

CLASSROOM IN A BOOK DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

4th

BOOK 12

HERMENEUTICS

A NEW LOOK AT HOW TO
INTERPRET THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out
by God and profitable for
teaching, for reproof, for
correction, and for training
in righteousness, that the
man of God may be complete,
equipped for every good work.

*"More than ever before, we need to screen out
the devil's influences from our interpretive efforts."*



GUARD AGAINST
DECEPTION



RIGHTLY DIVIDE
THE WORD



CONTEXT
MATTERS



GOD'S MESSAGE
FOR TODAY



APPLY THE WORD
FAITHFULLY

By
WILLIAM E. VINSON, JR., PhD



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CLASSROOM IN A BOOK DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

Book 12

HERMENEUTICS

A New Look at How to Interpret the Bible

By:
William E. Vinson, Jr.

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Preface

THE CLASSROOM IN A BOOK

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

The *Classroom in a Book Discipleship Series* is a unique approach to education. The author has over thirty years of experience in classroom teaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Internet teaching. The teachings covered Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Church History, Hermeneutics, Christian Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Evangelism, and Biblical Backgrounds. In other words, the teacher was a generalist in the world of specialization.

During my latter years of teaching at the seminary, God sent two people into the classrooms that have made this series possible. One student brought in some audio recording gear into the seminary classrooms and recorded everything said by teacher and students. The other person, Helen Agnew, transcribed the tapes into weekly sessions. Finally, Helen put all the weeks together for a course into a book, which became the nucleus for a formal book. Next came the editing phases in which the improper English and sentence construction was corrected. Also, the organization and thought flow was improved in order to facilitate a reader's comprehension.

Each class session became a chapter that went through several iterations of the editing process. Also, Helen provided computer drawings of the theological charts and models used by the teacher. These models were inserted into the book at the appropriate places.

INFORMAL WRITING STYLE

You should be aware that the chosen style of communication in this series of books is much more informal than the typical. I have worked to retain the folksy way of expression that I use in the classroom and pulpits. In a formal treatise, like my doctoral dissertation, the expression was stiff and formal (one may even say that it was written by a stuffed shirt).

So, who is going to read my dissertation because of its stiff formality?

These books are going to be easy reading because they will be what you hear in everyday conversation. In the classroom, I am a great communicator. When reading the transcripts of my audio-recorded classroom lectures, the students have commented that they could actually hear my voice with its inflection and volume in the printed words. These sensory experiences add to the impact and learning by the reader. So, I want you to know that the folksy level of communication was purposefully chosen in order to enhance your learning experience.

Dear saint, you are in for a treat. There will be points of time in which your mind will be so absorbed into thinking new and analytical thoughts of our Most Wonderful Lord, that you will be unable to resist sharing them with a loved one. In my editing passes of the various drafts, I found myself reliving the classrooms and all the high emotion and drama. My pulse rate would quicken and convictions and tears would return.

CLASS PROCESS

Each book is a semester-long class. The subject matter is explored very thoroughly because all the students are participating in the questioning and answering. You will have the next best thing to being in the classroom. In fact, there will be times in your reading in which you will be in the classroom through imagination.

BENEFITS

Discipleship has been declared by many to be the greatest need in Southern Baptist life today. In my many years of teaching, I have had churches to bus in many of their members to take my classes at Southwestern Seminary. The reason that was given was that it was a

very good source for discipleship training. This discipleship training is a step up from Sunday school and other training because *it adds seminary training at the lay level*. Armed with this new discipleship training, the new lay ministers are fulfilling their calls and impacting the Kingdom of God in a very positive way. Pastors are benefiting by having some new lay ministers to help them minister. Churches and society are benefiting by receiving positive help that is theologically sound and practical.

For you, the busy Christian of today, this series is a rare opportunity to actually participate in a seminary classroom to learn from the teacher and your peers in high impact and focused studies that are not available in any other books. The teacher's experience of teaching as a generalist will provide *interconnected insights and truths* that are not available in specialization. The *student interactions* in these books will create a *relevancy* that is unheard of outside the classroom. The

quality of the *class dynamics* will lift you, the reader, up into unparalleled densely packed teachings that will greatly improve the *efficiency of your learning*. You owe it to yourself to jump into this series because you can get an education that is the next best thing to actually going to seminary.

In addition to the student interactions recorded in each chapter, the major points that I made which would be the source of the tests given to the classroom students are stated in the text, and the *test questions* are stated at the end of each chapter (class session). The *answers* to those tests are given at the end of the book for you to check yourself. If you seriously want to know that you have accomplished the goals of each chapter and to be able to teach a course like this, answer those questions to the point that you can do so without going back into the chapter itself—i.e. memorize those points and charts.

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INTRODUCTION

Hermeneutics are the methods of interpretation.

Scripture is God's chosen medium to bridge the gap between His Mind and our minds. His part was completed perfectly because He is the One Who provided the perfect words to convey His Thoughts and the descriptions of His Actions. Our part is the interpretation of those perfect words from God, i.e. hermeneutics. God's Spirit helps us to understand His Word via the illumination part of the doctrine of revelation.

The word hermeneutics came from the Greeks. Hermes was the messenger god of Greek mythology who brought messages from heaven to earth.¹ Those messages could not be received without someone to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Thus, Hermes was the one selected to carry out those duties. Hermeneutics became the word that described receiving and understanding the messages from heaven.

It is a fact that Christians need divine help for understanding the Scriptures from God. However, the word hermeneutics has been adopted by elite Progressivism for explaining how they get their cryptic messages out of plain texts. Thus, over the centuries many different hermeneutics have developed along side of the Church's doctrine of illumination.

Messages between humans can be sent and received within the realm of human

capabilities. The interpretation of strictly human messages was without need of any special supernatural help. But today, there are many different hermeneutical practices that have grown up around evil's progress.

Strange as it may seem, the elitist Progressives of today think that their elitist minds connect with a cosmic spirit, a cosmic intelligence that shows them via their wisdom the plans for ushering in worldwide utopia. These elitist Progressives don't necessarily believe in a personal cosmic spirit (I assume you know that the cosmic spirit is the devil). They can even claim to be Christians. However they are unknowingly(?) serving the devil's plans for globalism. Thus they are reading into all documents their own meanings that always move society towards their preconceived utopian goals.

Elitist Progressive hermeneutics are now pervasive in the schools and colleges. We have not escaped their influences that have now invaded the Church. Elitist Progressive hermeneutics are very destructive for the original meanings of written documents, such as the Bible. Ancient written documents are being interpreted to mean nothing close to their original meanings.

More than ever before, we need to know how to screen out the devil's influences from our interpretive efforts so that we can achieve proper interpretations, translations, and understandings of God's Word. Meeting this need is the goal of this course.

¹ An image of Hermes used to be on our dimes long ago. It was the bust of a person wearing a helmet with two little wings. The wings designated him as super fast so that he could serve as a messenger.

Chapter 1 SCRIPTURE

In this course, we will be learning how to interpret the Bible. The technical word for interpreting the Bible is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a Greek crafted word that means obtaining the intended message. For this class, hermeneutics is the study of the methodological principles of interpretation, especially as applied to interpreting the Bible.

We all use hermeneutics whether or not we know what we are doing. Many lay people accept someone else's hermeneutic—usually that of their pastor, a parent, or a Sunday School teacher. Many clergy have accepted the hermeneutics of a professor or of their denomination. Some Christians accept the hermeneutic of whatever preacher happens to be on television.

The study of hermeneutics is the new frontier because the Word of God is provided to us in human words that must be interpreted in order to obtain their divine meaning. To be interpreted, the Bible must be read, and to be read, it must be opened. This is the same basic process described in Romans 10:14: “How can they hear without a preacher....”

When we read, we employ a hermeneutic. However, our hermeneutics are encumbered with all kinds of personal baggage. For example, “I’ve come that you may have life more abundantly” (paraphrased). This verse can be read with a *kenotic* theology (keeping to the humility of the *Kenosis*, i.e. emptying of self as shown in Chart 1.1). In this case, to walk sacrificially with Jesus through trials and tribulations for His glory is the most abundant life possible.

Another option, however, is that this verse can be read with the opposite of the *kenosis* (see chart 1.2) in which the reader may believe that we are being offered a life of ease and plenty. These are two hermeneutics that produce two different meanings and two different Christian lives.

Our hermeneutic is of crucial importance

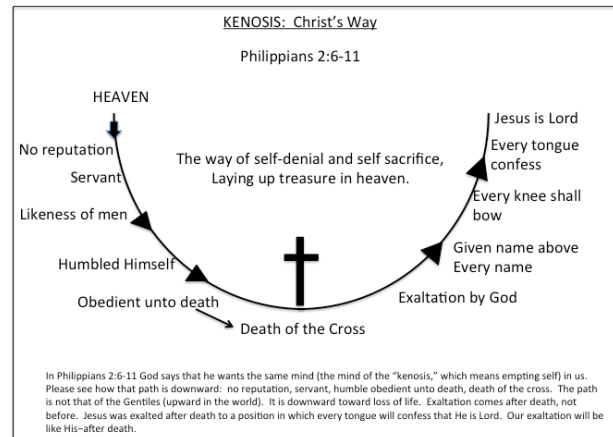


Chart 1.1

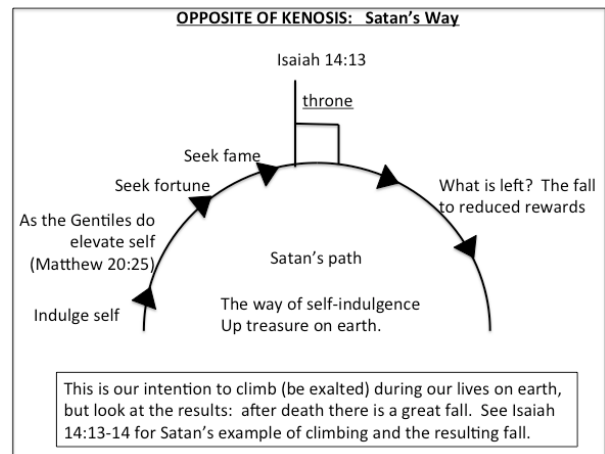


Chart 1.2

to us today in the face of so many winds of demonic doctrines. Our understanding of the Word of God could mean the difference between heaven and hell for ourselves and for those around us. Think of the doctrine of sacramentalism, which proposes the storing up of saving grace as a substance in the church's treasury of merit to be dispensed by the priests to needy sinners.

Millions of people simply accept the papal decrees in place of their own hermeneutics being applied to the Scriptures. They make no attempt to interpret the Bible themselves. Because the pope historically has wanted maximum control over the people, he did not suggest that the laity should attempt to read

the Bible for themselves. Instead, the authorities reserved that right for their own experts.

Martin Luther, the one who tacked the 95 theses on the church door starting the Reformation, was a priest who had not studied much Scripture. Because he was so zealous, those in authority over him assigned him the job of studying Scripture in order to get him out of their hair. Fortunately for each of us today, they chose for him to study the book of Romans, which specified that salvation was given by God through faith. When Luther discovered that the Church teachings did not line up with the Word of God, he attempted to enlighten everyone. The Roman Catholic Church did not want Luther's enlightenment, and the persecution began of all who tried to understand the Bible rather than accept unconditionally the papal doctrines.

When you take the Church History course, you will study people of the Reformation like Menno Simons. Upon becoming a Catholic priest, Menno had not prepared for the ministry by reading Scripture fearing it would lead him astray. In his third year as a priest, he thought that the bread and wine might not be the actual body and blood of Jesus occurred frequently to him and he searched the Scriptures discovering that he had been deceived.

His faith in the Church was further shaken when a neighbor was beheaded for being rebaptized, Menno searched and found nothing in Scripture about infant baptism as a way of salvation.

The final blow to Menno's Catholicism came when the Catholics killed 300 Anabaptists, including his brother. When he saw that the Anabaptists were willing to die for their faith, he then renounced Catholicism and became an Anabaptist himself.

Adopting the Reformation's turning to God's Word, *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), vastly impacted Menno's life and that of

future generations. Menno's hermeneutics may not have been correct in all areas (Christian isolationism came from him), but he did correctly understand and live by *sola scriptura*, as best he could understand it.

The people who were produced from the Reformation weren't totally correct theologically, but they were much better off than those in the dark ages. I know that most of you are familiar with the hymn, *Victory in Jesus*. It begins, "I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory, How he gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me...." We American Christians are blessed because most of us have heard the old, old story—the Gospel—as children from our forefathers who had developed mostly good hermeneutics. But are their hermeneutics good enough to stake your life upon? I hope that you will leave this class with one thing: the determination not to base your Christian salvation and walk on tradition or upon what someone else has told you. You all must search the Scriptures yourselves and labor and labor in your studies while allowing the Holy Spirit to bring to you illumination for understanding the divine meaning and conviction for obedience.

This course on hermeneutics is for us to learn how to interpret the Bible correctly for ourselves. For this we will explore various ways and methods to develop our needed skills for interpreting the Bible. However, before we tackle the *how* of interpretation, we must establish the *what* of the doctrine of revelation.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

Chart 1.3 (on the next page) shows six classes of Revelation. These six classes are divided over two basic categories of revelation: general and special.

General Revelation

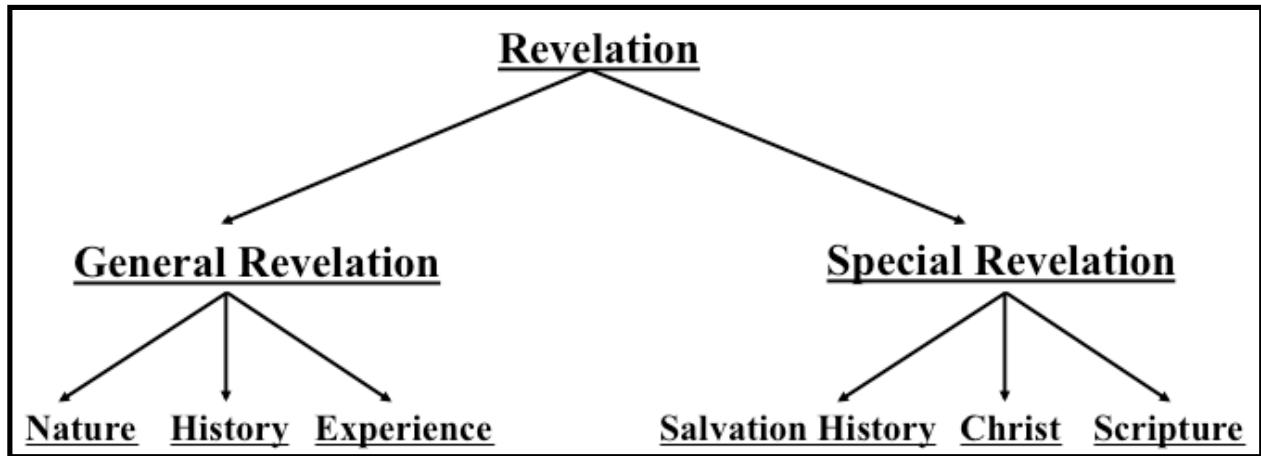


Chart 1.3

The first category of revelation, General Revelation, is generally available to all people. All can see nature and history, and all have experiences. These three classes of General Revelation are not selectively available to just some people; they are available to all people.

Nature is the makeup of the world. God manifests himself in the wonders of the heavens (sun, moon and stars) and in the beauty of the earth (mountains, flowers, forests, seas). You can know a lot *about* God by looking at the creation. Romans 1 speaks of how everyone can see nature and conclude that there had to be a creator. Because of this capability that is given to us via General Revelation, there will be no excuses acceptable for anyone denying the existence of God—this person is classified as a fool because of nature’s existence (Rom. 1:20-22).

History is the continuum of events over time of mankind on earth. History is linear and all of history bears the imprint of God's activity. God is revealed in the rise and fall of empires and nations—their histories reflect manifestations of God's involvements.

There is the sense that history is going somewhere and that the trip is under the authority of a big Someone Who is in charge of history. God can be sensed to be working behind the scenes of the history of mankind

Experience occurs in the God-shaped vacuum in every human. There are certain

behaviors and characters, which are marked on our souls to which our consciences call us. Humans mirror and reflect God because we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:22). Morally, our consciences tell us there is right and wrong. There is the wooing of conviction when God deals with the individual’s sins. There is also the paradigm of love by which we can discern the love of God and the reason for our desire to know God and receive His call to ministry to others.

These three classes of General Revelation are available to everyone, but they are not salvific. For salvation, we need Special Revelation.

Special Revelation

Special Revelation means that you and I do not discover the Lord or find our way to Him on our own. Therefore, God provided Special Revelation to mankind in order to point us to Jesus for salvation. He introduces Himself and His Son to us via Special Revelation. Special Revelation is revelation that is special, i.e. it is specially sent from God to a special people—all those people who are willing to receive it.

Special Revelation is special because there are requirements in order for you to receive something. Everyone can and does receive General Revelation; there is no excuse for ignorance, even an atheist can look at nature and see that there must be a Creator God. However, only special people, *willing*

people, can receive Special Revelation. If you are *not willing* to receive it, then you *will not* receive it.

Special Revelation is something given by God to a special people for a special purpose, i.e. salvation. It gives much more information about God than does General Revelation, and it also provides for an encounter with God. It contains enough information about God and power by God to be salvific for the reader who is willing to receive and believe.

The first class of Special Revelation, **Salvation history**, is that history that is peculiar to God's people—Israel and the Church. We see God's particular involvement when we look at the history of His people. In that involvement we will discern something about God, e.g. His love, patience, wrath, and discipline.

Christ is the supreme climax of God's revelation. Jesus is the Word and was with God in the beginning and was God. Jesus came to earth to be born as the Son of God and Mary in order to die as a sacrifice for our sins in order to reconcile us to God. Jesus is worthy of our adoration and worship, and according to Philippians 2:9-10 every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord.

Jesus is the Son of God, and when the people saw him, they saw God. During Jesus' incarnation, the people had the highest revelation from God that was possible. When Jesus spoke, it was the Word of God Who was speaking the Words of God.

Now that Christ has risen, He no longer meets us physically; He meets us spiritually. Christ talks to Christians one-on-one. This communication has a very subjective dimension to it now because it is subject to subject. Both subjects have wills. So there needs to be some strict guidelines for our understanding what He is saying to us in the encounter. That moves us to the last class of Special Revelation—Scripture.

Scripture is now the standard for us who live after the resurrection. It is our objective

norm for all classes of revelation. When we receive revelation without the objective normalization from Scripture, we lose our anchorage. We need our anchor to be hooked to something immovable—God's Word. Scripture is Special Revelation by God as the unchanging Word of God to mankind. However, only the special people (the people *willing* to receive it) will read and study God's Word as an authoritative guide for life. It is God's manual for entering and living the Christian life.

We have the objective Scriptures to use in our evaluation of all other classes of revelation. When we receive "revelation" from the other five classes, we must measure it against Scripture because Scripture is our objective norm. Without Scripture as an objective norm, we can subjectively discern what we want to from the other classes. However, even with the objective norm of Scripture, there is the danger of moving far afield in our subjectivity by using strange hermeneutics. An evident example would be reading meaning into the Scripture (*eisegesis*) rather than getting our meaning out of the Scripture (*exegesis*).

Please re-examine the two categories and six classes of revelation. As you move further to the left, under General Revelation, on the chart, you move away from what is salvific. People cannot get saved under General Revelation alone, but it gives them enough information to seek answers and be open to that which the Special Revelation provides. The three classes of Special Revelation can be salvific if they are interpreted correctly because they all contain the Gospel message. People who are liberal fall further to the left on the chart, and those who are conservative fall further to the right. On the far left of the chart are the most extreme liberals, i.e. nature worshippers.

I want you to hold to all six classes of the chart. None of them are bad, unless they are concentrated on to the exclusion of the others. You should be able to do a whole Doctrine of Revelation, regardless of what is your norm.

A person who holds to Scripture can still see God in nature. Do not choose one and discount the other five. Hold onto all six, but have one (the Scriptures) as your norm. If you understand and appreciate all six classes, you should be able to deal effectively with persons who hold to only one of the classes.

THE CLASS OF SPECIAL REVELATION DETERMINES THE HERMENEUTIC

Now, we will pay particular attention to the changes of the status of Scripture in each of the three classes of Special Revelation. A person in each of the three classes of Special Revelation will answer questions regarding Scripture in a different way.

The distinctions between the three classes of Special Revelation are slight and hard to distinguish, but each determines a unique hermeneutical approach to interpretation.

Salvation History

When Salvation History governs our hermeneutic, we interpret Scripture in our own accepted historical tradition. History points us to understand God in the same way that we understand other things. Thus our contexts have a large bearing on our hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics are an epistemological (knowledge-based) system. Man subjectively interprets the Scriptures through the lens of how the Scriptures have been interpreted throughout his own particular accepted tradition and environment. Through this class of Special Revelation, you will learn from the understandings of others “about” God in order to understand God yourself.

In this class of Special Revelation, it is assumed that the Scripture writer, who experienced the manifestation of God, writes his own interpretation of the act. However, the account is written within a certain context of history and tradition. In other words, the writer is not inspired with the actual words of the writing. He writes within an assumed context. The assumed context has been imposed on him by assumptions of a group or

denomination of churches or scholars. For example, the *kenotic* Christians are going to interpret the Scriptures completely differently from the upside-down *kenotic* Christians. Also Baptists interpret the Scriptures entirely differently from Catholics, etc.

In this hermeneutic, the scripture is *Geschichte*, the contextual interpretation of the act of God. This *Geschichte* is a man's subjective interpretation of what he saw God do or heard Him say. The Scripture would be only a human document under this class of Special Revelation. When this human document is read in the present day, the understanding is again couched within the framework of church history and tradition. Thus, the Christian with this governing doctrine of revelation gets an understanding of the Scriptures that is also subject to church history and tradition. If his church history and tradition are wrong, then so is his understanding of scripture (see Chart 1.4).

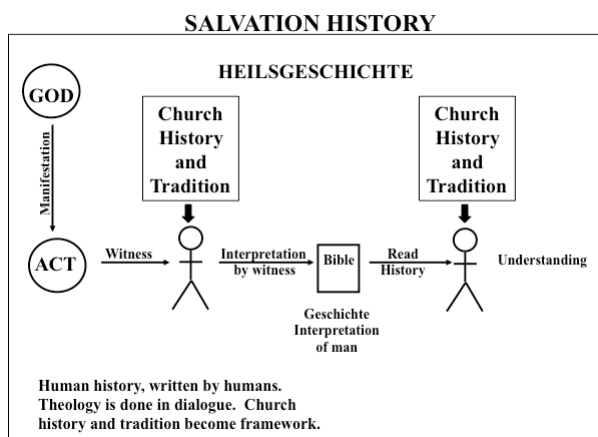


Chart 1.4

Personal (Act) Revelation

Concerning the **Christ** class of Special Revelation, scripture is the recording of an existential witness of a man. The existential witnesses are words that will bring about an existential encounter between the reader and Christ. This is an experience-based system in which scripture leads you to personal encounters with the Lord.

This class of Special Revelation is also subjective because it is based on a fallible

human witness who wrote the Scripture. Even though the prime witness is one of the Apostles or Old Testament Fathers, his understanding would be humanly fallible. Also the supposed understanding of the receiver of the message would be fallible as well.

To the left of Chart 1.5 is manifestation, which is God manifesting an objective act of some kind. The witness observes the act and is subjectively inspired by God to write an account of the act, which, in this case, is the Scriptures. This recording of the witness's interpretation of the act would be *Geschichte*, because it would be a human's interpretation of a historical event. The record of revelation is the witness's own account of what he saw.

The reader reads the *Geschichte* in present time and has a subjective encounter with the Holy Spirit. Inspiration has a different meaning here; it is entirely subjective because it is of the subjective *persons* of the Word and the reader, not of the objective written words.

The Scriptures are not the revelation in this scenario. The revelation is found only in the reader's encounter with Christ, the Word of God. The Scriptures provide only the arena and the catalyst for the revelation to occur in the encounter between Christ and the reader.

The original witness/writer was inspired to write his own account, but inspiration occurs also in the present day reader to get his own meaning not from the written account but from the encounter with Christ. As a result of the encounter, the reader is inspired to act on what Christ tells him person-to-person (subject-to-subject) in the encounter.

The inspiration with the original act and the inspiration today are both subjective in this model. You read the Scripture and Christ meets you like a lightning bolt from heaven. In this model, the information passed to the reader by Christ in their encounter is the revelation. This revelation is not tied at all to the words of Scripture. The words of Scripture just provide a meeting place and an occasion for the meeting to take place.

In this hermeneutic, illumination is not needed because it is replaced by inspiration. The reader is not illuminated to understand the Words of God in this doctrine. Instead, the Person of the Word of God, i.e. the Person of Christ, inspires the reader.

In Personal/Act Revelation, the reading of the Scriptures is done with human intellect because they are just the "*Geschichte*" which were also created with human intellect. In this model, the Scripture is nothing but a witness and has no more authority than that of the primary witness. The primacy of the Scripture is found in the primacy of the witness.

In Chart 1.5, the three vertical lines signify where: (1) God manifests Himself through acts in, history, (2) God inspires the witness to write an account of what he witnessed, and (3) God encounters the reader and inspires him to act (this act is why this doctrine of revelation is sometimes called Act Revelation).

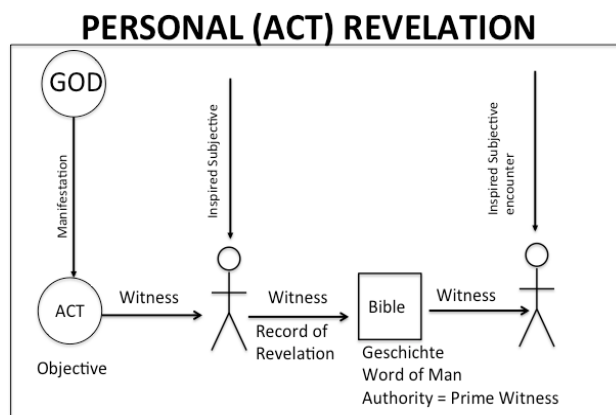


Chart 1.5

Propositional Revelation

Concerning **Scripture** as the normative class of Special Revelation, there is both objective knowledge content and also subjective experience content involved in the hermeneutic for Propositional Revelation. In this model, you receive the Words of God in the objective part, and you encounter God personally in the subjective part. In other words, this hermeneutic is both an epistemo-

logical and an experience based doctrine.

For the sake of contrast, please look back at Chart 1.5. This chart is a pictorial representation of Personal Revelation, which has too much subjectivity in it. It is all experience based. The prime witness is inspired (the downward arrow over his head) to write down what he saw in God's act of manifestation. The act was the revelation, and his writing about it is the record of revelation, not revelation itself.

The inspiration of the writer is subjective because he is inspired to write his interpretation (remember that to write something you have to interpret it first) of what God did. The Scriptures become mere *Geschichte* which is the human interpretation of the *Historie* (God's historical act). Their authority rests in the fact that the primary witness was there and saw the act.

Now in the present time, when man reads the record of revelation from the prime witness (the vertical arrow on the far right of Chart 1.5), he too may be inspired to act in a certain way if Jesus chooses to encounter him personally and call for a decision. This is called Personal Revelation because the inspiration to the reader occurs in the moment of personal encounter with the risen Christ. Some theologians call this doctrine act revelation because it calls for the reader to act upon the information received from the Person of Christ in the encounter.¹

Personal Revelation occurs in present time when the person of Christ reveals Himself in the context of the witness found in the Scrip-

¹ Acts are the foundation of Existentialism. This doctrine of Personal/Act Revelation is a synthesis of theology with the philosophy of secular Existentialism. Existentialism is the position that fulfillment or actualization of existence derives from acts. Ontology is not prime in Existentialism. Strangely, in secular Existentialism, God's order of things is reversed—one must act in order to fully exist. Thus, experiences are all important for development of personhood. Acts precede personhood. Others perform those initial acts, but from the point of existence onward, development of the self is achieved via acts of the self.

1. Scripture

tures. There is some validity in this concept. You can meet Christ this way; we all do. However, there is a lot of room for subjectivity to enter in because of the lack of an objective norm. We need an objective norm, and to find it please refer to Chart 1.6.

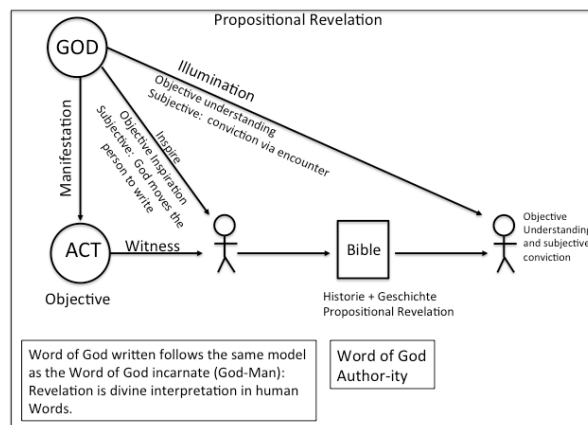


Chart 1.6

In review of *Historie* and *Geschichte*, remember that they are two German words for two facets of the one English word “history.” When studying theology, each of the two German words is translated as history in English because we have no words to distinguish their precise difference; the connotation is lost. *Geschichte* alone means something that is left of center when it is man's interpretation of the historical act. It is on the mark, however, if it is God's interpretation because the historical act is interpreted correctly, i.e. the *Historie* is retained in the interpretation..

So then, if God moves the witness to write the witness's own interpretation, it is human *Geschichte*, and therefore inaccurate interpretation. This is what you get in both Salvation History and also Personal Revelation.

On the other hand, God inspires the man both subjectively (moves the man to write the history) and objectively (gives the actual words from God's Own interpretation) in Propositional Revelation. *Historie* is the product of God's objective inspiration and *Geschichte* is the product of God's subjective inspiration. Thus, Scripture, God's inspired interpretation (objective *Historie*), is written

by God's chosen and inspired men (subjective *Geschichte*). It remains perfectly consistent with God. Scripture is simultaneously both *Historie* and *Geschichte* in the Propositional Revelation model.

Now the hidden problem for the conservative theologian holding to Propositional Revelation comes at the point of his own interpreting the inerrant Scriptures and getting wrong meanings because of our subjective biases. Just because the Scriptures are inerrant does not mean that our understanding will be inerrant. When we read and interpret the Scriptures, subjectivity has a chance to enter the results once again. Interpretations of Scripture are subject to changes with every man who, in turn, interprets God's Words for himself. Every reader brings a load of personal baggage with him to the job of interpretation. Therein lays the reason for this course.

Please understand that the word proposition does not mean what it is interpreted to mean on the street. In this study, the word proposition is a theological term which means a sentence construct made up of God's Words; the words mean what God means. In Propositional Revelation, the actual words, sentences, and paragraphs of Scripture are all infallible revelation from God.

There are three areas of propositional revelation: ***manifestation***, ***inspiration*** and ***illumination*** (refer to Chart 1.6). The first part of Propositional Revelation is an objective event in history that the witness could observe by seeing, hearing, or feeling. The witness observed the manifestation of God (he must see, hear, or feel something before he can testify of it).

After the witness observed the act, God inspired him subjectively to write a report of what he saw. God also gave him the interpretation of the act so that what was written would be accurate.

Inspiration is therefore both subjective and objective. The Scripture says exactly what God meant for it to say. Objective

inspiration is the interpretation of the act by God for the witness. For example, Moses saw God's parting of the Red Sea. Moses needed God to provide the precise words to interpret God's Own Act accurately. Without the objective inspiration, a problem of accuracy would arise. The writing would have been reduced to Moses' interpretation of a supernatural act.

When we read the original autographs² in Hebrew and Greek, we are seeing words and accounts written under God's inspiration. However, in order for us to understand divine words and supernatural accounts, our minds need to be elevated; this elevation is illumination. Illumination not only elevates our understanding but also gives us conviction. Conviction includes a spiritual encounter with the Lord Himself.

Scripture is the third and governing class of Special Revelation. Its distinguishing characteristic is in its doctrine of inspiration. Inspiration is defined in Propositional Revelation as God providing the interpretation of His Own Acts of manifestation. He moved the prime witness to write; this is subjective inspiration. However, He also gave the prime witness the understanding and interpretation of that act. Herein lays the objective content of the Scriptures.

Humans who were inspired wrote the Scripture, but God ensured the content of the writings to be His absolute Truth. Instead of *Geschichte* alone, the Scriptures became both *Historie* and *Geschichte*, the full aspects of history. These two Germanic words together comprise the full aspect of the English word history.

² The autographs are the original Hebrew or Greek manuscripts by the witnesses of God's historical acts. These Scriptures were since translated into the vernacular of the present Bibles. Thus it is imperative that you understand that every translation is an interpretation. For this reason, the various Bible translations have varying accuracies. Some translations are abominable in their twisted misrepresentations of Scripture.

Historie is the actual objective manifestation of God, and *Geschichte* is the subjective interpretation of that act. When man interprets the act, then the resulting scripture would be only *Geschichte* because all we have is the fallible interpretation of the act by a fallible man. However, when God interprets His Own Act, then the description is infallibly objective and describes the act itself. Thus, the English word history is an accurate word for the Scriptures because the word history means both *Historie* plus *Geschichte* together.

Also notice that inspiration is something that occurred in the past and is not continuing in the present. The Scriptures have all been written. They are not being added to by continuing witnesses.

So, what is happening today? The work of God continues today in what we call *illumination* of the reader. Illumination is God's help for finite man to understand the infinite Word of God. Without illumination, we would not be able to understand the things of God.

Also with illumination comes that other work of the Holy Spirit, i.e. conviction. Illumination is God's present day double work on the reader, which is both objective (understanding) and subjective (conviction).

Jesus is the incarnate Word of God, and as such, He is the God-Man. He is both divine and human. The Scriptures are the written Word of God, and follow the same model as Jesus. Thus, the Scriptures are both divine and human. God chose a human instrument via inspiration to write them. Then God chose the words used by the writer. God is, then, the author of the divine-human Words.

The authority of writings is based on the authority of the author. Authority is to be understood as author-ity. If a witness authored the Scriptures, then their authority would be fallible. However, if God authored the Scriptures, then their authority would be infallible and absolute because of their author-ity. This latter version describes the doctrine of Propositional Revelation, which means that the very

words of the Scriptures came from God's Own Mind.³

CONTRASTING THE HERMENEUTICS BETWEEN PERSONAL AND PROPOSITIONAL REVELATION MODELS

Remember that in Personal/Act Revelation, the Scripture is not *Historie*, but a human record of revelation (*Geschichte*). *Historie*, God's actual act of manifestation, is lost in this model, and all that is left is *Geschichte*, the mere human description of God's manifestation.

In Propositional Revelation, however, *Historie* is not confined to the time past of God's act of manifestation; God carries the *Historie* forward into the perfect interpretation of the *Historie*. The resulting *Geschichte* is the inerrant words of Scripture because the *Historie* and *Geschichte* are still together and aligned in perfect agreement.

God interprets His Own act of manifestation. Therefore, the words of Scripture are the perfect words to provide the reader with perfect history (divine *Historie* plus divine *Geschichte* plus human personality and writing). Via verbal inspiration, God allowed the writer's personality to show through His choice of words from the writer's personality and vocabulary. The writer was an active full partner with God in the writing of Scripture.

On the other hand, Personal Revelation assumes that the Word of God is not the written Word of God, but only the person of Jesus, the personal Word of God. Personal Revelation is the idea that the product from a personal encounter with the Person of Christ is the only revelation. Revelation is a Person-to-person encounter in which the Person of Christ gives a private message to the other person. When you look at theological text-

³ Proposition, in this kind of technical theology, is that the inspiration is applied to every word of Scripture. Thus the words are composed into sentences and paragraphs just as God intended them.

books, you will see revelation defined as God revealing Himself. That is true, but that is not all revelation is. When revelation is only God revealing himself to another person, where is the objective anchorage, which gives definition and consistent understanding to the message exchanged in the personal encounter?

On the Doctrine of Revelation chart, Propositional Revelation is the hermeneutic for the Scripture class on the far right of Special Revelation. The Word of God is in written form for this category of the doctrine.

In the middle column of the Special Revelation side of the Doctrine of Revelation chart, is Christ. Personal/Act Revelation is the hermeneutic for this class because the Word of God is considered to be the risen *Person* of Christ.

Propositional Revelation, like Personal Revelation, also has an encounter, but it is an encounter that conforms in every way to the objective propositions of Scripture.

We are to hold to and use all six classes of revelation on the Doctrine of Revelation chart. However, we should make proper and legitimate use of them. Personal encounters certainly happen, but they must not be all that we rely upon for our revelation because some spiritual encounters are with demons instead of Jesus.

Under Personal/Act Revelation, the Scripture is not inerrant because it is not composed of God's Words. It is composed of words selected solely by the human author. I have found that this erroneous Personal/Act Revelation hermeneutic is the most prevalent hermeneutic of today. It allows one to hold to doctrines that are explicitly rejected by the Scriptures.

In the Salvation History class of Special Revelation, the *Geschichte* becomes the German word *Heilsgeschichte*. This word is a compound German word composed of *Geschichte* and *Heils*. *Geschichte* is an interpretation of history, and *Heils* is German for salvation. On the far left of Chart 1.4, God is manifesting Himself in history with an act

observed by a witness who is inspired by God to write his description of it from his understanding within his own context of salvation.

Then in the present time, the reader reads the ancient description looking for understanding of how it applies to him within his own context. In this model, understanding comes through the context of Jewish, Christian, or church traditions for the modern day reader of the Bible. The contexts of God's people, both writer and reader, determine the interpretations of the manifestations of God within their own historical contexts.

What is our hermeneutic? When we read a passage, what do we believe? We generally believe what the Baptists have always believed. Thus church tradition, history, and current culture usually make up the framework for our beliefs. Church and tradition give understanding, which shape our applications.

A requirement of proponents of Salvation History is to do theology in dialogue with your church's corporate beliefs. In their opinion, studying alone to develop an independent understanding is not good because the church or denomination must provide the proper framework of your interpretation. This requirement purposes that your final understanding must fit within the organization's history and traditions.

This was the main model in the dark ages. During the Reformation, however, one man Martin Luther stood up and did not accept the Church's shaping of doctrine. I myself am saved because he searched the Scriptures rather than accepting church and tradition as the supreme guidelines.

At times we will all run to one model to escape another. Simply remember, you must never run from the Scripture's hermeneutic of Propositional Revelation. We should use the goody out of all the classes of revelation, but our governing standard should be the Scripture class.

Over against Propositional Revelation,

which is an understanding of the objective Words of God that brings about an encounter with the person of God, Personal/Act Revelation is an encounter stimulated by "*Geschichte*," or the interpretation of man about God. The authority, therefore, of the Scripture for Personal/Act Revelation is totally contained in the reader's spiritual encounter with Jesus. Remember that the authority is found in the author, and the author in Personal/Act Revelation is Jesus' private message to the reader.

In Personal/Act Revelation, who is the author of Scripture? The witness/writer is the author of Scripture, but the Scripture is not the revelation. Jesus, the Word of God, is the sole author of the private revelation that He gives "personally" to the reader.

Who is the author in Propositional Revelation? God is the Author because He selected the words for the writer of Scripture. In this scenario, the Scriptures retain God's absolutely accurate description. The *Geschichte* is an absolutely accurate description of the *Historie*. If a witness gives the interpretation, it is the witness's *Geschichte*, and the *Historie's* accuracy gets left out.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Some Christian theologians claimed inerrant interpretations by the Church and its authorities during the Dark Ages in which Salvation History was the ruling category of the Doctrine of Revelation. Since then, some of those "inerrant" theological positions have proven to be erroneous, e.g. the world is no longer considered to be flat.

The problem then became how can an inerrant declaration by the pope that has been proven to be false be made compatible with the continued claim of ecclesiastical and papal inerrancy? The excuse was found in the doctrine of Progressive Revelation. Under this doctrine, revealed "truth" changes over time. Thus, during the Dark Ages, the world could be considered flat for all intents and purposes for those times. Also the sun could be considered to revolve around the earth.

Progressive Revelation was invented to excuse the errors of the papal "inerrant" decrees.

When Christopher Columbus sailed off to find the new lands, it was discovered that the world was round, not flat. This new factor did not make the inerrant decrees of the past to be erroneous. The new factors were simply attributed to progressive revelation. All papal decrees are inerrant for their times and purposes under the doctrine of Progressive Revelation.⁴

In the face of Progressive Revelation, I would like to list some characteristics of Scripture that should not be attributed to this false doctrine:

1. The developing disclosure of God and His Will and Truth is seen through Biblical History.
2. Real progress is not from untruth to truth, but from a lesser to a fuller revelation (Heb. 11:1-3).
3. Fuller revelation is not contradictory, but supplemental.
4. The Gospel does not supersede the law, but fulfills it.
5. Prophecy about the Messiah who is a Suffering Servant is fulfilled in the victorious Jesus.

The perception of Jesus is projected differently in the various parts of the Bible as follows:

1. In the Law, Christ is pointed toward as the only remedy because sin has no remedy in

⁴The new Progressive label that is publicly claimed by most of our politicians ties in well with Progressive Revelation. Please be aware and beware of Progressivism. In Progressivism, the cosmic spirit guides the elite human decision makers placed by said spirit in government positions (our government is full of these people) in order to guide the world toward utopia. Changes in directions in a zigzag course of progress are not considered evidences of errors in said spirit's guidance of its Progressive elites in government. They are considered to be evidences of the changes that naturally accompany progress. Do not be fooled by becoming a Progressive and wrongly worshiping any such cosmic spirit.

- the Law.
2. Jesus is the promised Messiah in the Prophets as both the suffering servant and the coming king.
 3. In the Writings, Wisdom is personified as the Christ, and the Psalms refer to Him extensively and more directly.
 4. Jesus Himself introduced a Christocentric reading of the OT by interpreting the OT to be testifying of Himself.
 5. The Gospels depict the history of the Divine-Human Jesus.
 6. The Apostles were selected and trained to spread the message of Jesus.
 7. The NT is to be interpreted in light of Jesus as the model for understanding.

8. The book of Revelation shows Christ as the climax of revelation.
9. Jesus is only seen in the true sense via faith.

The Bible, in its original writings, should now be understood to be the inerrant Word of God. As such, its authority should be absolute because of its author-ity. Once we have our doctrine of revelation in place, our problem shifts to how to interpret the authoritative Word of God in a way to retain its inerrancy. The first requirement for this task becomes holding to Propositional Revelation as the foundation of our enormous endeavor.

Chapter Questions:

1. What is the Lord's purpose in giving the Bible to us?
2. What is revelation?
3. What are the parts of revelation?
4. What is Manifestation?
5. Define Inspiration.
6. Define authority.
7. Define illumination.
8. List the two basic categories of revelation and the 6 kinds/classes of revelation.
9. Name the hermeneutical methods that go with each class of Special Revelation.

Chapter 2

THE BIBLE

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Class, please understand that there are many translations of the Bible that are not valid because every translation is an interpretation. Many interpreters have agendas that they are pushing, and their translations are invalid. So, for the purposes of this class, please understand also that when I am referring to the Bible, I am thinking of a good translation, e.g. the KJV and the NASB among others.

Authority points to author. The authority of the words originates in the author. You have heard the expression: "Who said so?" One sibling often says this to another. If the parent sent the message through the child, then the message bears the authority of the parent. If the child is the originator of the message, then there is a lesser authority. An easy way to remember the definition is in the following spelling: author-ity. For purposes of the test, you may use the following as the answer: "Author-ity is found in the author."

Stott declares that authority "is the power or weight which Scripture possesses because of what it is, namely a divine revelation given by divine inspiration. If it is a word from God, it has authority over men."¹

Let us look at 5 verses, which detail authority.

1 Thessalonians

2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

2 Thessalonians

2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

2 Thessalonians

3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

2 Thessalonians

3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

1 Corinthians

14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

A question for you to ponder: Are men who question the authority of the Bible spiritual?

Max: According to 1 Cor. 14:37, no, he is not.

Larry: I think it is important for us to note the two key words in the verse. They are "think" and "acknowledge" or "recognize." Our thinking is always subjective. However when we recognize or submit to the authority of God's Word, that is objective. God's Word is the gauge for everything we do in our lives.

Jim: Men who question the authority of Scripture may be spiritual, but it is not the Spirit from God. It is one thing to test the Bible in order to come to a better understanding, plus we need to make sure that it is an accurate translation. It is another thing to question the authority. God wants us to test sometimes in order to know him more intimately, but not to question his authority.

Stu: Our spirituality is gauged by our acknowledgment of the authority of the Scripture. In other words, your depth of spirituality and your effectiveness as a prophet is

¹ John R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, rev. 1984) p. 139. This book was required as a textbook for the live seminary classes.

directly linked to the degree to which you acknowledge and submit to the authority of the Word of God in your own life.

V: Are men who question the authority of the Scripture Christians? To what extent can you question the authority of the Word of God and still call yourself a Christian?

Jack: The question should not be about the authority of the Bible. It is God's Word. The questioning should be about whether it is translated and interpreted properly.

Trouble:² To question the Word of God's authority is to question God's authority. There are Christians who view the Bible as "an" authority in their lives alongside other authorities. Their depth and effectiveness will be determined by the degree of submission to the Word.

Jose: There are Christians whose sole authority is the Bible (*sola scriptura*). They will flourish as they submit to the Word of God. It is simple: submit to the Word, flourish; reject the authority of the Word, flounder.

Helen: A true Christian cannot totally reject the authority of the Word and be a true Christian.

V: If God is the author of the Bible, then it is God Who gives the Bible its authority.

We all know that Jesus is Lord. Now, we must ask: Is Jesus the Lord of someone unwilling to submit to His authority? Our unwillingness does not remove the Lordship from Jesus. However, our behavior may be failing to recognize the fact of His Lordship over our own lives.

Salvation is our redemption from the bondage of sin. This redemption is a simple purchase. Jesus gave His mortal life to buy us. We belong to Him. He owns us. Thus, we are his slaves who get to serve the most wonderful Master ever possible. He has been elevated to the highest spiritual position pos-

sible that is considered to be the lowest position possible in the world's view.

Romans has a lot to say about the Lordship of Christ. Beginning in chapter 1:1-6, Paul describes himself as a servant—*doulos*. This word is translated as servant when it actually means slave.³ He is saying that he is literally a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the translators of the Greek manuscripts have chosen to weaken the word to servant in order to avoid the red flags that slavery raises.

Slave is a very strong word that means that you cannot be your own owner; it is not to be in charge of your own life. To be a slave means that you are at the disposal of someone else. The master can use you however he wants. To be submitted to the Lordship of Christ is to be an obedient slave of Christ. I think that my being a slave of Jesus is the highest honor that He can bestow on me. Life actually begins to be abundant in this slavery.

When you become a slave, you don't go where you want to go or do what you want to do. You don't live your life for yourself or make choices for your own betterment. When you become a slave, you become a vessel in another's hand. This other person tells you where to go and what to do and how to better serve him according to Matthew 20:25-28.

Matthew

20:25 But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The slave of God is to be a servant (*dia-*

² Trouble was a nickname that Dr. Vinson gave to one of his favorite students who had taken several courses from Dr. Vinson.

³ *Doulos* means bond slave, and *diakonos* means servant.

konos) to mankind. We are not to strive to exercise dominion over others but to serve them. This servant hood is dealing with the new relationship that God's slaves have with each other and with the people of the world whom God wants to save.

Paul is admitting, in those five verses listed at the beginning of this chapter, that he is a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is testifying that Jesus owns him, and it is a permanent relationship.

Paul has never visited the people he is writing to in Romans, but he starts out his letter with a red-flag word. He is promoting slavery as a good thing to a people whose practice of slavery was accepted as an inhuman but normal practice in their culture. The Roman citizens considered enslavement to be a position to be avoided at all costs. The people he is writing to are sophisticated and will question Paul's use of the word "slave."

This beginning of the letter to Rome is very important to Paul. He says that it was after the announcement of his slaveship to God that God called him. I want you to note the chronology here. Your call does not come before your slavehood. You must first be a slave. He didn't call Paul to be an apostle and let Paul decide when and where he wanted to be an apostle. First is the surrendering of the self into slavehood, and then the master will appoint you as an apostle, a preacher, a teacher, a carpenter, or something else.

We have lost this sense of vocation. Vocation is your call.⁴ There are people called to be carpenters, housewives, teachers, etc. You have a call and you have a gifting.⁵ To be responsible to your call, you must evaluate and strengthen your equipping and

then ply your calling in obedience to the Lord.

God can use in the present all that you have done in your past. God has a vested interest in you. As you were sinning in your self-centered rebellion, He sent angels to protect you and keep you alive. When you were doing right, He sent the Spirit to give you the power to do right. He has a vested interest in you; He bought you with the blood of His Son. You belong to Him; you must surrender the papers of your life, i.e. your will, to the Lord. Then He can use ALL of your history for His glory the way He wants to use you, and it can be a wonderful thing. Bad things of your past can be redeemed so that they now can be used for good.

God can take a person who is sour, mean and cruel and turn him around and fill him with His Spirit. Look at Motorcycle Ray⁶ in the back of this room as an example. Now that he has been redeemed, he can bear the fruit of the Spirit and use his spiritual gifts plus his natural talents to touch lives in his network of old friends and others in that motorcycle-gang culture.

God converts our past into something usable for good. This conversion is what God does with us. Every one of you has a history. Each of your histories is uniquely different and remarkable. If you are willing, God can work His miraculous power to convert your evil past into something that He can use for His Kingdom. Certainly, God does not make evil good, but He redeems something good out of our unsaved wasted lives when we surrender our all to Him. God turns the lemons of life into refreshing lemonade when we surrender to Him.

There is not one of you that God is not concerned with. He has given His time and effort, sent His angels to help you, and given His son for you. Now, it is time for you to surrender the papers of your life as a slave to Him. Then you can hear the call from Him,

⁴ Voca means call. Therefore, one's vocation is his calling by God.

⁵ When the Christian was reborn, God chose certain spiritual gifts to endow him with. These gifts are to give spiritual capabilities to complement the natural gifts and aptitudes that were given to him in his natural birth. The combination of spiritual gifts and natural gifts and aptitudes are the equipping necessary for being able to answer God's call to your ministry.

⁶ Motorcycle Ray was a former member of an outlaw motorcycle gang. He got saved and began preparing to meet his call to ministry.

not from self or others. Isaiah chapter 6 showed first the purging of the sin, and then after the sin was purged, Isaiah could hear God's call: "Who will go for us?"

After that purging, each of us will be ready to respond: "I'll go. Here am I, Lord. Send me." That is what I want for every one of you: "Here am I, Lord, send me." Hearing and answering God's call should be the thrill of your life. That is what slavery is; that is what the Lordship of Christ is about. So, I will ask the questions: Have you been purged of sin? Have you committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ by being willing to submit to His authority as His slave?

Is it possible to submit to the Lordship and authority of Christ and not submit to the authority of the Bible? Many Christians today pick and choose what portions of the Scriptures they adhere to and what portions they believe were only for the Jews of Jesus' day and culture. These people are in effect throwing out portions of the Bible. The Bible's truth is untainted by either the culture from which it comes to us or the culture to which it goes. The message of Scripture addresses mankind of every culture while simultaneously and authoritatively standing in judgment over the cultures.

We do not judge the Scripture, the Scripture judges us. Can you throw out portions of the Bible and still submit to the authority of the Bible? Look at Revelation 22:19 and ponder this verse.

Revelation

22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURE

What is the self-witness of the Bible for its authority?

1. In the Old Testament, God communicated with actual words, not just ideas.

Exodus

24:3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

2. The New Testament pictures divine and authoritative character for the apostolic word (Rom 1.5; 10.3; 16.26).

Romans

1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Romans

10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Romans

16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

3. In the Prophets are the words: "Thus says the Lord" (Jer. 1.4-9).

Jeremiah

1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, [and] I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I [am] a child.

1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I [am] a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I [am] with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

4. Fulfilled prophecy (Lk. 4.21).

Luke

4:21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Chart 2.1 is by no means a complete list as there are hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Old Testament	New Testament	The Prophecy/Fulfillment
<i>The Birth of Jesus, The Messiah</i>		
Malachi 3:1	Mark 1:2	Send messenger before him
Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:27	Born of a Virgin
Hosea 11:1	Matt 2:14, 15	The flight into Egypt
Jeremiah 31:15	Matt 2:16-18	The death of the sons under age 2
<i>The Death and Resurrection of Jesus, The Messiah</i>		
Psalms 35:11	Matt 26:60, 61	False witnesses rose up against him
Isaiah 53:7	Matt 27:12	When accused, he answered nothing
Isaiah 53:5	Matt 27:26	He was beaten for our transgressions
Isaiah 53:12	Matt 27:38	Numbered with transgressors
Psalms 22:16	John 20:27	They pierced his hands and feet
Psalms 22:8	Matt 27:43	He trusted God, let him deliver him
Psalms 22:1	Matt 27:46	Forsaken by God
Isaiah 53:9	Matt 27:57-60	Buried with the rich

Chart 2.1

Historic Christians and churches have consistently maintained the divine authority of the Bible.

- Luther espoused his faith to be in the Scriptures in the face of universally held faith in church history and traditions that contradicted the Scriptures.
- The 39 Articles of the Church of England and the Westminster Confession all called the Bible the Word of God.⁷
- The word, *theopneustos* means “God breathed” or “inspired” by God. 2 Timothy 3:16 uses this word to describe the Scriptures. Such writers as Clement, Origen, Eusebius and others have applied this principle to the New Testament.⁸

2 Timothy

3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

- Belief common among all Reformers was

that the Bible alone (*sola scriptura*) is our only rule of faith and practice.

- Josephus, Clement, Polycarp, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Athanasius, and Augustine all believed that the Bible was the holy inspired Word of God.⁹

Examine what Biblical writers have claimed.

1. Paul: (Galatians 1:11, 12, 15, 16; Eph. 3:1-10)

Galatians

1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians

1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace,

1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Ephesians

3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

⁷ H. D. McDonald, *What the Bible Teaches About the Bible*. Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL: 1980, p. 38.

⁸ Wick Broomall, *Biblical Criticism*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1957, p. 52.

⁹ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1976, p. 62.

3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

3:9 And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

2. The early Disciples (1 Thess. 2:13)

1 Thessalonians

2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

3. Peter placed the writings of Paul alongside those of the other Scriptures.

2 Peter

3:15 And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

3:16 As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The readers of Scripture commonly understand or believe in the unity and consistency of doctrine in the Bible. That unity and consistency is proven in the many fulfilled prophecies that have been thoroughly documented.

We know of the power of Scripture to transform lives. We have seen this phenomenon many times in ourselves, friends, loved ones, and in the biographies and autobiographies of many Christians.

Christ Himself makes the following Claims:

- Christ attributes the commandments directly to God.

Matthew

15:4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

- He also submitted to the Old Testament in his personal conduct

Matthew

4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Notice the words, "for it is written" which Jesus used in reply to Satan when overcoming the temptations. Jesus, God's Son, submitted to the authority of the Old Testament.

- Christ provided for the NT via the appointment of apostles: (1) He personally called each one, (2) He made them eyewitnesses of all that He did and said, (3) After ascending to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit so that they could be extraordinarily informed and directed, (4) Jesus gave them the power to work miracles.¹⁰

W. A. Criswell believed that the Word of God is a living message containing within itself God's own life (John 5:24).

John

5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Biblical Descriptions of Itself

1. The Word of God is a mirror, which reveals to us our true selves.

James

1:23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

¹⁰ W. A. Criswell, *Why I Preach That the Bible is Literally True*. Broadman Press, Nashville, TN: 1969, Pp. 14-15.

2. The Word of God is a seed that contains the life and vitality of the Lord.

Luke

8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

3. The Word of God is a sword, which pierces the heart and lays bare and naked our sinful souls before Him Who alone can save us from death.

Ephesians

6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

4. The Word of God is a life-giving word, the vehicle for imparting that life to us which is in Christ Jesus the Incarnate Word.

1 Peter

1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

If the Bible is considered uninspired with no authoritative rule for obedience, it will "contain advice instead of commands, suggestions instead of instructions, surmises of good men (perhaps not even good men) instead of promises of the faithful God."¹¹

Stott¹² anticipated several objections and criticisms of the Bible. His rejections of them are listed for the purpose of disarming the criticism:

- A denial of the Dictation Theory of Verbal Inspiration. The dictation theory states that man is a passive instrument whose own words, vocabulary, personality and mind are not used in the writing of the books of the Bible.¹³
- Stott does not believe that every word of the Bible is literally true.¹⁴ His arguments go as follows:

1. In Job 1-37, Job's friends gave him advice. In Job 42:3 and 7, God tells them ". . . ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right." Stott claims that we must not attempt to interpret God's Word apart from God's Word. A person who believes that every statement made by Job's friends was correct is not ". . . rightly dividing the word of truth. . . ."¹⁵

2. The statements by Job's friends "were recorded in order to be contradicted, not in order to be believed" (Stott, 141). Scripture is true in all that it affirms. There are things recorded in the Bible, which are not affirmed by the Bible. The recordings are true, but they are not always affirmed as proper behavior or beliefs.¹⁶

3. A lot of Scripture is presented in a highly figurative manner. There are many anthropomorphic (ascribing human characteristics to non-humans) statements in Scripture. We do not interpret these verses, which talk of God's hands and feet, eyes and ears literally. God is Spirit (John 4:24).¹⁷

4. Luke 14:26 is about hating your father and mother. Can you see the principle there of hyperbole? To be on the path of sanctification requires that you hate your mother and your father. But this doesn't mean hate your mother and your father. He means in comparison to your love for him, your love for your parents should look like hate, because you are to give your life for Him.

- Stott's third disclaimer regards the inspired text of Scripture. In Stott's opinion,

¹¹ Basil Manley, Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*. A. C. Armstrong, New York: 1888, p. 23.

¹² Ibid., Pp. 140-43

¹³ We will study the various theories of inspiration in the next lesson.

¹⁴ I and many other Southern Baptists would tend to argue with this statement

¹⁵ 2 Tim. 2:15. The Bible is correct in that Job's friends actually said these things even though their advice was wrong.

¹⁶ The Bible presents true history by giving both the bad and the good of actual events. It reports that which is wrong along with that which is correct.

¹⁷ *Class*, I tend to believe that God has those bodily parts, not physically but spiritually.

the inspired text is the original manuscript, or oldest copies, in their original language. For the Old Testament, this would be Hebrew and for the New Testament, mainly Greek.

In response to Stott's claim about untrue words, I think that he is confusing valid with true. Erroneous advice by Job's friends was actually made. The historicity of them is true. The *Historie* and *Geschichte* are present in the statements. However, the advice is not valid. God makes it clear when the statements are valid or invalid, but the statements actually occurred. All accounts are true: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

We will discuss the inerrancy of Scripture in more detail next lesson. For now, however, the inspiration and authority of the Scripture does not mean that any and every modern translation is totally free from error. In days of old, the Scriptures were laboriously copied by hand from one worn manuscript to a new one by scribes who spent entire lifetimes in such pursuits. There were mistakes made in copying the manuscripts. These mistakes were miniscule, for example, repeating a word, or omitting a word.

Mistakes are also made in translation. Every translation is an interpretation. **Burn this indelibly in your mind: Every translation is an interpretation.** Inspiration is not claimed for translators; it is only claimed for the autographs (the first writing). In the Twentieth Century, with myriad translations from many sources, it is naive to believe that every translation is totally error free and lacking in personal slant and subjectivity. An example is the feminist Bible that uses the feminine gender for God.

The only truly objective and trustworthy translation of the Bible is the original manuscript in the original language. Each time a Bible is translated, some of the personality and bias of the translator/interpreter slips into the new version. For personal reading, several translations are acceptable. However

extreme care must be taken in choosing the translation used for a serious study.

Learning the original language and studying the original text is the best option for serious study. A Strong's Concordance is a good source for those who cannot spend the time to learn the original Greek and Hebrew.

THE BIBLE IS A DIVINE/HUMAN BOOK.

The Bible is a divine book that was spoken by God to reveal Himself to us. The Bible is also a human book that was written by man under the inspiration of God and is read by man under the illumination of God.

Human writers write the Bible in human language. It contains different types of human literature including poetry, songs, sermons, parables, history, prayers, proverbs, letters and short stories. The Bible speaks truthfully about natural matters, such as science, in the language of common people. There is a diversity of writers, and it was written in Hebrew and Koine Greek over a period of over 1,500 years. As Jesus came in human form with a human mother, so the Bible was written in human language by human authors.

Jesus is the Living Word of God, the God-Man; the Bible is the written Word of God, the divine-human book. Let us not overemphasize either the divine or the human nature of Scripture. An emphasis on the human portion of Scripture, to the exclusion of the divine, is an Ebionitic view. An emphasis on the divine portion of the Scripture, to the exclusion of the human, is a Docetic view.¹⁸

¹⁸The Ebionitic versus Docetic views were the two views of Jesus that were battled out during the first four centuries of Christianity. Remember, an example of a Docetic view of Christ, as a spirit, is a picture of Jesus walking along the seashore leaving no footprints. The Ebionitic view was that Jesus was higher than man but lower than God.

Chapter Questions

1. *Doulos* is the Greek word frequently translated as “Servant,” but in fact it is literally _____; *diakonos* means _____.
2. Your slaveship must come before you are _____ to the work that God has for you.
3. The dictation theory states that man is a _____ whose own words, vocabulary, personality and mind are not used in the writing of the books of the Bible
4. What does “autographs” mean? _____.
5. Jesus is the divine-human Word of God incarnate, and the Scripture is the divine-human Word of God _____.
6. All translations of the Bible are _____.
7. T/F, the KJV Bible is an interpretation? _____.
8. T/F, the original autographs are interpretations? _____.

Chapter 3

INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY

In order to help you see the difference between revelation and inspiration, I am giving you a definition from Unger's Bible Dictionary. By the way, I don't want you to blindly accept everything you hear or read. Learn to look up definitions in dictionaries and search the Scriptures to find verses regarding the terms we study. If you leave this class with the determination to search the Scriptures and examine the statements and writings of others, you will have benefited greatly from this course.

Revelation refers to the truths or facts which God has made known about Himself that could not be known otherwise. Inspiration is the process by which the knowledge has come. This week, we are studying the process by which we have received the divine knowledge.

THE THREE THEORIES OF INSPIRATION

- Verbal

In this theory, God gives the actual words of Scripture. There are two additional theories about how God provided the actual words:

1. Dictation: In this method the human scribe is a passive instrument, like a pencil in the hand of God. God dictated the Scriptures to the writer who wrote them down as he heard them.
2. Accommodation: In this method, the human scribe actively participates with God by providing his own vocabulary and personality to blend with the supervision of God (you can see that Paul and John's writings differ).

In the Verbal Accommodation theory, God causes the writer to write his own account of the witness, but God provides His divine interpretation of the account through the writer. So the result is God's account in the writer's own words. *This*

accommodation method of verbal inspiration is what I personally hold to.

- Plenary: In this theory, there is less specificity of the details. Inspiration is of the whole but not necessarily of its parts. There are two methods for this theory of inspiration.
 1. Inerrancy is in doctrine, not history. This means that the Scriptures themselves are not inspired by God as His inerrant Word, but the doctrines that are intended to be produced by the scholar's study of them are inerrant.
 2. Inerrancy is in the functions of the Scriptures. Functional inerrancy means that God's intentions of salvation and guidance for life are inerrantly provided by the Scriptures. The Scriptures in this version of the plenary theory gives practical or "functional" inerrancy.
- Dynamic: In this theory, the Bible is the adequate record of God's revelation for guiding our faith and practice. Dynamic means power. Thus in this theory, the Scriptures have adequate power to achieve God's intentions. There is little concern for the actuality of the events of history or the inerrancy of the recording of said events.

Under verbal inspiration, the words themselves are inspired. Under plenary the whole, but not the words, is inspired, i.e. the message is inspired, but not each word. Under dynamic, the inspiration is in God's investing the power of salvation into the Bible.

To properly understand inspiration, we must understand the Deity of Jesus. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God." This indicates the deity of Christ. Jesus transcended time. He was in the beginning even before creation. As a matter of fact, He is the creator.

THE WORD OF GOD

What is the Word of God? Does the Word of God have ontology, or has it just functionality? Is the Word of God identical to God? Is the Word of God separate from God? Ontology is concerned with the nature and relations of beings. Does the Word of God have divine being or does it just perform a divine function?

For clarification, are you identical to your word? Can I examine your words and know who you are? In connection with this question, our integrity comes into play. God's Being, Words, and Behavior are fully integrated. Thus what He says is identical with Who He Is. So, in order to answer this question about ourselves in the affirmative, our integrity is needed so that we and our words are identical. Otherwise, if I believe your words, then I am acting in great faith because I trust that you are equal to your word (increasingly rare today). To believe God's Words, is a simple faith because His integrity is perfect.

It was said of Abraham that he "believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness."¹ This is the act of faith, which God requires of us. We are to believe Him because when He says it, His Word is as reliable as He is; this is absolute integrity. Not only that, but His actions reflect Who He Is. His integrity is absolute and complete.

Christ's humanity is displayed in His eating, anger, crying, suffering, and dying. Jesus was a man, who was born, lived, learned a trade, was rejected, suffered, and died. He was also tempted because He was a man in every respect with one exception—He was not a sinner.

How does the virgin birth link the deity of Christ with His humanity? The two words (virgin + birth) do the linking. Virgin indicates that God was His Father, and this speaks to His deity. Birth indicates that Mary was His mother, and this speaks to His humanity.

Jesus was both God and Man; He was the God-Man.

Which is most important: believing that or believing in? Believing that is objective and believing in is subjective. Some believe that the objective is most important, but that is mere head knowledge without the subjective faith of believing in. Others believe that the act of believing in (the subjective) is most important. However, if the object of your faith is wrong, then your faith becomes ineffectual, no matter how strongly you believe it.

Christ is the God-Man joining deity and humanity in His God-Man Personhood, which also demonstrates His mission of joining men with God. In His Being He walked on earth as a Man, but He was still God. Jesus was the incarnation of God, the God-Man.

The Word of God is twofold: incarnate and written. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, and the Bible is the Word of God written. The Scripture is man's words joined with God's interpretation that follows the same paradigm of Jesus' Personhood. For the Word of God written, God interprets His own acts and uses a human to write that interpretation in his own human words under the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit (verbal inspiration + human contribution of personality, vocabulary, and labor of writing).

The 8 views of inspiration delineated by David Dockery²

1. Dictation view has already been defined above.
2. Illumination view is a subjective view of inspiration. Only the writer was inspired to write his interpretation of the manifestation. The words themselves were not inspired.
3. Encounter view is an existential vision of God through His Scriptures. The reader gains the potential human growth through the principles of the Bible given to him in the encounter.

¹ Romans 4:3.

² This course in the seminary required Dockery's book, *Doctrine of the Bible*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992).

4. Neo-orthodox view is an ongoing inspiration in which the reader is inspired by an encounter with the "personal" Word of God, Jesus Himself.
5. Feminist view is a biased reconstruction of the text itself to fit the female biases.
6. Liberation/Process views restate the purpose of the Bible so that the temporal aspects of humanity are foremost. In this view, the meanings are all twisted toward establishing equality between the races, economic classes, genders, countries, etc.
7. Dynamic/Sacramentalist view sees the Bible as the medium of grace. Grace is thought to be a substance that gives divine power for forgiveness and eternal life.
8. Plenary view is defined by Dockery to be the same as my verbal view listed above.

Inspiration

In these different models, the inspiration varies from objective to subjective and from writer to reader, from words to concepts, from God's purpose to man's purpose. The authority of the Bible for you depends upon which model you choose.

Plenary inspiration is the model that Dockery prefers. He explains it on page 75 of his book. His definition is different than the commonly accepted definition, which is inspiration of the whole, but not necessarily of the individual parts. Dockery states that plenary inspiration includes the particular choice of words. Under Dockery's definition, then I too would subscribe to his plenary view. However, most people holding to the plenary view do not include the actual words, only the meanings. I think that if the verbal requirement is not added to the plenary view, then there is room for the plenary view to really mean functional inerrancy. With this model, one could claim the Bible has errors, but it functions inerrantly.

The Dynamic model falls very short. It could even allow that God could have chosen another vehicle for His power, but He chose the Bible. Dynamic comes from the Greek word *dunamis*, which forms the root for dynamite. The emphasis in the dynamic

model is in the *power* of God. God has the power to use the Bible as His instrument of salvation, and in this theory, He chooses to do so.

I once attended a philosophical debate over inerrancy. There were many who held to an errant Bible against one who held to inerrancy. The major group attempted to tear the Bible apart by pointing out minuscule and supposed discrepancies concerning precision of measures. Finally the proponent of inerrancy asked the age of each of his opponents. They gave him answers like 38 and 42. He said, so all of you were born on this day. You did not tell me 38 years, 2 months and 7 days. Then he confronted them about not allowing the same common principles of measurements to be used in the Bible as they and all of us use every day.

Look back at Chart 1.6 in Chapter one which illustrates propositional revelation. Manifestation, inspiration and illumination are the three essential parts of the doctrine of revelation, and they are all acts of God. Revelation today begins with God's act of manifesting Himself via His Word that He inspired. He helps the reader to understand and act upon the infinite things of God via illumination. You have studied these three parts in course #1 on systematic theology. In summary, God performed the act, which was witnessed by a person who recorded it in writing. The witness saw an objective act—*Historie*, i.e. the act that God performed. This is the objective part of history, i.e. a witness observes the act of God.

After the person witnesses God's manifestation, God inspires the person to write about it for others to be able to perceive the act also—this urge to write about the act is subjective inspiration.³

The inspiration of the "person" to write a

³ This kind of urge to do something is commonly called inspiration today by Christians, but inspiration's theological meaning is much more than this subjective urging from conviction by the Holy Spirit's role in illumination.

record of the manifestation is subjective. In the subjective part of inspiration, God comes upon the person and tells him to write a record of God's act of manifestation. The witness then writes his interpretation of what he saw or heard. This subjective interpretation is the *Geschichte*. The accuracy of the *Geschichte* in describing the *Historie* depends on the intellect and the integrity of the witness. This is where inerrancy breaks down.

In Propositional Revelation, the doctrine of revelation has not only a subjective element but also an objective element in all three parts of revelation. The subjective part is when God inspires the person to write a description of what he saw or heard. The objective part is when God becomes the interpreter and inspires the actual words from the writer's own personality and vocabulary to be written in order to produce an absolutely perfect record (*Geschichte* plus *Historie*). Thus the subjective and objective elements are present from God in this model of verbal-accommodation inspiration.

When Moses wrote the Pentateuch, not only was he inspired to do the writing, but also the content of the writing was God inspired. God gave the interpretation to Moses. When man interprets, the *Geschichte* is subject to being far from the truth of the *Historie*. But if God interprets, then the *Geschichte* is a perfect recording of the *Historie*. Therefore the inspiration of the Bible—where did it come from, i.e. is it God's Word (propositional revelation) or man's word (all other forms of revelation?)—is of vast importance when studying authority.

When Moses saw the manifestation, God gave him understanding. Moses was moved to record it in writing. The record was not just human *Geschichte* (Moses' interpretation of the happening). God also inspired Moses by pulling out of Moses the exact words to describe the happening. The writings accurately described the *Historie* only at this point. God guaranteed the integrity of the record to be factual. Propositional revelation is the written Word of God. The author is not

Moses, but God through Moses. God is the Author, and Moses is the fully participating human partner in his writing. If it is God's Word, then it has the author-ity of God.

When I give my testimony, it does not contain God's author-ity because I am giving my own personal description as I understand it. If I were to write my testimony, I would not be writing Scripture to be added to the Bible. I would be writing only my own human description (*Geschichte*) of my own understanding of what God did with me.

Illumination

When I read a Bible, God does not inspire me; He illuminates me. The third major element of Propositional Revelation is illumination. God illuminates me to understand His Word.

Illumination has two parts just like inspiration, i.e. objective and subjective. Understanding is the objective part, and it comes hand in hand with conviction, the subjective part. The order of subjective and objective parts from inspiration is reversed at the illumination stage. There is no conviction until I understand God's Word. If I attempt to read a Spanish Bible, I will understand a few words like *Dios* and *Christos*; but I will not have any conviction until I understand the words in their propositions (meaningful sentences and paragraphs). There will be no understanding without interpreting. When it has been interpreted and I understand, then the conviction can come.

For objective understanding we might need to use a theological dictionary to understand words, like propitiation, in the Bible. Once we understand, the subjective conviction comes upon us, moving us to call out to God for forgiveness and help for obedience. Or we may respond by obeying a straight out command from God.⁴ At the point of understanding and convicting, the objective and

⁴ Many call this inspiration. I avoid calling it inspiration because the theological use of inspiration is much greater than personal conviction.

subjective have come together. Knowledge and motivation toward obedience come together in illumination.

The Divine and Human Word of God

Jesus is the revealed Word of God incarnate. God's written Word follows the same model. Jesus, as the God-Man, links the divine and human in His personhood. Likewise, the Bible is the Word of God written in human form. The words of man selected by God to record His message to mankind is the uniting of deity and humanity together in the Word of God written by a human. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate; the Bible is the Word of God written. In both, deity and humanity are indelibly linked together.

Define Inspiration and quote 6 verses about it.

Inspiration is God giving His Own Interpretation for His Own Acts and moving the witness to write God's Own specific interpretation in the witness's own words.

2 Timothy

3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

3:16 All scripture [is] given by **inspiration** of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Peter

1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any **private interpretation**.

1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God **spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost**.

1 Thessalonians

2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as **it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Inspiration means that Scripture is exactly what God said (2 Tim 3:16-17). God said that **all Scripture** is inspired. Subjective inspiration is the man chosen by God and moved by God to write the Scriptures. God gave that chosen man the interpretation and the honor to use his own words and understanding under God's supervision.

2 Peter 1:20-21 indicates that inspiration is both objective and subjective. God gives the interpretation (objective); the witness does not generate it. This is the objective creating of the Word.

The subjective inspiration occurs in the witness. God moves him to record the act in writing so that others can know what happened.

Thus, objective inspiration is about the actual words, and subjective inspiration is about the actual writer.

Objective inspiration is clearly and unmistakably indicated in I Thessalonians 2:13 which says that the apostles did not preach the word of men to people, but, in fact, the Word of God.

In the historical Baptist confessions of faith (listed below), the Bible has always been considered normative.

1. Thomas Helwys's Confession 1611.
2. First London Confession 1644.
3. Second London Confession 1677, 1689.
4. Philadelphia Confession 1742.
5. New Hampshire Confession 1833.
6. Baptist Faith and Message 1925, 1963, 2000.

In all of these confessions, the Bible is affirmed in its inspiration, truthfulness, and authority. When these positions began to be challenged, and the Bible schools and seminaries lapsed from considering the Bible as inerrant and normative, a group of scholars met in Chicago in 1978 to call the Christian church back to its roots. This statement is known as the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and its text is restated in Appendix 3.1. Please review it carefully.

INERRANCY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Dockery defines inerrancy to mean “that when all the facts are known, the Bible (in its autographs, that is, the original documents), properly interpreted in light of the culture and the means of communication that had developed by the time of its composition, is completely true in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author’s purpose, in all matters relating to God and His creation.”⁵

If every word in the Word of God is inerrant, how do we get errors in manuscripts? The answer is that they crept in as the Scriptures were manually copied and re-copied.

The original book of John eventually rotted and fell apart. Before it was totally ruined, someone made a copy. The original was inspired, not the copy.

One mistake that was common for copyists to make is dittography—which is duplicating a word such as a second “the” following the first “the.” Another common error is leaving out a word; a third is joining two words into a compound, single word. Another source of error is the addition of punctuation because the original autographs contained no punctuation.

Our early copyists have done a good job. The various manuscripts have only minor errors. Textual Criticism is a valid discipline, which deals with these manuscripts and analyzes the common mistakes in them. Most of us stand on the shoulders of those who did this tedious analytical work of getting back to the exact wording of the autographs. Occasionally, footnotes in the Bible will tell us of some of the errors listed above. In the KJV, they are shown in brackets; some translations have them in italics. You can blindly accept your translation or do textual criticism yourself, i.e. study Greek and Hebrew to do textual criticism and exegesis of the manu-

scripts in the language in which God originally gave His Word.

The errors we have in manuscripts are insignificant. However, many left-wing theologians have used the idea of mistakes in the generations of copied manuscripts to undermine the inerrancy of the Word of God.

Have you heard people say that different areas of the Bible vary in the degree of inspiration? Have you heard people say that the Bible contains the Word of God, but is not identical with the Word of God? Many Liberals call our belief in the inerrant, infallible Word of God bibliolatry, or worship of the Bible.

Where has our spiritual heritage come from? To whom do we owe our Baptist heritage? Please understand that our forefathers of the Reformation fought and died to give us the right to read and interpret the Word of God for ourselves, without being shackled by Church and tradition. Their battle cry was *sola scriptura*, or Scripture alone. They died attempting to tell the world that the Bible alone was our only rule of faith and practice. How can a modern day Protestant hold onto the Reformation faith, yet deny the Reformers’ view of the Bible as the Word of God?

While I value textual criticism, I consider Higher Criticism unnecessary because it concerns things such as who wrote the individual books of the Bible. The authority of Scripture for these people is based on the outcome of these endeavors. Did John write John? Yes, but that is not the ultimate statement. The ultimate is that God authored it through John. I know who authored the books. God authored the entire Bible. It is His Word, and it has His author-ity.

I believe that Higher Criticism is not a valid discipline in the way that it is being used to separate God from the Scripture’s authorship. When people get into debates about authorship, someone might decide that the pagan Canaanites wrote the Ten Commandments and Moses simply found them and copied them.

⁵ Note Dockery’s definitions of several subparts of this statement on pages 89-91 of his book.

An actual case of the claim of copying pagan writings occurred in the claim that the origination of Moses' account of God's dealing with sinful man via the Great Flood came from the *Gilgamish Epic*⁶ which gave a Mesopotamian account of a great flood. The claim is that Moses used it as his own account. If that was actually the case, then how could we reliably trust the Scriptures? On what authority would man be required to obey the Ten Commandments or trust in the records of God dealing with mankind? I see no authority in Mesopotamian pagans for me to trust their accounts of God's guidance. But if God inspired Moses to record God's own interpretations of His dealings with mankind, then I see them as both trustworthy and authoritative.

Some people believe that not all of the words that a Biblical writer presented are the Words of God, but some are simply ordinary human utterances. Even though the Bible indicates an occasion of this by Paul,⁷ we do not have the right to pick and choose under our own options. We must be extremely careful to distinguish the words of an apostle

from the Words from God. If the Bible does not expressly indicate that something is just an apostolic utterance, then we cannot assume that the words in question are merely human words, thoughts, and emotions apart from God's inspiration. When we Christians give ourselves permission to determine which words in the Bible are from God and which are from man, we are giving ourselves authority over any portions of the Bible with which we choose to disagree.

If we choose to discount portions of the Word of God intended for all men, are we choosing to discount God? Revelation says:

Revelation

22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book.

⁶ The *Gilgamish Epic* is a pagan writing from Mesopotamia which contains a pagan description of a great flood.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:6-10ff.

Chapter Questions

1. Define:
Revelation
Inspiration
2. What is the verbal theory of inspiration? List and explain the two additional sub theories of verbal inspiration.
3. Why is "believing that" insufficient in itself? Why is "believing in" insufficient in itself?
4. What is the "Word of God"?
5. List the eight views of inspiration delineated by David Dockery.
6. Define inspiration and list 3 passages that support it.

Chapter 4

Geographical and Historical Context

Just as Christ came to men at a certain time in history, he came to a certain place, a particular area of the world. He came to a nation, which was God's chosen people for over 1,000 years before Christ. The Promised Land was a place that GOD CHOSE and as such is worthy of the dedicated study by God's people today.

The Fertile Crescent

The Fertile Crescent is often called the cradle of western civilization. It is an area bounded on the West by the Mediterranean Sea and on the North and East by high mountain ranges. It includes the Tigris-Euphrates river valley and is the area immediately North of the Arabian Desert. It is fertile because it has sufficient water for agriculture and livestock.¹

Iraq is located in the Eastern section of the Fertile Crescent. Both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (see Picture 4.1)² run through Iraq. The North part of what is now Iraq was once included in the ancient empire of



Picture 4.1

¹ If you have the textbook by Stott, you can see the Fertile Crescent on the map on page 29.

² Biblical Backgrounds and Old Testament teacher Steve Parsons offers the student a wealth of photographs of the Biblical world. The photos you view today are from his collection.

Assyria whose capitol city was Ninevah. We will study a little about the Assyrian annihilation of Israel (722 B.C.) next week in our overview of the Bible. In the Southern portion of Iraq was the capitol city Babylon of the Babylonian Empire that captured Judah in 586 B.C.

The Holy Land (Palestine) represents a small area at the southwestern end of the Fertile Crescent along the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. "From earliest times the Holy Land has been identified by a variety of names, often with a distinction made between the area west of the Jordan River and the area to the east. In the Old Testament, for example, the area west of the Jordan River is usually called "Canaan" and the area to the east simply "beyond the Jordan."

"Palestine" is the English pronunciation of "Philistia" (land of the Philistines), which in Old Testament usage pertains to the narrow strip of coastal plain, i.e. Gaza, south of approximately where Tel Aviv stands today. Greek and Roman geographers began to use the name Philistia in a broader sense, inclusive of the whole area between the Mediterranean Sea and the desert fringe. Palestine became the official designation of the area between the Sea and the Jordan River. Today the Holy Land extends from the boundaries of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and includes the state of Israel, and certain territories under Israeli military control.³

Crossroads to the World

The importance of the Holy Land regarding world geography lies in its location. Notice on the map of the Fertile Crescent how narrow the land gets between the Arabian

³ Miller, J. Maxwell, *Introducing the Holy Land*, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1982), pp. 31-32.

Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. The narrow portion is in the Holy Land. There are three huge obstacles to easy movement through the land in that area. There are high mountain ranges to the north and east, the Mediterranean Sea on the west and to the south the Arabian Desert.

The Two Major Highways through Palestine

The Holy Land is located in a pathway between three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Because of this location, it has played an important role in human history. There were two major trade routes in Old Testament times.

The first was called **The Way of the Sea**, which began in the Egyptian Delta and went through the Coastal Plain of Israel. It eventually split and one went along the Phoenician Coast and the other northeastward toward Damascus. In New Testament times, the Way of the Sea was called *Via Maris* and connected the Roman Empire with Egypt and North Africa.

The second Old Testament major route began in Arabia and the Red Sea area and went north through the Central Highlands, dropping down into the Jordan Valley, eventually crossing into the Transjordan area, and going on north along the Eastern Plateau toward Damascus. It is known as the Kings Highway mentioned in Numbers 20 and 21. In the 2nd century A.D. the Romans paved the road and added heavy road markers called milestones along the road. The Romans called it the *Via Nova* (New Way/New Road).

Four Regions of Palestine

1. Coastal Plain (see Picture 4.2). The Coastal plain borders the Mediterranean Sea to the east. In the north this strip of land is narrow, and broken almost completely by Mount Carmel. The coastal



Picture 4.2: Coastal Plain

plain is flat, sandy and has no natural harbors. To the North is the Plain of Sharon, which has lush orange groves today but in Old Testament times was covered with forest and had little population. South of Joppa, the land has less rainfall making it suitable for raising wheat and barley, olives and vines. Towns are Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Joppa, and Haifa among others.

2. The Central Highlands (see Picture 4.3 on the next page). The Central Highlands started in the mountains of Lebanon and descended into Upper Galilee that descends into Lower Galilee. Lower Galilee belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, but was despised by the rest of the Holy Land in Old Testament times partially because it was an exposed area more likely to fall to invading armies. It was also the area more likely to adopt pagan customs.

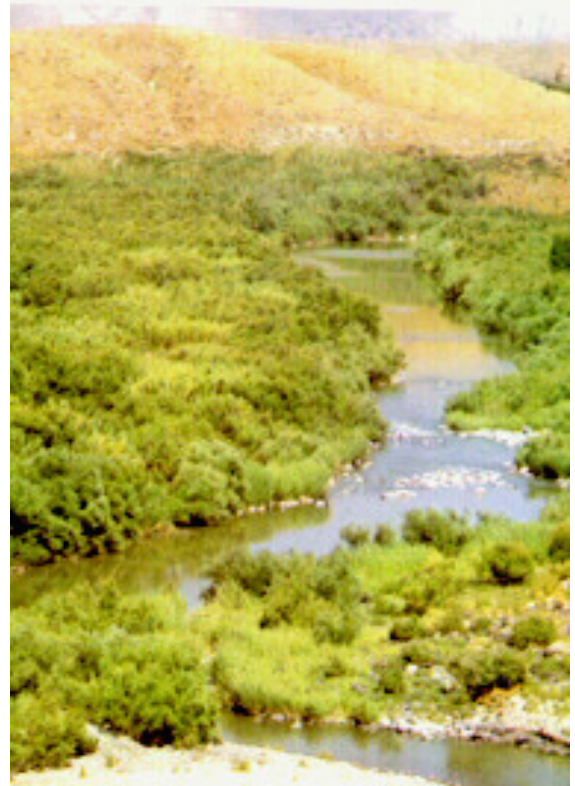


Picture 4.3: Central Highlands

In New Testament times, it was a rich agricultural area of vines, grain and olives. Jesus was raised in Nazareth, performed the first miracle at Cana and raised the widow's son in Nain. The marshy Plain of Esdraelon, Samaria and Judah are other areas of the Central Highlands. Judah, of course is where Jerusalem is located. The farthest south area is the Negeb, with rocky barren slopes that border on Egypt.

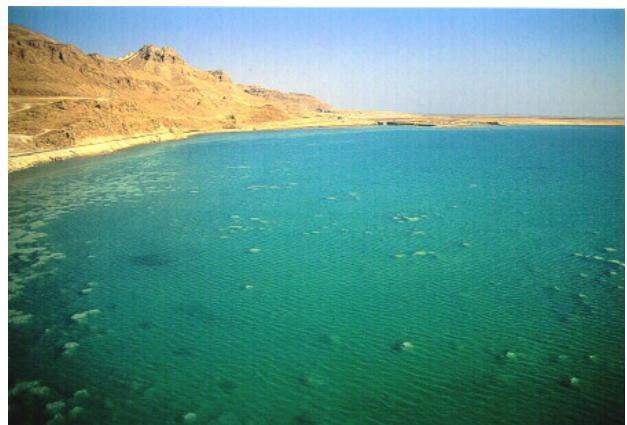
3. The Jordan Valley (please see picture 4.4) is the third area of the Holy Land. The Lake of Galilee, which is 600 feet below sea level, is located in the north end of this region. Lake Galilee is surrounded with green hills that drop steeply to the lakeshore on three sides. On the fourth side is the tiny Plain of Gennesaret. Magdala, Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida were around Lake Galilee and Jesus did a lot of ministry and teaching there (Matt. 15:39, Mark 1:21, Matt. 11:21, John 1:44).

Fish caught in Lake Galilee in New



Picture 4.4: Jordan Valley

Testament times were salted and exported to Rome. South of the lake, the Jordan is lower than the valley floor and is difficult to cross. The area is desolate, with a jungle even further south that was the home to lions, wild boar and crocodiles. Below that is the Dead Sea (please see picture 4.5), which is over 40 miles long and 1,300 feet deep. It is so salty it is impossible for a person to sink in it. The



Picture 4.5: Dead Sea

far southern end of it may be where Sodom and Gomorrah were located.

4. The fourth area is the Eastern Plateau (no picture available). There are four rivers, which cut canyons through the area. Bashan was famous for its wheat harvests. Gilead was once thickly wooded and famous for medicines. Further south is Moab where the rainfall is less and the land slopes downward. South of Moab is Edom which rises in elevation and was rocky, but known for the copper mines.

Life in the Land

Traditionally, historians divide the people of the land into three distinct groups. The people included the farmers who till the soil, the Bedouin who kept camels, sheep and goats, and the merchants who made money in trading.

Many of those on the Central Ridge close to the often drought stricken eastern slopes had to supplement their agriculture with the raising of livestock. The animals they normally raised were goats and the less hardy but more valuable sheep. Although these animals were raised both for wool and meat, the common people of the Holy Land usually ate meat only during feasts. Goats and sheep were also raised for sacrificial animals. Sheep, goats, donkeys and camels were more characteristic of the Eastern Plateau and southern deserts than of the farmland.

An important foundation of Israelite society was the farming community, and they had many feasts to celebrate harvests. Olive groves, wine and wheat were the major agricultural items they grew. These three items are mentioned together in several passages in the Bible:

Psalms

104:15 And wine [that] maketh glad the heart of man, [and] oil to make [his] face to shine, and bread [which] strengtheneth man's heart.

Joel

2:17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where [is] their God?

2:18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

2:19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

Deuteronomy

8:7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

8:8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

8:9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any [thing] in it; a land whose stones [are] iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

8:10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

8:11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

8:12 Lest [when] thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt [therein];

8:13 And [when] thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

8:14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, [wherein were] fiery

serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where [there was] no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

8:16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

8:17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of [mine] hand hath gotten me this wealth.

8:18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for [it is] he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as [it is] this day.

8:19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

Other crops they grew were dates, pomegranates, almonds, figs, barley, cucumber, dill and mint.

Early and Latter Rains

Rainfall was very important to the people of the Holy Land. There is at least five months of every year where there is no rainfall at all. The early rains come after the dry season and the fruit harvest, beginning around October or November. The rain is heavy while it lasts and normally concentrated into about 40 or 50 very rainy days. Snow occasionally falls in the higher areas, but it is not something the people are accustomed to.

Early in April, the first ears of wheat ripen. The farmers are very blessed when the later rains fall and cause the heads of wheat to swell with an abundance of grain.⁴

Three Important Annual Agricultural Festivals

The first heads of wheat and barley are called the "first fruits" and their harvest is

celebrated along with the Passover. The Passover is the religious festival when the Israelites celebrated both their delivery from Egypt and God's mercy to them in the harvest.

Leviticus

23:4 These [are] the feasts of the LORD, [even] holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

23:5 In the fourteenth [day] of the first month at even [is] the LORD'S passover.

23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month [is] the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

23:7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

23:8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day [is] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein].

23:9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

23:12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD.

23:13 And the meat offering thereof [shall be] two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD [for] a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof [shall be] of wine, the fourth [part] of an hin.

23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

⁴We would reverse the early rains and the later rains in our concept of the year.

Seven weeks later are the completion of the harvest and the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost.

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated during August.

Leviticus

26:39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

26:40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

26:41 And [that] I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if

then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

26:42 Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

26:43 The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

At this time, the people lived in huts, which they had built in the vineyards to remind themselves of the wilderness wandering. This was also the time of the fruit harvest.

Chapter Questions

1. The Fertile Crescent is often called the _____. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, mountain ranges, and the valley of the _____ rivers.
2. Palestine is the English pronunciation of _____.
3. The Way of the Sea and the Roman road Via Nova are the two major highways through Palestine. The Via Nova is referred to in Numbers 20 and 21 as _____.
4. List the four regions of Palestine
5. List and describe the three important annual agricultural festivals.

Chapter 5

Overview of the Bible

In the Old Testament courses I teach, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, I have repeatedly seen students read the prophets and ask why the Israelites could not hear the prophets. Have you noticed that the same problem seems to be pervasive among Christians today? What is wrong with God's people that they cannot hear the prophets? Why can't we hear God's Word?

The Story of the Old Testament

A study of the Old Testament will teach us a lot about God's dealings with His chosen people and about human nature and tendencies. Because we are people of the New Covenant, we will begin our overview of the Old Testament by looking in the New Testament at Romans. In Romans 9:6 & 7, please note these Old Testament references: Genesis 17:7, 19, 21 and 21:13.

Genesis

17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, [and] with his seed after him.

17:21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

21:21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

Election

Romans links and demonstrates continuity between the Old and New Testaments. Election, predestination, Gospel, and Law, Abraham, and Jesus are linked together. Look at

chart 5.1. Here is a crude condensation of God's elections of history in which we have a narrowing as we go along. There is a narrowing to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Jesus.

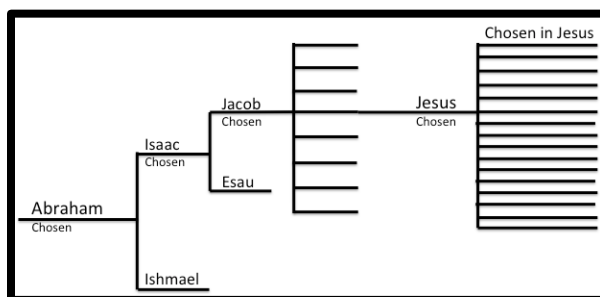


Chart 5.1

God elected Abraham to be the channel of blessing to the world, and when he chooses/ elects someone, everyone coming out of that person will be blessed. Isaac was the descendent next elected, but because of the covenant of grace given to Abraham, all of his seed will be blessed. Thus, Ishmael was blessed as well, but of the two children born to Abraham, God narrowed His next choice/- election to Isaac as His “channel of blessing.” That narrowing of the channel of blessing is called election. Election was a narrowing down to one person through whom blessings to everyone would flow. The Abrahamic Covenant came through Isaac, not through Ishmael.

Election is NOT God's choosing a person to go to heaven. It is God's choosing a person through whom God's blessings of salvation would flow to all who would receive the blessings. Please do not make the mistake of viewing election as God's choosing who will be saved for heaven and who will be lost for hell. Election is not of an individual to be saved. Election is of an individual “means” of salvation. Jesus is God's final election. Through God's narrowing of election down to

just one man, Jesus, everyone who is *willing* to receive the gift of salvation offered through Him may be saved.

Let us look at Romans 9:8-13 which links to Gen. 25:23 and Mal. 1:4.

Genesis

25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations [are] in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and [the one] people shall be stronger than [the other] people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Malachi

1:4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

In Romans 9:8 the word, promise is used. The streams we are talking about here keep getting bigger and bigger like a family tree expanding. All of Jacob's seed is blessed by God. But eventually, one of that seed is elected—Jesus. And from there we go on to the cross.

There are many streams that come out of the seed of each election which means that every time God makes a choice, there is a narrowing down and a focusing on His one, unique "channel" of blessing. Through that "channel" comes God's blessings to the many in the form of a promise. The narrowing is over the word "promise" which links with "believing" as shown in Romans 4:3.

Romans

4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

God makes a promise to provide blessings to all who believe God. How do you receive that promise? You receive it by believing God. You receive, by faith. To receive the promise and be part of the promise, you believe God. Apart from the Abrahamic Covenant in which all of Abraham's natural

descendants are forever blessed in this natural life, we who are not natural descendants of Abraham must believe God's promise to be his spiritual descendants through Jesus.

Promise must have believing, or faith connected to be activated. If the promise is certain only on the condition of belief, faith will activate its fulfillment for the person believing. Abraham believed God and sealed the covenant's condition by acting on that belief. To activate a promise in your present life, we must believe the promise and act upon it.

So, the covenant of faith in the Old Testament became an activated covenant of promise because Abraham believed it and acted upon it, i.e. Abraham was a doer of the Word of God. Belief without the corresponding action is a dead faith. Abraham's faith was not a dead faith. He acted upon God's Word. Therefore, the Abrahamic Covenant is a sealed deal in which God will forever bless Abraham's descendants as narrowed through Isaac and later through Jacob and lastly through Jesus. Not only is God blessing those who bless Abraham's descendants, but also He is cursing those who curse Abraham's descendants.

How does one now get born into God's covenant? the same way as Abraham, i.e. by believing God's promise. Let us apply this to our understanding of the Bible. This is scary. What if you don't believe the Bible? What if we turn to a page and you don't believe that page? What if we turn to a verse and you don't believe that verse? What would happen if someone convinced you the Bible was not the Word of God, but only a witness? Then you would believe a witness instead of being like Abraham and believing God.

Is believing a witness the same as believing God? Or, is believing a witness the same as believing "about" God? What do you think? If we don't receive the promise through believing God, we will be left out of receiving God's promised blessings.

Please see that God promises forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and the destination of

heaven to those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised again as Lord. Acting upon that promise by receiving it openly is called justification. However, there are other promises of God to reward you for obeying Him after justification. Those promises are for what is known as sanctification. For the Christian who gives his life back to the Lord as His devoted slave, the Lord promises to share His eternal heritage with him. Class, please note that it is possible to be justified but fall short in your sanctification.

Read Romans 9:14. Abraham did not choose to be the elect. God chose Abraham and elected him to be the channel of God's blessings to the world.

Romans

9:14 What shall we say then? [Is there] unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

God's intentions were to bless Abraham and the world through Abraham. God purposes to bless not only Abraham's natural seed but also his spiritual seed. The spiritual seed of Abraham Who eventually became the Ultimate and last Elected Person is Jesus whole lineage is traced back to Abraham in both Matthew and Luke. We, who come after Jesus are blessed because we are His "spiritual" seed.

Class, the purpose of election is to bless others. Abraham met the conditions for the covenant of Grace for Abraham's descendants. Moses gave us the covenant of Law for Adam's descendants. Jesus is the only person who fulfilled both covenants and provided the spiritual New Covenant of salvation for all mankind in the form of a promise that is activated only by belief. All of Adam's natural descendants have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the gift of God is eternal life for Abraham's spiritual descendants (those who believe Jesus, i.e. believe God). The New Covenant is salvation by grace through faith. He that believes the promise receives the blessing. He that believes not receives not.

You Christians are not only blessed but also elected *in Jesus* to further expand God's blessings to others. As such, you are beneficiaries of the Abrahamic and New Covenants as Abraham's and Jesus' spiritual seed. You cannot be one of God's elect apart from being *in Jesus*. Abraham was elected to bless the world. God says that He is going to pour out His blessings on you and on all those believing Jesus' promises that you tell them of, i.e. the Gospel seed that you sow. Furthermore, He is going to bless all the people who bless you and curse those who curse you. The promises of that same Abrahamic Covenant apply to Jesus because Jesus is in that seed. Now those promises apply to you because you are in Jesus' seed.

The New Covenant is Jesus' covenant of grace via belief in which Jesus has paid our sin debts as our High Priest and Sacrificial Victim. In this covenant, we who believe and receive Jesus' promise of forgiveness are now a part of Jesus' spiritual seed. We are the carriers of Jesus' spiritual seed, and we are to sow that seed in all the soils (peoples) of the earth.

There was a purpose that we are to see in God's election. God narrowed for the express purpose of broadening the expanse of blessings. Eventually, God narrowed the channel of blessings from the limited physical/natural seed of Abraham to an unlimited spiritual/supernatural seed of Jesus. When God elects to pour blessings on an individual, the purpose is to bless many through that individual.

The choosing of Jacob on the chart is a further narrowing from Isaac, and the purpose is to pass on the covenant of promise through Jacob's **physical** stream. And there will be another narrowing to Jesus for the purpose of blessing the whole world through a **spiritual** stream.¹

God's purpose is to bless the world, and

¹ Thus, unbelieving Jews are blessed by God because they are of the physical stream of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All Christians are blessed by God because they are the spiritual seed of Jesus.

His method has been in place since the Abrahamic Covenant. How would a lost person get into the elect under the New Covenant? Just receive and believe the Gospel, the Word of God which promises the blessings of salvation through Jesus, and he is in. The lineage is no longer passed on via the flesh, but via faith. God narrowed down to one in order to broaden out to the many. The election of a person through whom the blessing would come is a narrowing. The blessing comes to “believers” in Jesus in the form of salvation. Everyone who believes God’s Promise in Jesus is predestined **in Jesus** to go to heaven in order to continue life eternally in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only thing that will get you into Jesus’ promise of grace is to believe God’s promises. That is why the proclamation of God’s Word is so important. A person cannot get saved unless he hears the promise and accepts it by faith. We need to witness by every means that we can think of. The majority of Christians is neglecting one of the most effective means. That means is via the distribution of Gospel tracts. Every unsaved person who reads a Gospel tract receives a private and intimate contact from God. The awesome Power of God goes to work on that person at that point to continue until the person makes a decision. Your witnesses through word, deed, and tracts are your opportunities for the sowing of Jesus’ Gospel seed. Your faith in God’s Word is either alive, or it is dead. Which is it? If it is alive, is it comatose and on life-support?

God elected Jesus and predestined Him to be Lord of the universe, and predestined everyone in Jesus to share in the Lord’s inheritance. We who are in Jesus are predestined to go where He goes, do what He does and share in His inheritance, and to be called a child of God. How do we get that? Just believe God.

Salvation’s doorway is very narrow. The only way to get through that narrow gate is through Jesus, God’s elected gateway. Jesus is God’s ultimate and final elected channel of

blessing because He combines the fulfillments of the Abrahamic Covenant of grace via His birth lineage and the Old Covenant of Law via His works. Because of His accomplishments, He was resurrected to His eternal High Priesthood to provide eternal life to us under the New Covenant of forgiveness of sins by grace through faith. Those who believe in Jesus have His righteousness imputed to them, and they get born again as Jesus’ spiritual seed.

Christians are those in Jesus’ election

Every Christian is one of the blessed elect because of being in Jesus. As an elect person, your branches of blessed people should broaden through your lively faith. Or, perhaps there is no broadening, and the branches stop with you. God has given you special graces and blessings like He gave Israel. As an elect in spirit, the model holds true through you. That means you have a high responsibility of sowing the spiritual seed of promise to an ever-widening population. God is going to bless the multitudes through you. If you fail and neglect to do what Jesus saved you to do, all of those potential branches through you will be hurting for eternity. We are to pass on the blessings by announcing that they are available to anyone who will believe God’s promise of salvation in Jesus. God’s Word assures us (1 John 5:11-13).

1 John

5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

If, like many of the Israelites in the Old Testament, you see yourself as a special person and believe the blessings and graces of God are an end rather than a means, then you may be part of the dead faith majority who enjoys and celebrates without performing the

function that God has prepared you for as a channel of blessing. Your choices will determine whether other people will be hurting or rejoicing for eternity. Wake up church!

Some of you have been given much. Some of you have been called by God to pastor a church or teach a Sunday school class. Perhaps some of you have been preaching or teaching without the existential application, without the gut wrenching preparation, without praying and weeping over the people, and without the hurt in the heart and the heaviness that Paul mentioned in Romans 9:2. When you fail in these areas, you are stopping instead of multiplying the blessings.

A study and understanding of the Old Testament is important for Christians today. Just suppose that Abraham did not believe God, or that he believed without fulfilling his own end of the covenant. What if Isaac or Jacob failed to multiply? Or look at the New Testament. What if Jesus chose to bask in His blessedness and be a great orator rather than a teacher? What if He had yielded to the clamor to make Him king, rather than staying the Lamb of God? What if Jesus was a self-centered climber instead of humbly adopting the *kenosis*, and investing His Life in the lives of a select and narrow group? He was tempted, just as we are, but He didn't fail!

Some people just barely get into the promise, because of some last minute saint who sows in him the Gospel seed, and the dying man believes the promise. Consider the person within days of his death? If there is not a faithful Christian who reaches out to tell him of God's promise in Jesus, he will be going to hell. Witnessing is our method of sowing the seed for broadening the Kingdom of God and the blessings for those who will believe God's Promise in Jesus.

It is that way with you every step and every minute of your life—you are either continuing to broaden the stream or stopping it with yourself. You are going to leave this study and go out and make decisions of life. As you make decisions, you will be either broadening and bringing more into the King-

dom to be part of the elect in Jesus, or shutting off the peoples' blessings forever.

There is a great risk in you for your family and friends when it comes to election. By being in Jesus, you possess the keys to the Kingdom (the seeds of Jesus' salvation). I cannot explain it to you any better than Paul did in Romans 9. He was sorrowing to the point where he would give up his own eternal life for his kinsmen outside of the branches of election in Jesus. I have difficulty seeing that level of compassion, but the level I do see is breaking my heart. So, Kathy and I are making determined efforts to take God's promise of salvation to our family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and even strangers.

The possibilities go like the following:

- Yes, we sow the seeds/yes, they believe,
- Yes, we sow the seeds/no, they do not believe.
- No, we don't sow the seeds/. . . .

We are the fork in the stream. Each of you is one of the elect in Jesus through whom God's blessings will flow. God has chosen to work through you. Are you resisting? Is there something God is calling you to do that you are refusing to do? As a result of your refusal to believe God, people will be outside of the blessing that you are supposed to be providing. Each of us is making life-changing decisions on a daily basis and much of life's purpose flows on by us. We become like the fool who is perceptually dull, and we don't see what is going on around us. We continue trucking along as the drunkards described by Isaiah.

If the preachers and Sunday school teachers step up and begin to preach and teach with their lives, pouring their souls out in prayer, preparing divine lessons and not just preaching and teaching history lessons, our country will change. We are talking about changing lives, getting your people to fall on their faces in repentance and leave church as changed persons to go out and make a difference with their friends and families. I think that the pastors and Sunday school teachers have it in

their hands to make the difference.

Think for a minute about what God has blessed you with. What has God given you besides salvation? He has given you a parentage; He has given you language, opportunity for education, a network of friends and co-workers. Your parents have raised you up and taught you values. Most of you were born in a free country. You have been given much. What does God want you to do to be a blessing to the multitudes? There is ministry ahead for you and choices to be made. Some of you are shrinking back from sacrificial choices today. You are fearful and do not believe God. What if Abraham had argued about going out in the wilderness???

When reading the Old Testament, you must NOT fall into the pattern of standing apart and being aloof from the exhortations and warnings found there. When Jeremiah called for Judah to repent, that clarion call extends to the church and to you today. Yes, there is an explicit history of Israel under review in the Old Testament, but it has an ultimate claim on all of God's people. When Israel is chastened for idolatry, those same warnings come to you. When the watchman on the wall is said to be in a drunken sleep, that indictment is for you as well. The warning about blood being required by their hands if they fail to warn the wicked, falls on you as well. God is no respecter of persons. He deals with His people the same today as He did yesteryear.

Salvation

I have given you, through this review of Abraham and the promise, an overview of the Bible from Abraham through Christ to us. However, we have skimmed over a lot of interesting and important details. One of which is how God delivered His people out of Egypt. Exodus shows how God gave a preview of the doctrine of salvation in His deliverance of Israel.

Cycle of Apostasy Illustrated by the book of Judges

The overview of the history of Israel and

Judah will repeatedly show the four-part cycle illustrated so clearly in the book of Judges:

1. Backsliding
2. Oppression
3. Repentance
4. Deliverance

This pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament. I also experience this cycle and see it also in the lives of Christians around me. The part of the cycle dealing with repentance includes an outcry to God for forgiveness and help. This step of repentance and outcry is followed each time by deliverance.

In the Old Testament book of Judges a vivid picture of the cycle is repeated frequently. Those parts are backsliding by God's people under God's Kingship, oppression of God's people, repentance by God's people, and deliverance for God's people through a judge sent by God to lead His people to victory. I would like for you to see that this cycle did not only occur during those times, but during the times of the kings and it is still occurring in our individual lives today.

Human Kings as Seal Number 1

Let us look back to the coronation of the first King of Israel. This would have occurred between God's election of Jacob and Christ. 1 Samuel 8:5-22 describes how the people reject God as the King of Israel and accept a man as king in His place. I believe this is the breaking of the first seal in Revelation 6:1-2 which was opened nine centuries before the birth of Christ. Once this seal was broken, its consequences have progressively broadened and matured since that time and continues to mature today. Eventually, Antichrist will become a human king of the world. He will be displaced by the restoration of God's reign concurrent with Man's continued reign through Jesus Christ the God-Man.

The ultimate king will be Jesus after all His enemies have been put under His Feet. He will activate His Kingdom as King of kings, and Lord of lords. This event will be after all the seals, trumpets, and bowls have

matured. Even though all the seals have been opened and six of the trumpets have blown, they have not yet fully matured. You can study more about this in our course on the book of Revelation.

The people told Samuel that they demanded a human king, and God opened the seal, allowing them to displace Himself with a human king. The choice of a king had consequences for Israel immediately, but the consequences are going to grow and mature all the way through Antichrist. The ultimate outcome will be Jesus Christ as King of kings.² But before the Millennium, Antichrist will be the king of the world. Thus, breaking the first seal opened the path that will lead directly to Antichrist.

The opening of the first seal started with rejecting God as the King of His own people. This first seal will have severe repercussions. The prediction in 1 Samuel is that the first seal will cost the people a large portion of all their possessions. Human government is very expensive. Taxation involves taking away the rewards of human labor, and giving them to the king and his servants, i.e. the government.

Some commentators believe the one depicted on the white horse in Revelation 6 is Christ, but that does not fit the Biblical depiction of Christ. The one in the first seal has a bow as a weapon; Christ uses the Word of God as His Sword. The one in the first seal has a crown that was “given” to him; Christ was born King and “earned” many crowns. This person goes out conquering and to conquer, but Christ gained victory through dying. Revelation 6:1-2 does not describe Jesus.

Kings of the United Kingdom

The Hebrews had only 3 kings as a united kingdom before it broke up into Israel and Judah as two separate kingdoms. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the three

kings of the United Kingdom?

Saul, the first human king of God’s people,

1. had great potential.
2. was a strong patriot who was popular with the people.
3. was proud and disobedient causing the Lord to desert him.
4. became despondent and paranoid.
5. died in battle against the Philistines.

David, the second human king,

1. unified the nation.
2. secured the peace by conquering its enemies, even the Philistines.
3. made plans for the construction of a temple, which his son would complete.
4. whose terrible sin led to the shattering of his family, including the death of his first born son.

David’s son, **Solomon**, the third human king,

1. ruled during a time of peace.
2. expanded trade and commerce, and led the nation to prosperity.
3. was known for his wisdom and for his proverbs.
4. married many unbelieving wives and they turned his heart from the Lord.
5. became quite oppressive in his labor and taxation policies, which led to a revolt of the people.

The united nation of Israel was, smaller than the Texas panhandle. When the nation divided after the death of Solomon, the northern half retained the name Israel, and the southern kingdom took on the name of the primary tribe of the region, i.e. Judah.

Israel, the Northern Kingdom

Israel crossed the line against idolatry and was destroyed because the northern kingdom refused to do step 3 of the above cycle, i.e. repentance. Instead of repenting from the Baalism being practiced, successive kings promoted Baalism by sponsoring it and turning their backs on God by rejecting the warnings from His prophets.

² Christ as King will be the restoration of God’s Kingship. During the Millennium, the God-Man will once again use judges to lead His people. The judges that God will use will be the resurrected martyrs who are described in Revelation 20:4 as sitting on thrones.

The occasion for Israel's destruction by God was the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis. In this crisis, Israel joined Syria in an alliance to prevent the expansion of the Assyrian Empire. When those two nations put pressure on Judah to join their alliance, God was angered.

King Pekah of Israel and King Rezin of Syria threatened to attack King Jotham of Judah for its refusal to join their alliance. Jotham refused because he wanted to keep Judah under the protection of God.

Rezin and Pekah attacked Judah. The King who succeeded Jotham in Judah was Ahaz. He was a wicked king who feared attacks from Israel and Syria from the north, Philistia from the west, and Edom from the south. In his fear, King Ahaz of Judah offered his son as a burnt sacrifice and then aligned his nation with Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria against the hostile surrounding nations.

Rather than repent from idolatry, Ahaz sought protection via an alliance with pagan Assyria. Isaiah had given him a warning that if he sought help through an alliance with an evil nation, God would turn him over to suffer the consequences of defeat.

However, that defeat came from an unexpected time and source. However, before that defeat of Judah, Assyria stepped in and stopped the surrounding nations from their attacks on Judah. Then it put the whole region under tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, the emperor of Assyria.

Being the Lord's people, either Israel, Judah, or the church, does not exempt us from being overtaken by Assyria or another evil including the Antichrist. God's people must depend upon the strong arm of God, not upon our own strength or that provided through an alliance with the strong arms of pagan flesh.

When Tiglath-Pileser died, Israel decided to stop paying tribute to Assyria while Assyria was in transition to a new emperor. God had removed His protection from Israel because of its Baalism and turned them over to their fate of trusting the strong arms of

pagan flesh rather than God for their protection. Israel was conquered and totally destroyed by Sargon II, the new emperor of Assyria in 721 B.C.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, the Antithesis of Israel

Note the example of idolatry and oppression of Israel in spite of Isaiah's warnings. Now, let us look at Judah where Isaiah was ministering during Israel's idolatry and Judah's apostasy. Isaiah had preached naked for three years against allying Judah with pagan Assyria. Isaiah's nakedness symbolized what would happen to the people of Judah if Ahaz chose protection via pagan alliances over protection from God.

Isaiah had counseled Ahaz against a foreign alliance but was not heeded. Back during the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis, Judah ended up seeking protection from Assyria. Assyria marched on both Syria and Israel and put them under grinding tribute. In a subsequent revolt by Israel and Syria to get out from under paying the tribute, Assyria aligned its total force against them and wiped Israel off the face of the earth, and increased the tribute from Syria.

Also having sensed weakness in Judah because of its request for help from Assyria by Ahaz, Sennacherib, the ruler of Assyria attacked Judah in order to sew up the entire Middle East into his empire. He marched against Judah and began to conquer many of its cities on his way to Jerusalem.

In the meantime, Hezekiah had succeeded Ahaz as king and had implemented spiritual and moral reform in Judah. Hezekiah is one of the great reforming kings in Judah's history. He heeded Isaiah's call for reform. This reform is a good illustration of how the prophets of Israel and Judah delivered God's messages to the king and the people. As a result of this repentance of Judah as led by Hezekiah's reform, God delivered His people from the certain destruction that was promised to Judah because of Ahaz's lack of repentance.

Isaiah counseled against surrendering Jerusalem to Assyria and for Judah to rely on the strong arm of God. Unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah listened to Isaiah and turned to God. Although the Assyrians had surrounded Jerusalem and were taunting the people of Jerusalem, God's people ignored the taunts and refused to surrender. Isaiah 37:33-37 describes how God defeated the Assyrians without Judah's soldiers having to raise a hand. 185,000 Assyrian warriors were mysteriously killed in one night.³

Isaiah

37:33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

37:34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

37:35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

37:36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they [were] all dead corpses.

37:37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

Judah's Eventual Apostasy

Unfortunately, Judah's repentance and turning back to God did not last. During Jeremiah's preaching over 100 years later, Judah followed Israel's path and refused to repent.⁴ As a result of its Temple idolatry, Judah was conquered by Babylon and carried into captivity in 586 B.C. just as Isaiah had warned over a century before during Ahaz's apostasy.

A few of the remnant of Judah returned to

Palestine after they were allowed to return from exile around 538 B.C.

Centuries later, the queen of Judah, having not learned the lessons from history, appealed to Rome for aid because there was a civil war being waged between her two sons. One brother was general of the Israeli military, and the other was the minister in charge of Israel's religion. Each was fighting for total control. Rome sent its army to establish the peace, and while it was in Israel, Caesar decided to just take over the country and put it under tribute.

The people of Judah were back in their country and were being ruled by Rome when Christ was born. The time was precisely right for Christ to be born.

Galatians

4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels

There are four main sections of the New Testament. The first is the Gospels that portray Jesus' incarnate life. Though not primarily biographies, they contain biographical information. Primarily, they are full of God's offers of salvation through His only begotten Son. They give us the history of Jesus, the fledgling beginnings of faith in Jesus as Lord, and the salvation available for that faith.

The Gospel of Mark (Mark was Paul's earliest partner), was presumably written first and is a book of action depicting Christ as someone who gets things done.

Matthew was probably next. In Matthew 1:1-17 we see the genealogy of Jesus with scriptural truths telling about His Messiahship. The concentration in Matthew is the teachings of Jesus.

This Gospel also traced Jesus' lineage forward from Abraham, Jacob, and Judah up through king David and eventually to Joseph

³ What would God do for us today if we would just repent and trust in Him?

⁴ The express parallels of Judah's apostasy with that of our present church is available in our course on Jeremiah.

the husband of His mother Mary.⁵

Luke, a later partner of Paul's, is the most distinctive of the synoptic Gospels. Luke is the longest of the New Testament books and is fairly precise in historical details. It traces Jesus' lineage backward through Joseph His mother's husband back to king David and before that to Judah, Jacob, and Abraham.

John was most likely written last and its purpose is detailed in John 20:31—"that you might believe." Believing and life are theological emphases of John. Also many signs or miracles are recorded by John to show the deity of Christ.

The first period of Jesus' ministry is noted as the three years of obscurity. It is followed by the year of popularity and then by the year of adversity.⁶

Acts of the Early Church

The second main section of the New Testament is the book of Acts which is the history of Paul's missionary journeys and of the early church.

In Acts, an account of the first martyr, Stephen, sets the stage for the conversion of Saul. Holding the cloaks during the stoning of Stephen was Saul, who, after his conversion, was renamed Paul by God.

Paul wrote more of the New Testament than any other man. His letters connected mostly with his missionary journeys. Paul's task from God was to carry the Gospel message abroad from the cradle of Christianity. He made three missionary journeys which all involved the establishment of pockets of Christianity in every city in his route. He eventually was sent to Rome to stand trial. There he fed the church that was already there because of ministry by some unnamed prior convert, presumably a convert of Paul's.

⁵ God was Jesus' real Father. Mary was His real mother. Joseph was the husband of Mary who was given the honor of raising Jesus like a human father.

⁶ Our course on the book of John explores the theology of Jesus' ministry and teachings.

The Epistles

The third section of the New Testament is the Epistles. Paul's epistles make up a large majority of this section. John and Peter also wrote some of the epistles.

Paul's Chronology

You can find many chronologies about Paul's letters and journeys. Everyone has his own chronology, and you are welcome and responsible to develop your own. Following is my opinion for the chronology of Paul's letters and journeys.

Missionary Journey #1

This short journey was up into Galatia, present day Turkey. He wrote the letter to the Galatians from Antioch after the journey. This letter is the book of Galatians, and it was sent back to the converts to Christ that came to faith during Paul's first missionary journey.

Sometimes Paul wrote letters in anticipation of visits and other times, he sent letters back to places he recently had left. This letter was written in A.D. 45.

The Church Council of Jerusalem

The next chronological event was the Council at Jerusalem about A.D. 48-49.⁷ This council occurred between the first two missionary journeys and dealt with the requirements for salvation of Gentiles.

The reason Galatians is dated before the council at Jerusalem is that Galatians dealt with some of the same issues dealt with at the council, e.g. requirements for salvation of

⁷ Today's calendar is about 4 years off. So, all the dates of the first century to the present only give a reckoning within 4 years of when things happened. With the destruction of the library in Alexandria by the Muslims and their destruction of many Christian records, our calendars are not exact. Some of our authorities say that Jesus was actually born 4 years before we show him to have been born, making his birth in what we now call 4 B.C. Because some scholars use the date of 4 B.C. for Jesus' birth and others do not, we have this discrepancy among very reputable scholars. Do not try to be too precise about these dates.

Gentiles. Yet the council was not mentioned in the letter to the Galatians, so Galatians must have been written prior to this famous council.

Missionary journey #2

The second missionary journey occurred in A.D.49. During this journey, Paul wrote two letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians) from Corinth back to the Thessalonian Christians who were converted when he had passed through there.

Missionary journey #3

Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians from Ephesus in anticipation of his going there while on his third missionary journey. Corinth was an extremely important city. The Corinthian church was started on Paul's second missionary journey, and Paul was anticipating visiting it on his third missionary journey.

The third missionary journey had multiple purposes. First, Paul wanted to visit the churches that he had started. He wanted to check on their theology and teach them some more. Second, He also wanted to check on their ethics, fellowship, and welfare. Third, he was collecting an offering for the persecuted Jerusalem Christians.

The church members in Jerusalem were going through extensive persecution and suffering. They were losing their jobs and suffering severe deprivation. Paul was asking for money to take to the suffering Jerusalem Christians.

Rumors of factions and bad ethical behavior had reached Paul's ears before he left Ephesus for Corinth. Before Paul started moving south in Greece toward Corinth, he wrote First and Second Corinthians in advance of his arrival to deal with the reported sin and other problems in the Corinthian church. When he arrived at Corinth, the church became submissive to God's Word and repented of the sin in the church.

While Paul was in Corinth, he stood

facing south. To his right is Rome in the west; to his left is home in the east—Antioch and Jerusalem. His heart is torn over which way to go. He has in his hand the offering for Jerusalem; he has in his heart the evangelistic hunger to take the Gospel to Rome. He is standing in Corinth torn in half; he yearned to go west to Rome and then on to Spain. However, it was essential that he return to Jerusalem to take the offering to the persecuted saints in Jerusalem.

Class, this is the scenario in which Paul wrote Romans from Corinth in A.D. 56. Corinth had a very significant part in the Christian beginnings of history even though it was a church full of turmoil and sin.

When Paul returned to Jerusalem, he was arrested for taking Gentiles into the temple, which started a Jewish riot. He was jailed in Caesarea where he wrote the prison epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. These letters were to churches that he had established in his missionary journeys.

When it appeared definite that the Jews would kill him if he remained jailed in Caesarea, Paul appealed to be tried by Caesar. He was sent to Rome to stand trial under Caesar. While in Rome, he wrote the personal letter and his Pastoral Epistles. Philemon was a personal letter appealing for the reconciling of a slave with his owner.

As Paul drew closer to his execution, he wrote three Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy. The tone of his writing changed very much in these epistles because he was envisioning the end of his life and the fact that he must hand off the baton of ministry. Timothy and Titus are the two he chose to hand it to.

So, there was in Paul's heart a heavy responsibility to carry the ministry forward and do it in the right way. Then came his death; he was beheaded in A.D. 65 or 66. His beheading did not end Paul's life. He is eternally alive with his beloved Lord Jesus, and he lives on here in his epistles.

We are riding the crest of a tidal wave that

is coming right from Paul's teaching of salvation by faith. The Reformation originated out of that very message as found by Luther during his study of Romans.

The Apocalypse

The fourth section of the New Testament is called the Apocalypse. Apocalypse means an unveiling or revealing of something otherwise unknown to man because it comes from God above. Remember a few weeks ago we

studied General and Special Revelation? That word for revelation (apocalypse) is used as the name for the book of Revelation. Revelation is an umbrella word for things revealed to man from God. Therefore, the entire Bible is a revelation from God. The book of Revelation was given to the Apostle John who wrote it during his exile on the island of Patmos during Caesar Domitian's persecution of Christians.

Chapter Questions

1. True or False:
2. _____ Election is God's choosing a person to go to heaven.
3. God makes a promise to provide blessings to all who believe God. How do you receive that promise? You receive it by _____.
4. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for _____.
5. Please see that God promises forgiveness of sin and heaven as the destination to those who believe that Jesus was the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised again as Lord. Receiving that promise is called _____.
6. List three reasons why Revelation 6 doesn't describe Jesus?
7. List the steps in the cycle of Apostasy illustrated by the book of Judges.
8. Because Israel, the Northern Kingdom, refused to _____, the nation was divorced by God.
9. What are the four sections of the New Testament?
10. Define Apocalypse.

Chapter 6

THE CANON

THE LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE:

Is the Bible literature? Many Christians in many churches would be offended to hear the Bible classified as literature. Why? Designating the Bible as literature seems to classify it the same as a novel you could purchase at the supermarket or—since it is ancient literature—as the *Iliad* by Homer or the *Odyssey*.

The Bible is not mere literature. It is not just a human writing. Certainly humans wrote it, but it is also divine. Therefore it is not mere literature. It is sacred literature, i.e. the very Word of God.

Does the Bible contain literature? When the Bible was written, different forms of literary style were used to convey God's message. When you sit down to write a letter, you normally use a different format than you would use to write the minutes of the church business meeting. An article for the newspaper is totally different than a love song, and poems are distinctive because they rhyme—or they did until a few years ago (smile). The type of writing (letter, poetry, or newspaper article) is considered the genre.

Dockery describes the literature issue thusly: “Although the Bible was never intended to be read solely as literature, it has undeniable literary qualities and has undoubtedly greatly influenced other literature, particularly in the English-speaking world. From a literary point of view, the Bible contains drama, poetry, narrative and prose.”¹

The book of Revelation, which is an apocalypse, is an example of several forms of literary style. The book is a revelation of something that we could not know apart from God's divine intervention. We cannot climb up into heaven and see what God is revealing to us. We are stuck on earth, so God sent His Word to us in the form of a prophesy, letter,

psalm, and drama in Revelation.

Look at Ecclesiastes 3 in a King James Version of the Bible. At first glance, it appears to be more of the same literary style as chapter 2. Read the first few verses, these verses seem to have a rhythm to them, even though they have been translated from the original Hebrew. The verses are familiar to many of you, a popular secular song in the 60's was written using the words of the first few verses. Now look at the verses in another translation such as the New American Standard or the Living Bible. Note the indentations of the text of verses 1-8 in the more modern versions. These are indications of a different literary style. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is either poetry or a song.

Look at Psalms 53 in a King James Bible. Compare that to the same passage in a New International Version or other modern translation. Note the indentations on the second lines in the NIV. These are indicative of a song or poem. Is there a heading in your Bible above the psalm? It most likely reads, “A Psalm of David” or “To Maschil.”

Three Kinds of Bible Translations and Two Examples of Each

1. Word-for-word equivalents: **KJV** and **NASB**.
2. Dynamic equivalents that use idiomatic English seeking to communicate meaning: **NEB** and **NIV**.
3. Paraphrases that expand the interpretation in the interpreter's own words: **The Living Bible** and the **Amplified Bible**.

As you study your Bible, pay attention to the literary style of the passage you are reading. Sometimes the passage prior to it will identify it as a song or a prayer. Other times the modern translations will identify it for you. In the prophets, oftentimes the sermons are indented and treated as separate from the narrative portion of the book. Look at a few chapters of Jeremiah and note the indentations

¹Dockery, p. 117.

on some of the passages. Why are they classified as poetry rather than prose?

Treat Prose and Poetry Differently

1. Prose is everyday language that conveys meaning in the common way.
2. Poetry is language, which creates emotional response through imaginative and experiential words.
3. Prose would therefore be interpreted much more straightforward and ordinarily than poetry.

The New Testament has been classified into four different types of literature. The first four books of the New Testament are the GOSPELS. The commonly understood definition of Gospel today is the good news of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. The writers of the Gospels are actually called evangelists (*euaggelos*: *eu* = good, and *aggelos* = angels or messengers from God. Evangelists are messengers of good news from God).

Unger's Bible Dictionary defines Gospel as: "The term Gospel stems directly from the Anglo-Saxon 'godspel,' meaning god-message. Ultimately, however, the earlier form of the expression went back to 'god-spel,' signifying 'a good message,' a phrase apparently invented to reflect exactly the Greek '*euaggelion*.' The Gospels find no parallel in world literature. Negatively they are not romances or folk tales since they catalog historical events. Neither are they biographies in any strict sense, nor memoirs. They are not even in the strict sense of the word literary works. None of the evangelists, not even Luke, is dominated by literary aspirations. Perhaps the Gospels can best be described as portraits of Jesus the promised Messiah."²

The second type of New Testament literature is HISTORY. Acts is the book of history

in our New Testament. Look again into your Bible at the book of Acts. Many Bibles have introductions at the beginning of each book. Read the introduction in your Bible or a commentary. Does the introduction lead you to believe Acts contains a great deal of the history of the early church? The King James Version calls Acts "The Acts of the Apostles."

The third type of literature is the EPISTLES, or letters. An example of a letter is Philippians. Note on the heading of Philippians in the King James Version it reads, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians." The letters were written to a specific people for a special purpose. Later, as in the preordained design of God, they were shared by all and are intended to edify all believers.

The fourth type of literature is the APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE of which Revelation is an example. I want to caution you here about the understanding of the phrase, apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic Literature is a type of literature often mentioned in commentaries and theological studies. The label of apocalyptic given to non-canonical (not an accepted part of our Bible) materials is an inaccurate name as this literature (non-canonical) did not have its origin in God. The true meaning of Apocalypse is a *revelation from God*; therefore the entire Bible is apocalyptic literature, and the book of Revelation identifies itself as *apokalupsis* at the beginning of the first verse of the first chapter. This designation by God gives us advance notice of a specialness about this book of the Bible. Later on in chapter one, God gives an example of how to interpret the book.³

However, apocalyptic literature is a name that is associated with non-canonical Jewish writings that are looking forward to a political messiah who will deliver the ever-hopeful

² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago: 1966, p. 421

³ Our course on the book of Revelation goes into detail about how to interpret the Apocalypse.

Jews from their oppressors. This Jewish apocalyptic material that projects political deliverance was not accepted as a portion of our canon. Therefore, when we associate the biblical book of Revelation with the non-canonical Jewish literature, we are casting doubt on its divine origin. This, in turn, may cause us to question everything contained within the book of Revelation. Yes, Revelation is apocalyptic literature, but Revelation is not to be classified with Jewish non-canonical apocalyptic literature.

THE TEXT AND CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:

Why were certain Old Testament books accepted into the canon and others classified as simply Jewish Literature? The answer is not what most people would suppose to have happened. About the end of the first century A.D., rabbinic councils apparently met to discuss the Old Testament canon. However, instead of deciding which books were authoritative, that group listed books already being used by believers. This means that the devout Hebrew people, not some committee, recognized the canon as the books that God had breathed. That Hebrew accepted canon is now our Protestant Old Testament.

The word, “canon” comes from the Greek word, *kanon* and from a Hebrew word, *qaneh*, which means measuring rod or reed. Those books measured and accepted by the Hebrew community and found to be “God-breathed” were included in the canon. The canon is made of books that measure up to the standards demanded by God’s people. In turn, the books in the canon are books that we should measure our lives by.

WISEMAN: List the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 of the New Testament.

(Use your Bibles and memorize the names of the 66 books of the Bible)

Now look at this list of titles and see if

you recognize them as being included in the canon:

- “The Wisdom of Solomon”
- “Ecclesiasticus,” also called “The wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach”
- “I Esdras”
- “I Macabees” and “II Macabees”
- “Tobit”
- “Judith”
- “Baruch”
- “II Esdras”
- “Prayer of Manasses”
- “The Rest of Esther”
- “Song of the Hebrew Children”
- “The History of Susanna”
- “Bel and the Dragon”

These books are part of the Apocrypha (secret or hidden), a name given by Jerome to a number of books that were excluded from the canon. They had come to be part of the *Septuagint* (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) in a strange way.⁴ Jerome was assigned the task of translating all the Hebrew Scriptures in about A.D. 400. When he translated the *Septuagint*, he translated all of the books including the non-canonical books. It is my understanding that Jerome did not consider those non-canonical books to be part of the accepted Scriptures, but since he translated them, they were added to the Old Testament Latin *Vulgate* soon after his death.

⁴ Emperor Alexander demanded a library to be built in Alexandria and stocked with a copy of every book in the world translated into Greek. The Catholic Church authorized Jerome to do this translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the *Septuagint*. However, Jerome’s *Septuagint* was not confined to the canonical books but included those Hebrew apocryphal writings which were placed adjacent to the Hebrew Scriptures in the library. Later when the Catholics constructed their Old Testament, they developed it from Jerome’s *Septuagint* which included the Apocrypha. Thus the Catholic Bible is different from the Protestant Bible because the Protestants translated their Bibles from the individual Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of Old Testament and New Testament books.

Thus, all the apocryphal books of the *Vulgate* became a part of the Roman Catholic canon. They did not receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church until 1546.

Read over the list of the books again and assure yourself that you will recognize them as part of the Apocrypha next time you hear of them. You need to be aware of these books because Roman Catholic Bibles contain them. Others will read about them in theological books and further seminary studies.

Following are the reasons that Unger's Bible Dictionary gives for the apocryphal books not being accepted into our Old Testament Canon:

1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms.
2. They teach doctrines that are false and foster practices that are at variance with inspired Scripture.
3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
4. They lack the distinctive elements that give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.⁵ In other words, they do not inspire worship by the reader.

An interesting point about the Apocrypha is that although Jesus and the apostles quoted the Old Testament repeatedly in the New Testament, the Apocrypha was not quoted at all.

The Hebrew canon (Old Testament Masoretic Text) contains 24 books, rather than the 39 of the Protestant canon. However, it contains the exact same subject matter. How can this be? The books are grouped together (several books are combined into one, e.g. 1 and 2 Kings became just Kings) and arranged in different order in the Hebrew canon than they are in your Bible. In the Hebrew canon, the first book is Genesis and the last book is

Chronicles, however, the material of such books as Malachi and Isaiah which fall after Chronicles in our Old Testament are included in the arrangement.

The Law was comprised of the first five books of the Old Testament. We do know that God revealed Himself to the Hebrew people in these five books through Moses. It is probable that significant portions of Genesis had been transmitted and preserved orally. Later we discover that workmen sent by young King Josiah of Judah found an old law scroll while they were refurbishing the temple (2 Kings 22:8 to 23:25). It was called the book of the law, and it was considered authoritative. That scroll contained all or part of our book of Deuteronomy, and perhaps even more. This is documentary evidence of the Law's acceptance as an authoritative sacred Scripture.

I usually have students whose writings are hard to understand. Perhaps some of your small children run words together or forget to capitalize or punctuate. This sloppiness in writing causes a great deal of trouble for the reader. However, running words together with no punctuation or capitalization was the practice in Old Testament times in order to save space and labor for the copyists. It was the norm to join all the words together with no capitalization, punctuation marks, or spaces. For example, the words were all run together without punctuation or spaces. Remember the Old Testament was also written without vowels. So, the same example would be thwrds wrllrntgt hrwthtpntnrspcs. It is hard to imagine how writing such as this can be copied by hand for centuries while maintaining the integrity of the text, yet this is the way the Old Testament was preserved.

The Masoretes (AD 500-800) accepted the challenge of editing the Hebrew Old Testament and adding the vowel sounds to produce the first example above with the full spelling of words but without spaces. They did this

⁵Unger, p. 70.

with great precision and attention to detail. According to Sir Frederic Kenyon, the Masoretes “numbered the verses, words and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and middle letter of each. They enumerated verses, which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them. . . .⁶ These trivialities . . . had the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text.”⁷

The accuracy of the Old Testament is astonishing to those in the secular world. An example of the accuracy is found in this quote of Robert Dick Wilson: “The evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy. That the original scribes should have written them with such close conformity to correct philological principles is a wonderful proof of their thorough care and scholarship; further, that the Hebrew text should have been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequaled in the history of literature.”⁸ We can see God’s hand at work in the preservation of the text of the Word of God.

What Robert Dick Wilson has done is textual criticism. Textual criticism is a valid discipline. It is the analyzing of ancient manuscripts to determine the original text and its meaning.

⁶ In our computer age, a similar idea was used to verify accuracy. A check bit was used to make all the bits of a binary piece of data always to be an even number. Every time the computer wrote something, it was in binary code, i.e. bits and no bits. The computer added up the binary bits for the data and added a check bit to make the total an even number whenever the total was an odd number. If the next computer read the data, and the total was an odd number, then the data was declared erroneous.

⁷ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., San Bernardino, CA, 1979, p. 55.

⁸ *Ibid.*

In another quote from *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, the minute manuscript variations in the Hebrew Old Testament are compared with those of secular writings of similar antiquity. “Gleason Archer, in comparing the manuscript variations of the Hebrew text with pre-Christian literature such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead, states that it is amazing that the Hebrew text does not have the phenomenon of discrepancy and MS [manuscript] change of other literature of the same age. He writes: ‘Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years older than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (AD 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.’”⁹

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS:

Prior to discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the reliability of our copies of the Old Testament was in question. However a shepherd boy near Qumran stumbled upon a cave containing several large sealed jars containing leather scrolls wrapped in linen cloth. The leather was in good condition due to having been wrapped, sealed, and kept in a dry climate. The scrolls were about 1,900 years old. Before that discovery in the Twentieth Century, the oldest known manuscripts were from about AD 900. The Dead Sea Scrolls are dated between 200 BC and AD 200 depending upon the scroll itself.

Qumran is located in an arid region about seven miles south of Jericho on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The world became very excited at the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially when it was determined that they were indeed authentic. Archaeologists began searching around Qumran and

⁹ *Ibid.*, 53-54

discovered several more caves containing manuscripts. The manuscripts were not all Biblical texts. Some were Apocrypha written in the Intertestamental period (between about 400 BC and AD 45). Others were commentaries and even secular documents.

The documents contain a full scroll of the book of Isaiah and most of another. There are also scrolls or fragments from almost every book of the Old Testament. Upon close comparison of the scrolls with our oldest known manuscripts, Biblical scholars were amazed at the precision of preservation of the text of our Old Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a valuable tool in the battle against the skepticism regarding the Bible as the accurate translation of the inspired Word of God, which is common today

The Councils did not determine what was canonical and what was not. The people of God under the leadership of the Holy Spirit made those determinations. The councils formally ratified them.

WISEMAN: How and when did each of the three parts of the Hebrew Old Testament come to be accepted as authoritative (canonical)?

1. Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy).

When Ezra the priest returned to Judah in 458 BC after the long exile in Babylon, he read the law of God to the people. He and the people obviously considered “the book of the law of Moses” to be authoritative Scripture. Most people think that the process of accepting the law as canonical was complete by 400 BC.

2. Prophets (prophetic books). The prophets not only pointed to the authority of the law; they also obviously expected their own words to be taken seriously. This included the expectation that their messages be preserved. Isaiah had his disciples record his words (Isaiah 8:16). Baruch did that for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:1-22). The prophets were probably recognized as canonical by about 200 BC.

3. The Writings (all the other O.T. books). We do not have precise information about any of the general writings and how and when they were accepted as authoritative. We do have apparent references to the third part of the Hebrew canon in Luke 24:44. The Writings were accepted, and the whole Old Testament canon was officially closed at the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.

Chapter Questions

1. Identify 3 kinds of Bible translations and give 2 examples of each.
2. Name the four types of literature found in the New Testament.
3. Why do we need to treat prose and poetry differently?
4. How and when did each of the three parts of the Hebrew Old Testament come to be accepted as authoritative (canonical)?

Chapter 7

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

Last week we studied the literature of the Bible and also the text and canonization of the Old Testament. This week we will be studying the text and the canonization of the New Testament and the translation of the Bible.

I want to caution you first about separating the Bible into multiple books. The Bible is not multiple books, but one book. Christians follow one book with two major divisions that are equally valuable and authoritative. The Old Testament foreshadows Christ, and the New Testament is His fulfillment.

The entire Bible is Christological and Christocentric. Some Christians separate the Bible into two distinct portions and throw out the Old Testament as obsolete since Christ. That is an incorrect assumption.

The Old Testament was the Scripture of Christ's day. He considered it authoritative and divinely inspired. Look at the following Scriptures: Acts 18:24, Rom. 15:4, II Timothy 3:15 & 16, Romans 1:2. The New Testament writers obviously believed the Old Testament was divinely inspired as well.

Acts

18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, [and] mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Romans

15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

II Timothy

3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Romans

1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

How did the New Testament writers feel about the writings we call the Old Testament? Look at I Timothy 5:18 (KJV): "For the Scripture sayeth, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward." In this passage, Paul is quoting and explaining the Old Testament verse (Deuteronomy 25:4), "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." He explains the Old Testament verse by connecting it to the New Testament verse which is quoting Jesus' words as recorded in Luke 10:7: "... for the laborer is worthy of his hire. . . ." God, through Paul, is declaring both the Old Testament passage and the New Testament passage to be Scripture.

The New Testament was produced over a period of about 50 years. There were 8 or 9 men who wrote different portions of the New Testament. Matthew wrote Matthew, Mark wrote Mark, Luke wrote both Luke and Acts. John wrote the Gospel of John, I, II and III John and Revelation. Peter wrote both I and II Peter. Also contributing were, James, Jude, and an unknown writer of the book of Hebrews if Paul did not write it. Paul wrote all the rest.

I am currently involved in a very interesting Bible study. We began by studying Luke, which tells a great deal about the apostle Peter. In the study we learned about Peter's personality and character traits. Now we are studying I and II Peter and observing the way in which Peter wrote and the subjects that the Holy Spirit impressed upon him to write about. I would recommend a Bible study

such as this where you learn all you can about the writer and then study what he wrote to all of us.

James wrote the book of James and Jude wrote Jude. Paul wrote 13 epistles: Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Many people are indecisive about who wrote Hebrews. If Paul indeed wrote it, then eight men wrote the New Testament. There were nine writers, if someone other than Paul wrote Hebrews.

The New Testament writers had various types of knowledge of Jesus. Matthew, John and Peter were 3 of Jesus' original 12 disciples. Paul had a dramatic conversion on the Damascus road as foretold in Acts 9. Paul considered James an apostle in Galatians 1:19. Luke worked with Paul a great deal in his missionary endeavors. Jude was the brother of James, both Jude and James were half-brothers of Christ. Of the eight known authors, only two, Paul and Luke, did not know Jesus during His earthly ministry.

We referred earlier to the synoptic gospels as over against John. The synoptic gospels, i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are very similar. "The substance of 606 of the 661 verses of Mark reappears in somewhat shortened form in Matthew, and about 350 of the 661 verses of Mark reappear in Luke. Furthermore, Matthew and Luke have each about 235 verses in common, comprising chiefly discourse material, which are not in Mark."¹

Because of the similarity of the synoptic gospels, many theologians believe that there may have been an original source, which they called "Q" for the German word *Quelle*, which means source. They theorize that the

synoptic gospel writers took much of their common material from this mysterious source.

I think that this theory of Q is bunk. The source of the Gospels is God. Yes, similarity is because of a single source, but that source is not a mystery writer who has written a gospel called "Q." That source is God, and all the writers of Scripture received all of their material from Him.

There are people today who say that inerrancy cannot be proven because we do not have the autographs. These same people will write as though "Q" exists even when not one manuscript of Q has ever been found. Multitudes of manuscripts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been found, but these doubters do not believe that they were written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke with their source in God. Yet they have absolute faith in Q, which does not exist.

I am making you aware of "Q" because you will run into the theory repeatedly in your theological training. Simply because many people believe in this theory does not make it a fact. The Holy Spirit is quite capable of leading three writers to tell similar accounts of the same historical events. Look at John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you." The fact that the synoptic gospels are similar does not substantiate the belief that some of the God-inspired writers copied from other writers or from a source which has since been lost.

If you are interested in studying the parallels in the gospels (the similar passages), a good study help is *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*.² This book lists each passage of the synoptic gospels and shows its parallels. For example,

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament: its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), P. 80.

² Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1992).

the healing of the man with the withered hand is found in Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11 and a good gospel parallel will show these passages side by side. In this way, a student can see how people with different personalities wrote, from God's inspiration, accounts of the same happening.

Matthew

12:9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had [his] hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? That they might accuse him.

12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift [it] out?

12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

12:13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched [it] forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Mark

3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

3:2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

3:3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

3:4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched [it] out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

Luke

6:6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

6:7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

6:8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

6:9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy [it]?

6:10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6:11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

The actual writing of the New Testament was much more labor intensive and expensive than the writing that we do today. Writing materials were scarce and costly. The common saying is that the New Testament manuscripts, which we have, are copies of copies—hand copies, of course—of materials originally written by hand. And the oldest copies are no less than 100 years removed from the originals. This in and of itself is remarkable for any document of antiquity.

Fortunately, many manuscripts are available for study, and the science of textual criticism (textual studies) has developed so well that we can be sure of the manuscript readings with a high degree of confidence. Not a single one of the questionable passages affects any major doctrine of our faith. God has truly been at work in both the inspiration

and also the preservation of his Word.

The early writing materials were fragile. The oldest form was a crude paper made from Egyptian papyrus plants. Sheets of this material were sewn together to form a scroll. The largest scrolls would have contained Acts or the Gospel of Luke. Writing was done on one side of the narrow sheets.

With usage the stitches pulled through the papyrus sheets, and the scrolls broke in two. Sometimes sheets were lost, and the surviving scrolls were just fragments. Christians were looking for a more durable writing material. In the fourth century AD they began to use parchment made from animal skins. They wrote on both sides, since parchment was expensive. Sometimes the writing was erased and the parchment was used a second time. Such a manuscript is called a palimpsest.

Writing on papyrus was done with a reed stalk dried and sharpened on one end. Writing on parchment was done with quill pens. Ink was made usually from soot or lampblack mixed with gum dissolved in water. The type of ink found at Qumran, the Dead Sea community of the first century A.D., was still used in the middle of the twentieth century.

From the fourth to the ninth centuries A.D., most manuscripts were written with capital letters. They are called uncials. There was no space between the words and no punctuation marks. Later manuscripts were written in small letters (or cursive style) and are called minuscules. The work went faster and was much easier to read because of the spaces between the words and the accents and punctuation marks. Most New Testament manuscripts are minuscules.

The New Testament was originally written in (koine) Greek, the common language of the Roman Empire. As the common languages of various nations were not familiar with Koine Greek, there was a growing need for translations of the Bible in their own

languages. The earliest efforts at translation were in Latin and English. We will talk more about these translation efforts later in this lesson.

The early translations help us determine the correct textual reading whenever there are uncertainties. We are also assisted by Scripture quotations or allusions to the Scripture by the leaders of the early church who are commonly called church fathers. These were leaders who lived in the immediate centuries after New Testament times.

THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

1. The Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or associates (Luke 1:1).

Luke

1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2. The epistles quote the Gospels as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18).

I Timothy

5:18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer [is] worthy of his reward.

3. The Apostle Peter accepted Paul's epistles as Scripture (II Peter 3:15-16).

II Peter

3:15 And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

3:16 As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

4. The first century church read and circu-

lated the books (Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27; I Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:4).

5. The last book of the New Testament was written before the end of the first century.
6. Every New Testament book (except III John) was quoted as Scripture in the second century.

Look at Chart 7.1, which lists the early father's quotations of the New Testament. Note that the Gospels were quoted the most, followed by Paul's letters. Notice the names of these men. You will hear them repeatedly as you study courses such as Church History.

3. The Apostles were dying and their works needed to be preserved.
4. Troubles in churches required authoritative instruction.
5. Persecution necessitated a collection of the books that explained the reason.

Tests of Canonicity

These tests were developed by the early church in order to determine what books to include in the canon:

1. Inspiration—operation of the Holy Spirit sets them apart as much higher than normal writings.

EARLY FATHERS QUOTATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT						
WRITER	GOSPELS	ACTS	PAULINE EPISTLES	GENERAL EPISTLES	REVELATION	TOTALS
JUSTIN MARTYR	268	10	43	6	3	330
IRENAEUS	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
CLEMENT ALEX.	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
ORIGEN	9,231	349	7,778	339	165	17,922
TERTULLIAN	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
HIPPOLYTUS	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
EUSEBIUS	3,258	211	1592	88	27	5,176
GRAND TOTALS	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

Chart 7.1

Why the New Testament Was Collected

1. The authoritative words of Christ needed preserving.
2. There was a need for a New Covenant collection of documents to complement that of the Old Covenant.
2. Apostolicity—they belong to the apostolic age. For example the book *Shepherd of Hermas* is not apostolic.
3. Doctrinal purity—they are consistent in doctrine.
4. Genuineness—they induce worship.

5. Catholicity—they have universal acceptance.³

The Gospels and Epistles were shared among churches. Between the time of the Apostles and AD 140, the various books were collected and regionally accepted. From AD 140–180, the various regions began to agree upon the books that were inspired, apostolic, doctrinally pure, genuine and universal. From AD 180–240, universal confirmation and final agreement had arrived.

Who is the author of the New Testament? God is the author. Therefore, is there any question about who decided which books should be admitted into the New Testament canon? The Author decided, of course. God determined the New Testament canon, and the Church recognized the New Testament canon. Inspiration preceded recognition. The official recognition of the canon by a church council did not happen until AD 397. However, the Holy Spirit had inspired the Church (God's people) to accept the canon long before that. For example, Athanasius listed all 27 books in his Easter Letter of AD 367.

The internal considerations which preceded the official recognition of the canon were: 1) the fact that the accepted books were a rule of faith from which the Christian could not depart, 2) the real or related apostolic contact of a book (was it authored by an apostle or someone closely associated with one?), 3) The internal witness in individual Christians by the Spirit to the Scriptures.

Early Days of Christianity

As those of you who take our Church History course will learn, the years from AD 100 to 325 were dangerous times to proclaim the name of Christ. The external danger came

from the Roman Empire. Twice during this time period, concerted efforts were made to exterminate Christianity throughout the known world. The response of the Christians to the persecution was unique. They made efforts to develop effective literature to enlighten the persecutors and strengthen the faith.

The persecution of Christians and Christianity even involved intellectual assaults, which “represent one of its severest struggles and greatest victories. Pagan writers, skilled in logical argumentation and trained in the best scholarship of the revived classical era, leveled against Christianity every criticism that modern infidels and agnostics have used.”⁴

Two types of Christian writings developed as a result of this persecution, *apologetics*, which are writings in defense of the faith against unbelievers outside of the faith, and *polemics*, which are disputations between Christians within the faith. Both of these types of writings of the early church fathers are valuable to Christians today and provide confirmation of the historicity of Scripture, which strengthens our faith. Look again at Chart 7.1. Most of the writings from those men mentioned in the chart were either apologetics or polemics.

The persecution also illustrated the need for an authoritatively recognized canon, although the Scripture did not have to be recognized by a council of men in order to be the Word of God. However, God used these circumstances to cause men to move to collect the Word of God and confirm it into one canon.

The persecution of Christians ended abruptly when Constantine, whose mother had been a Christian, gained power. Later, he was

³ Catholic means universal. So, the catholic church prior to the 5th Century meant the universal church. At the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, the Roman Catholic Church was born. That is when “Catholic” became a proper name as well as an adjective.

⁴ Robert A. Baker, *A Summary of Christian History*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), Pp. 16-17.

fighting a battle and saw a vision of the cross in the clouds that he believed was God's signal to him that he would have victory in this battle. After that victory, he adopted Christianity and set forth to cause Christianity to be accepted as an allowable religion in the whole Roman Empire. Constantine made his decision known by installing the figure of the cross on all the shields of his army.

Constantine and the Eastern Co-emperor Licinius agreed upon the edict of Milan in AD 313 to end the persecution of Christians. In AD 323, Constantine became sole emperor.

There is question about whether Constantine's profession of faith was sincere or political. However, in AD 325 he encouraged all of his citizens to become Christians. This move was not necessarily a good move for Christianity as secular involvement caused a lot of dilution and distortion of the faith. Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire by the time of Theodosius (AD 378-95).

When Emperor Constantine became bishop of bishops at the Council of Nicea in AD 325, caesaropapacy was instituted. When doctrinal orthodoxy came under the sway of the government, all manner of distortions gained entrance. Physical power determined both political correctness and also theological correctness. Truth was by decree from the seat of power. Secular influence invaded all areas of the church, and ecclesiastical dissent encountered physical persecution by the government.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE:

In the late fourth century, Jerome translated the entire Bible (i.e. the Septuagint which contained extra books which were not canonical) into Latin. The translation was officially commissioned by the Bishop of Rome and was called the Latin Vulgate (Latin was the language of the common, or vulgar

people). Because the Septuagint contained extra books, i.e. the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Vulgate also contains them,

The Vulgate served as the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church for almost 1,000 years. Classical Latin ceased to be spoken by the common people, and in time, only the educated Roman Catholic clergy could read and interpret the Bible.

A few people attempted to translate the Bible into English during this time period. In the eighth century, Venerable Bede, an English Monk, translated portions of the Vulgate into English, but no copies of his work have survived. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, portions of the Bible were also translated.

The first full translation of the Bible into English was done by John Wycliffe, an English priest and church reformer of the fourteenth century. Wycliffe died in 1384 and his followers completed his translation of the Latin Vulgate. In 1408, the Roman Catholic Church condemned the Wycliffe translation and banned all such translation efforts.

In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. Many translations of the Bible in common languages were spread throughout Europe as a result of this innovation. In 1522, Martin Luther published a German translation. In 1525, William Tyndale did likewise with an English version of the New Testament. Tyndale had to flee to Germany to publish his translation as the Church of England would not allow him to produce an English Bible there. He was arrested in 1535, convicted of treason for producing the translation and executed.⁵

How many various translations of the

⁵ The above passages regarding translations are historical facts, which have been summarized from Steven M. Sheeley and Robert N. Nash, Jr. *The Bible in English Translation* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1997), Pp. 18-19.

Bible do you have at home? In Europe during the Reformation, whole congregations may have had only one Bible, if they were even that fortunate.⁶

The Anabaptist movement was begun because a group of intellectual young men gathered in the home of Grebel in the early 1500's to study Greek. They eventually began to study the Scripture in detail and discovered in the process the errors of the Roman Catholic Church and the reality of salvation via faith in Christ alone. These young men, brand new Christians, were immediately launched into perilous lives of persecution, deprivation, flight, and martyrdom. Why? They were persecuted because they were curious and studious enough to search the Scriptures and brave and committed enough to follow through with their scriptural faith and witnessing.

There have been similar problems in our days. In communist countries in the twentieth century, Bibles were condemned and people were persecuted for their faith. There will be similar problems in all Christian circles during the last days, which I believe are upon us right now. How much do you value your personal Holy Bible? Would you be willing to die to make the Word of God known to people who will have no hope without it? When was the last time you passed out a tract to someone? When was the last time you introduced Jesus to someone? You are living in a free country. If you can't do it here where it causes you no physical persecution,

would you have died for your faith if you had lived during the Roman period of Christian extermination of the early church or even during the Reformation? Will you be able to stand for your Lord against the Antichrist?

There are others attacking the Bible through translation efforts. Among these are modern translations, which bring an agenda to the task. An example is the feminist agenda in which the masculine gender is being eradicated.

My daughter sent me an article from her school's paper. I do not have the name and date of the paper; the school is Texas A&M. The article warns of a trend of using translation processes to change the Word of God to fit certain agendas (see Appendix 7.1). The article alerts us to the unexpected in the new Oxford University translation, which is redoing any words that can be construed as racist, sexist, or anti-Semitic.

I recommend that you try this process. Choose a certain Bible passage, gather as many translations as you can find. Look up the passage in each of the translations. Compare the meanings in detail. On differences, look up the Greek or Hebrew meanings in a concordance or dictionary. Which Bible has a meaning that is closer to the original? Start using more than one translation of the Bible when you do serious Bible study. If possible, go to the Hebrew or Greek text and translate it paying particular attention to verb tenses, the gender of nouns and pronouns, and the definition of words.

⁶The open pulpit Bible is a current American tradition that recognizes this ancient limitation of one single Bible per Anglican Church.

Chapter Questions

1. Of the writers of the New Testament, two of the writers are half brothers of Jesus. Name them. _____
2. Who are the two writers of the New Testament that did not personally know Jesus while He was teaching and preaching in Israel? _____
3. What is the “Q” (*Quelle*) document? _____
4. Parchment replaced the papyrus that was used for the earliest writings because the papyrus was _____
5. List the tests of canonicity (and explain each one): _____
6. Who is the author of the New Testament, and who decided upon the canonicity of the chosen books? _____
7. The fact that the accepted books were a rule of faith from which the Christian could not depart, the real or related apostolic contact of a book (was it authored by an apostle or someone closely associated with one?) and the internal witness in individual Christians by the Spirit to the Scriptures are the _____
8. The two types of writings of the early church fathers that are valuable to Christians today and provide confirmation of the historicity of Scripture, which strengthens our faith are _____
9. Match the following translators with their translations:

a. Jerome	_____ Provided the first full English translation of the New Testament.
b. Venerable Bede	_____ Began a full translation into English that was completed by his followers.
c. John Wycliffe	_____ Translated the Septuagint into the Latin Vulgate
d. Martin Luther	_____ Translated parts of the Vulgate into English, but none of his work has survived.
e. William Tyndale	_____ Translated the Bible into German.

Chapter 8

SECULAR AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

This week we are studying proper hermeneutics, which is the proper interpretation of the Bible. We will be concentrating on using the proper process to discover what the Lord intends for us to grasp out of a passage and how to apply it to everyday life.

FALSE WORLDVIEWS

In order to understand proper hermeneutics, I want to heighten the contrast between the good and the bad by first showing you some of the wrong kinds of hermeneutics. We will look at both secular and biblical hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is the new frontier in scholarship. They are used in every area of life. In secular uses they are used to understand all messages. When you read a text, what does it mean? Long ago, the author determined what message he wanted to convey and wrote accordingly. But authorial intent is now passé in this so-called enlightened age that is producing false worldviews.

I took, as part of my doctoral program, a course on secular hermeneutics at UTA. This was a purely secular course involving secular hermeneutics. Attachment 8.1 consists of four short summary papers which I wrote as illustrations of current secular hermeneutics which have an effect on Christian hermeneutics. I repeat that these are secular hermeneutics, and they are highly technical. If you are interested in what the world is thinking or you want to delve a little deeper into what the church is up against, Attachment 8.1 would be a good starting place.

Now, I will discuss a couple of false worldviews that have produced two terrible secular hermeneutics that are pervasive in our

present culture. One is Progressivism¹ and the other is Existentialism.

Progressivism

In our courts, laws are interpreted as guides for our relational behavior. But what do the laws mean? They can mean just about anything now. Under the worldview of Progressivism, it is not the author who determines the meaning of a text. Instead, the latest Progressive reader determines the meaning. In Progressivism, the cosmic spirit is a secular spirit; it is the spirit of the world.² This cosmic spirit is leading the human race on a progressive journey toward its utopia in which full enlightenment will be in place. As this occurs, the human mind will grow progressively in tune with said spirit. This means that today's man is more enlightened than yesterday's man. Therefore, the adherents of Progressivism question why a document's meaning should be trapped in yesterday's understanding? For the Progressive, truth is progressive, and the truth of a document is as well.

Red flags go up whenever I hear the words "living document" used of the Constitution or the Bible. It is not that I do not think that they are living documents, but it is how those words are being used today. Under the philosophy of Progressivism, the meanings of the documents progressively change so that they no longer mean what the author (God in the case of the Bible) intended.

Existentialism

Under Existentialism, all is subjective. The text can mean anything to anyone. You create your own meaning because you are the subject. No one has the right to tell you what

¹ Hilary Clinton has openly declared that she is a Progressive.

² We know that the spirit of this world is the devil.

a text means because that would make you object, which is taboo in Existentialism. Everyone gets his own truth and goes his own way.

When these two false worldviews are merged, the result is an anything-goes understanding of words. While in high school, my daughter, Rebekah, wrote a poem about the tragedy of abortion, but when it got into the school's newspaper, it was so distorted in its interpretation that it no longer meant anything close to what she had poured her heart and soul into saying. The distortion was ruinous. So, how was it distorted? It was distorted by the merging of two formerly separate hermeneutics based on two different worldviews.

First, is the worldview of Progressivism. The editor knew more about what the author was trying to say because she was an elite intellect in her own mind (this is common in Progressivism, the basic worldview foundational to liberalism). The editor was part of the elite of society who are more in tune with the Progressive cosmic spirit than are we mere commoners.

You see this in our government attitudes today. The elite think that we cannot make good decisions for our own lives because we are just too out of tune with what the cosmic spirit is doing in the world. They also think that we don't have enough sense to even realize our need for their wise guidance.

Secondly, under the worldview of Existentialism, all is subjective. Therefore, the words mean whatever is expedient and exigent to the reader. In this compound hermeneutic, authorial intent is neither primary nor even secondary in importance. The cosmic spirit's truth, which is hidden within the text, is discerned by the progressive interpreter and translated into his own existential words.

Poetic license (Existential-Progressive hermeneutics) is practiced to extremes in our

English classes today. A poem about blue water can be made to mean peaceful (blue) death (water), sadness and turbulence, body and spirit, or heaven and earth. The poets of long ago would turn over in their graves if they knew how their poetry was being interpreted today.

If you take our Philosophy course, we will study many men over the ages that have come up with various ways to interpret the Bible and to look at God and man. Some small parts of their intentions might be good, but all of them are in error and are hurting both secular and theological life. The bad part about this is that their bad philosophies are still affecting us today.

Look at Revelation 19:20.

Revelation

19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he **deceived** them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

There is an important eschatological symptom that you need to be aware of. The backbone of philosophy's intent is determining truth from error, or right conclusions from wrong ones. In Revelation, right before the judgment, did you notice the word deceived? The nature of deception is that you don't know it. If you knew that you were deceived, you wouldn't be deceived. If you know that you are living in deception and continue in deception, it is foolishness.

You don't know where you are deceived; I don't know where I am deceived. There was only one perfect theologian—Jesus. Everyone else is deceived in some area(s).

Satan attacks us through deception. When we believe lies, we become a proponent of error. An illustration is when Peter attempted to get Jesus to give up his heavenly mission as related in Matthew 16:21-23.

Matthew

6:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Jesus called Peter Satan. If Peter had succeeded in convincing Jesus to go back from his task, Satan's attempt at deception would have been successful. That was an example of the method that Satan uses.

What about us? What if we are interpreting the Lord's truth with a faulty understanding? It doesn't matter how much faith you have in that error; believing a falsehood does not make it true. The more strongly we believe it, the more we will push it. The error can then become a stumbling block for the church. For more examples of the devil's deceptions in this one chapter of Scripture, look for the word deceived in Revelation 20:3, 8 and 10.

Revelation

20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should **deceive** the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

20:8 And shall go out to **deceive** the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom [is] as the sand of the sea.

20:10 And the devil that **deceived** them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

I believe the Word of God, but I can twist the meaning of the Word and turn it into a lie, even in my best intentions, when I use a false hermeneutic. Please know that although I still claim to believe the Word, I am likely de-

ceived in multiple areas. Hermeneutics come into play here. The cutting edge of theology today is hermeneutics. How do we properly interpret the Bible?

Schleiermacher's Feeling Hermeneutic

Let me give you a very important example of a false religious hermeneutic. It is Schleiermacher's hermeneutic which became the basis of Liberalism³ (please see Chart 8.1). The common ground for all of humanity in this hermeneutic is "feeling." In this model, it is assumed that the author of the scripture was expressing his feelings about what he had just witnessed. Thus the words are an expression of feelings. The reader must experience those same feelings in order to get behind them to understand what the witness actually experienced that produced those feelings that are described in his words of scripture. Thus the reader obtains the meaning not from the words themselves but from the feelings that

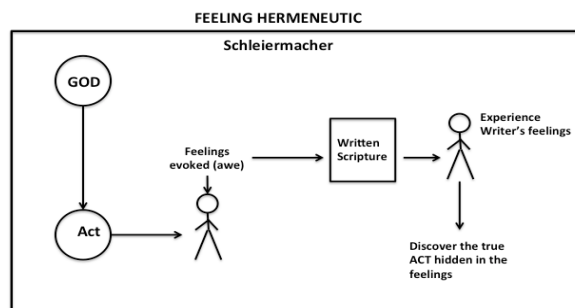


Chart 8.1

³ Liberalism is the label that has been used for describing Progressivism for many decades. Progressivism is the worldview that produces Liberalism. The term liberalism is used because it liberates us from God's anchors of values, laws, and processes. In Progressivism's worldview, the world is being moved progressively toward a utopian pinnacle. The cosmic spirit (the world does not realize that the cosmic spirit is the devil) is the force behind this "maturation" process. For that spirit to work it needs some human workers that are enabled by that spirit to implement governing rules conducive to the spirit's goals. These workers are the "elites" of the human race who are rising up in government all around the globe. These governing authorities are of one mind with the cosmic spirit and they are appointed by said spirit to implement its goals.

they generate. Once the reader experiences the same emotions, he is enabled to ascertain the true revelation that caused those emotions. Can you see how subjective this can be?

There is another subjective worldview that produces a faulty view of the Bible. Please see Chart 8.2 that depicts personal/act revelation.

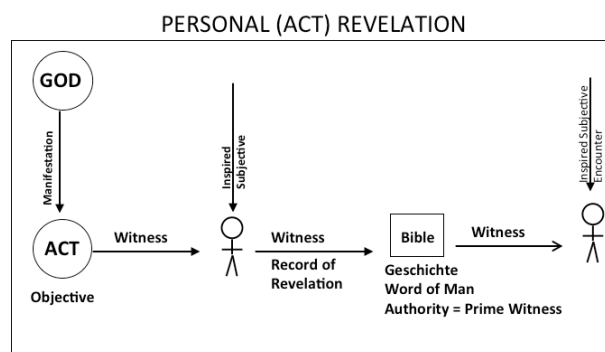


Chart 8.2

Neo-orthodoxy is the Christian philosophy that was spawned by Existentialism. From Neo-orthodoxy, we get the personal/act doctrine of revelation and its associated hermeneutic of subjective encounters.

Neo-orthodoxy is a Christian version of the Existentialism worldview in which there is nothing really objective except the words of Scripture. Thus, the Scriptures as revelation from God are incompatible with this worldview because of their objectivity. Therefore, they are considered to be merely the witness of revelation.

Revelation for the Neo-orthodox Christian occurs in the subjective encounter of the Christian reader with Christ. The revelation is given as the content of that encounter. Jesus Christ, the Living, inerrant Word of God reveals what He asks of you in the personal encounter. That is what personal revelation is; it is the information that is passed from the person of Christ to the person reading the Scriptures. Again, this is totally subjective because it is subject to subject. There is no demand inherent in the words

themselves because they are objective. The objective words only provide the arena and catalyst for personal revelation to occur in the personal encounter.

For the secular Existentialist and the Neo-orthodox Christian, nothing objective can be a part of revelation proper. The demand is found only in the information transferred in the person-to-person encounter.

In this Neo-orthodox model, the Words are merely witnesses, and their primacy derives from the witness's close proximity in history to the Lord's act.

In the feeling hermeneutic, you find the revelation in the aped emotions. Those emotions are found inside of yourself as they are stimulated by the ancient witness's words. Then the revelation is found in the understanding of what provoked those emotions in the witness.

In the feeling hermeneutic you find the emotions in an internal encounter with yourself. The revelation is what produced the emotions that are described by the words. However, in the personal hermeneutic, the encounter is with the Lord, and the revelation is what He passes on to you outside of the witness's words of Scripture.

Subjectivity is pervasive in today's generations. Children are being conditioned to think of themselves as the centers of the universe and the supreme subjects to enforce their supreme wills upon their environments and even upon the world.

The Church is not immune to these influences. I suspect that the majority of Christendom is involved in subjectivity of some kind. We can find in subjectivity many ways to distort the Bible while being deceived into thinking that we are practicing good hermeneutics.

At the Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 20:15 tells of people being cast

into the lake of fire. Who are cast into the lake of fire? The “deceived” who thought that they were right in what they believed. They do not accept the objective Words of God. Instead they impose their own subjectivity as their own rigid parameters for revelation. They refuse to believe that they deserve hell for their sins, and they refuse to admit a need for Christ’s atonement. This deception is of the utmost seriousness.

The very reason you and I are breathing is that we need to take *objective truth* to the world. Error causes people to be cast into the lake of fire, but their error hurts us too. Two parties hurt: those who are cast into the lake of fire and we who knew the truth and failed to warn them. If we don’t use our education to check our theological conclusions and then use our theology in ministry, we will hurt desperately in our loss of rewards and grieve for the lost during that final judgment.

We must examine our doctrine of revelation and our hermeneutics and those of our teachers and pastors and ascertain whether we are correctly interpreting the Scriptures. Just because we have heard something preached all of our lives by numerous preachers does not make it correct. The proper interpretation of the Bible is vastly important; it deals with eternal life or death for us, for our loved ones and the lost world around us.

Look at Paul’s commission to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV): “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” This verse does not say go to church every Sunday and Wednesday night and believe everything the pastor tells you. It does not say watch whoever comes on the Christian television station and believe every word he says. Look at Acts 17:11: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Those of

Berea were considered nobler than other Christians because they received the word *AND* searched the scriptures daily to ascertain whether or not what they heard was true. Do you read the Bible with an open mind, willing to change your way of life and thoughts if they are out of line with God’s Word?

Referring back to that course which I took at UTA, I sought to refute their idea that there was only one hermeneutic. My refutation was through a paper that I wrote (Attachment 8.2).⁴ In the paper, I argued that while the world offered dozens of hermeneutics from which to choose, there is only one valid hermeneutic in biblical studies. My position is that to interpret the Bible, one’s hermeneutic must include help from the Holy Spirit. We do not read the Bible the same way that we read the newspaper. You can understand the newspaper with your human understanding because it is totally within the human realm. But the Bible is a divine-human book, and we need divine help added to our humanity to understand it (1 Cor. 2:14).

Stott declared that “a truly biblical hermeneutic will be consistent with the nature of the Bible itself.” He goes on to affirm authorial intent: “The best interpreter of every book is its author, since he alone knows what he intended to say.”⁵

The Holy Spirit is a crucial part of our study of the Bible. Certainly, the best interpreter of every writing is its author. Therefore, God’s book can only be interpreted correctly by God’s Spirit Who inspired it to begin with. Think back to the first week of class when we studied Propositional Revelation. A portion of Chart 1.6 in chapter 1 dealt with our understanding of the Word of God, i.e. illumination. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit to give us objective under-

⁴ Please excuse the format; when we acrobated from WordPerfect, some of the spacing and pagination was corrupted.

⁵ Stott, p. 157.

standing and to cause subjective conviction.⁶

The Holy Spirit enlightens whoever reads the Word of God submissively and reverentially. All regenerate or born-again Christians are prime candidates when they approach the Word of God in the same way that they did when they got justified. Have you ever spoken to a person who considered the Bible to be dull and dry and would not read it? The first question to ask about a person such as that is: “Is he even saved?”

The Holy Spirit enlightens the humble person. As you walk along on this educational experience, it is human nature to become more prideful as you become more educated. Eventually, many people come to the point where they think they know more than everybody else about the Word of God and have a perfect hermeneutic. Such people are very difficult to teach. The humble man, on the other hand, who knows he has only a glimpse of the truth, will be hungry for knowledge and understanding of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit enlightens the obedient. Obedience is an essential aspect of our understanding of the Bible. Look at John 14:21: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him *and will manifest myself to him.*” If we keep His commandments, He will reveal Himself to us.

OUR TEACHERS

The **Holy Spirit** enlightens the obedient

⁶ Please note that this encounter is both objective and subjective. The objective part is the eternally written Words of God that will always mean what their Author intended them to mean. They will never change. So, the meanings of the words become objective understanding serving to anchor the reader’s mind. The subjective part is in the will of the reader. Will the reader obey or not. There is also the subjective part in the will of the Lord. The Lord will disclose only to His obedient friends what His Father has revealed to Him (John 15:15).

ministers. What we know of the Lord’s Mission of salvation is to be shared with the lost world around us. Do others know that you are a Christian? Share your faith. The *Missio Dei* is the Mission of God set forth by God in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” That was His purpose. Class, the *Missio Dei* is now our purpose too.

Our teachers are several. As we have already seen, the Holy Spirit is our primary teacher. Additionally, **we** teach ourselves. We are expected to study and use our own reason in a responsible way.

The **Church**, i.e. all Christians, is the gifted people for ministry because all are given spiritual gifts to be used in ministry. The people of the church are gifted to minister according to God’s call. We learn much from the preachers, teachers, laymen, and even children.

Finally, **Scripture** interprets Scripture. And so, Scripture teaches us via its own clarification of one verse by another.

VARIOUS FALSE INTERPRETATIONS

An allegory is a story or account, which has hidden truth for the one who will search for it. If we believe that the Bible has hidden meaning and search for it, we will be searching for meaning that supports our pet doctrines, or even our pet sins. This is too subjective a form of interpretation.

The difference between an allegory and a parable is small. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The meaning is singular, dealing with the thesis. The meaning of the parable must be found in its thesis. Allegory, on the other hand, has heavenly or spiritual meanings for every earthly element.

Certainly, the Bible uses allegory on rare occasions, and we are to interpret the elements contained in the allegory. However,

on these occasions, we can allow our biases to inject subjectivity into our results. Remember subjectivity is a hazard in every person because every person is a subject who has a free will to interpret and act for self. Every person who is neither dead nor comatose is a subject who can will and act. Thus we subjects must approach allegory with care and trepidation.

Dogmatism is the presupposition that the Bible does not need to be interpreted. An example would be the person who never attempts to understand the geography, history of ancient Palestine, the importance of agriculture, situation, or the parties involved in the Biblical times.

Extreme literalism occurs when the interpreter demands that the Bible be always interpreted literally; however, it is possible to be too literal in our interpretation. An example would be to think of God as having wings because of Scripture such as Psalms 17:8 where David asks God to hide him under the shadow of His Wings.

There are severe dangers in tradition. Many people will not vary from their worship practices because their forebears set the traditions. Most people join the church in which they were raised without questioning whether its doctrine is correct. We do this due to tradition (you will see how tradition has caused apostasy when you study the church history course). Who or what is the spiritual authority in your life? The church? Your forebears? or the Word of God?

It is our charge from God not only to ascertain that we believe correctly, but also to rescue the perishing—those who are deceived (1 Cor. 1:18).⁷ Proper interpretation of the

⁷ People who know that they are headed for an eternal hell are rarely content with that knowledge. So, the huge problem is the lack of knowledge by a people who do not know the danger that they are facing. These people are deceived into thinking that they are alright in their lives, and better than most others.

Bible is crucial to your Christian pilgrimage and the people's salvation. My question for you to ponder is: Do you think deception involves the "what" more than the "how" of belief?

AN EXAMPLE USE OF A GOOD HERMENEUTIC

Now let us attempt to interpret a difficult passage of scripture. Look at Hebrews 6:3-6. Many people interpret this passage to mean losing one's salvation. What do you believe it means?

Look at Chart 8.3 about the doctrine of salvation. Note the vertical line of justification on the far left. That vertical line signifies the event when you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins, cleanse you and come into your heart. At that moment, your eternal salvation is a done deal. Thus it is an event, not a process. You are saved and headed for heaven. However, that is not the entirety of salvation.

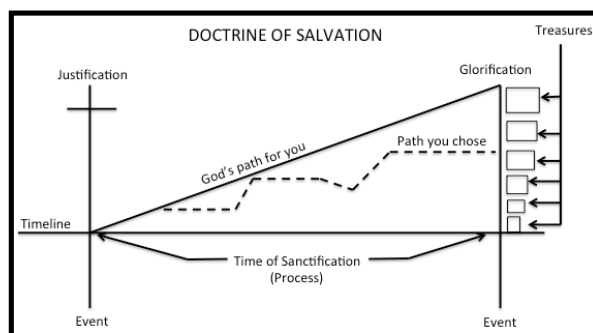


Chart 8.3

Note the diagonal line upward. That is the path of sanctification that God has for you. Sanctification is the portion of salvation concerned with our Christian walk. Instead of an event like justification, sanctification is a long process that lasts for the rest of your life. God has a plan for each of us; he has a diagonal line for each of us to walk. They are not the same. If I stay on my line that means that I am doing God's will to the uttermost of my ability.

Note the wandering dashed line. That wandering occurs when I ignore God's will, or don't correctly understand it, and do my own thing by getting off my assigned path. Even this guy who is wandering off of his assigned path will make it to the end.⁸ However, he will receive fewer rewards at his glorification.

Our glorification is when rewards will be announced and awarded by the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Judgment Seat of Christ is where the Lord will judge every Christian's works, i.e. the judgment of our sanctification. That judgment is an event at the end of mortal life. The quality of your sanctification will be measured against how well you followed the Lord's assigned path for you.

Once I have been justified, I will make it to the end. I will reach glorification. That is a "tradition" of Southern Baptist Doctrine that I hold to. But, how do we explain verses 4-6 of Hebrews 6?

In my hermeneutic, the words, "if God permits" of verse 3 are very important. When you are messing with God, you stand to lose more than is apparent at the time. In sanctification when you get off of your assigned line, there is a chance you will not be able to get back on it. Please hear me—if you give up your calling, there is a chance you will not be able to get back into God's "original plan" for your life.

For an example of not being allowed to get back on path, please take note of the provocation in the wilderness when the Hebrews were at the border of the Holy Land and about to enter. Joshua and Caleb told them that despite the seemingly overwhelm-

ing obstacles, God had assured their victory, but the people decided not to launch their invasion because they had no faith in God's assurances of victory. The next day, they repented of their faithless decision and decided to go into the Promised Land. However their faithlessness in God's ability to achieve the impossible had angered God, and He was not going to allow those faithless Hebrews to establish the parameters of how He was to give them His gift of the Promised Land. God refused to go with them on their timetable, and they lost the battle and were humiliatingly routed. Those faithless Hebrews, whose fear prevented their obedience to God, ended up spending their entire lives wandering in circles in the wilderness. They were disobedient for one day, and they never got back into God's plan for them.

Our course on Hebrews will give you a really in-depth study of the doctrine of sanctification. Plus you will see that with the proper hermeneutic God makes us aware of His doctrine of salvation in all three facets—justification, sanctification, and glorification. Herschel Hobbs' book on Hebrews does a terrific job on the book of Hebrews, which is the one biblical book that focuses on discipleship, i.e. sanctification.

Sanctification is the walk of obedience between the time of the New Birth and the time of entry into heaven. This walk of sanctification is filled with the tests of our faith which give the Christian the opportunities to overcome his fears and believe God for the victories. The method of this walk of obedience is labeled discipleship by the Lord. He defines it as denying yourself, taking up His cross of sacrifice, and following Him in His ministry.

In another class, someone asked if you lose anything by getting off of your path. You lose all the tests and possible accomplishments that flow by while you are off path. The flow of God's path for you is designed by

⁸Making it to the end is called perfecting. It is not a maximum grade in the quality of your trip to the end. To be perfect is to make it to the endpoint of your own life walk of salvation. That endpoint is glorification, which is your entrance into heaven with the Lord's pronounced eternal rewards and ranking for you.

God to maximize your rewards in heaven. If you allow your faithlessness to stop you from acting on those opportunities, then all that adventure and opportunity to earn rewards flow by and are eternally lost. So being off path brings great loss to God's people. It worked like that for the Hebrews, and it still works like that for the Christians because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Being disobedient causes you to miss all the opportunities that have passed you by while you were off course. Concerning getting back on path, look at the words in verse 3, "if God permit." Getting back on your path is not "an automatic" when you decide to do so. It requires God's permission. If you willfully get off of or abandon your path, and God doesn't give you permission to pick up your calling again, you could spend your life doing less than God's original best for you.

So, ministers beware. You have big targets on your backs. Satan is out to get you, to trip you up, to bring you down. The temptations will be many and varied. Your weaknesses will be sought out and exploited.

Tom: Some of my friends came to Seminary, I equate that with being on their path, but they got an economic opportunity or something came up and they became frightened and they decided to leave. If they come back, will it be the same? Will they have to have God's permission in order to get back on their path? Is this a similar scenario?

V: Yes. What if God calls you into deep water (using the book of Hebrews analogy for being on your path), and after getting in and tasting the adventures of savoring God's adventures, power, and victories, you get out? He might swear in His wrath that you will never get back in? That is what He did with His people in the wilderness. We never know just when our disobedience may cross the red line with God. The principle that to whom much is given, from him much is expected

may be the paramount definer of the red line.⁹

Look at verses 4-6. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit. That means you are partakers and have possession of the Holy Spirit as a Partner. When you are doing God's task, you are linked with the Holy Spirit as a Partner. Everything you accomplish is in the power of God. However, your part in the accomplishment is your defeating of your own will and giving it to your Partner, the Holy Spirit.

A partner is what we are called to be. Jesus said for us to take His yoke upon us. The effect in ministry is a partnership effort. If we, like the Hebrews, mess with God, we too may not have His permission to get back in our assignment. You have tasted the Word of God and known it to be the best thing that you have ever tasted. You have experienced the powers of heaven. You have seen Him in action in your life and in the lives of others. Don't fall away!

"Fall away" in verse 6 comes from the word *parapesontas*. "*Para*" means alongside of, and *pesontas* means to fall and the complete word is *parapesontas*, and it means to fall along side of. This means that the path that you fall onto is very similar to God's chosen path for you, but it is one of your own choosing. Though seeming to be good, it falls short of God's best.

The danger is that you may get out of God's path into a path of your own design. You never know when, or if, God will accept your re-entrance into His path. If you have been in the deep water of God's flowing river and tasted it all, yet you forsook the real pilgrimage and adopted the false *kenosis*, you must have God's permission to get back in. Do not trifle with God.

To substitute some of the world's religious or even secular junk for what God has for you is to fall alongside of. Look at verse 4,

⁹ Luke 12:48

"it is impossible." That is why God's permission is needed in verse 3.

At justification we get the ability to step into the deep water. This ability is purchased by the crucifixion. If you decide that you don't like the deep water and get out and then decide to get back in, you have put the crucifixion to an open shame. If you do not get into the deep to begin with, you are despising what Christ bought for you. On the other hand, you MAY go too far in getting out of the deep water. This self-willfulness could eliminate the right to get back into God's original plan for your life.

A false interpretation of this Scripture would be to believe that a Christian who turns away from God loses his/her justification. A lot of people live in fear and doubt regarding this very idea. This is a false hermeneutic which has deceived many.

This is a very difficult passage to interpret

and you may not agree with my hermeneutics on it. But let me caution you not to offhandedly accept another interpretation just because it feels right. The feeling hermeneutic has put many people in hell who were convinced that they properly interpreted Scripture. Do not be deceived. Study the Scripture prayerfully and humbly. Ask the Lord to reveal truth to you and listen to Him *when he speaks through the objective Scriptures*.

My friends please take this in the right spirit: you are deceived; I am deceived; everyone is deceived. You must realize that Jesus was the only person not deceived. The rest of us are deceived in some areas of our lives. Some Christians are deceived in many areas, and some in few areas maybe even only one, but we are all deceived in something. It is our hermeneutics that perpetuates that deceit by allowing us to hold both to our sin and also to our harmony with the Word of God.

Chapter Questions

1. What are the two wrong hermeneutics discussed in this chapter?
1. Under the philosophical understanding of Progressivism, who determines the meaning of a text?
2. When a reader creates his own meaning of a document/thought/idea because it is subjective, it is called _____.
3. The Christian version of Existentialism is called _____.
4. What is the mission of God, and where is it found?
5. Explain the difference between allegory and parable.
6. Dogmatism is the _____.

Chapter 9

STEPS IN THE HERMENEUTICAL PROCESS

Learning to properly interpret the Bible is something that most Christians take for granted believing that any Christian can properly interpret the Bible. It is not guaranteed to anyone simply because they are Christians, however, but is a skill to be acquired. The proud person believes that he properly interprets the Bible on every occasion. The humble person knows that only God is infallible.

In the Church History class, you will study the historical wreckage of many men who did not interpret the Bible properly. The Philosophy course also surveys the vain philosophies that are still impacting and destroying the churches via incorrect hermeneutics.

There are steps that believers can follow to properly interpret the Bible. In this lesson, we will be studying the procedure to be used to best interpret the Bible correctly. The Holy Spirit is naturally our main teacher in Biblical interpretation. However, the Holy Spirit requires effort from us in order to complete the job of interpretation.

Remember that illumination is God's giving us understanding and conviction when we study the Scriptures. We must pray to God for illumination when we study the Word of God. We must also be aware of the geography of Biblical times, the history, the proper use of grammar and syntax, and the definitions of words in order to properly understand the Bible. Certainly, there are many simple biblical truths that can be understood by even a child. I am not saying that the Holy Spirit cannot help someone with no idea of the geography and history of Biblical times to understand some parts of the Bible. I am, however, saying that God gave us our minds in order to better understand and serve Him.

As a member of this class, you have been given an opportunity to study the Word of God and learn how to properly interpret it and to teach your friends, family and church proper Biblical understanding and hermeneutics. Our Lord will have a higher standard for you as a result of the knowledge you are gaining this semester. We must all never quit striving to properly interpret the Word of God.

How does Stott explain 1 John 1:5?

1John

1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"It is as much the nature of God to reveal himself as it is the nature of light to shine. Now God has revealed himself chiefly by speaking. We can be quite sure, therefore, that he has spoken in order to be understood, and that he has intended Scripture (the record of the divine speech) to be plain to its readers. For the whole purpose of revelation is clarity not confusion. . . ."¹

Dockery says of interpretation of the Bible: "Most, if not all, theological deviations are caused by the neglect of Biblical truth or by a faulty interpretation of Biblical texts."² Our proper interpretation is crucial to ourselves and to future generations.

THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The **Apostolic Fathers** interpreted according to the Apostles' understanding. How-

¹ John R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, rev. 1984) p. 165.

² David Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), p. 117.

ever, false teachings infiltrated and provided the false doctrines for carnal men to use in their quests for power. In the desire to expand the reach of the church, apologetics were developed to define the faith to outsiders. Creedal frameworks were eventually developed for hermeneutical purposes with the result of a perpetual forcing of the Scriptures through a firm theological grid. The resulting understandings of Scripture became divorced from their literary and historical contexts.

The rise of the **School of Alexandria** in the third century introduced allegorical interpretation. In this process, the literal sense was not the primary meaning of Scripture. Origen was the main proponent. The allegorical interpretation sought the deeper, mystical understanding, which lay beyond the actual words themselves.

The **School of Antioch** arose to counter the Alexandrian allegory. Antioch emphasized a literal and historical interpretation. Like the Apostolic Fathers, they read Scripture Christologically but with obtaining the literal-historical sense of the actual words being the prime purpose of exegesis. Exegesis is the digging out of the words themselves the meaning which the author intended in his selection of those words. This school sought to get the meaning from the text itself.

In the fifth century under Augustine and Jerome, a **Theological Synthesis** was developed in which the Scriptures were interpreted both allegorically and literally, but always theologically. Alexandria and Antioch were synthesized without either dominating.

As the two strong bishops of Alexandria and Antioch vied for power, each developed false doctrines that would give it an edge over the other. Soon, however, the bishop of Rome entered as a powerful contender for supremacy because of his access to the absolute power of the Roman emperor whose governmental empire was centered in Rome. Doctrine became a means rather than an end

in this evil quest for power. The quests for power provided the overall context for interpreting Scripture and developing Church doctrine.

From the time of **Augustine until Martin Luther** and the Reformation, four power bases of the church interpreted Scripture in four unique ways. The four hermeneutics and how each interpreted Jerusalem are as follows:

- Literal (what it actually says)—Jerusalem was literally a Jewish city.
- Allegorical (what it can be believed to say)—Jerusalem was the church of Jesus Christ.
- Tropological (what it means in a moral sense)—Jerusalem was the souls of men and women.
- Anagogical (what it is hoped to say in an eschatological sense)—Jerusalem was heaven.

Luther and Calvin of the **Reformation** concentrated upon the importance of the literal sense with an emphasis on grammatical-historical and the Christological meaning of Scripture. For the first time in hundreds of years, salvation became personal once again. The cold, rigid, and mechanical sacramentalism of the enslaving church was replaced with the warm and true justification through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The new battle cry was *Sola Christos, Sola Scriptura, and Sola Fidei* (Salvation is available only through personal faith in Jesus Christ alone as revealed by Scripture alone). This freed the Christian from the rigid control by an apostate, institutional church that dispensed salvation from its treasury of merit via sacramentalism only to those who submitted to its demands.

Immediately following the Reformation, **the heirs of the Reformers** rejected their newfound freedom from the rigid, enslaving, institutional church. They chose instead to submit to a “theological” interpretation,

which created a new rigidity. The resulting new bondage came from the state's power to enforce its own theological preferences on the church's doctrines. Thus we got Calvinism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Reformed Presbyterianism, and Catholicism in the various nations. Church doctrine became linked to the power of the governments' swords. Acceptance of the church's doctrine peculiar to each nation became an automatic condition of citizenship. It was dry and without the personal vivaciousness of the Holy Spirit.

The Anabaptists reacted against the state-church dogmatism of the Magisterial Churches that came after the Reformation. Pietism and its historical-critical approach stressed the historical interpretation over the theological interpretation of the Magisterial Churches. Pietism was a movement, not a denomination. As such, this movement which, according to the Scriptures, sought a personal relationship with Jesus, was created by the free-church movement of the Anabaptists. The flaw in Anabaptism was that they sought their freedom in their separation from the government in a pseudo-monastic approach.

The Anabaptists turned back to Jesus alone from the state-church in a personal monastic salvation. They established free-church principles that returned the churches to the Scriptures and away from magisterial control. These principles gave rise to the Baptists in a whole new form of Christianity that was a synthesis of the Magisterial Church and the Free Church.

The Baptists rejected Anabaptist monasticism and passivism. But they retained the Anabaptists' freedom to use the Scriptures alone for their source of doctrine. Also from the Magisterial Churches, the Baptists retained the use of the sword to fight for freedom of belief and worship. In order to escape governmental control, the Baptists had to flee to a new world in order to implement

freedom of religion. This new experiment was implemented in America via the Constitution that protected the church from government interference.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF SOUND INTERPRETATION

1. The principle of simplicity stresses looking for the natural meaning of Scripture. God chose language to transmit understanding. In order to determine what the language says, we find linguistic study necessary.

The natural meaning is not necessarily the literal meaning because sometimes the natural meaning is figurative rather than literal, e.g. the passages where Jesus said that to be his disciples we must hate our father and mother, and where Nicodemus was told of the requirement of being born again. Common sense will usually be a reliable guide for these types of contexts.

Each passage must be interpreted in its context. Perhaps those who take one verse and interpret it without regard for the verses preceding and following it cause the greatest distortions of the Bible. A passage taken out of context is easily twisted. I have heard skeptics say that Scripture contradicts itself. A person could choose several individual passages and lay them out in an attempt to prove that point. A good example here would be Paul and James treating the doctrine of salvation from two different perspectives in Romans and James. In Romans, Paul says that we are justified by faith, but James claims that our works justify us. Please refer back to Chart 8.3 on the doctrine of salvation in the preceding chapter. Paul was speaking to those on the left side of the justification line, and James was speaking to those on the right side in the part of salvation that deals with sanctification. Works cannot be used to achieve justification, but as soon as justification is accomplished, works become very important in sanctification.

2. We must look for the original sense of Scripture, and thus we must review the historical context. What did the original hearers understand God to be saying? At this point we have introduced the grammatico-historical method of interpretation. The following elements should now be considered:

- a) Situation: what were the situations of the writer and first readers?
- b) Style: what is the literary genre? Is it prose, poetry, wisdom literature, Law, prophecy, psalm, apocalyptic, drama, letter, or history?
- c) Language: what changes in the language have occurred over the centuries? The classic case of this is Greek, which changed from classic Greek to *koine*, or common Greek. Many words change meaning over time. We have to determine the meaning of the word at the time of writing.
- d) Culture: what accommodations to the culture do the writings make, if any?

I have found that this element of culture can be a trap. If a New Testament command corresponds to the culture of the time, one cannot safely conclude that the command is culture sensitive. God is over, not under, culture. His commands are valid whether or not they agree with the culture. However, when they do agree with culture, we should not automatically transfer that agreement to today's culture. For instance, if God says that the wife is to obey her husband, and the culture of that time was in agreement, then the command should not automatically be reversed so that it agrees with a present-day "liberationist culture." In my opinion, for one to accommodate to culture, there must be "overwhelming evidence" for it.

For me, the washing of feet had a cultural reason in the New Testament times, but not now. Back then there was a physical and a symbolical need for foot washing. Now, foot

washing would be a "symbol" of servanthood. The trap of using changing cultures to reinterpret God's commands gives license to depart from God's very intentions. In this trap, one begins to rely only on "what does this mean to me?" We are to stay on the road between the two ditches. On the right side of the road is the ditch of rigid literalism. Here one's total concern is to determine only what the text meant in the original culture. On the other side of the road is the ditch of subjectivity. The total concern of this ditch is what the text means to me in my culture without regard to what it meant to the original hearers.

We are seeking a synthesis: of the historical and contemporary so that there is a determination of what the text said to the original hearers and then determine what it means to us in a different time and culture without losing its original meaning, e.g. how do we implement foot washing now, or how do the two cultures affect women wearing pants?³

3. The General Sense deals with the principle of harmony. Since every passage comes from God, then each should be in harmony with the mind of God. As a result, we can interpret Scripture with Scripture with the result being harmony without contradiction. We should learn to see the Bible as a whole and read each text in the light of all the Scriptures.

Basic fundamental Check List for Sound Interpretation

1. What does the text actually say? And remember; don't rely upon only one Bible translation. Remember also that subjectivity enters into every translation from the translators. This is especially true for a paraphrase translation. You can find out who helped translate the version that you are using by using the chart by Dockery on page 102 of his book.

³John R. W. Stott, pp. 173-175.

2. What do the words really mean (in the original language)? This is where a Strong's Concordance, which contains the definitions of the Greek and Hebrew words of the Scriptures, is helpful. A good example of this is the word "patience" (see Chart 9.1), which is the English translation for the Greek word *hupomeno* that means abiding under. Thus when we are called to be patient, we are called to stand under the burden that God has given

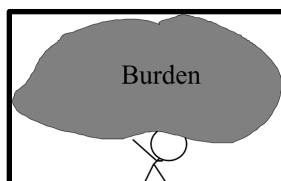


Chart 9.1

- us, to continue on as is although we want to throw off the burden and run.
3. Learn to distinguish between the teaching of the Bible, which is for all men everywhere at all times, and the teaching that is for the Biblical person or people at that time only. For example, when the 70 were sent on mission, they were told to take nothing with them and to rely upon people in every city they went to for their sustenance. This was a command of Jesus for a particular people at a particular time for a particular purpose. It was not a rule for all mission work for the church because Paul thankfully received help from the church at Philippi to conduct missions. Yet one of my former students was raised in a religion based on this rigid principle for conducting any and all mission work.
4. Answer these questions as you study: Who wrote to whom? When was the writing done and under what circumstances? Why was the material written? These are historical type questions that help with interpretation.
5. Determine what the passage meant. What purpose did the Author, the Holy Spirit, hope to accomplish by writing that particular passage? Why is it in the Word of

God? What did the passage mean to the original hearers? Did they glean from it the truths that they should have?

Remember, the Holy Spirit did not intend for us to be super detectives in order to understand the Word of God. He intended for it to be very clear to us. However, He expects us to exercise due diligence in our efforts. We must read, study, and labor over the Word of God. Faithless self-indulgence by kicking back and expecting God to just open your head and pour in His revelation that He has already provided in the written Word of God does not work. We must knock, seek, and ask before it will be opened, found, and received.

The Scriptures describe God's people as having ears without being able to hear. The Word was written so that they could hear God's Word, however, they had chosen to stop up their ears. The Bible is the revelation from God to man and, as such, is intended to be understood. People who turn Biblical interpretation into a mystery, however, are ignoring the simple truth for something more to their liking. God doesn't like that.

6. Think about whether the passage is prose or poetry. Is it a sermon, a hymn, a letter?
7. Remember the Bible does not affirm everything stated in the Bible. The sinfulness of many is retold, not as an example for us to emulate, but as an example for us to avoid. We must determine whether the passage is intended as instructions or is something else such as a simple historical account.
8. Determine its ancient meaning and then apply that meaning to self today. The contemporary meaning is sometimes clearer if we understand the historicity and the meaning to those of Biblical times.
9. Learn about Biblical tools and build a good library for yourself. Dr. Briscoe, one of the professors here at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has kindly

allowed me to copy and distribute his 12-page Manual on Hermeneutics that also lists some of the Bible study aids. It is Appendix 9.1 and will be a very useful tool for you to determine your Bible-study processes and library needs.

10. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. The Word of God came from God and was intended by God to be one harmonious whole. When you develop an interpretation of one passage of Scripture, examine the doctrine to make sure that it is in line with the rest of the Word of God. If you find that it is not, you should examine your understanding of the passages that do not agree with your current interpretation to make sure that you have correctly interpreted them. We all sometimes make mistakes in interpretation and some doctrines and theologies that people have been taught since a child are incorrect. Don't be afraid to admit that your understanding

of Scripture may be in error. The proper interpretation of Scripture is a weighty issue that we must take seriously.

Read through the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (Appendix 3.1). This was compiled in 1982 and the fact that 100 participants and observers agreed on these sound Biblical principles should be an encouragement to us today. Make sure that your church and family are aware of Scriptural truths. Study them. There will come a time when people do not agree upon sound doctrine—it is prophesied. Therefore, it will happen. It is happening!

A bonus for you has been graciously provided by one of our best students. It is attached as Appendix 9.2 for your perusal. In this paper Randall does a good job of showing how one's presuppositions can shape the resulting hermeneutic.

Chapter Questions

1. According to the text what is "illumination"?
2. What was developed in the church to define faith to outsiders?
3. The rise of the **School of Alexandria** in the third century introduced allegorical interpretation. What was the purpose of that?
4. _____ is the digging out of the words themselves the meaning which the author intended in his selection of those words.
5. From the time of Augustine until Martin Luther and the Reformation, the church interpreted Scripture in a fourfold way. Name those four ways.
6. What was the battle cry of the Reformation?
7. List the four elements of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation that should be considered.

Chapter 10

DEPENDENCE OF HERMENEUTICS ON PIETY

What is more important for Christians to do than to apply the Word of God to our lives? Many of us have memorized the Word of God and can quote it at the appropriate times. That is good, but it is not enough. If we are proclaiming the Word of God and yet not living it, we are seen by the world as hypocrites. That type of Christianity leads people not to the Lord, but away from Him. What did Jesus, our example, do? He matched His actions with His Words. There was integrity in His life. Is there integrity in your life?

On the other hand, our piety also depends on our hermeneutics. If we should wrongly interpret God's Word, then we can get some very strange pieties. We see the results of this problem all the time. In fact, I think that this problem has been the main cause of the birthing of so many denominations. Some of the denominations are even spawning sub-denominations. Even within the Baptist denomination, there are Southern Baptists, Independent Baptists, Hard Shell Baptists, Missionary Baptists, etc. Within Southern Baptists, we have closed communion and open communion groupings.

Thus piety depends upon hermeneutics, and hermeneutics depend on piety. But in this lesson we are going to focus on the latter, i.e. hermeneutics depend on piety.

A DOER OF THE WORD'S LIFESTYLE

Stott lists these factors as being prevalent in the lifestyles of a real disciple of Jesus:

1. "Worship" is always a proper response to the revelation of God.
2. "Repentance" should occur due to the acknowledgment of our shortcomings compared to God's requirements.
3. "Faith" is a trustful response to a trust-

worthy God, based on knowledge of the Word of God.

4. Christian disciples must prove their love for Christ by "obeying" Him.
5. Once we know the truth, we are under compulsion to pass it on through "witnessing" to Christ.

In summary, "the revelation of God leads to worship, the warnings of God to repentance, the promises of God to faith, the commands of God to obedience and the truth of God to witness."¹

All of these five responses depend on hermeneutics. If you do not understand what God has said in His Word, then you cannot know the revelation, warnings, promises, commands, and truth. However, Christian life is far more than knowing and understanding; it is doing the truth that is known and understood.

THE TRIANGLE OF PIETY

Please look at chart 10.1. Notice faith,

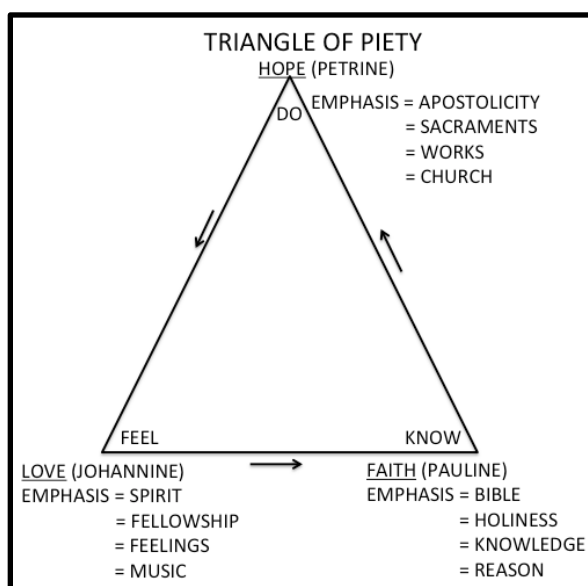


Chart 10.1

¹ Stott, p. 192.

hope and love on the triangle. We will concentrate on the correlational words: know, do and feel. The Christian knows, does what he knows, and then feels the confirmation of God in the form of expanded understanding. The feeling is like hearing the words from God: “Well done” and “Now, I am going to show you more.” This is the pattern for the Christian life. It is called the Triangle of Christian Piety.

The starting place for all Christian piety is faith. The movement on the triangle is counterclockwise. Christian life begins with knowing the truth. Once you know the truth, you are expected to do the truth. Lastly, after knowing and doing that truth, God will affirm you by touching your soul and opening your spiritual understanding for a larger glimpse of His plans (John 7:17, 14:21, 15:14-15). As the Christian cycles through these three parts of Christian piety, he grows in grace and maturity.

If the saint refuses to implement some part of truth that he knows, then his growth becomes stunted. In fact, the terrible danger is that he will begin to regress in his spiritual capabilities at that point. In his understanding, the truth becomes perverted, then his actions become fitted to his perverted doctrine, and

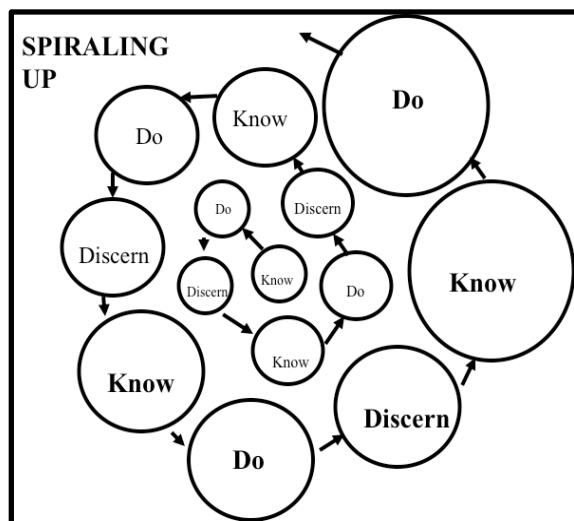


Chart 10.2

lastly his affections become vile. The Christian has only two choices: spiral up (Chart 10.2) or spiral down (Chart 10.3), i.e. he will either grow in maturity and capability or regress in maturity and capability.

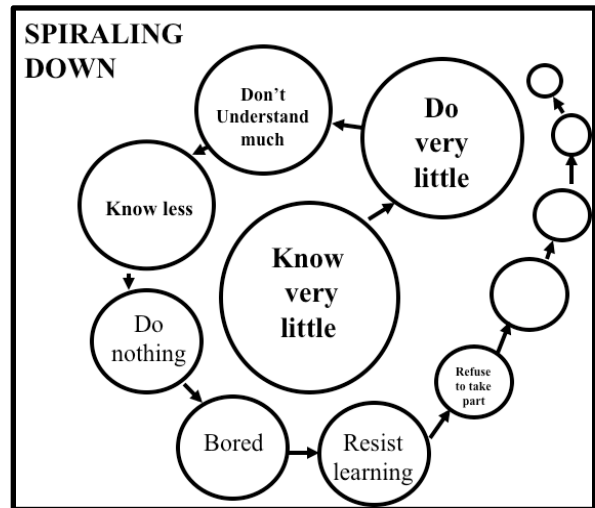


Chart 10.3

When the pattern is broken, i.e. the doing of the truth does not follow the knowing of the truth, there are serious repercussions. The mind, body, and soul are impacted negatively—the body becomes defiled by terrible behavior, the soul's affections become perverted, and finally the mind begins to become dull to the truth and accepting of a lie (Romans 1:17-32).

We are expected to do something with our knowledge of God's Word. To know the truth and not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17). That could become a problem with taking one of these classes. You could actually become worse off because if you know something and are not doing it, you are accountable and are heaping sin upon sin. If someone is determined not to do God's work, the worst thing he can do is get more education and then ignore it. However, that does not mean that you can escape by not knowing; God says to study to show yourself approved. So, if you do not know the truth, then you do not escape judgment because you are commanded to know the truth. To know the truth

and not do it has no escape either. The only positive piety for the saint is to know the truth and do the truth.

In this lesson we are focusing on the doing part at the top of the Triangle of Piety (see Chart 10.1), i.e. the application of God's Word. Doing is what actualizes faith by starting one's piety in the right direction.

Faith becomes alive only with the doing of it. Otherwise, faith becomes mere lip service, which has no life. Dead faith in the life of a Christian's piety causes a reversal of direction in the spiral. Instead of growing in faith and maturity, regression begins toward an increasing apostasy. Instead of acknowledging the Creator, people do the opposite, and the mind begins to deteriorate.² Whenever this Triangle of Piety is messed up, it has direct negative impact on the mind. When Christians leave off the doing of their known truth or even do its opposite, their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:21).

Many people make a distinction between head and heart knowledge of the truth. Heart knowledge is applied head knowledge. Heart knowledge is head knowledge that becomes existential³ to you. Existential knowledge means that your knowledge has a direct bearing, both quantity wise and also quality wise, on your continued existence. With this type of knowledge, if what you hold to be true turned out to be false, your existence would suffer. However, if your knowledge is "knowing about," then it is simply head knowledge. If you don't commit your life to head knowledge, it does not rise to the level of becoming existential knowledge.

² Romans 1 depicts the spiral into apostasy that begins with knowing the creation without acknowledging and worshiping God as Creator, i.e. not doing the truth that the person knows.

³ Existential is not to be confused with Existentialism. When used as an adjective, the word existential is used to say that something affects your very being. It has to do with your existence.

If you come into this class and gain knowledge of the truth, but go out doing nothing with what you have learned, then you would become worse in your spiritual understanding than if you had never come into the class. Your being would be reduced. In other words, disobedience of God's Word has existential effects in the wrong direction. The reason for this worsening is because you will have reversed the Triangle of Piety and are being darkened. This process is happening all around, especially in the churches where there is good preaching because anytime you learn the truth and don't do it, you are on a downward spiral of apostasy.

Have you ever read the Bible or heard a sermon and not had one nerve struck? Later after your life changes over some point and you become a doer of the Word, that same passage hits you like a sledgehammer. The making of head knowledge into heart knowledge is the moving from knowing the truth to doing the truth. The truth believed and obeyed becomes existential because it affects who you are.

When we have truth coming in, it is good for us only when it leads to application. But if the application of known truth is broken, then a defilement of the mind results; the foolish heart is darkened. This darkening is existential to who you are in your regressing. Just like doing the truth is existential in a positive way, not doing it is existentially negative. God's ever-present requirements on us are to know and do at our absolute maximum capability. Knowledge is always coupled with doing. Therefore we can never quit our studying. Plus we can never quit our doing. We must grow until we die.

When you break the line between knowing and doing on the Triangle of Piety, God allows darkness to begin to replace the truth. You then act upon the darkness to cause your body to be defiled in the same way that your mind was defiled. Apostasy is caused by

truth coming in without the corresponding action.

Romans, at the end of chapter 1 and continuing into chapter 2, deals with this darkening cycle. Paul made this truth very clear in Romans both for Christians and non-Christians. The ability for all to observe creation and conclude that there must have been a Creator outside of⁴ that creation eliminates all excuses for not acknowledging the existence of God.

Romans 1:26 talks of defiled affections. People who know that the Creator God exists but choose to worship something of creation instead of the Creator get a defiled mind, and this leads to a defiled body that, in turn, leads to defiled affections. The whole personality is darkened and becoming more and more vile. The apostate's affections are against nature, and that speeds his terrible spiral downwards.

Romans

1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Romans 1:26-27 speak of homosexuality in particular, but the principle applies to various sins. For example, cirrhosis of the liver results from alcoholism; it is an existential recompense on the body for the sin of a drunken life. Some of the diseases and terrible situations coming upon men are based upon their behavior.

Behavior is what piety is all about. A Christian's piety doesn't involve knowledge alone. It is what he does with that knowledge; it is his behavior after receiving the knowledge. If you get truth in and don't behave according to it, you are darkened and start a spiral in which each area of the triangle is darkened and continues in a spiral downward to a point of total apostasy. Romans 1:29 describes that point as reprobation. It is

the point at which the mind can no longer discern right from wrong.

We all see people that have become reprobates. They have spiraled down to the point where they believe it is right to lie, betray, deceive, steal, kill unborn babies, promote homosexuality, etc.

Romans 1:29-31 lists samples of things that the reprobate will be doing. A reprobate's values and ideas are totally upside down. For them it is good to hurt people. But the worst outcome is that they have known the natural things of creation and that there had to be a wonderful Creator but have violated their consciences. They know that judgment is coming. Yet, they keep on doing those evil things and even endorse others who are doing them.

Romans

1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 1:31 Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Christians know the truth; we go into class and learn more truth. Then when we go out into the world, we do that truth. With the doing will come an affirmation from the Holy Spirit and an opening of the mind for even a deeper truth which will encourage us to go back for more truth and do it too—a spiral up. What is the exhortation for the man spiraling up? Get truth, do that truth, and then God will bless you with more illumination so that you can get more truth (John 7:17, 15:14-15). Go and grow continuously because God's truth is infinitely deep and wide.

The doing Christian will exhort other Christians also to do the truth. Likewise, the apostate that is spiraling down will also

⁴ It is foolish to think that creation is self-existent.

exhort others to do likewise (Romans 1:32). While knowing the judgment of God, they continue in those unseemly things and encourage others to do likewise.

Judgment of Works

According to John 7:17, if you will do the truth that you know, you will receive more knowledge. ***My dear Brother, self-denying works of ministry are the key to discipleship.*** Look at Romans 2:1-3. Knowing is not enough. Whenever you have enough knowledge to become a judge of behavior, you are accountable for that behavior. You will be judged by the same judgments that you are using against others.

Romans

2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2:2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

2:3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

This syndrome exists all over Christendom. Pervasive is the belief that because we can see error and evil in others, we are good. The deception is twofold: first, knowledge adequately substitutes for doing, and second, the application of that knowledge is the judgment of others. If you can see something, but someone else cannot see it, you think more highly of yourself. That pride is a natural behavior. In your pride, you express your knowledge by judging others' behavior.

However, if you can judge others' behavior, you must meet the requirements yourself that your knowledge reveals. If you don't meet the requirements of your own judgment, you will not escape the judgment of God.

These judgment Scriptures: Job 34:11; Ps.

62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; Jer. 32:19; Matt. 16:27; and I Cor. 3:8 are a good sampling of judgments of our works. You will be judged based on what you do (your works) whether you are a Christian or not.

Job 34:11

34:11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to [his] ways.

Psalms 62:12

62:12 Also unto thee, O Lord, [belongeth] mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12

24:12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider [it]? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth [not] he know [it]? and shall [not] he render to [every] man according to his works?

Jeremiah 17:10

17:10 I the LORD search the heart, [I] try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, [and] according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 32:19

32:19 Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes [are] open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

Matthew 16:27

16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

1 Corinthians 3:8

3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

All men will be judged twice: first, on their persons and second, on their works. First is the judgment of person—are you

saved? If you are a Christian, your personhood has already been judged as guilty and deserving of the wages of sin. However, the Christian has received the gift of God, eternal life, and the judgment of his person has been lifted. In its place, God has given him the gift of justification. The judgment of the Christian's personhood has been changed to righteous because he has had imputed to him the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. One judgment, the personhood judgment for every born again Christian, is over. There is yet, however, a second judgment coming.

The judgment of works is coming for all men. The Christian who has been adjudged as righteous in his person must act like a Christian. This is where Christian piety enters the equation. We must know the truth, do the truth, be confirmed with further enablement by God, and then start the cycle over again. If we continue to grow in grace and maturity, then our works judgment will yield rewards. But if we do not do the truth because of not knowing the truth or do not implement the truth that we know, then a fearful loss of rewards awaits us in the works judgment.

Dear saint, your works will be judged. It is not enough that we are righteous in our personhoods; we must act like what we are.

Amos 3:2 indicates that God's judgment will come first to His people. We are the first in line when it comes to the judgment of works. The reason is that "to whom much is given, much is required." We have been given the Bible. We stand on the shoulders of others. Theology and church history are available for us to study. The way that God dealt with Israel and Judah, the early church, the church in the Middle Ages, and the Reformation all have gone before us. The Bible is available in many languages; we can all have a Bible.

There was a time in the Middle Ages when there was only one Bible per town. We

have gifted preachers, teachers, and prophets. And last but not most, we have the Holy Spirit!

When we see God's mercy and grace, it should lead us to repentance. When we do something wrong, the mercy of God is available. He is willing to forgive us if we just turn to God from our sins, confess our sins, and ask for forgiveness, i.e. repent.

The person who doesn't realize his own need for implementing Christian piety, but overemphasizes God's mercy, grace and forgiveness will do just the opposite and indulge himself, heaping sin upon sin. At the same time, he may even sing songs about the mansions and crowns he will receive in heaven.

There are Christians today who think God is swooning over them because they breathe in and out without getting mixed up. They pander to God's all-powerful sufficiency and declare that He has done all the work for salvation. They declare that works is a negative word when it comes to salvation and that there are no works required of them. These ignorant Christians fail to distinguish justification from sanctification,⁵ fail to acknowledge the command to practice the *kenosis*, fail to realize the definition of discipleship, and fail to recognize that obedience entails not only knowing but actual doing.⁶

Romans 2:5 indicates that when you realize God's mercy, grace and willingness to forgive, it should lead to repentance. If it doesn't lead to repentance, it will lead to hardening of the heart. When you overemphasize God's grace while behaving terribly, you are laying up wrath. Anyone who breaks the cycle in Chart 10.1, whether they are saved or unsaved, is laying up wrath. Not

⁵ God covers sanctification extensively in His biblical book of Hebrews.

⁶ I address what is required of the saint in his particular part of the *Missio Dei* in the course on evangelism. In that course we will explore your spiritual gifts and how they fit into the *Missio Dei*. Every true Christian has a part to play in God's ongoing mission on earth.

only is God disappointed, but also the person will be greatly disappointed in his works judgment. This is a serious problem in the church today.

Look at Romans 2:6. It doesn't say here, every man except Bill Vinson or every man except the ones in Fort Worth, or even every man who is not in the church. It says every man. Class, we will have rendered unto us in the works judgment what our deeds earn.

Romans

2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:10-11. This is the scripture that describes the terror that I experience. I know something about the terror of the Lord. I am terrified that I will mess up and lead you to mess up. The pressures of knowing the truth are awesome. They will haunt you. You will occasionally want to ignore the knowledge, but please know that you must teach the truth. The terror of the Lord comes to the one who knows what is at stake in knowing without the corresponding doing.

When I know something, I must check both my heart and my actions before I can teach it. If I am guilty in either of these areas, I must get them fixed before I can teach them. Yes, I could still transfer the knowledge to you without doing the knowledge; you could still spiral up even if your teacher were spiraling down. Since I know the judgment of works and the terror of the Lord, I must do what I know and I must teach you what I know. The same for a pastor, a Sunday school teacher, or a parent. Now, you must teach this since you are now learning it.

2 Corinthians

5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one

may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad.

5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

I have the same kind of feeling about the works of sanctification that I do about salvation's justification. I used to be a street preacher—that was all I did—I left the teaching to the church. But people just got saved and drifted around, not amounting to much. I realized there was a problem that I needed to do something about, so I became a teacher. But I continued on in evangelism. I am responsible and must do both of them. The terror of the Lord drives me; I can't stop. It is the fire in the bones spoken of by Jeremiah that drives me on.

Stott mentions this concept on page 159. "Thus Jesus promised that those who have a will to do God's will would know whether his teaching was true, and that he would show himself personally to those who proved their love for him by their obedience (John 7:17; 14:21). Conversely, it is those who violate their conscience by disobedience who make shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19). Nobody who does not practice what he already knows can expect to advance in his knowledge."

A new Gnosticism is abundantly pervasive today. Gnosticism is the concept that knowledge alone is salvific. Gnostics were abundant during the time of Jesus and the Apostles; in fact a great deal of John's teaching is combating Gnosticism. Many people believe that if they go to church and accept without question what they are taught in Sunday school and in the worship service, they are gaining knowledge and are growing and maturing into "good disciples of the Lord." Too many of us today believe that devotion to gaining knowledge is enough for our Christian walks, and if we attend church on Sunday

night and Wednesday night, or watch the Christian television station, we are superior Christians.

That is not what our Lord taught. He emphasized application of the truth and taught us that if we do not apply what we learn, we are sinning. For to him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin (James 4:17). What do you know that you are to do? Are you doing it? If not, pause here and face God in prayer.

Integrity is the integration of your knowledge, actions and affections (faith, hope, and love of Christian piety). Hypocrisy is the divergence from the cycle of those three parts of piety. To do the truth that you know is the only path to integrity; to confess a truth but do its opposite is hypocrisy.

Colossians expresses God's Will that every Christian is to be wholly dedicated to serve Him with their lives. Paul declared that he was preaching the hope of glory for every believer. He was warning every man, and teaching every man that all wisdom was wrapped up in each man's being presented as perfect in Christ.

From where does most damage to the church come? Not from outside, but from those in the church who are not bringing glory to the Lord. Pervasive is the preaching that every church member is a victorious and productive Christian without doing anything other than attending and giving. God isn't glorified in lip service, but in lives undergoing learning and training in the Word of God and doing what they learn. Teaching, training, and leading in the applications are responsibilities of the pastors and the spiritual parents.⁷

Applying the principle of 2 Timothy 2:2, Dawson estimated that if one Christian would

within 6 months convert and disciple another who would convert and disciple another within 6 months, in less than 16 years, two billion people would have been reached for the Lord.⁸

2 Timothy 2:2

2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

This principle starts in the Christian home. If each Christian just parented their children spiritually, we would see growth in the church. That growth would at least match the population growth of Christian families. Such growth would produce increased quantity and also quality in the churches.

Granted this is an idealistic principle and there are members of Christian families who will never be converted. However, there will be many outsiders who will be converted just by the increased witnessing and other ministries by the faithful members of the Christian families. Every Christian's job is to spread the Gospel, learn to apply the Word to his life, and teach the converts to spread the Gospel and apply the Word to their lives.

During my years in Atlanta, Georgia, I won a lot of people to the Lord, but I was buffaloeed by what came afterwards. Many of the new converts in my church were falling away and many of the older Christians refused to admit the need for evangelism. I determined that this terrible problem could only be corrected by discipleship. The Christian people needed not only to be properly taught but also to be properly disciplined. That was when I dedicated the rest of my life to teaching the pastors and other ministers. I am faithfully counting on you to multiply proper discipleship training outwards to your people. The churches must be turned back to true *kenotic* discipleship. This will not happen

⁷ A quote of Dawson Trotman (founder of the Navigators). Found in Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 301.

⁸ Ibid. p. 306.

unless you teach them to apply the Word of God to their lives while living it yourself.

The Word of God and the Holy Spirit provide the power to implement Christian discipleship. It starts by being a mirror that shows us what we are like (James 1:23-25). Then it becomes a sword to cut through our thick shells into our guilty consciences (Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, Acts 2:37). Once the Word of God reaches our hearts, then the Holy Spirit watches our wills and floods in divine power when our decisions align with the Word of God.

James 1:23-25

1:23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

1:24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Ephesians 6:17

6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Hebrews 4:12

4:12 For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Acts 2:37

2:37 Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?

METHODS FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE

A *book study* covers a specific book of the Bible. Taking one of my classes, such as

Hebrews is an in-depth book study. I say in-depth because we approach the studies both academically and also devotionally. In these classes of in-depth Bible study, you will be told the book's background and the historical factors that influenced it. The following questions are good and could be applied to a study of the book of Hebrews or to your term paper on 2 Timothy 3:

1. To whom were the messages preached, or to whom was the book written?
2. What were their experiences socially, economically and spiritually?
3. What were the circumstances of the preaching or writing?
4. What was the purpose of the preaching or writing?
5. Note the major divisions of the book.

In each Bible course that I teach at the seminary, the students are required to read the Bible book 7 times and meditate on it for 7 hours during the semester. They were also encouraged to use/compare several translations. Then they analyzed their own lives using the passages under study by an in-depth reflection and personal application. Some have found that an additional step of outlining the passages enhanced their devotion.

Paragraph interpretation is another method. In this kind of study, we must determine that we are studying the passage in the light of its setting in the entire book. Why was the passage included in the book? How does it relate to the central message of the book? What is the primary concept or thought of the paragraph? We must do all these things before we do our analytical meditations of devotion.

Another method that we should employ is *grammatical analysis*. Here we must determine the principle sentence or idea of the paragraph. This can only be accomplished by studying all parts of the sentence looking for answers to how, why, who, what, when and where.

Topical studies are important for finding the Lord's teaching on specific subjects or for learning a great deal about certain people. However, they are not adequate as the sole method of Bible study. The person who relies only on topical studies may tend to omit the above methods in studying just a particular subject and take things out of context. He may actually misinterpret the Bible.

Biographical studies could be about an individual or a group, e.g. Moses, Abraham, women of the Bible, Jesus' disciples, or the prophets. A person who is facing a specific challenge of raising children could do a Bible study concerning, for example, Godly fathers. Is there any type of biographical study suggested by our passage in 2 Timothy? I can think of one. "Passing the torch" in a relay race could be a good application for father to sons and pastor to disciples.

A person who has studied Systematic or New Testament Theology will be better able to understand and pursue a **doctrinal Bible study** than those with little prior doctrinal study. It is a great disappointment of mine that the majority of Christians today have little or no doctrinal knowledge. They may know what they believe, but many cannot show us how or why they believe it and how it connects into a comprehensive system. One of the doctrinal statements from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics would be

a good place to find a doctrine for which you could do a Bible study.

A person with a good concordance or something such as Nave's Topical Bible could pick a **key word or concept** such as "faith" or "prayer" and search the scripture passages that deal with it.

Nothing may be more rewarding than a good Bible study. However, remember the Triangle of Piety. The Bible study is of little value to you unless you apply it to your life. What have you learned from the Word of God within the past month? What have you done about that knowledge? Let us make a commitment today. Will you be a disciple of the Lord Jesus who has faith in what His Word actually says? Will you use honest hermeneutics to determine what it is saying? Then will you do what the Word is saying?

Do you love Jesus? Then you should know beyond question that he who loves Him is only the one who obeys Him (John 14 & 15). Speak to Him now. Tell Him that you will obey Him, and then ask Him to reveal more truth to you as you implement what you already know. In the Triangle of Piety, you first know something, then you do it, and then the Spirit will confirm you and open your mind for additional knowledge. Then the cycle starts over with that new and expanded capability for understanding more about the Lord's plans and how you fit into them.

Chapter Questions

1. What happens when we proclaim the Word of God but don't live it?
2. What are the five factors that Stott lists as being prevalent in the lifestyle of a true disciple of Christ?
3. Draw the Triangle of Piety and label each corner with the proper name and relate it to the attributes of know, do, and feel.
4. What are the elements of spiraling up?
5. What is the key to discipleship?
6. Add the method of study described by the following phrases:
 - a. Covers a specific book of the Bible:
 - b. Study a passage in the Bible in the light of its setting in the entire book:

- c. Determine the principle sentence or idea of a paragraph.
- d. Find the Lord's teaching on a specific subject or for learning a great deal about certain people.
- e. Studying a particular person, group of people or a prophet.

Chapter 11

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BIBLE

The *Holy Spirit* plays the major role in the production, preservation, and interpretation of Scripture. Concerning the production, God's Spirit inspired the writers (subjective inspiration) and the writings (objective inspiration). God used real people in this process. He used all of their knowledge, talents, experiences, and personalities. We can only talk of it, but we cannot explain it. It is miraculous because the actual words are God's Words from God's Mind being supernaturally transferred to us through a human medium who contributed his own personality, vocabulary, and God-given understanding through human words. The final product gives us words that express divine thoughts that are higher than our ability to comprehend.

Translation

God was active in the work of canonization and transmission of Scripture. Part of that work was in translation. Many of our first translators, such as Tyndale, were martyred because of this work. These translators often had to go against the established church, tradition, and the civil government. However, God used fallible humans for this work, and sometimes their biases slipped into their work of translation. One such error is the word *diakonos*, which was transliterated to deacon, rather than to what the word meant which was "servant" or "minister."

Interpretation

Concerning interpretation, the Spirit's role is described via the theological term "illumination." Illumination comes to regenerated or born-again persons. The natural or unregenerate man cannot understand the things of God; they appear as foolishness to him (1Cor. 2:14). The phenomenon that is familiar to many saints is how the Bible becomes new and exciting to the new born Christian when

before conversion it was boring and not understandable.

1 Corinthians

2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

Humility is essential to the interpreter. The humble saint realizes that he cannot scale the heights into heaven to achieve knowledge of God. He knows that it must be given to him, or else he will never know the things of God. Because he realizes his own inabilities, the humble saint will pray for understanding. Prayer is the expression of humility. Ps 119:18 expresses this kind of prayer: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

Obedient piety is also essential to the interpreter. The Lord promises that the obedient saint will know whether his doctrines are true (John 7:17, 14:21). The opposite is very threatening—to violate your conscience by disobedience is to make shipwreck of your faith (paraphrase of 1Tim 1:19).

John

7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or [whether] I speak of myself.

John

14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

1 Timothy

1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

The interpreters are to be communicative. God gives us His message to communicate,

not just have the message for our own enjoyment. The Word of God is a lamp unto our feet (Ps. 119:105). The lamp is to be put on a lamp stand so that it can shine forth. The lamp is not to be hidden under a basket.

Psalm

119:105 NUN. Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

God's People

God uses His people who are willing to be used. All of our gifts are given and activated under the sovereignty of God's Spirit. The Scriptures are not the product of human values, gifts, or ideas even though all of these things are involved. Instead, the Scriptures are the product of God, the Author of every Word. The Author must help us interpret them if we are going to understand the unreachable things of God.

The irony is that this very Bible, which is beyond human production, preservation, and interpretation, is the very Words of God, which speak to the human situation. Our sinful life problems are unsolvable unless God solves them. He gives His solutions in His Word. The Scriptures provide healing for our predicament and a sure guide for our lives (ethical and moral guidelines). These Words are the messages from our loving God who speaks to our hearts no matter in which age we live. These are Words for every need; they are relevant for every human in every situation and in every age because they are the Words of the "I AM."

Closing Words

Class, it does no good to hold to verbal, propositional inspiration if your interpretation is allowed to change God's Word to mean other than what God intended. Inerrancy goes out the window if our interpretation is allowed to change the meaning of Scripture.

Back when the doctrine of revelation was the issue of the conservative resurgence in the

1900's, the deep abiding issue was over the inerrancy of God's Word. But now the deep abiding issue is over the interpretation of God's Word, i.e. *hermeneutics*.

The Progressives are willing to allow us nincompoops to hold to our so-called illusions of inerrancy so long as they are given the freedom to determine what the inerrant texts mean. The battlefront has changed from what the text *is* to what it *means*.

Class, this radical cultural shift has become the new battlefront. It is affecting our churches, three branches of government, schools, families, and etcetera.

The Progressives are willing and even content with our demands for inerrancy of Scripture because they have moved on with another tact. They don't care what we demand concerning the quality and integrity of the Scriptures as long as they get to declare what the Scriptures mean. This same shift can be seen in all other areas of life too.

The move into lawlessness is the untying of the anchorage of meaning from authorial intent. This allows for the rebellious soul to be proud of his stance on inerrancy while being free to forge ahead outside of God's Will.

The parallel can be seen in all areas of our culture. The rebellious people in political power can expound the unique wonderments of the American Constitution while using their powers to move far afield of what it actually says.

Folks, we are now in the final stage of human apostasy. The constancy of the written code has been replaced with the frivolousness of the rebellious human spirit. God warns that after the restraining law has been removed, the Man of Lawlessness will arise to rule the world. Hermeneutics is the tool that Satan is using to enable his man to rise to power.

CONCLUSION

There is a ton of things that must go right in order for our interpretation of Scripture to produce good results. The first thing that goes wrong is one's doctrine of revelation. In this doctrine, we must determine what revelation is. There are six classes of revelation from God, and we must acknowledge that all of them play essential parts in our hermeneutics. However, focusing on just one of the six to the exclusion of the others will send us off course so far that our systematic theology will become just plain weird.

There is a hermeneutic that "Christians(?)" have adopted for each of the six classes of revelation, and they all may have taken root in your church. I have yet to visit a church in which three of the six were not being employed.

The secular Progressive movement of which religious Liberalism is a subpart has jettisoned authorial intent and placed the reader's understanding at the head of the line. Thus the meaning of a text changes with each generation.

Secular Existentialism has impacted every church in America, and very few even know

that it has occurred. The colleges and seminaries have all been affected. Some of the professors have grown up under Existentialism, and they don't even know that the doctrine of revelation that they are teaching is wrong. The fact is that good intentions do not rectify wrong actions.

In some cases, the text no longer matters to the interpreters. In modern college graduate classes, hermeneutics are almost unrecognizable to Christians who have grown under the tutelage of the Bible. It takes a great deal of study to find out what the "weird" stuff that they are teaching actually means to persons who are willing to live life in real time and place. Modern jargon of the new hermeneutics operates in the spiritual realm of ideas floating around looking for available receptors.

Apostasy is in full swing, and no one has escaped the hermeneutical tools that Satan has launched to bring the entire world under his rule. This course will alert you to his devices and give you the tools to analyze his attacks. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN JESUS:

(This is by no means a complete list as there are hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

Old Testament	New Testament	The Prophecy/Fulfillment
<i>The Birth of Jesus, The Messiah</i>		
Malachi 3:1	Mark 1:2	Send messenger before him
Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:27	Born of a Virgin
Hosea 11:1	Matt 2:14, 15	The flight into Egypt
Jeremiah 31:15	Matt 2:16-18	The death of the sons under age 2
<i>The Death and Resurrection of Jesus, The Messiah</i>		
Psalms 35:11	Matt 26:60, 61	False witnesses rose up against him
Isaiah 53:7	Matt 27:12	When accused, he answered nothing
Isaiah 53:5	Matt 27:26	He was beaten for our transgressions
Isaiah 53:12	Matt 27:38	Numbered with transgressors
Psalms 22:16	John 20:27	They pierced his hands and feet
Psalms 22:8	Matt 27: 43	He trusted God, let him deliver him
Psalms 22:1	Matt 27:46	Forsaken by God
Isaiah 53:9	Matt 27:57-60	Buried with the rich

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 Denial, 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 affirm 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.

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 material, 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.

APPENDIX 7.1

(Transcription for easier reading follows)

The new Oxford University Press version of the Bible is a gross distortion of a Holy text

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

ERIN HILL
COLUMNIST



terrible.

For example, if you were to follow the Oxford University press' version of the Lord's prayer, you would say "Our Father-Mother who is in Heaven."

We could go on and on here, or you could do it yourself in the privacy of your home. Every time you read about God's only begotten Son, substitute the words "only child."

This would be almost laughable if it weren't so real.

Who are they fooling?

To tamper with the Bible is to ask for trouble.

It's the real thing.

God's word, written down by man. It is Scripture, not a paper that needs a little editing to make it more sensitive and culturally appropriate.

It is literature. No one thinks to rewrite Shakespeare to make his texts more inclusive. But we're more than happy to change the words of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

It is also history. It documents the social mores, attitudes and issues of particular groups.

It does not document our society — that is true. But that doesn't mean that we should change it around so that it does.

The Bible is what it is. Love it or leave it; don't rewrite it.

If anything, we should be trying to get it closer to the original Hebrew and Greek texts, not further from it.

Several things about this new version are alarming.

First, the idea of revising history to make it more palatable troubles any thoughtful person.

The original text is a lesson in itself; you can learn attitudes of society at that time, but if you change it there is no context. Every time you change it, it loses something.

Second, is the belief that if we change the text then the behaviors will follow suit.

It is foolishness to think that by changing words, we are changing lives. Words are important, yes, but words by themselves are rarely so compelling that an entire society rids itself of all of its sexist, racist habits and joins in a rousing chorus of "We Are The World."

To paraphrase the words of Berkeley professor and biblical scholar, Robert Alter, author of *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, this version of the Bible is an agenda masquerading as a translation.

And I don't think Oxford University knows who it is messing with.

Erin Hill is graduate pursuing a teaching certificate

THE NEW OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS VERSION OF THE BIBLE IS A GROSS DISTORTION OF A HOLY TEXT

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Second Letter of Paul to Timothy.

"It is often called the New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But Jesus didn't write a word of it. Who, then, wrote the 27 books that make up the traditional New Testament canon?" asked a Dec. 1990 U. S. News and World Report article.

Who indeed?

The birth of the New Testament was not a tidy one. Around A.D. 140, in response to Gnostic heresies and other threats to doctrine, the church moved towards an official Christian canon and began organizing the texts and letters that had been passing around the early church.

Since that time, people have changed it to suit their own personal gospels and creeds, but perhaps none so dramatically as the folks in England who have put together a version of the New Testament to top all currently available on the market.

It is a doozie, that's for sure. And they are hard at work on a revised version of the Old Testament.

This isn't the first time someone has wanted to change it, but this seems to be the one of the most comprehensive make-overs the Bible has ever received. And it comes from a prestigious institution usually thought of as a place where

thoughtful and intellectual decisions are made.

This makes it quite alarming.

Oxford University is no crackpot underground organization or loose band of radical believers.

It's Oxford. It's definitive. It's made a big mistake.

Susan Thistlewaite, co-editor of the Oxford University Press in question, defends the recent facelift given to the Holy Book. She argues that Jesus message on tolerance and love is "warrant for treating everyone equally," including equal treatment in the Bible.

This poor Bible has actually gone through more than just a facelift—it's more like total reconstruction, if you will.

All words which might be considered sexist, racist, or anti-Semitic have been changed. All words that might have been excluded have been changed so that everyone is included. Sounds great, but tastes terrible. For example, if you were to follow the Oxford University press version of the Lord's Prayer, you would say, Our Father-Mother who is in heaven."

We could go on and on here, or you could do it for yourself in the privacy of your home. Every time you read about God's only Begotten Son, substitute the word, "only child."

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First, the idea of revising history to make it more palatable troubles any thoughtful person.

The original text is a lesson in itself, you can learn attitudes of society at that time, but if you change it there is no context. Every time you change it, it loses something.

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Erin Hill is a graduate pursuing a teaching certificate.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

REWRITES OF POSITION PAPERS 1-4

PAPERS SUBMITTED TO DR. LENORE LANGSDORF
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF HUMANITIES: HERMENEUTIC

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL. 5302

BY

BILL VINSON

23 MAY 1986

POSITION PAPER #1
RELATIONSHIP OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT

The first question that comes to my mind about subject and object is: which is the interpreter and which is the text? If the interpreter is the subject and the text is the object, then I see the relationship as one of epistemology. If on the other hand, the text is subject and the interpreter is the object, then we have an existential "grasping" of the interpreter by the text.

The epistemological relationship of subject and object is the position taken by Husserl. Here, the task is to strip away the subjective contribution of the interpreter in order to reduce the object to its purest form. The interpreter is the subject, but through an epoche he will even objectify himself. This is the first step in finding the subjective impurities contained within the phenomenon. The next step is to bracket the object itself. The final result is the phenomenological reduction of the phenomenon to its *eidos*. The *eidos* of the text is its meaning.¹

The existential relationship of subject and object in which the text is subject and the interpreter is the object is the position taken by Karl Barth. This is a reversal of the traditional scientific approach to study. Barth accomplishes this subjectivity of the text with his emphasis on the Holy Spirit. The Word of God encounters man in the text. Here, the text is revelational, i.e., the Word of God is God's Spirit revealing God in an encounter that occurs when the interpreter reads the text.²

Bultmann is an existentialist who somewhat synthesizes the epistemological and the existential approaches. He objectifies the text in his first

step of demythologization. Here, there is an epistemological approach to the text in finding first, its literal meaning and then second, its demythologized meaning. This latter meaning is composed of the literal meaning of the text, less any supernatural content. The demythologized meaning is at this point still an objective meaning. The final step of interpretation is the existential appropriation of the demythologized text by the interpreter. This step comes as a result of the text's call for decision. In summary, the text comes to the subject interpreter in objective form, but it also comes as subject asking its object, the interpreter, for a decision.³

Gadamer sees the text as being neither a fixed object nor the subject. For him language is the object, and both speaker and hearer are subjects.⁴ The author contributes his part of the meaning through the text (his linguistic context), and the reader contributes his part of the meaning through his own linguistic context. The meaning is created by the interpreter when he sums these two parts into a "fusion of horizons."⁵

Heidegger has a mutual projection in which both the text and the reader do a projection. Nicholson modifies Heidegger and says that projection (Verstehen) is done by the reader and that appearance is done by the text. Illumination impacts both projection and appearance by its effect on man as "being" in the world. Auslegung is the laying out or disclosure of what is projected.⁶

I prefer the epistemological model for myself. I as the subject will exegete the object, the text. I want the original meaning, and for this reason I think that Husserl's phenomenological reduction is more apt to provide it. I remember an

experience in the recent past in which I distorted Aquinas's doctrine of the Kingdom of God because I allowed my own theological presuppositions to be imposed on Aquinas. Ironically, this distortion occurred in a subject-object approach to interpreting Aquinas. Thus an epistemological approach by itself does not assure that distortion will be prevented. However, the phenomenological approach of Husserl is a special kind of epistemological method that is far more apt to prevent distortion.

NOTES

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1927 ed. S.v. "Phenomenology," by Edmund Husserl.

²William E. Vinson, Jr., "The Significance of the Trinity in Barth's Theology," Scripta: The God and Man Seminar Papers, edited by David Kirkpatrick (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring, 1984), pp. 3-24 passim.

³Paul Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation, PP. 68-72.

⁴Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 428-31, 445-47, 348-51.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

⁶Graeme Nicholson, Seeing and Reading (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1984), pp. 19-31, 44-45, 52-56.

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POSITION PAPER #2

CAN A TRANSLATION AVOID BEING AN INTERPRETATION?

To translate is to carry across; it is to render from one language to another. The primary concern of translation is with carrying the meaning. Fidelity of meaning may sometimes require the yielding of the desire for a word-for-word or a phrase-for-phrase match in form.¹

The tension between form and meaning assumes a particular stance concerning meaning. Where is meaning to be found? Gadamer would say that it is created in the interaction between speaker and hearer. Both the speaker and the hearer supply a part of the meaning, but the whole meaning comes from the sum of the parts. On the other hand, Husserl would say that the meaning is within the phenomenon, i.e., the text. In this case the phenomenological reduction of the text through epoche would yield the eidos of the text, its meaning.

I hold with Husserl and against Gadamer. My past experiences in which I have supplied part of the meaning for the text from out of my own context have resulted in distortions to original meaning. Certainly, I realize that Nicholson is correct about the idea that my own interests cause me to emphasize one part of the text over another. However, through phenomenological epoche, I hope to keep distortion at a minimum. In summary, I am going to take the approach that the meaning is already within the text and that the task of translation is to carry that meaning across into a new language form. The question remains: is this translation also an interpretation?

Meaning oriented translation forsakes the direct path from form-to-form

and seeks instead to analyze the message and restructure it into a new simple form. This method known as "dynamic equivalence" focuses on the intended audience.² Dynamic equivalence is the method used many times by the New Testament writers themselves in their quotes of the Old Testament. Their quotes were often from memory with a concern for meaning rather than a precise restatement.³

Meaning, however, is not unaffected by form. Form may affect meaning in two areas--in both cognition and emotion. Words of two different cultures may correspond cognitively but not emotionally, and vice versa. When this happens, a change of form may be necessary to carry both impacts.⁴

Formal emphasis assumes a great similarity between languages, and its goal is formal correspondence. The interlinear is an example of this kind of translation. It is not a regular or complete translation. In fact it is just barely a translation because it lacks syntactical completeness and grammatical accuracy.

The idea behind the emphasis of form over meaning is that every translation loses some information and adds other information.⁵ Furthermore, there is also the idea that the extreme alteration of linguistic form can seriously distort the meaning.⁶

In conclusion, I think that the beginning of translation must always be with the source text. Nicholson even says that the first two things that an interpreter can do with his material is to fix the text and translate it. The translator mediates between the text and another audience.⁷ His knowledge of both the source and receptor messages must be as extensive as possible in both historical and linguistic backgrounds. The translator is going to use his acquaintance with

the text to exegete the message and then reformulate it into the receptor language.⁸

When the cultures are very different, I think that form must be adjusted for the sake of content. These adjustments become necessary because cultural presuppositions can affect the referential meaning of the message.⁹ The translator's task is to interpret the message from the framework of the source language and culture and then formulate it in such a way that the receptor can interpret the same basic message in his own language and culture. As a self-check in accuracy, the translator should anticipate how the receptor is likely to respond to the message that he gets in his interpretation. This anticipation is also an interpretation. In essence the translator interprets the proposed final form of the message somewhat as a proxy of the receptor.¹⁰

I think that there are actually two interpretations in translating. One is "from" the source language, and the other is "into" the receptor language. Risk of imposing the translator's own bias on the receptor can be minimized by holding to phenomenology and formal correspondence as much as possible.

NOTES

¹Eugene H. Glassman, The Translation Debate (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1981), pp. 23-30.

²Ibid., pp. 52, 64. Also see Jakob Van Bruggen, The Future of the Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), pp. 29-30: The "equivalent effect" is the new frontier in Bible translating according to Van Bruggen. At one time the source was the all important consideration. Now, the receptor is the governing emphasis. Formal changes are allowed in order to enhance understanding.

³Glassman, p. 36.

⁴Eugene A. Nida and William D. Reyerburn, Meaning across Cultures (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 6-7.

⁵Glassman, pp. 56-57.

⁶Nida and Reyburn, p. vi. Formal considerations deal with: transliteration, morphological structure, phrase structure, rhetorical devices, measured lines, figurative language, discourse structure, and literary genre (p. 46).

⁷Graeme Nicholson, Seeing and Reading (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1984), pp. 22, 14-15.

⁸Nida and Reyburn, p. 5.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 1, 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 20-24.

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POSITION PAPER #3

WHAT IS UNDERSTANDING A TEXT?

Understanding a text can have a wide range of meanings. For example, it can mean that the focus of interpretation is on the author and his experience of producing the text. Dilthey represents this kind of interpreter. For him, the interpreter must achieve an understanding that is built upon a personal experience that reproduces the mental life of the author. This experience is somewhat of a reliving of the author's experience in the interpreter's mind. The shared mentality among persons is the meaning of Dilthey's "system of interactions" in a world of the mind.¹ Because of the commonality of human mentality one can know himself in the other person. One can project the "I" into the "Thou."²

Another kind of interpretation is one in which the interpretive focus is more on the reader. I think that Gadamer represents this kind of interpretation. Just as the shared mentality of human beings was the basis of Dilthey's emphasis on reliving an experience, it is the commonality of human speech that provides the basis for understanding for Gadamer. Gadamer's goal is to get inside the speaker's language rather than inside the speaker's head. The speaker supplies his individual meaning in his language, and the interpreter adds his individual meaning from his own linguistic context. The result is an understanding that is greater than either of the individual parts. Language, here, is the basis for an understanding that is somewhat creative.³

I think that the middle road between Dilthey and Gadamer is more appealing for me. I need more distancing than Gadamer prefers. I want more of an epistemological approach to the text like that of Ricoeur in which the text

supplies the distanciation. Too much of me as an interpreter is apt to get into the text if I use Gadamer's approach which seeks to eliminate distanciation. I think that the meaning is already in the text and that my job is to find it.

Also like Ricoeur, I think that Dilthey is too psychologically oriented. Ricoeur rejects the psychological emphasis in favor of the text which opens up and discloses.⁴ I, too, want to find the meaning within the text rather than within the author's mental life because the text rather than the author is what is available. When the epistemological meaning of a text has been uncovered, then this is what understanding the text is for me.

ENDNOTES

¹Wilhelm Dilthey, Selected Writings, edited, translated, and introduced by H. P. Rickman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 206-7.

²*Ibid.*, p. 208.

³Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 346-51.

⁴Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation, edited, translated, and introduced by John P. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 53.

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POSITION PAPER #4

IS TRADITION NECESSARY FOR VALID INTERPRETATION?

Historical tradition, for Gadamer, is the continuum in which meaning is found. There are two horizons on this continuum, i.e., the author's horizon and the interpreter's horizon. The elements of debate are found here. On the one hand, tradition can be deemphasized, and on the other hand, tradition can be much emphasized. The former is found in the scientific approach to hermeneutic. In this approach, the interpreter becomes the subject who operates upon the text which is the object. The latter emphasis, i.e., emphasis on tradition, is represented in Gadamer's focus on language as the specific manifestation of tradition and the actual mediator of meaning. In this approach, language becomes the carrier of tradition. Tradition and language are so linked that as one changes the other changes.

The scientific approach is the one taken by Husserl. In his phenomenology, he is seeking a pure science. This science is only attainable if the phenomenon is purified of subjective accretions through phenomenological reduction. By means of the epoche, the interpreter can bracket his own observing, his "consciousness-of" the object. After the interpreter removes his own psychological subjectivity, he brackets the object in order to find its *eidos*. Husserl's goal is to obtain a natural science that is purified by working out new laws applicable to pure *eidos*.¹

For Gadamer language and tradition are very important. Again, language and tradition form one continuum with two horizons. The text is from the author's horizon, but it is not the container of "meaning." Meaning is synthetic; it results from the joining of the two horizons. Thus Gadamer would say that meaning is

void until the reader made a contribution from his own horizon; the two horizons are fused for the production of meaning. Meaning is born out of the synergism of the two horizons. It transcends the text (the author's horizon), and it transcends the interpreter's horizon.²

Gadamer finds cogent support from Thiselton. In his book appropriately titled The Two Horizons, Thiselton claims that understanding would be impossible without the engagement of two horizons, i.e., both the author's and the exegete's. Thiselton basically thinks that the phenomenological approach most often fails to do a phenomenology of the exegete. The exegete's self-understanding is neglected. As a result of this failure, the exegete often hides behind his "descriptive task" without examining the impact that his own self-understanding has upon his interpretation. Thus for Thiselton the exegete must relate his own horizon to the text.³

I basically prefer Husserl's phenomenological approach. I want my interpretation to be analytical in its quest for description. However, I find that interpretation is an imprecise science because of the unlikelihood of screening out all presuppositional bias. I find that I must agree with Nicholson's concept of "projection." His description of how perception is a product of projects and their projections correlate closely with my own personal experiences.⁴ For this reason, I must acknowledge that two horizons are engaged in interpretation. Thus, both the tradition of the text and that of the interpreter are necessary for valid interpretation.

NOTES

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1927 ed. s.v. "Phenomenology," by Edmund Husserl.

²Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 348-51, 428-31, 445-47.

³Anthony C. Thiselton, The Two Horizons (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 14-15.

⁴Graeme Nicholson, Seeing and Reading (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1984), pp. 36-52.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

ONE HERMENEUTIC VERSUS SPECIAL HERMENEUTICS

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO DR. LENORE LANGSDORF
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF HUMANITIES: HERMENEUTIC

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

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ONE HERMENEUTIC VERSUS SPECIAL HERMENEUTICS

This debate between one and multiple or special hermeneutics will be conducted as a dialectic between the old school of hermeneutics (OH) and the new hermeneutic (NH).¹ OH emphasize the author's intent, and the NH goes a step further by also emphasizing the reader's context. Where OH use rules and methods to get back to the original message, the NH sees the original message as only a piece to the puzzle. The puzzle needs more pieces added, and they will be added by the exegete.

One Hermeneutic

Because hermeneutics (in the plural) were considered to be superficial, there emerged a NH. The plural version of hermeneutics operates out of the scientific mode in which there is a superficial, subject-object dichotomy. The more comprehensive NH takes into account not only the historical conditioning of the author but also the historical conditioning of the exegete. There are two horizons, and both must be engaged. The horizons are of both the exegete and the text.²

¹The abbreviation OH will be treated as a plural noun. NH will be treated as a singular noun. The reader can substitute "old hermeneutics" and "new hermeneutic" for "OH" and "NH," respectively.

²Anthony C. Thiselton, The Two Horizons (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 12-16. Gadamer thinks

Gadamer, a NH proponent, thinks that the meaning of the text does not rely on the original intent and history. The author does not have to know the real meaning. Actually the interpreter often understands more than the author. Understanding is productive rather than reproductive. In other words, the interpreter's horizon is synthesized with the author's into a more complete meaning.³

Gadamer's hermeneutic is universal. Truth emerges in the dialectical process of questioning and answering. The question originates in the interpreter's historical horizon, and the answer comes from the encounter of the two horizons. This encounter occurs in language which houses the historical traditions from both horizons.⁴ There is a quest for fusing both horizons, but it is not allowed to override all temporal tension. one must be able to see the author's text as one's own, but

that it is illusory to think that one can think as men of another age (p. 55). He insists that both horizons must be brought towards a fusion. objectivism occurs when the text's horizon is the only consideration. Naive objectivism occurs when meaning is constructed solely from the present (pp. 57, 304, 307).

³Ibid., pp. 18-20. Gadamer claims to be purely descriptive. This claim seems to imply that truth is not being added to the message of the text; it is already there. However, like art, the message is never final. The next person can always see something more. A parallel to this idea that there is infinite meaning in a text can be seen with the doctrine of progressive revelation. In this doctrine, the prophets did not understand their own message completely. Progressive revelation would occur as the Holy Spirit brought more understanding out of the message for future interpreters (pp. 293-301). See also James D. Smart, The Interpretation of Scripture (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 313.

enough distance must be retained in order to prevent making the

text a mirror of one's thoughts.⁵

Special or Multiple Hermeneutics

OH focus on the original intent of the author. The exegete wants to be as objective as possible in his treatment of the text. His first step is then to neutralize his own subjectivity. If the first step is successful, then the text is freed to say what it said.⁶ If the first step is not successful, then there is an imposition of the interpreter's preconceptions upon the text. It is at this point that the old school criticizes the new school which allows for a domination of the text by the interpreter's pre-understanding.⁷

Pannenberg's criticism of Schleiermacher and Dilthey can be extended to Gadamer and his new hermeneutic. That criticism is that the universal hermeneutic leads to relativism if there is no anchorage in a universal history that has reference to

⁵Ibid., p. 326.

⁶Ibid., p. 26: In harmony with Husserl's phenomenology, there is no projection of a prior understanding. The goal is to let the thing appear as it is.

⁷Ibid., p. 17. Emilio Betti criticizes Gadamer's claim to pure description. According to him Gadamer is lost in existential subjectivity. These two men divide over the term "description." Distinction is made between the meaning of the text and the meaning that the text has for the exegete in his historical tradition (pp. 28-29). The former has the concretizing of meaning occurring along with the concretizing of the text. Gadamer, who holds the latter, separates the two concretizings. Actually, he would say there is never a final concretizing of meaning.

God's providence in Christ.⁸ Without absolutes, hermeneutics are vulnerable to the hidden agenda. Thus, Von Ranke became a myth-

maker;⁹ Lessing divorced truth from history altogether;¹⁰ Dilthey and Heidegger eliminated the Judeo-Christian God; Bultmann eliminated miracles;¹¹ and Marxists now continue to arrive at Marxist interpretations.¹² All of these people have unintentionally emphasized the present horizon over the old horizon. If the meaning of the text is anchored to the present, then there is only one result possible--relativism. The phenomenon of the NH is that presuppositions seem to govern interpretations.¹³

For OH, abstraction is the key to neutralizing the presuppositions, but the opposite is the key in the new hermeneutic.¹⁴ Truth should be conceptual, but the NH makes it relative to experience. Truth is created when it is "completed" by the interpreter.

Synthesis

Both OH and the NH are wrong when it comes to New Testament interpretation. The NH bridges the subject-object

⁸Ibid., p. 83.

⁹Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹¹A. Berkeley Mickelson, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 7-9, 17-19: Bultmann assumed a closed continuum of natural law. All events in the Bible had an imminent historical cause in nature. The Bible must conform to this preunderstanding, and Bultmann achieves it with the hermeneutic of demythologization.

¹²Thiselton, p. 113.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 296.

gap via historical continuity couched in language. OH bridge

the gap via scientific epistemology. However, New Testament interpretation has an infinite gap to bridge. The gap is between God and man. Temporally, the gap is infinite; epistemologically, it is infinite; and ontologically, it is infinite. An infinite bridge is needed--the Holy Spirit.

Luther balanced the grammatical sense of meaning with the spiritual depth of meaning.¹⁵ The former was available to all people, but the latter depended upon an experience of spiritual illumination (an opening of our limited understanding) by God, the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

Calvin also had a very great emphasis on the Holy Spirit. For him the Holy Spirit was instrumental in the production of Scripture via inspiration. In other words, man wrote the Scriptures, but it was God's words given to the writer through inspiration.

Not only was the Holy Spirit the inspiration of Scripture, but he was also portrayed as the illuminator of the interpreter. The total depravity of man precludes his being able to have true understanding of the things of God.¹⁷ Without God's intervening grace of illumination, man would remain helpless in achieving

¹⁵Graeme Nicholson, Seeing and Reading (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984), p. 164.

¹⁶Mickelson, pp. 38-39. See also Nicholson, pp. 102-7.

¹⁷Rationalists suppose that the intellect is all that is necessary for interpretation.

to the Reformers, could never replace divine instruction.¹⁸

In order to shorten this paper, I am not going to resolve the debate between one or more hermeneutics in the secular realm. Instead, I am going to focus on the spiritual realm; I am going to opt for a special hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible. I call it a spiritual hermeneutic.

Jesus claims that one's understanding of God's word is a gift. That gift is faith, and faith is instrumental in understanding.¹⁹ Jesus plainly says that he spoke in parables so that the people could not receive salvation by the natural capacity of the human mind.²⁰ The understanding comes from God. Paul says that natural man cannot receive the things of God

¹⁸Mickelson, pp. 39-40. An example of how problems arise when the spiritual hermeneutic is replaced by a rational/philosophical hermeneutic can be found in the history of the Church. As the Church advanced in history, it began to try to conserve its position. In order to prevent "heresy," the Church relied on its Regula Fidei as a hermeneutical guide. As a result,

reason, systems, and abstract formulations ruled in theology. Theology often controlled exegesis in opposition to the correct order in which exegesis controls theology. Men looked for texts to prove their theology and explained away evidence that seemed to be contrary to their particular view (p. 42).

Here is a subject-object problem in which the text became dominated by the interpreter. For good interpretation to take place, pure motives (an openness to God) are necessary (P. 4; 2 Cor. 2.17).

¹⁹Eph. 2:8 and Rom. 1:17.

²⁰Matt. 13:11-15.

because they appear to him as foolishness. The things of God

can only be known by the Spirit, i.e., they are spiritually discerned.²¹

So, does philosophical hermeneutics have a place in interpreting Scripture? Revelation is in two parts: general revelation and special revelation. The former is available to all men using their own hermeneutic(s). God says that all men can know that God exists merely by looking at creation. Not only can man see that God exists, but also they can "understand" God's power. Because of this capability, men "are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."²²

Special revelation, on the other hand, is not open to everyone. It is open only to those of faith, i.e., to those who believe that God "is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."²³ Where general revelation consists of nature, history, and experience, special revelation consists of salvation history, the incarnation, and Scripture. General revelation is open to reason and philosophical hermeneutic(s) for a limited disclosure of God's Truth.

Special revelation, however, is interpreted in stages which use both the philosophical and the spiritual hermeneutics.

²¹1 Cor. 2:14. The Bible is replete with references that attest to a spiritual hermeneutic. See the appendix for a sample list.

²²Rom. 1:20-21.

²³Heb. 11:6.

First, man makes a rational (philosophical) investigation of the

text. If the man is a man of faith, this first step shades over into spiritual illumination for a divine disclosure of God's Truth. Second, God investigates man. There is a confrontation between man and God. The text occasions the confrontation, and this confrontation is the time and place of conviction. Since conviction is attributed to God, the Holy Spirit, this entire second step is spiritual and outside the realm of philosophy. When Peter realized that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus told him that the understanding of what he had just concluded was a special revelation from God in heaven and that it could not have been information communicated via flesh and blood.²⁴

In conclusion, special hermeneutics carry the day for me. I think that the Bible must be interpreted differently from the way an ordinary history is interpreted. Though I did not resolve whether or not special hermeneutics are required to interpret ordinary history, I did assert the need for a special hermeneutic for Bible interpretation.

²⁴Matt. 16:16.

APPENDIX OF SAMPLE VERSES INDICATING A SPIRITUAL HERMENEUTIC

Paul preached not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2:4).

Words of men's wisdom are not those of God. His word is spiritual and must be taught by the Holy Spirit. God's things are foolishness to natural man (1 Cor. 2:9-10, 13-14).

Jesus himself opened the understanding of the disciples so "that they might understand the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:45).

Only by the Holy Spirit can man call Jesus Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).

The mind is blinded until one turns to the Lord (2 Cor. 3:15-17).

The cross is foolishness to the unsaved (1 Cor. 1:18).

The Word of God was voiced by Paul not as merely the word of men but as the Word of God. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (1 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 6:17).

The Gospel comes not from men; Paul received it by revelation from Christ. The Holy Spirit bears witness to its truth (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 in. 5:6).

One should preach the Gospel not with wisdom of words unless the cross of Christ should be made of no effect (1 Cor. 1:17).

The Gospel came not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5).

The Gospel was a trust from God entrusted to the apostles (1 Thess. 2:4).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Jesus said that whoever eats him will live, and many said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (Jn. 6:57-60).

Peter admitted that many of Paul's letters contain things that are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16).

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How to Interpret the Bible

Dr. Tommy Brisco
Fall 1994

TEACHER TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

I. Introduction

A. **Hermeneutics:** The art and principles of biblical interpretation with a view to applying the Bible's message to today's world.

1. Two fold task

- a) to discover what a text meant in its original setting
Exegesis: "to lead out of" – a critical explanation
Exegesis: "to read into" – the tendency to read into the text a foreign meaning imposed by the interpreter.
- b) to discover what a text means in the contemporary setting application on the basis of my text, what am I to believe or do.
- c) the "Hermeneutical gap": the distance that separates us from the original setting of our text
- d) we must keep the two tasks separate; we can only know what a text means when we have determined accurately what it meant originally.

2. The two agents of Hermeneutics

- a) Holy Spirit: His function is to cast light on the text—illuminate the text—not to add meaning to the text
- b) Human Agent: God expects us to use our resources. Some essential characteristics of a good interpreter include
 - (1) a **believer**—interpretation from within the faith
 - (2) a **seeker**—one who desires to know and to obey
 - (3) **openness**—to God and to fellow believers
 - (4) **dependent** upon the Holy Spirit
 - (5) **methodical/systematic** approach to Bible Study

3. Two types of Hermeneutics:

- a) General: those principles and concepts used to interpret any biblical passage regardless of the literary type.
- b) Special/specific: those principles and concepts employed for special literary types: e.g., prophecy, Psalms, parables, etc. See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart How to Read for All its Worth (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

4. Five Basic Principles of General Hermeneutics

- a) Grammatical: What do the words mean? How do they relate to one another? How does the passage unfold? What is the structure of my text? What kind of literature am I dealing with? Literal or symbolic, poetry or prose?

- b) Historical: What is the historic setting of my text? What cultural, geographical, religious ideas are found in my text?
- c) Contextual: What is the immediate context of my text? How does my text fit into the overall structure of the book? What does the Bible as a whole have to add to the idea found in your text?

Remember: proof texting—taking your text out of contents— a common way of misunderstanding the Bible.

- d) Theological Principle: What does the text have to say about God, man, salvation, sin, relationships, ethical guidelines for the Christian pilgrimage, the church, etc.
Remember: God’s revelation has been progressive until it was given fullness in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is foundational, but partial.
- e) Practical Application: What are the theological truths of the text? What should I believe, how should I act, what does the passage say about relationships, what truths contained in the text undergird my Christian walk.

- 5. Much of good hermeneutics is common sense. Be sensitive to the text, read thoughtfully, pay attention. Resist the temptation to run to the commentaries or quarterly to see what others think the text means before you have carefully, prayerfully considered the passage yourself. Develop a good, methodological approach to Bible study to answer the basic question raised in your study of the text.

II. The Basic Tools for Biblical Interpretation

A. Several good standard Translations of the Bible

- 1. The distinction between a paraphrase and a translation is a big one. Paraphrases are more “loosely” tied to the original Hebrew and Greek than translation. Paraphrases often have a lot of theological bias (be it good or bad) built into them. Paraphrases can be used as a supplement to gain other perspectives on a passage, but should never substitute for translations in study preparation.
- 2. Some of the standard relations include:
 New International Version (NIV)
 KJV and New KJV
 Revised Standard Version (RSV)
 American Standard Version (ASV)
 New American Standard Version (NAS)

3. Cross-references as a tool

B. Concordances: Concordances list the words of the Bible in alphabetical order and show the verses in which the word occurs.

- 1. Uses:
 - 1) to locate a passage
 - 2) to compare passages which deal with the same subject

- 3) to research other passages in which a significant word occurs
- 4) to study the different contexts in which a word occurs thereby learning something of its range of meaning.

2. Standard Concordances

Strong J. The exhaustive Concordance to the Bible

Young, R. Analytical Concordance to the Bible

Goodrick, E. W. and J. R. Kohlenberg. The NIV Complete Concordance

Hartdegen, S. J. Nelson's Complete Concordance of the NAB

C. Multi-Volume Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

1. Uses: These tools are some of the most versatile tools for the interpreter. The following represents only some of the ways they benefit Bible study.

- a) Quick references for unknown terms: "early rains," "millo," "Gilead"
- b) More detailed knowledge of subjects mentioned in the text; e.g., "Philistines," "Samaria," "Nathaniel," the "Assyrians"
- c) Overviews of individual books of the Bible
- d) in depth article on key biblical words or theological ideas; e.g. "faith," "salvation," "justification," etc.
- e) background on biblical customs and manners: "marriage," "festivals"
- f) information on key biblical personalities: "Moses, David, Paul"

2. Standard Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

- a) Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (5 vols.)
- b) International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Rev. ed. (4 vols.)
- c) Illustrated Bible Dictionary
- d) The Layman's Bible Dictionary (forthcoming)

D. Bible Atlases

1. Uses:

- a) locating geographical information mentioned in text
- b) gaining an overview of biblical events or periods: e.g. the voice of the Exodus, the missionary journeys of Paul.
- c) learning about the biblical environment: physical landscapes, climate, economic basis
- d) atlases often contain information on biblical history

2. Selected Atlases

- a) Readers Digest's Atlas of the Bible
- b) The Oxford Bible Atlas, ed. H. G. May
- c) The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands
- d) The Hammond Bible Atlas

- e) The MacMillan Bible Atlas
 - f) The Harper's Atlas of the Bible
- E. Biblical introductions and Surveys: These works give background information on all biblical books including discussions on author, setting, purpose, structure, and often content of each book.
1. Uses:
 - a) to gain insight regarding the essential literary questions: "Who wrote the book, when was it written?" etc.
 - b) to get an overview of the structure of the book.
 - c) to get an overview of the content
 - d) surveys give excellent summaries of the life of Christ, Paul, and Old Testament figures.
 2. Selected Introductions and surveys
 - a) New Testament
 - (1) Robert Gundry, A Survey of the New Testament
 - (2) Everett Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament
 - (3) Bruce Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content
 - b) Old Testament
 - (1) Robert Cate, An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Study
 - (2) Robert Cate, These Sought a Country
 - (3) Clyde T. Francisco, Introducing the Old Testament, rev. ed.
 - (4) Page H. Kelley, A Nation in the Making (the Pentateuch)
 - (5) Ralph L Smith, Israel's Period of Progress (Conquest, United Kingdom)
 - c) Biblical Histories
 - (1) Uses:
 - (a) give historical background
 - (b) often contains information on biblical culture
 - (2) Selected Biblical Histories
 - (a) New Testament
 - i) F. F. Bruce, New Testament History
 - ii) Edward Lohse, The New Testament Environment
 - iii) F. V. Filson, A New Testament History: The Story of the Emerging Church
 - iv) F. F. Bruce, Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free
 - (b) Old Testament

- i) F. F. Bruce, Israel and the Nations
- ii) H. T. Frank, Discovering the Biblical World, rev. ed.

F. Commentaries: Commentaries are written for different purposes and vary greatly in terms of quality and usefulness.

1. Uses:

- a) to compare your findings with what others have said
- b) to find help for the interpretation of specific passages
- c) to gain information about the literary and historical background of a text

2. Selected Commentaries

- a) Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
- b) Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
- c) Broadman Commentary
- d) Layman's Bible Commentary
- e) Study guide of January Bible Study Books
- f) New International Commentary of the N. T.
- g) New International Commentary of the O. T.

G. Theology

- 1, Uses: to probe significant theological ideas
- 2. Selected works:

- a) Layman's Library of Christian Doctrine
- b) Roy Edgeman, What Baptist's Believe

III. General Guide for Interpreting the Bible

A. Initial Preparation

- 1. Read the passage under consideration several times from your favorite version.
- 2. Compare several standard translations with the one you use; be alert to distinctives or differences. **Note**: Pay close attention to any textual variations indicated by special notes, italics, or brackets. Be prepared to consult commentaries if significant differences occur to gain insight to the nature of the problem.
- 3. Make notes, indications, questions, or uncertainties you have as to what the text means: e.g. the meaning of words or phrases, flow of thought, historical/cultural allusions, etc.
- 4. Try to identify the type of material you are dealing with. Is it prose or poetry? Literal or figurative? Narrative? Prophecy? A parable? Allegory? The type of material dictates special hermeneutical principles.

B. Gaining a larger perspective: attempt to understand your passage in the light of the overall structure and purpose of the book in which it is found.

1. Learn what you can the book by answering the following questions: author, date of writing, occasion, purpose, identify of recipients, literary style, or characteristic features of the author.
2. Read the book through where possible. Explore the historical setting of your book thoroughly, especially for any Old Testament book. Try to understand not only the political background, but also the religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. Read the book through noting important themes and theological ideas.
4. Examine a basic outline of the book noting the structure and flow of thought; better still, make your own outline of the book.
5. Note the immediate context of your passage. Pay special attention to what proceeds and succeeds it.
6. Be thinking about what purpose your text has in light of the overall purpose of the book; what impact would your text make on the original readers in light of the authors purpose?

C. Dealing specifically with your text.

1. Analyze your text as to basic thought structure; pay attention to words, being certain of their meanings and relationships.
2. Consult good commentaries to see if there are any significant points of grammar, lexicography (word meanings), or syntax (word relationships).
3. Key words of a passage need to be noted especially.
4. Identify clearly any cultural expressions, references to institutions, people, or historical events mentioned in the passage. Note: Often a good multi-volume Bible encyclopedia and dictionary is all that is needed. Also, good commentaries should deal with such issues.
5. Try to summarize exactly what your test says.

D. Think theologically: Scripture is given to express theological ideas.

1. What theological concepts are expressed in your text? What theological are assumed or undergird your text?
 - a) Concepts about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, his nature, his work;
 - b) Concepts about God's relationship to us;

- c) Concepts about our relationship to Him;
 - d) Concepts about our relationships to others in light of our relationship to Him.
- 2. Formulate what you believe to be the theological basis of your text.
- 3. Where possible compare parallel passages or other passages dealing with the same theological concepts; note the distinctives of your text.
- 4. Be certain your interpretation of your text is not in clear conflict with other passages.
- E. Get to the point in light of your study, develop an understanding of the basic thrust and key teachings of your text.
 - 1. Identify the basic ideas and theological emphasis.
 - 2. Identify the key truths or principles to be gained from the passages; there may be doctrinal, ethical, or moral guidance for living out the Christian experience.
- F. Applying the text.
 - 1. The foundation of all good applications is a solid grasp of the original meaning of your text.
 - 2. Good application grows out of awareness of contemporary concerns and needs. The interpreter must be alert to the needs of those whom he/she is ministering. Analyze the specific needs of those whom you are ministering being sensitive to how our text may be helpful.
 - 3. The role of analogy.
 - a) Identify points of contact between the situation addressed in your text and the circumstances of today. What correspondence do you see between the ancient and modern settings?
 - b) What message, principles, or guidance did your text give to the ancient context? How can this message address needs today in a similar context?
 - 4. Drive the points home by contemporary or biblical illustrations
 - 5. Indicate what effect(s) the teachings of the text should have in the life of the individuals and churches today. The text could:
 - a) invite trust and faith
 - b) require change positively or negatively
 - c) challenge to grow spiritually
 - d) ground us in our faith

APPENDIX I

Keys to Analyzing a Passage Grammatically

1. Recognize key words, underline them mentally and be certain of their meaning.
2. Note the natural structure of the passage by paying attention to:
 - a. Important connective phrases
 - 1) “but,” “however” indicate a contrast
 - 2) “in order that” states a purpose
 - 3) “for,” “because,” suggests results or activity
 - 4) “therefore,” “since,” suggests results or activity often predicated upon a prior statement
 - 5) “and” joins two or more
 - 6) “if” introduces a conditional aspect
 - b. Note the arrangement and development of the ideas or thoughts expressed in your text.
Be alert to contrasts, comparisons, repetitions used in the passage to convey the message.
3. Pay special attention to verb tenses. Is the action described complete or incomplete; past, present, or future tense.
4. Pay attention to pronouns and their antecedents.
5. Note any adjectives or adverbs which qualify a noun or a verb.
6. Learn to recognize advice, warnings, exhortations, promises, and admonitions. Observe upon what basis these are made.
7. Be alert to the literary type (genre) of your text.
 - a. Literal or Figurative?
 - b. Prose or Poetry?

APPENDIX II

Theological Perspectives – Certain theological perspectives ought to be kept in mind as we interpret scripture.

1. The essential message of the Bible is clear (Perspicuity of scripture).
This does not mean that every part of the Bible is equally clear or that there are not obscure passages in the Bible. What it does mean is that God has communicated clearly those matters essential for faith through the Bible. This perspective leads to several other insights.
 - a. Obscure passages must be understood in light of clearer teaching.
 - b. No doctrine should be built solely upon obscure or difficult passages; e.g., 1 Cor. 15:29 – “Baptism for the dead” or 1 Peter 2:24—“By his stripes we are healed.”
 - c. Doctrines are more secure as they are taught in multiple parts of the Bible.
 - d. Passages which are brief should be studied in the light of passages of greater length and depth; e.g. Acts 2:38 with reference to baptism and salvation—Romans 6, Eph. 2, etc. We must read the part in light of the whole.
 - e. We must be willing to live with some biblical paradoxes; e.g., the sovereignty of God and man’s freedom.
2. The analogy of faith principle: scripture is best interpreted by scripture.
 - a. This perspective is grounded on several presuppositions.
 - 1) The Bible is a unity.
 - 2) The Bible is coherent: its teachings “hang together”
 - 3) The Bible is profitable for edification.
 - b. interpretations of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching, of scripture at any point.
 - c. Give priority to systematic passages over the incidental, brief, or nonsystematic in matter of doctrine.
3. God’s revelation of himself was progressive: (Heb. 1:1-4)
 - a. The New Testament contains the final witness to God’s full revelation in Jesus Christ.
 - b. We must read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. The Old Testament is foundational, but incomplete.

SOUTHWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

SUBMITTED TO

DR. BILL VINSON

AS A RESULT OF THE CONVERSATION

CONCERNING HERMENEUTICS

BY

RANDALL EASTER

AZLE, TEXAS

JANUARY 15TH, 1999

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15)

“Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God?” (Mark 12:24)

It is my purpose to show:

- I) The definition of hermeneutics.
- II) The definition of presupposition.
- III) The interpretation that comes from presuppositions.
- IV) The false gospel that looks real.
- V) The gospel presentations.

I) The definition of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is the study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible).

[Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition] “Refers to an explanation,¹

II) The definition of presupposition

1. The presupposition or the word presume plays a major part in how the Scripture is interpreted. Presume means “To take for granted; to take upon oneself without permission; to proceed overconfidently.”² Presumption means “something that can be logically assumed true

¹ Corley, Bruce, Steve Lemke, Grant Lovejoy, Biblical Hermeneutics (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 2.

² Webster’s Dictionary (Ashland: Landoll’s, 1993), 339.

until disproved.”³ The human nature compels one to assume and to presume in all areas of life so there must be some type of guideline when it comes to interpreting Scripture or one will run the risk of making the text say what one subconsciously wants it to say. The human nature is to sin and have fault so the only way to truly know whether one is at fault is to use Scriptural principles in interpreting the written Word.

2. An example of different presuppositions would be a man born and raised on a cotton farm in South Texas would have a different understanding of John 4:35 than someone born and raised in the inner-city of Chicago. Knowing this to be true there must be a guide to interpreting scripture or one will come to wrong conclusions.

3) There are some notable movements in the world today that work off of different presuppositions that bring them to false interpretations. 1) One of these groups (Goose-bump gobbler’s) is the group that always promotes health, wealth, and prosperity. This same group also promotes the theme of “name it and claim it.” 2) Another group (Grace givers) promotes a god of all grace, love, and forgiveness. This group would support the theme, “judge not lest you be judged.” 3) There is also a small group (God given) of radical rights that would hold to Scripture alone, carry the cross, suffer for Christ’s sake, take the narrow path. This group would support the theme “be a martyr for Christ.”

III) The interpretation that comes from presuppositions.

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”(John 10:10b).

1) Group one would read this verse to mean that a person is supposed to be rich materially, physically, and living a life that abounds in all good things. They would claim that you are never to be sick and never have lack of house, car, or other material things that God obviously wants to

³ *Ibid.*, 339.

bless you with. “Christ died and rose again so you could be healthy, wealthy and happy.”⁴

2) Group two would interpret this to mean that when you walk through this life you can be abundant because your sins are all forgiven and Jesus’ blood keeps your slate clean. You should not have any guilt because Jesus loves and forgives and His grace is sufficient for you. This group will tell you that your life is abundant because, “You are a saint, you are God’s work of art, you are righteous and holy, you are fully accepted by God.”⁵ 3) Group three would come up with a totally different understanding of this. The apostle Paul would be in this third group, and let us see how he would understand the abundant life. II Corinthians 11:22-31 sums up Paul’s abundant life. He glories in the suffering that he has been through. He gives a list of the shipwrecks, prison time, beatings, journeyings, times stoned, perils, pain, weariness, etc., and in these he must need to glory. I suppose that the first two groups would claim that Paul did not have the Spirit or that he did not understand his relationship to Christ. 4) The illustration could go on and on. However it is easy to see how the place you start will determine very strongly what you come up with in the end unless you place the Scripture as object and yourself as subject, i.e. subject yourself to the Scriptures. We are under the Word and to make the Word say what we may want it to say is a sin and an abomination to God. “When we read object (Bible) we have to be under whatever it says.”⁶

IV) The false gospel that looks real

“And the gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:10)

1) The major tragedy that comes to the world is a gospel that looks real, but is actually counterfeit. The counterfeit gospel comes from people that allow Satan to deceive them into a

⁴ Star Telegram, Paper article for January 10, 1999. (Front page)

⁵ Steve McVey, *Grace Walk* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 44-45

⁶ Bill Vinson, *Systematic Theology* (Fall 1996) class notes

one dimension Jesus.

Illustration: If you were to come into possession of a counterfeit dollar and place it beside the real dollar you would not be able to tell the difference without knowing what to look for. The two dollars would be the same size, shape, color, design, and worth the same value until someone discovered the one to be a fake. When a bill is discovered to be a counterfeit it is then taken and destroyed because it has no value. Herein lies the danger of using bad hermeneutics and starting with wrong presuppositions, because it will bring a false gospel. If one is saved under a false gospel, then they have not accepted the true Jesus, and therefore their salvation will be thrown into the fire and destroyed because it has no value. The one who has been presenting the false gospel will find that “it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6b). It will be Jesus who will examine whether or not the gospel that is presented is true or counterfeit.

2) The three previous groups that have been listed in this paper would all claim that the gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached to the world. They would say that as long as one believes in Jesus all the rest of life will work out. The first two groups would say not to worry about the different worship styles, actions, interpretations, and so on just so long as Jesus is preached, then all is OK. However, the deception that comes in this mentality is that they leave out the information of who Jesus is. So looking at the above verse that says we are to publish the gospel, this brings a need to interpret the gospel. “In most NT uses, the gospel is the sum total of saving truth about Jesus as it is communicated to lost humanity.”⁷ The gospel can be interpreted and presented in many different ways and this is the major eternally damaging aspect of not interpreting the Scriptures properly. The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ, but how that news is communicated to

⁷ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 316.

the lost humanity makes all the difference in eternity.

V) The gospel presentation

1) Group one that proclaims health, wealth, and prosperity communicates a gospel that presents Jesus as someone who will save you from hell and give you eternal life. However, the thing that comes mixed in with that is that if a person will just accept Jesus then their life will be put into order and everything will work out great and they will begin to experience the abundant life. Therefore, the hearer of this gospel says to himself that the way to have all of his problems solved is to just say yes to Jesus and then everything will get better. This presentation is on par with the way the world advertises their products. They tell you all the good of the product without telling you all the bad side.

Illustration: A car salesman will tell you every aspect of what you want to hear about a car that you want to buy, but he will not tell you that in a few years that it will start to fall apart and that you will spend hundreds of dollars in car repairs. However, he tells you what you want to hear and you purchase the car based upon your selfish desires. The gospel presentation is the same for the above group in that they tell you all the good side of Jesus and not the difficult side. So the hearer accepts Jesus in light of having his own selfish desires fulfilled. Those selfish desires include wanting their problems solved, debts removed, acceptance amongst peers, etc. The acceptance of this false gospel produces a counterfeit salvation that will be thrown into the fire and destroyed because it has no value.

2) Group two will proclaim a gospel of grace that is similar to group number one. It is a gospel that frees one from “eternal punishment” (this group does not like to preach the word hell) and gives one eternal life. The gospel is wrapped in a form that allows a person to get saved and then live however they want to live because after all, you are saved by grace. This gospel will be one

that will not hold people accountable because they have no right to judge, and after all, you cannot talk about sin because it has been forgiven. The one that hears this gospel can come and accept this Jesus and not have to change his lifestyle. This gospel is very accommodating to those people out there that want to feel like they have covered their “religious bases” and now they can get on with life.

3) Group three this time will focus on the way that Jesus Christ presented the gospel. Jesus started by asking some people to follow him. Peter and Andrew had to throw down their fishing industry and follow him. James and John left their fishing industry and their father to follow him. Matthew left the tax collecting business to follow him. So far, this gospel does not seem fun, think of it, a preacher today telling you to quit your job and leave your father if you want to follow Jesus. Jesus proclaimed the gospel in a way that said if you loved your father, mother, son, daughter more than him then you were not worthy of him. (Matt. 10:37) Jesus preached a gospel that said deny yourself and take up the cross, for if you want your life saved you will die. (Matt. 16:24-25) Jesus says that his gospel does not bring peace on earth, but rather division. (Luke 12:51) Jesus proclaimed a gospel that said wide is the gate to destruction, but narrow is the way to eternal life. (Matt. 7:13-14) Take this last verse interpreted by the first two groups and it becomes, many will be saved and few will miss out.

REMARKS

1) Ask yourself what is the standard in which you interpret Scripture. The best place I see to start is with Philippians 2:5-11. This Scripture shows the mind of Christ being of no reputation, servant, humble, obedient to death, even death on the cross. When hermeneutically interpreting the text, no matter what the presupposition, check to see if it lines up with the mind of Christ. Check to see if your understanding of the text elevates man or humbles man, causes one to be

master or servant, willing to die for Christ or wishing to overcome persecution.

2) It is not to deny that God offers grace, but to realize the whole picture of God. Sure grace is in the gospel, but so is death involved in the gospel. It is not to say that there are no blessings in the gospel, but it is to understand what true blessing is, and true blessing is to be able to suffer for

Christ. 3) To make the Scripture say what you want it to say is an abomination to God and his Holy Word. To put yourself above the Word places you in the position of God and that is a very dangerous place to put oneself. When Satan did that, he was cast down to hell.

4) In commenting about the two groups who have distorted the gospel of Christ, I want you to see something that is vitally important. There is a lot of truth in what they say and do. They do not line up and do everything opposite to the Word of God, but only change small things. This is what Satan does as the great deceiver. Satan will not just come out and be noticeable, but rather he will come in a way that most people will not be able to recognize him. Just as at the beginning of this paper we talked about the counterfeit dollar, so is Satan using these two groups to look like the real thing in order to pull as many people to hell, or to an artificial abundant life, as he can. These groups claim great numbers of salvations, healings, deliverances, but are these things by God or by Satan? The only way to determine that is by the Word and one must be able to interpret the Word properly in order to see the truth. Does it line up with the mind of Christ?

5) Matt. 7:22-23 talks about the fact that there will be many that will profess Lord, Lord, but the Scripture goes on to say that the Lord will tell them to depart for he never knew them. Where does this large group of people come from that the Lord is talking about? It must come from those that proclaim a false gospel and from those that believe a false gospel. This should make you shake and tremble if not only for yourself, but for all of the thousands of countless souls that have been deceived by this sick, selfish, Satan-mixed gospel.

6) Some of you out there would say that these people that I am claiming to be preaching a false gospel are not false. You may say that they talk about dying to self, carrying the cross, being persecuted, and taking the narrow path. The things that are said by these false prophets do not have a great deal of effect if they are driving 40,000 dollar cars, living in 150,000 dollar homes, building 4 million dollar churches, wearing 1,000 dollar suits. When Jesus, Paul, Peter, Stephen, and others proclaimed the message they had no place to sleep, no change of clothes, were in prison, shipwrecked, and being persecuted to death, their words of self denial and cross carrying will be effective. Please try to see the difference my friend it could cost you your life.

7) You may say, but look at all the things that are happening in their meetings. There are people being slain in the spirit, tons of emotion and feeling, calling out of unknown things, prophecy, coughing up demons, and on and on. I say do not be so easily deceived by the false gospel. Satan himself has moved into the pasture and is doing a powerful work to deceive all in order to take a bucket load to hell. You say that Satan cannot bring blessing and prosper. Look at (Matt. 4:8-9) and see that Satan had the power to bless Jesus Christ himself with material blessings if he would worship him. These false gospel proclaimers are putting self first and not preaching the whole gospel. Please do not fall into this trap my friend it will cost you for eternity.

ANSWERS TO CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

1. What is the Lord's purpose in giving the Bible to us?
To point us to the Savior, Jesus Christ.
2. What is revelation?
God discloses Himself and information about Himself, which could not be known in any other way.
3. What are the parts of revelation?
Manifestation, inspiration, and illumination.
4. What is Manifestation?
Manifestation is God acting in history.
5. Define Inspiration.
Inspiration is God's giving His interpretation for His acts and moving the person to write that interpretation.
6. Define authority.
Author-ity is found in the author.
7. Define illumination.
It is the Spirit's help for us to understand the Word of God, and along with it comes conviction from the person-to-person encounter of the reader with God.
8. List the two basic categories of revelation and the 6 kinds/classes of revelation.
General Revelation: Nature, History, and Experience.
Special Revelation: Salvation History, Christ, and Scripture.
9. Name the hermeneutical methods that go with each class of Special Revelation.
 - a. Those under the structure of a church or denomination as their governing model of Special Revelation, use Salvation History hermeneutics.
 - b. Those who hold to Christ as their governing model of Special Revelation use Personal/Act hermeneutics.
 - c. Those who hold to Scripture as their governing model use propositional hermeneutics.

Chapter 2

1. *Doulos* is the Greek word frequently translated as "Servant," but in fact it is literally bond slave; *diakonos* means servant.
2. Your slaveship must come before you are called to the work that God has for you.
3. The dictation theory states that man is a passive instrument whose own words—vocabulary, personality and mind—are not used in the writing of the books of the Bible
4. What does "autographs" mean? The original writings, not the translations.
5. Jesus is the divine-human Word of God incarnate, and the Scripture is the divine-human Word of God written.
6. All translations of the Bible are interpretations
7. T/F, the KJV Bible is an interpretation? True
8. T/F, the original autographs are interpretations? True, however they are God's interpretations via inspiration

Chapter 3

1. Define:
Revelation
It refers to the truths or facts that God has made known of Himself to man.

Inspiration
It is the process by which the knowledge from God has come.
2. What is the verbal theory of inspiration? List and explain the two additional sub theories of verbal inspiration.

Verbal theory: In this theory, God gives the actual words of Scripture.
- a. Verbal Dictation: God dictated the Scriptures to the writer who wrote them down as he heard them.
- b. Verbal Accommodation: God causes the writer to write his own account of the witness, but God provides His Own interpretation through the writer by guiding the writer's selection of words. So the result is God's account in the words of the writer.
3. Why is "believing that" insufficient in itself? Why is "believing in" insufficient in itself?

“Believing that” is simply objective, but that is mere head knowledge without the subjective faith of believing in.

“Believing in” is subjective; if the object of your faith is wrong, then your faith becomes ineffectual, no matter how strongly you believe it.

4. What is the “Word of God”?
The Word of God is twofold: incarnate and written. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, and the Bible is the Word of God written.
5. List the eight views of inspiration delineated by David Dockery.
 - a. Dictation
 - b. Illumination
 - c. Encounter

- d. Neo-orthodox
- e. Feminist
- f. Liberation/Process
- g. Dynamic/Sacramentalist
- h. Plenary

6. Define inspiration and list 3 passages that support it.
Inspiration is God giving His Own interpretation for His acts and moving the person to write God’s Own specific interpretation in the writer’s own words.
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:15-17
 - b. 2 Peter 1:20-21
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Chapter 4

1. The Fertile Crescent is often called the Cradle of western civilization. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, mountain ranges, and the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
2. Palestine is the English pronunciation of Philistia.
3. The Way of the Sea and the Roman road Via Nova are the two major highways through Palestine. The Via Nova is referred to in Numbers 20 and 21 as The Kings Highway.
4. List the four regions of Palestine
 - a. Coastal Plain
 - b. Central Highlands
 - c. The Jordan Valley
 - d. Eastern Plateau
5. List and describe the three important annual agricultural festivals.
 - a. First Fruits, celebration of the first appearance of harvest and precedes the Passover
 - b. Passover, celebration of the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt and God’s mercy in the harvest. (Feast of Pentecost occurs 50 days after Passover and celebrates completion of harvest.)
 - c. Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration in August of how the people lived during the wilderness wanderings and the time of fruit harvest.

Chapter 5

1. True or False:
False Election is God’s choosing a person to go to heaven.
2. God makes a promise to provide blessings to all who believe God. How do you receive that promise? You receive it by believing God, i.e. faith.
3. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
4. Please see that God promises forgiveness of sin and heaven as the destination to those who believe that Jesus was the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised again as Lord. Receiving that promise is called justification.
5. List three reasons why Revelation 6 doesn’t describe Jesus?
 - a. The person in the first seal has a bow as a weapon; Christ uses the Word of God as His Sword.
 - b. The person in the first seal has a crown that was “given” to him; Christ was born King and “earned” many crowns.
 - c. This person in the first seal goes out conquering and to conquer; but Christ’s victory was won through dying.
6. List the steps in the cycle of Apostasy illustrated by the book of Judges.
Backsliding—Oppression—Repentance—Deliverance.
7. Because Israel, the Northern Kingdom, refused to

- repent, the nation was divorced by God.
8. What are the four sections of the New Testament?
 - a. Gospels
 - b. Acts (history of the church)
 - c. The Epistles
 - d. The Apocalypse
 9. Define Apocalypse.
Apocalypse means an unveiling or revealing of something otherwise unknown to man; the revelation comes from God above.

Chapter 6

1. Identify 3 kinds of Bible translations and give 2 examples of each.
 - a. Word-for-word equivalents. KJV and NASB.
 - b. Dynamic equivalents that use idiomatic English seeking to communicate meaning. NEB and NIV.
 - c. Paraphrases that expand the interpretation in the interpreter's own words. The Living Bible and the Amplified Bible.
2. Name the four types of literature found in the New Testament.
 - a. Gospels
 - b. History
 - c. Epistles
 - d. Apocalypse
3. Why do we need to treat prose and poetry differently?
 - a. Prose is everyday language that conveys meaning in the common way.
 - b. Poetry is language, which creates emotional response through imaginative and experiential words.
 - c. Prose would therefore be interpreted much more straightforward and ordinarily than poetry.
4. How and when did each of the three parts of the Hebrew Old Testament come to be accepted as authoritative (canonical)?
 - Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy). When Ezra the priest returned to Judah in 458 BC after the long exile in Babylon, he read the law of God to the people. He and the people obviously considered "the book of the law of Moses" to be authoritative Scripture. Most people think that the process of accepting the law as canonical was complete by 400 BC.
 - Prophets (prophetic books). The prophets not only pointed to the authority of the law; they also obviously expected their own words to be taken seriously. This included the expectation that their messages be preserved. Isaiah had his disciples record his words (Isaiah 8:16). Baruch did that for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:1-22). The prophets were probably recognized as canonical by about 200 BC.
 - The Writings (all the other O.T. books). We do not have precise information about any of the general writings and how and when they were accepted as authoritative. We do have apparent references to the third part of the Hebrew canon in Luke 11:51 and 24:44. The Writings were accepted, and the Old Testament canon was officially closed at the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.

Chapter 7

1. Of the writers of the New Testament, two of the writers are half brothers of Jesus. Name them.
James and Jude
2. Who are the two writers of the New Testament that did not personally know Jesus while He was teaching and preaching in Israel.
Luke and Paul
3. What is the "Q" (*Quelle*) document?
A source document that many Bible scholars think was copied from by the other Gospel writers.
4. Parchment replaced the papyrus that was used for the earliest writings because the papyrus was fragile and easily torn apart
5. List the test of canonicity (and explain each one):
 - a. Inspiration—operation of the Holy Spirit sets them apart as much higher than normal writings.
 - b. Apostolicity—they belong to the apostolic age. For example the book *Shepherd of Hermas* is not apostolic.
 - c. Doctrinal purity—they are consistent in doctrine.
 - d. Genuineness—they induce worship.
 - e. Catholicity—they have universal acceptance.
6. Who is the author of the New Testament, and who decided upon the canonicity of the chosen books?
God

7. The fact that the accepted books were a rule of faith from which the Christian could not depart, the real or related apostolic contact of a book (was it authored by an apostle or someone closely associated with one?) and the internal witness in individual Christians by the Spirit to the Scriptures are the internal considerations which preceded the official recognition of the canon.
8. The two types of writings of the early church fathers that are valuable to Christians today and provide confirmation of the historicity of Scripture, which strengthens our faith are Apologetics which defend the faith to outsiders and Polemics which are disputations within the faith.
9. Match the following translators with their translations:
- a. Jerome e Provided the first full English translation of the

New Testament.

- b. Venerable Bede c Began a full translation into English that was completed by his followers.
- c. John Wycliffe a Translated the Septuagint into the Latin Vulgate
- d. Martin Luther b Translated parts of the Vulgate into English, but none of his work has survived.
- e. William Tyndale d Translated the Bible into German.

Chapter 8

1. What are the two wrong hermeneutics discussed in this chapter? Progressivism and Existentialism
1. Under the philosophical understanding of Progressivism, who determines the meaning of a text? The latest reader
2. When a reader creates his own meaning of a document/thought/idea because it is subjective, it is called Existentialism.
3. The Christian version of Existentialism is called Neo-orthodoxy.
4. What is the mission of God, and where is it found?

Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

5. Explain the difference between allegory and parable.
- An Allegory has heavenly or spiritual meanings for every element.
 - A parable is an earthly story, the thesis of which deals with a heavenly meaning.
6. Dogmatism is the presupposition that the Bible does not need to be interpreted.

Chapter 9

1. According to the text what is "illumination"? Illumination is God's giving us understanding and conviction when we study the Scriptures.
2. What was developed in the church to define faith to outsiders? Apologetics
3. The rise of the **School of Alexandria** in the third century introduced allegorical interpretation. What was the purpose of that? The allegorical interpretation sought the deeper, mystical understanding, which lay beyond the actual words themselves.
4. Exegesis is the digging out of the words themselves the meaning which the author intended in his selection of those words.
5. From the time of Augustine until Martin Luther

and the Reformation, the church interpreted Scripture in a fourfold way. Name those four ways.

- Literal
 - Allegorical
 - Topological
 - analogical
6. What was the battle cry of the Reformation? *Sola Christos, Sola Scriptura, and Sola Fidei*
7. List the four elements of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation that should be considered.
- a. Situation: (Who are the author and readers?);
 - b. Style (is it prose, poetry, wisdom literature, Law, prophecy, psalm, apocalyptic, drama, letter, or history);
 - c. Language (have the meanings of some words

- changed over time?)
 d. Culture (what accommodations to the culture

do the writings make).

Chapter 10

1. What happens when we proclaim the Word of God but don't live it?
 The world sees us as hypocrites who are all talk and pretensions. We cause them to avoid Jesus as Savior and Lord because we don't act like we believe what we are preaching. Our devotions are seen as devotions to the church not to Jesus.
2. What are the five factors that Stott lists as being prevalent in the lifestyle of a true disciple of Christ?
 - a. Worship
 - b. Repentance
 - c. Faith in God and His Word.
 - d. Obedience
 - d. Witnessing to the truth.
3. Draw the Triangle of Piety and label each corner with the proper name and relate it to the attributes of know, do, and feel.
 See Chart 10.1 in the text.
4. What are the elements of spiraling up? know – do – discern
5. What is the key to discipleship? Doing the Word of God
6. Add the method of study described by the following phrases:
 - a. Covers a specific book of the Bible: Book Study
 - b. Study a passage in the Bible in the light of its setting in the entire book: Passage Interpretation.
 - c. Determine the principle sentence or idea of a paragraph. Grammatical Analysis.
 - d. Find the Lord's teaching on a specific subject or for learning a great deal about certain people. Topical Studies.
 - e. Studying a particular person, group of people or a prophet. Biographical Studies.

HERMENEUTICS

A NEW LOOK AT HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE

Good interpretation is essential for faithful discipleship. This book gives you biblical principles, practical tools, and spiritual safeguards so you can rightly discover God's message and apply it to your life in today's world.

IN THIS BOOK YOU WILL:



Understand why hermeneutics matters and the dangers of misinterpretation.



Discover the key principles for interpreting Scripture rightly.



Learn how context, genre, and language shape God's meaning.

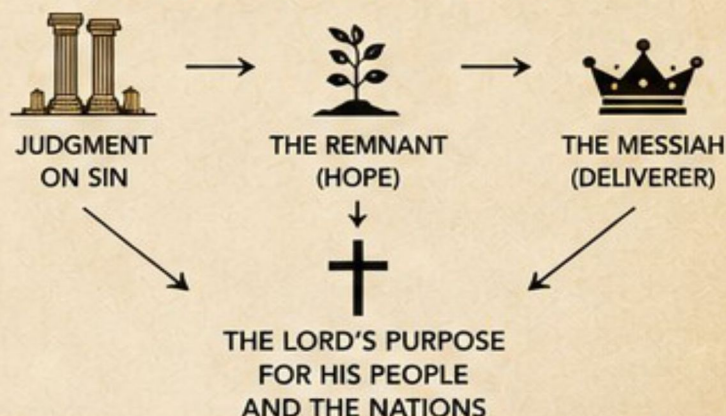


Guard against Satan's influences and self-exaltation in interpretation.

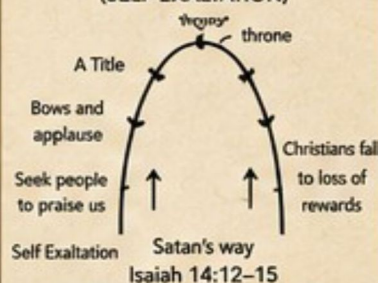


Apply God's Word faithfully to your life and the world.

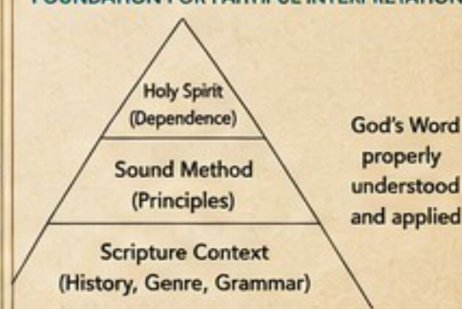
A PICTURE OF ISAIAH'S MESSAGE



REVERSE KENOSIS: SATAN'S WAY (SELF EXALTATION)



FOUNDATION FOR FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION



WILLIAM E. VINSON, JR., PhD

Former director of Seminary Extension in Nashville, TN, and professor of Biblical Studies with 25 years of experience teaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and through internet teaching. The discipleship series is a unique approach to Biblical education.

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL, JUDAH, AND TO US

TO ISRAEL	TO JUDAH	TO THE NATIONS	TO US TODAY
Call to repent Turn from idols Trust the Lord (Isa. 1 – 39)	Judgment and restoration A remnant returns (Isa. 1 – 39)	The Servant The Light to all Prayer for all (Isa. 40 – 66)	Hear God's Word Trust in Christ Live for His glory (Isa. 1 – 66)

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