apply our single, author-determined meaning to this passage. Is it possible that what we have is the following: (1) Hosea clearly referred to the exodus under Moses. (2) Matthew, however, understood Hosea's statement as involving a paradigm. This paradigm included the following: God had promised to Abraham and his seed that they would live in the land he had promised. As a result he would not leave Israel in bondage in Egypt, but he would deliver his "son" from Egypt into the promised land. Matthew realized that, if this were true with respect to the people of Israel, that is, God's "son," how much more would it be true for his Only "Son." (3) Thus Hosea's reference to God's fulfillment of his promise which led to the exodus had as an implication God's bringing the holy family back from Egypt as well.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to explore some of the advantages of an author-oriented model of hermeneutics. I make no claim that the model of a single, author-determined meaning resolves all the hermeneutical issues involved in Biblical interpretation. What I would suggest, however, is that such a hermeneutic is holistic, that it agrees with the rules of all communication, that it can be applied to all literature and all genres, and that it has less difficulties associated with it than any other alternative.

SECTION 25

Luther's Instructions for Studying Theology as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method

Luther's Instructions for Studying Theology as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method[1]

(an oral address given at the SE Regional Evangelical Theological Society meeting, March 2005)

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

I. Introduction

Never in the history of the church have so many good hermeneutics textbooks been available. Of course, never in the history of the church have so many bad hermeneutics texts been in print as well. Still, evangelicals have little to complain about. If we haven't learned to "read the Bible for all its worth," we have hopefully at least come upon "a basic guide to interpreting the Bible." Though current evangelical hermeneutics texts vary in strength, as a whole, they are excellent in defending authorial intent, providing a history of biblical interpretation in the church, giving rules for determining various literary genres and enumerating principles for interpreting those genres. With so many excellent texts on biblical interpretation available, it is striking how few hermeneutically-sound sermons one hears. Where is the clarity and power of sound Biblical interpretation manifested in pulpits, popular Christian literature, and Sunday School classes? Is something lacking?

Martin Luther, though he wrote nearly 500 years ago, provides some guidance on this subject in the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings. Indeed, if the sole benefit of this paper is to serve as a goad so that you – the listener – find and read this short preface yourself, your time in this session will be well-spent, I believe. Luther's memorable style of expression undoubtedly exceeds the quality of my writing – and thus, I point you to it. ("*Ad fontes*!" as the Reformers said.) Yet, with faltering lips, I hope to summarize faithfully and apply some of Luther's thoughts to our current setting.

In his preface, Luther gives a three-part prescription for theological study, which I think provides the missing ingredients in much current evangelical hermeneutical instruction. This three-step method is *Oratio*, *Meditatio*, and *Tentatio* (prayer, meditation, and trial). These elements, I believe, are crucial to faithful biblical reflection, but are often neglected in current discussion. In this paper, I will proceed by looking at the basis for Luther's theological prescription. That is, *why* does he see prayer, meditation, and trials as the *sine qua non* of true theological study? Then, we will examine each one of his three recommended elements in turn. Finally, I will make some concluding remarks.

II. Luther's Basis for his Prescription

Luther rather confidently commends his three-step method for theological study. In fact, he claims, "If you keep to [this method of study], you will become so learned that you yourself could . . .write books just as good as those of the [church] fathers and

[1] Quotations of Luther's preface are from the following English translation: "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, edited by Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 63-68

[church] councils. . ."[2] On what basis can Luther make such an audacious claim for his prescribed method of study? He can make such a claim because he does not believe a human authority stands behind the prescription, but a divine one. Luther's derives his method from Psalm 119 [the lengthiest psalm in the canon, as you know]. Luther notes that throughout the psalm, David repeatedly mentions three things:

(1) David cries out to God for understanding of his Word (prayer, Oratio)
(2) David thinks on, recites, sings, and variously ruminates on God's Word as he seeks to understand and apply it (meditation, Meditatio), and
(3) David is repeatedly oppressed by enemies and difficulties (trial, Tentatio).

A superficial reading of Psalm 119 will quickly note these motifs. For the purposes of this short paper, I will choose a few examples of each theme. Many more could be listed, and hearers of this paper are encouraged to search Psalm 119 for themselves.

First, Psalm 119 models a <u>prayerful</u> approach to studying God's word. [2x]

Psalm 119:5 [David, addressing the Lord]
Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

Psalm, 119:10
With my whole heart I seek you [Lord] ; let me not wander from your commandments!

Psalm 119:12
Blessed are you, O LORD; <u>teach me</u> your statutes!

Psalm 119:17-20
Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.

Psalm 119:34-37
Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.
Second, Psalm 119 models a <u>meditative</u> approach to studying God's Word. [2x]

Psalm 119:11
I have <u>stored up your word in my heart</u>, that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:13-16

[2] Ibid., 65.

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Psalm 119:27
Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

Third, Psalm 119 presents <u>trials</u> as integrally related to the psalmist's prayers and meditations. [2x]

Psalm 119:23-24
Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

Psalm 119:28
My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

Psalm 119:41-42
Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word.

Psalm 119:49-55
Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law.

Psalm 119 has 176 verses. In this short survey above, I draw from less than the first third of the psalm. Even from such a superficial analysis, one cannot miss the prominent repetition of prayer, meditation, and trial. In other words, Luther stands on firm evidential ground in asserting the importance of Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio in the psalm. And, as the psalm is about God's word and his people's approach to it, the text seems very fitting as a basic hermeneutical or theological method. It may also be of passing interest to note that Dietrich Bonhoeffer had the custom of requiring incoming theological students to memorize Psalm 119. One wonders - if prospective students were informed that they must memorize a 176 verse psalm before beginning study at Southern Seminary, how this new requirement might affect matriculation rates.

We will now look in more detail at the individual components of study recommended by Luther.

III. *Oratio*

In our age of pragmatism (in which we seek seven simple steps to solve any problem), is it any surprise that we do not want to be told to wait? And prayer – a waiting and dependence upon God – has become less and less emphasized in Biblical study, whether that study be academic or pastoral. A survey of recent hermeneutics textbooks reveals the cursory attention given to prayer. Some hermeneutical discussion even implies that prayer biases the student of Scripture towards a pre-conceived conclusion. According to this understanding, it may actually be the non-believer who has the advantage in determining the meaning of Scripture, for he comes with little bias as to what the text will say, for it makes no authoritative claim on his life.

Daniel Fuller is the most recognized proponent of this view, though it has other prominent adherents. Fuller bifurcates understanding into cognitive and volitional categories. That is, there is cognitive understanding and volitional response, and the two are not to be confused. Fuller claims that supernatural intervention only functions on the volitional level.[3] In other words, it is only in inculcating a desire to obey the meaning of the text that God supernaturally intervenes in the life of the believer. Thus, determining cognitively the authorial meaning of the text is solely the application of acquired skill and natural reason.

It seems striking to me that Fuller, who would likely pray readily for a surgeon's increased skill in an operation, believes that prayers for increased exegetical skill are to no avail. "No," an objector will say, "What one needs is more lexicons, more grammatical study, more time in the text!" Undoubtedly, grammatical study, lexicons, and time in the text are essential. But, is there a place for God's supernatural aid in understanding, acquired through prayer and God's gracious intervention? If not, then the traditional Protestant understanding of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is incorrect.

More common than an outright rejection of the value of prayer or divine aid in the understanding of the text is brief lip service to the idea, with the subsequent wholesale neglect of it. Where in any modern hermeneutics textbook can be found a thoughtful and biblically-based discussion of how prayer should practically be used in study? By failing to appropriately emphasize and instruct our students in the school of prayer, we are implicitly teaching them not to pray. Jesus' disciples saw the prominence of prayer in his life, and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1) When our disciples view our lives, do they ask this question, or do they ask, "How do you read so many books?" Or, "How do you write so much?" Or, "How do you sleep so little?"

Is it any wonder that modern sermons and Christian writings so rarely fail to expose and cast out the spirit of the age? Indeed, (to commit my own hermeneutical faux pas), "this kind can only come out through prayer" (Mark 9:29).

A brief survey of texts that discuss the doctrine of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit illustrate a lack of clarity and exegetical grounding. On the other hand, Fuller's system, while clearly understandable, is biblically unconvincing and dangerous. While I do not personally impugn Fuller or any who follow him, I believe his system does encourage an arrogant independence from God in approaching the text. A semi-Pelagian reliance upon one's unaided reason seems to me also dangerous and unbiblical.

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[3] Daniel P. Fuller, "The Holy Spirit's Role in Biblical Interpretation," in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978), 192.

The doctrine of total depravity teaches us that the entirety of the human person is affected by the fall – reason, emotions, will. We need the specific and supernatural aid of God to counteract our sinful nature in the regular study of the Scriptures. No one can win a biblical argument by claiming, "The Spirit told me," or "I prayed before I wrote this article." However, it appears to me that the Biblical evidence presents understanding as an indivisible mixture of both cognitive and volitional elements – an understanding in fallen creatures that can and must be aided by God's special intervention.

Does this mean, then, than non-believers cannot understand some portions of the Biblical text? No, but it does mean a believer who seeks God's aid in understanding a text has advantages over a non-believer with equal intellectual gifts, background, and skills. It is not that the Spirit provides additional information that is not in the text, but the Spirit helps in seeing clearly the information there and in the weighing of contextual and debated factors. It is as though the Spirit provides the spectacles that bring the picture into clearer focus. As believers wearing the spectacles of faith, however, we must make our arguments on the basis of the words before us in the text – not by appealing to supernatural assistance, regardless of how real and ongoing that assistance may be. As I observe the revelatory landscape along with my non-believing dialogue partner, I must make my argument on the basis of the facts in front of me.

As I strain to see through my God-given spectacles, I might say, "I see a small white bird that has just landed in the cedar tree."

My unbelieving, un-spectacled partner counters, "I saw a movement in the tree, but a bird you did not see – only the wind blowing."

The same facts are there before us, but only one sees rightly.

IV. *Meditatio*

In addition to being a prayerless people, we in the western church are a hurried and unreflective folk. We may respond to forty ministry-related emails in one day and daily read large sections of our Bible, but where is the chewing, ruminating, and deep reflecting on the text that causes it to sink down in our souls - and by God's grace, change us. The great scandal of the church, one modern pastor has said, is large buildings filled with undiscipled people. Like skates on a frozen lake, the Word has skirted over our minds and hearts with little measurable effect.

Luther warns of the danger of unreflective Bible study. He writes, "And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken [the words of Scripture] once or twice, and that you have complete understanding. You will not be a particularly good theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is half ripe."[4]

In some recent popular Christian writings, we are seeing a reaction to our unreflective and hurried lives. Is it any wonder that a minority, but growing number of Western Christians, are being drawn to the spiritual disciplines of solitude and silence as they seek to unclutter their souls. Unfortunately, in some books on this subject, it seems to me that a form of unbiblical Eastern meditation (maybe via Oprah or Hollywood) has been adopted. The highest goal of this meditation seems to be some sort of ethereal, ineffable experience of

[4] Lull, 66

relating to God with an "empty mind." From the Scriptures, however, it seems that God would have us meditate on his Word. Yes, we may seek
moments of silence and solitude, but those are moments when God tries and tests our hearts – bringing to mind Scriptures, failings, obligations, words of encouragement, or challenges. Not an empty mind, but a mind convicted, filled, focused, and transformed by God is the goal of biblical meditation.

We are inclined to think of biblical meditation as sitting quietly and simply thinking about a text over and over. This is biblical meditation, but it is also much more. Luther rightly points to the multitude of ways in which David meditates on the Word of God in Psalm 119. The Reformer writes,

> Thus you see in this same Psalm how David constantly boasts that he will talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, read, by day and night and always, nothing except God's Word and commandments. For God will not give you his Spirit without the external Word; so take your cue from that. His command to write, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc.., outwardly was not given in vain.[5]

Thus, meditating on the Bible is not simply quietly reflecting on a passage, but singing, reciting, memorizing, and writing the word. Meditating on the Word is using whatever intellectual and creative energies God has given us to focus on his revelation in thought, action, speech, or image.

In the Epistle of James, chapter 1, verse 25, we read, "The man who looks <u>intently</u> into the perfect law, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does." How desperately we as professors, pastors, students, and Christians in the pew need to be people who look intently into God's perfect Word – and to be transformed into people who do not simply hear the word, deceiving ourselves, but do what it says.

With added attention to the Word of God, some other things will likely have to be scaled back – such as attention to secondary literature. I recall with personal delight
I. Howard Marshall's address on this campus in which he lamented the unnecessarily large number of books being published these days. I add my hearty "Amen," as I find it nearly impossible to even read a summary of all the publications in my field in New Testament Abstracts. Might it, in fact, be a good thing, to spend less time in secondary literature and more time in the Bible?
With his own "Amen" to this idea, Luther writes:

> I would have been quite content to see my books, one and all remain in obscurity and go by the board. Among other reasons, I shudder to think of the example I am giving, for I am well aware how little the church has been profited since they have begun to collect many books and large libraries, in addition to and besides Holy Scriptures, and especially since they have stored up without discrimination, all sorts of writings by the church fathers, the councils, and teachers. Through this practice not only is precious time lost, which could be used for studying the Scriptures, but in the end the pure knowledge of the divine Word is lost, so that the Bible

[5] Ibid., 66.

> lies forgotten in the dust under the bench (as happened to the book of Deuteronomy, in the time of the kings of Judah).[6]

Becoming a more prayerful and meditative people will come at a cost. Could the popular "less is more" principle be true when it comes to our theological intake?

V. *Tentatio*

Much energy in the Western world is directed at avoiding trials. Nearly one-fifth of the United States' Gross Domestic Product goes towards insurance – a way of protecting ourselves against unplanned car wrecks, house fires, or medical expenses. Ironically, the very difficulties we seek to insulate ourselves from are often the means God uses to mature us. They are the means, Luther claims, of taking our abstract knowledge of what the Bible says and making it experiential and real. The Reformer writes:

> [A trials is] the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdoms.[7]

And later Luther adds,

> . . . as soon as God's Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his assaults will teach you to seek and love God's Word. I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil's raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much, That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have been otherwise.[8]

Trusting and obeying God in the midst of trial leads to a more mature understanding of Christian truth. The Biblical authors so frequently link suffering to spiritual growth that it is difficult to know which of numerous examples to cite. James 1:2-4 reads, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Similarly, Romans 5:3-5 reads, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." And in Philippians 1:29, we read, "For it has been graciously granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil, my translation)

Just last week, I had planned to attend an all-day pastor's conference where one of the main topics was God's demonstration of his power through our weakness. On the

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[6] Ibid., 63.
[7] Ibid., 66-67.
[8] Ibid., 67.

morning of the conference at 3:45 am, my daughter began several hours of a difficult bout with a stomach virus. My exhausted, pregnant wife, meanwhile, was recovering from a difficult cold. Is it possible that changing vomit-soaked clothes and sheets over and over could teach me more about God's power in weakness than hearing yet another speaker on the topic?

If we survey the lives of prominent saints in the Scriptures (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Paul), we see very quickly that God's path towards understanding of and service in the kingdom is often a path through repeated trials. As Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

VI. *Conclusion*

In this short paper, I have offered my introduction to and reflections upon Luther's instructions for studying theology, as recorded in the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings. While not wanting to neglect the valuable secondary studies available to us, the Biblical text itself demands our own prayers, meditations, and trying experiences. The strength of Luther's proposal, I believe, is its rooting in the hermeneutical method advocated in Biblical revelation itself, that is, in Psalm 119.

Luther's own words provide us with a fitting conclusion:

> There now, with that you have David's rules. If you study hard in accord with his example, then you will also sing and boast with him in the Psalm, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" [Ps. 119:72]. Also, "Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep thy precepts," etc. [Ps. 119:98-100]. And it will be your experience that the books of the fathers will taste stale and putrid to you in comparison. You will not only despise the books written by adversaries, but the longer you write and teach the less you will be pleased with yourself. When you have reached this point, then do not be afraid to hope that you have begun to become a real theologian . . .[9]

May God grant that we be such persons in our day.

[9] Ibid., 67.

SECTION 26

Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament

Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament

This essay originally appeared as an article in *Westminster Theological Journal*, Fall 2002 (Vol. 62), pages 257-265. It is made available to my students with the permission of *WTJ*.

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Introduction

Just as modern scholars often praise F. C. Baur for being one of the first NT scholars to treat Romans as an occasional letter, they regularly pillory Melanchthon for treating Romans as an abstract summary of the gospel. In such attacks on the Preceptor of Germany, references to his writings are frequently brief and undocumented. Typical of this approach is the following quote from J. C. Beker's article in *The Romans Debate*: "Although the tendency persists to view Romans as a dogmatics in outline, or as a version of a *compendium doctrinae Christianae* (Melanchthon), Romans is actually a profoundly occasional letter."[1] Karl P. Donfried, Peter Stuhlmacher, Arland J. Hultgren and Lucien Legrand make similar references to Melanchthon's compendium quote, though none of the above authors cites the source of his quotation.[2] Do these brief undocumented references to Melanchthon's writings accurately convey the reformer's view of Romans? The purpose of this short essay is to investigate Melanchthon's compendium quote, and more broadly his hermeneutical approach, to determine if modern NT scholarship has represented him accurately.

The Famous Compendium Quote

Eduard Schweizer is one of few scholars who correctly notes that Melanchthon's compendium quote is from the introduction to the reformer's 1521 edition of the *Loci Communes*.[3] The quote is found in section 2.1.7 of *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* and page sixty-nine of the English rendering of the *Loci* by Charles Leander Hill. What exactly is the context of this quote and what did Melanchthon mean in referring to Romans as a compendium of Christian doctrine? Let us begin by providing a fuller version of the quotation:

> In the Epistle to the Romans, when he drew up a compendium of Christian doctrine, did Paul the author philosophize about the mysteries of the Trinity, the mode of the Incarnation or about "creation active and

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[1] J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate* (rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 327.

[2] Karl P. Donfried, "Introduction 1977," in *The Romans Debate*, xli; Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Purpose of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 231; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 9; Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 121. Though Renan does not specifically name Melanchthon, he alludes to the compendium quote: "Ce n'est plus l'Épître aux Romains qui est le résumé du christianisme, c'est le Discours sur la montagne" (Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul* [Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1869], 570).

[3] Eduard Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 1; cf. L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 14-15.

> passive?" On the contrary, what does Paul do? He reasons most certainly about the Law, Sin, and Grace. Topics, I say, on which alone the knowledge of Christ depends.[4]

The above passage comes soon after another frequently quoted portion of Melanchthon's Loci:

> I do not see how I can call that man a Christian who is ignorant of the remaining topics such as the power of sin, the law and grace. For by them is Christ properly known, if indeed this is to know Christ, [namely], to know his benefits and not as they teach, to perceive his natures and the mode of his incarnation.[5]

From looking at the compendium quote in its original context, it is clear that Melanchthon is contrasting Paul's discussion of the more pragmatic aspects of the Christian's experience (law, sin, and grace) with discourse over the minutiae of trinitarian doctrine or similarly obscure theological subjects (i.e., topics the scholastics preferred to discuss). Melanchthon asserts that Paul addresses practical matters which affect the conscience and daily life as opposed to abstract or non-soteriologically significant doctrines. This meaning of compendium doctrinae Christianae differs from the sense given to the term in modern scholars' reference to it. Arguably, irresponsible quotation of the Loci has led modern readers to believe that Melanchthon thinks Paul presents the reader of Romans with a full-orbed presentation of Christian doctrine. This is not what Melanchthon says.

W. G. Kümmel argues that we should not consider Romans a "compendium of Christian doctrine," as Melanchthon does, because Paul does not deal adequately with eschatology and Christology. Nor does the apostle even mention church order or the Lord's supper.[6] Ironically, Melanchthon's quote, which Kümmel cites as a simplistic misunderstanding of Romans, actually presents roughly the same view of Romans as Kümmel. The letter is not an abstract summary of all aspects of Christian belief and practice; this is what the scholastics would have meant by a "compendium of Christian doctrine." Melanchthon, on the other hand, means a collection of soteriologically-

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[4] MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: "Paulus in epistola, quam Romanis dicavit, cum doctrinae christianae compendium conscriberet, num de mysteriis trinitatis, de modo incarnationis, de creatione activa et creatione passiva philosophabatur? At quid agit? Certe de lege, peccato, gratia, e quibus locis solis Christi cognitio pendet." The English translation is by Charles Leander Hill (Philip Melanchthon, The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon, trans. C. L. Hill [Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944], 69). The standard critical editions of Melanchthon's writings are K. Bretschneider and H. Bindseil (eds.) Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis Opera, quae supersunt omnia, 28 vols. (Halle [vols. 1-18], Brunswick, NJ [vols. 19-28]: Schwetschke, 1834-60; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1963), and Robert Stupperich (ed.) Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl, 7 vols. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1951-75). These series are abbreviated as CR and MWA.

[5] MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: "Reliquos vero locos, peccati vim, legem, gratiam, qui ignorarit, non video quomodo christianum vocem. Nam ex his proprie Christus cognoscitur, siquidem hoc est Christum cognoscere beneficia eius cognoscere, non, quod isti docent, eius naturas, modos incarnationis contueri." English translation: Hill, 68.

[6] Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, 17th ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 312.

significant and pragmatically valuable teaching on the Christian life.

Two other caveats should be made when using the compendium quote to explain Melanchthon's hermeneutic. First, one should remember that the quote is taken from the reformer's systematic theology rather than from one of his commentaries on Romans. While the Loci is based on Romans, it was intended to be more of an abstract synthesis. Second, the reference to Romans as a compendium doctrinae Christianae is missing from later editions of the Loci, and thus Melanchthon himself may have been uncomfortable with possible misunderstandings of his words.

Melanchthon as New Testament Commentator

As we turn to Melanchthon's commentaries to investigate his hermeneutical approach, we must remember that he wrote prior to the rise of the critical method and its historical consciousness. Thus, Melanchthon was most concerned with the current-day application of the biblical text (i.e., the reforming result of biblical study). A "commentary on Scripture" to Melanchthon meant something quite different from modern biblical scholars' use of the term "commentary."[7] Melanchthon's approach generally respects the original historical context, yet is most concerned with the enduring didactic value of the text. To discover this enduring value of a biblical book, Melanchthon argues, one must understand the author's purpose in writing, or one can easily get mired in the misinterpretation of individual verses taken out of context. Melanchthon explains his exegetical approach in the Praefatio to his commentary on Colossians:

> Just as it is usual for other works to begin with the establishment of their theme, so it is with Paul's letters: the reader is first to be shown, what subject is under discussion, what the status of the letter is, what--as the Greeks say--is hypokeimenon [what is presented]. The purpose of this is so that he should know what to look for in the book as a whole, and what to expect from it. You will not be reading profitably, if you simply abstract isolated statements from it. It should be read as a single continuous address, so that there may be drawn from it one established statement that is capable of strengthening and teaching the conscience. Those who are [forever] departing from the general scope and purpose of the book as a whole fail to do this.[8]

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[7] See Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (eds.) Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); also see Kenneth Hagen, "What did the Term Commentarius mean to Sixteenth-Century Theologians?" in Irena Backus and Francis Higman, eds., Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse (Geneva: Droz, 1990): 13-38; chapter 2, "Les Commentaires de l'écriture," of Jean-François Gilmont, Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 71-92.

[8] MWA 4.211. The Latin original: "Sicut in aliis scriptis principio constitui solet, quod sit argumentum operis, ita in Paulinis epistulis primum monendus est lector, qua de re dicatur, qui sit cuiusque epistulae status, quod, ut Graeci dicunt: u(pokei/menon, ut, quid petere et exspectare ex toto scripto debeat, sciat. Nec utiliter legeris, si tantum mutilatas sententias inde excerpseris, totius orationis series cognoscenda est, ut inde colligatur certa sententia, quae munire conscientiam et docere possit, quod, qui non faciunt, ii saepe in universum aberrant a totius scripti scopo ac propositio." The English translation above is by D. C. Parker (Philip Melanchthon, Paul's Letter to the Colossians, trans. D.C. Parker [Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989], 29). C. Joachim Classen notes that Melanchthon, in his biblical commentaries, is interested in helping the reader understand "the intention of the letter as a whole, the general line of [8] the argumentation and the structure of particular arguments" (C. Joachim Classen, "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the1992 Heidelberg Conference [Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 274). Cf. T. H. L. Parker, Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans 1532-1542 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 4-5.

In order to determine properly the guiding purpose of a biblical book Melanchthon employs his knowledge of classical rhetoric.[9] The reformer's treatment of Romans in his 1540 commentary is a prime example of this approach.[10] Melanchthon names the two major propositions in Romans as: [1] sin exercises universal dominion over humanity (Rom 1:18),[11] and [2] God justifies unmeriting sinners by faith (Rom 3:21f.).[12] In submitting the remainder of his exegesis to these guiding propositions, Melanchthon agrees with his prior statement in the Loci, i.e., that Romans is a compendium of Christian doctrine—an exposition on the essential matters of salvation.

While Melanchthon views Romans as primarily a document about salvation, it remains an occasional letter to him. A brief look at his treatment of Romans chapter 1 confirms this fact. Melanchthon does not simply apply the text; he repeatedly notes Paul's first-century context.[13] Then, Melanchthon makes an explicit comparison to his own time period—drawing out the implications and significance of Paul's intended meaning. Melanchthon's clear understanding of this distinction between the original context of Romans and his own time is emphasized by the phrases with which he introduces the comparisons to his own time period, e.g., "In the same way . . ." (Eodem modo . . .),[14] "So also at this time . . ." (Ita et hoc tempore . . .),[15] and "Now let popes and monks be compared with the picture Paul paints" (Iam ad imaginem Pauli conferantur Pontifices et Monachi).[16] A careful reading of Melanchthon's commentary will confirm this pattern. While Melanchthon's primary concern is to uphold the truth of the gospel by attacking falsehoods of his day and leading readers to a proper understanding of the gospel, the text of Romans remains for him a letter written by a first-century apostle to a

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[9] Schneider writes, ". . . Melanchthon construed Scripture literally as sacred rhetoric, oratio sacra, and that detailed tracing of how this construal governed his hermeneutical processes and systematic formation of doctrine is indispensable both to understanding and to assessing him and the prevailing historiography" (John R. Schneider, Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990], 6).

[10] The 1540 commentary is found in volume 15 of Corpus Reformatorum. Fred Kramer recently translated this work (Philip Melanchthon, Commentary on Romans, trans. F. Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia, 1992]). This commentary is a revision and expansion of Melanchthon's earlier Commentarii in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos (Wittenberg: 1532). The 1532 edition is most easily accessed in volume 5 of MWA. See Schäfer's excellent article on this earlier edition (Rolf Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik im Römerbrief-Kommentar von 1532," ZTK 60 [1963] 216-235).

[11] CR 15.561 (Evangelium arguit omnes homines ac pronunciat omnes sub peccato esse . . .). Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.69 (omnes homines [sunt] sub peccato).

[12] CR 15.586-87. Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.99 (Fide iustificamur).

[13] I do not want to overstate this point. Admittedly, one could find many sections of Melanchthon's commentary which at first glance seem far removed from the historical context of Paul's letter. I would argue, however, that underlying Melanchthon's extended application of the text is always a knowledge of the text's origin.

[14] CR 15.549.

[15] CR 15.554.

[16] CR 15.555. I am following Kramer's translation here (68).

first-century congregation in Rome.[17] In fact, authorial intention remains key for Melanchthon because it is only the author's intention to construct his letter according to a rhetorical scheme which can justify Melanchthon's over-arching hermeneutic.[18]

Melanchthon also notes the importance of authorial intent in his commentary on Colossians. This quotation needs to be reproduced here because it so clearly presents Melanchthon's apologia of his rhetorical approach:

> It may perhaps seem inept of me, to relate Paul's prose to rhetorical conventions. But it is my opinion that the Pauline style of writing can be better understood, if the series and dispositio of each section is taken into consideration. For the material itself shows that Paul did not write completely without any order or ratio. He has his loci in which he prepares the minds of the readers; he has his particular method of teaching and of explanation. Not to notice this in our exposition would be simply doing what the Greeks call jumping in the dark or, as Chrysostom says, nyktomachein [fighting in the dark].[19]

An Evaluation of Melanchthon's Rhetorical Hermeneutic

Calvin and Erasmus criticized Melanchthon for twisting the biblical text to fit his rhetorical scheme.[20] The modern scholar Rolf Schäfer has made a similar accusation.[21] Nevertheless, Melanchthon's familiarity with classical rhetoric and cautious scholarship should give us pause before impugning his motives. The reformer wrote three handbooks on rhetoric and three works on dialectic--all in Latin. [22] Few, if any, modern rhetorical critics could claim such familiarity with their subject matter.

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[17] CR 15.546.

[18] CR 15.495. Cf. CR 1.1044. See Schäfer's account of Melanchthon's evolving view of Paul's rhetorical background and intentions (Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 218f.)

[19] MWA 4.214-15. The Latin original: "Videar fortassis ineptus, si Pauli sermonem ad rhetorica praecepta conferam. Ego tamen sic existimo intelligi melius posse orationem Paulinam, si series et dispositio omnium partium consideretur. Neque enim omnino nullo ordine aut nulla ratione scripsit Paulus, id quod res ipsa ostendit. Habet suos locos, quibus praeparat animos, habet suam quandam docendi et narrandi rationem, quam in enarrando non animadvertere, quid aliud est, quam quod Graeci dicunt: in tenebris saltare, seu ut Chrysostomus ait: nuktomaxei=n." English translation by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 32.

[20] John Calvin, Iohannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, ed. T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.45-50. In an October 1534 letter to Sadoleto, Erasmus wrote, "Miseram Commentarios Melanchthonis, non vt illos imitareris (nec enim alibi magis torquet scripturam, vtcumque miram professus simplicitatem), sed quum illic commemorantur variae multorum opiniones, sciebam tuam prudentiam illinc excerpturam quod ad mentis Paulinae faceret cognitionem." (PSA XI, 45). In June 1533, in a letter to Boniface Amerbach, Erasmus wrote, "Venditur istic commentarius nouus Philippi Melanchthonis in Epistolam ad Romanos; in quo sibi placet—et multa praeclare dicta fateor. Sed in multis displicet. Torquet multa, arroganter reiicit Origenem et Augustinum, non pauca transilit. Legi quaterniones aliquot." (PSA X, 244-45). PSA is the standard abbreviation for the 12 volume set, P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, eds., Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami (Oxford: University Press, 1906-58).

[21] Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 222.

[22] They are: De Rhetorica libri tres (Wittenberg, 1519), Institutiones Rhetoricae (Hagenau, 1521), and Elementa rhetorices libri duo (Wittenberg, 1531), Compendiaria Dialectices (Leipzig, 1520), Dialectices libri quator (Hagenau, 1528), and Erotemata dialectices (Wittenberg, 1547). See Classen, 271

Contrary to criticism, Melanchthon does not blindly apply his rhetorical hermeneutic to every biblical text. In fact, Melanchthon freely admits that 1 Corinthians does not fit a rhetorical scheme and that "the letter is not coherent in the way that Romans is."[23] In investigating 2 Corinthians, Melanchthon employs some rhetorical categories, but says the letter's structure is "mostly obscure and badly connected."[24] In his 1559 Enarratio Epistolae Pauli ad Colossenses, Melanchthon mostly abandons the earlier rhetorical outline that he used in his 1527 commentary on Colossians; at least, he makes little mention of it.[25] Also, for Melanchthon, OT prophetic speech sometimes provides the basis for Paul's rhetoric, rather than classical patterns.[26] Moreover, when classical rhetorical categories and terms do not adequately describe Paul's speech, Melanchthon is not hesitant to coin new terms.[27] For example, the reformer finds the three standard categories of rhetoric (forensic, epideictic, deliberative) inadequate to describe Romans and other biblical books, and thus proposes a new fourth category, genus didascalicum.[28] It must be remembered that "rhetoric" for Melanchthon was not primarily a series of classical forms, but "speaking correctly and elegantly."[29]

Such a complex rhetorical approach to the NT might be unexpected from a Reformation scholar, especially since recent articles on rhetorical criticism assume that ancient rhetorical categories were "rediscovered" in the twentieth century. Many scholars seem to think that Paul organized his letters with a knowledge of classical rhetoric, some of the church fathers understood his approach, and then the church was plunged into the dark ages of allegorical exegesis and prooftexting for church dogma.[30] James Muilenburg's 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature is often cited as the impetus for the modern flowering of rhetorical criticism.[31] Within the field of NT studies, scholars look to Hans Dieter Betz as a modern pioneer in this "rediscovered discipline." Betz first introduced his rhetorical approach to Galatians in an August 1974 lecture at the 29th General Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas at Siguna (Sweden).[32] Betz's 1979 Hermeneia commentary on Galatians applies in more detail the rhetorical analysis he originally proposed in his 1974 lecture.

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[23] MWA 4.16 (noted by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 21).

[24] MWA 4.86 (noted by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 21).

[25] CR 15.1223-82 (noted by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 23).

[26] CR 15.561.

[27] Classen, 273-74.

[28] CR 13.423-25 (or genus didacticum).

[29] CR 13.419 (from El. rhet.).

[30] Augustine used oratorical paradigms for biblical interpretation in his De doctrina christiana (A.D. 426). See Gerald A. Press, "Doctrina in Augustine's De doctrina christiana," Philosophy and Rhetoric 17 (1984) 98-120; James Jerome Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47-63; C. Clifton Black II, "Keeping up with Recent Studies: Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation," ExpTim 100 (1988-89) 255.

[31] For Muilenburg, rhetorical criticism is ". . . the study of the characteristic linguistic and structural features of a particular text in its present form, apart from its generic rootage, social usage, or historical development" (e.g., looking at word repetition, inclusio, chiasmus, parallelism, and poetic devices) [Black, "Rhetorical Criticism," 253].

[32] Classen ("St Paul's Epistles") writes of Betz, ". . . as Professor Betz stresses the novelty of his method [in his commentary], it seems obvious to ask why it was not discovered and used before or, as he mentions Luther, Melanchthon and Lightfoot in a footnote, were they the first and what did they do?" (268).

During the two decades following Betz's commentary, modern rhetorical criticism has blossomed. Numerous NT scholars have attempted to dissect Paul's rhetoric in Romans, usually with little or no acknowledgment of non-contemporary approaches (e.g., Melanchthon). Wilhelm Wuellner pioneered this modern rhetorical approach to Romans, and was followed by many others, including David E. Aune and Robert Jewett. Jewett's article, "Following the Argument of Romans," is possibly the best known contemporary rhetorical foray into Romans.[33] In this article, Jewett says he hopes the rhetorical method will provide an objective approach to understanding Paul's argument and highlight the letter's occasional nature. Jewett sees the rhetorical approach as corrective of theologically-driven understandings of Romans.[34] Jewett concludes that the letter is an ambassadorial one, in which ". . . Paul aims to provide a theological argument that will unify the competing house-churches in Rome so that they will be willing to cooperate in a mission to Spain, to be mounted from Rome."[35] In contrast to Melanchthon, Jewett contends, "If one were to pose the traditional question of the 'high point' or 'climax' of Romans, it is surely to be found in the peroration in chapters 15-16 rather than in the abstract, doctrinal themes of the earlier part of the letter."[36] Jewett would agree with Schäfer that Melanchthon's interpretation of Romans is driven by outside theological concerns. One might question whether Jewett's rhetorical approach is not equally conditioned.

Dunn gives a balanced summary of modern rhetorical approaches to Romans:

> The key fact here is that the distinctiveness of [Romans] far outweighs the significance of its conformity with current literary or rhetorical custom. Parallels show chiefly how others wrote at that period; they provide no prescription for Paul's practice and no clear criterion by which to assess Paul; and the fact that no particular suggestion has commanded widespread assent in the current discussion suggests that Paul's style was as much or more eclectic and instinctive than conventional and conformist.[37]

In agreement with Dunn, we judge "the new rhetoric" to hold greater promise than classical rhetoric for understanding Paul's letters. Rather than seeking to fit Paul's letter's into a classical rhetorical mold, "new rhetoric" looks for distinctive patterns and markers within the apostle's speech and then lets these divisions guide our outline of Paul's thought.[38] Melanchthon approaches this flexibility of the new rhetoric with his openness to coining new terms, abandoning rhetorical schemes when they are not helpful, and looking to the OT as a pattern for Paul's speech.

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[33] Robert Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in The Romans Debate, 265-77.

[34] Ibid., 265-66.

[35] Ibid., 266.

[36] Ibid., 276-77.

[37] James D. G. Dunn, "The Formal and Theological Coherence of Romans," in The Romans Debate, 245-46.

[38] Hansen argues that the successful application of "the new rhetoric" to Paul's letters show that the observation-based elements of rhetoric are what make Paul's letters fit a rhetorical outline. Hansen notes that classical rhetoricians composed their rhetorical manuals based on observations of what did and did not work in speech. Quintilian compared the rhetorician observing rhetorical patterns to a doctor noting the medicinal properties of herbs (G. W. Hansen, "Rhetorical Criticism," in G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid, eds., Dictionary of Paul and His Letters [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 822-24.

Conclusion

As we saw at the outset of our study, Melanchthon is often presented as a simplistic misinterpreter of the Scriptures. Yet, in examining Melanchthon's actual writings and secondary studies of his rhetorical hermeneutic, we have discovered that the reformer is more exegetically sophisticated. Melanchthon does not present Romans as a systematic theology dealing with all topics of Christian theology, such as eschatology, the Lord's Supper, and church order.[39] He treats the text as a presentation of the gospel (i.e., soteriologically-significant and pragmatic doctrine). Though Melanchthon's rhetorical approach may seem forced at times, it arguably presents the major themes of Romans accurately.[40] The reformer's approach allows us to look at Romans as a unified message--something the framing epistolary brackets of the letter encourage (Rom 1:11-17, 15:14-33).[41]

[39] Contra Kümmel's unfounded accusation (Introduction to the NT, 312).

[40] Melanchthon's emphasis on justification in Romans is really not that different from some modern scholars. For example, see Mark A. Seifrid, Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme, NovTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[41] For a further defense of the importance of these framing brackets, see Jervis. (See n. 3 for a full citation of Jervis.

SECTION 28

Filing and Saving Your Work

Filing and Saving Your Work

"The best teachers in any field of knowledge are those who remind students all their lives. It is particularly true of the ministry of the Word."
(John R. W. Stott)

"Plan your preparation time weeks ahead, and keep to your timetable. Show your people you love them by the time you spend in prayer and preparation."
(Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 167)

I. Filing

1. Purchase a standard four-door filing cabinet to begin. Add new cabinets as needed.

2. Develop both biblical and topical categories.

   a. Start your topical files from "Abortion" to "Zwingli" and add new topic files as needed.

   b. Start your biblical files with one on each book of the Bible. Eventually, you will want to expand this to one per chapter of the Bible. Later, you will want to break some chapters down to smaller separate segments (e.g., Eph. 1:1-14; Eph. 1:15-23).

II. Tapes

1. Purchase a dependable and, as inexpensive as possible, tape storage system (a "sound stacker"). Recognize CD's are on the way.

2. Develop a biblical, topical and author index system.

   a. Notebook for topics/authors
   b. Wide margin Bible for sermon text
   c. Tape and catalog your messages

III. Your Sermons

1. Conserve all your research work. Add to, but never reinvent the wheel.

2. Save your sermon notes. That makes it easy to recall them. Document well!

3. A notebook binder system is a proven method, as it individualizes sermon files.

4. Don't just read a book or listen to a tape, own it through proper conservation principles (Mark and record your observations/highlights).